



Supporting Oral Language Development

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Oral language is the interactive process of speaking and listening for various purposes: to communicate, to learn, and to socialize. Speakers and listeners must interpret nonverbal cues and process the meaning, grammar, and syntax of what is heard in order to comprehend and respond appropriately. In the *Program and Planning Guide*, you will find an Oral Language Continuum outlining the three significant areas of oral language development: language structures, language for learning, and language for social relationships (see pages 60 to 63).

Since language is so crucial in the learning process, its continued growth in the classroom should be encouraged. To stimulate language development, try some of the following suggestions from the *Program and Planning Guide* (pages 38 to 42):

- vary groupings to provide opportunities for students to talk (e.g., partner, small groups of students, whole class discussions)
- when you talk with students, be an attentive and active listener
- link conversations to students' experiences
- extend conversations and expand content
- provide modelling rather than correcting students' language patterns
- provide opportunities for discussions so that students can share ideas

Literacy Place for the Early Years is built on the foundation that oral language should be integrated throughout all areas of literacy instruction with strategies and activities that require and support students as they use and develop oral skills for a variety of purposes.

Oral Language and Reading

As you work with the *LPEY* reading materials, you will discover that a variety of oral language opportunities have been embedded into the Read Aloud, Shared Reading, and Guided Reading sessions. Many of the teaching plans suggest oral language activities such as: listening to the teacher's think alouds, discussing with a partner or group, responding to questions and prompts, participating in class discussions, sharing background knowledge, role-playing, choral reading, retelling, giving opinions, and providing details. Oral language follow-up activities are also included in the lesson plans. Students may be practising their communication skills by rereading the story, taking a character's viewpoint when talking with a partner, discussing key ideas in a small group, writing a literature response to share with classmates, or listing plot predictions with a partner.

As partner work is a key grouping for the development of oral language in primary classrooms, you may want to try these strategies that enable pairs of students to share and clarify their thoughts, opinions, and ideas during reading and writing activities:

- Partner Conversation – allows students to discuss topics of interest in an informal situation
- Think-Pair-Share – helps to encourage student participation by providing individual thinking time first, then students exchange ideas with a partner, and finally they share in a whole group setting
- Inside-Outside Circle – offers opportunities for students to engage in discussions where they experience a variety of ideas and perspectives as every student gets a chance to speak with, and listen to, at least two different partners

Oral Language and Writing

The *Writing Guide* also focuses on oral language development. Modelled and Shared Writing lessons are based on using language to create text and to talk about writing strategies. During Guided Writing lessons, students listen, discuss, and contribute ideas to assist each other with writing experiences. Oral language is also an important part of the writing process. For



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example, the Planning and Researching step includes students discussing their ideas or asking others for information. The Sharing and Publishing step can be the oral sharing of the text and a follow-up discussion. In fact, you can find mini-lessons that highlight oral presentation of a text in the Craft and Conventions section of the *Writing Guide*.

Oral Language and Working with Words

At the Kindergarten and grade one levels, the *Working with Words Guide* includes a phonological awareness section with direct oral language instruction and activities to support and develop students' awareness for the sounds and rhythms of language. Activities focus on rhymes, onsets and rimes, syllables, and the phonemes in spoken language. Oral language is also integrated into each of the interactive teaching areas of Working with Words through discussing, sharing, and developing vocabulary.

Note: On page 76 of the *Program and Planning Guide*, you will find a continuum for Phonological and Phonemic Awareness for kindergarten and grade one. Also the grade-specific Oral Language Development Checklists are very useful when assessing the three areas of language development.

If you have a question you would like answered, please email your request to: workshops@scholastic.ca.