

The importance of vocabulary for literacy development

Children's language skills in kindergarten are strongly related to later academic success.

Keys:

Exposure to varied vocabulary

Children need to build a knowledge base about the world around them; to know how to use the right word.

Opportunities to part of conversations

that use several sentences in a row. e.g. explanations, narratives

Stimulating home and classroom environments

good books

varied and stimulating curriculum

Strategies for encouraging language development

Playful language

Play involves experimenting with words, rules, ideas.

In play children can use problem-solving strategies, correct mistakes and rethink plans.

Imaginary play involves communication through gestures, words, scripts, roles, and symbols.

Examples: home corner, office centre, restaurants, building constructions, shopping centre / market

Supporting language development

Avoid monopolizing conversation.

Provide opportunities for children to talk.

Ask questions.

Avoid closed questions (one-word-answer).

Give children enough time to get the words out.

Listen to children.

Use new words whenever possible.

Use sharing time / show and tell.

Reading books aloud

Re-read old favourites.

Ask questions about the story, e.g. "What else could the hungry caterpillar eat?"

"Which part of the story did you like best?"

Dramatise the story.

Describe a picture in the book.

Literacy at home

Parents can be encouraged to:

Read shop and street signs together
Point to names of produce in the supermarket
Cross items off a shopping list
Make a photograph album with titles
Read books together

Story telling

Telling stories is completely different to reading aloud. There are no pictures of text to focus on. The story teller uses voice, body, hands, face and particularly eyes. Puppets can be used in story telling.

Story maps

After listening to a story, children can draw the events that occurred in sequence.

Making books

a) activity based books

Kindergarten and beginners: children can draw a picture of a class event. They verbally dictate a "sentence" about their picture, which is transcribed on the drawing by the teacher. Staple all the pages together and you have a class "Big Book" for class reading.

b) retelling a story

Make a class book by giving different children a part of a story to illustrate. Write a sentence under each drawing and compile the book.