

Addressing Communication Skills in the Classroom

Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (FELDS)



Overview of Communication Skills

Skills in the area of communication relate to a child's ability to both understand and use language. As a child develops communication skills, there are increases in both ability to respond to adult directions and to express wants and needs.

Receptive communication generally refers to skills such as responding to sounds and words, associating pictures and objects with words and responding to questions with either verbal or nonverbal responses.

Expressive communication refers to the ability to relate information to other by actions, gestures, sounds, words and sentences.

The developmental skill area of communication includes the use of language and communication during social contact. The production of speech sounds is also included in the Language and Literacy domain in the FELDS.

Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (FELDS) for ages Birth to 5 years addresses four components for 3-year olds and seven components for 4-year olds.

Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (FELDS)

	Language and Literacy Standards	
Components	FELDS Benchmarks	
Listening and Understanding	A.1	Demonstrates understanding while listening
	A.2	Increases knowledge through listening
	A.3	Follows directions
Speaking	B.1	Speaks and is understood when speaking
Vocabulary	C.1	Shows an understanding of words and their meanings (receptive)
	C.2	Uses increased vocabulary to describe many objects, actions, and events (expressive)
Sentences and Structure	D.1	Uses age-appropriate grammar in conversations and increasingly complex phrases and sentences
	D.2	Connects words, phrases, and sentences to build ideas
Conversation	E.1	Uses verbal and nonverbal communication and language to express needs and feelings, share experiences, and resolve problems
	E.2	Ask questions and responds to adults and peers in a variety of settings
	E.3	Demonstrates understanding of the social conventions of communication and language use
Emergent reading	F.1	Shows motivation for and appreciation of reading
	F.2	Shows age-appropriate phonological awareness
	F.3	Shows alphabetic and print knowledge
	F.4	Demonstrates comprehension of books read aloud
Emergent Writing	G.1	Begins to show motivation to engage in written expression and appropriate knowledge of forms and functions of written expression

Supporting Communication during Class Routines

Routines are important for development of language and communication skills.

Routines help children learn:

- How words are organized: before, after, then
- Vocabulary associated with routines
- How to respond and/or initiate conversation in social routines

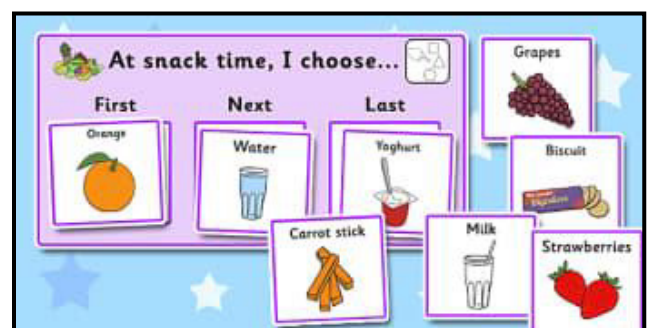
Strategies for Teaching Vocabulary during Routines:

- Talk to children during routines. Label the items associated with routines, what you are giving them, what they need and want.
- Break routines into small parts so that children hear and use associated words frequently and get more practice.
- Label what the child is interested in at the moment. Label what you are doing so that he/she associates your action with his/her request or interest.
- Use visuals, objects, drawing, photos to help children associate the words used with the routine to actions and items.
- Encourage and motivate children to participate and engage in routines. The more participation and practice with words the greater the increase in understanding and using the vocabulary.

Strategies for Using Visuals to Support Communication Development

Use visuals during routines to teach and reinforce vocabulary. Remember to describe actions and talk about what is occurring during routines. Ask questions such as "What's next?" to encourage children to point to or verbalize next steps in routines.

Use visuals to support choice making. When first introducing choices, start with 2 or 3 familiar choices and pair the visuals with words so that children are learning the vocabulary associated with the visuals. Choices are an important motivator for communication so it is important that the choices are of interest to the children.



Tips for Adults who are Interacting with Children

To support a child in making requests:

- Encourage the child by placing his/her favorite thing within his view but out of reach requiring him to "request" that object.
- Requesting could be by gesture, pointing, sign, picture or verbal.
- Offer things, like a snack, bit by bit, so the child will have to make multiple requests.
- When playing a physical game like swinging, a child can learn he or she can start the game by saying "go" after you say "ready, set..."

Support a child in learning how to refuse or protest:

- Offer nonpreferred items or a child's least favorite things as a way to help a child tell you "no," "enough," "all done" or "stop".
- Continue an activity until the child wants to stop. Provide ways for him/her to end the activity by showing or gesturing or verbalizing.

Support children in answering questions:

- Change the presentation of questions. When you ask a child a basic yes or no question, you give that child an excuse to say as little as possible. Instead of asking a child if he or she wants to play with blocks at break time, ask the child specifically what he or she wants to do.
- When you need to ask a child with a communication issue a question, try to leave the question open ended to encourage a longer response.



Support children in understanding words:

Describe what they are doing while actions are occurring. This will help them understand the meaning of words. Your emphasis is on helping each child understand words. Don't pressure him or her to talk.

Add to words children say. For example, if a child says "car," you can say, "You're right! That is a big red car."

Ask children to name pictures. Name the pictures for them if needed.

Teach them new words. Reading is a great way to do this. Read books with short sentences on each page.



Encourage Communication by encouraging engagement

Give positive and descriptive feedback.

Engage with children during all activities. Talk to them about activities and items in the classroom.

Greet each child and make connections with children. Talk about their interests.

Talk to children during play time. Play with them and show your interest and enjoyment of their play. Let them know their communication is important.

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