

Make Shared Reading More Powerful in Building Oral Language (Summary of suggestions from *Learning to Talk and Listen*)

FOCUS ON VOCABULARY

Teachers pick books that include new words and ideas and explicitly call attention to the new and interesting vocabulary words in books that intentionally help children understand the core meanings of words.

- Tell the child what the word means.
- Point to a picture in the book that illustrates the word.
- Connect the new word to words the child already knows.

EMPHASIZE THE USE OF ABSTRACT LANGUAGE

Teachers encourage children to use language to communicate thinking about things that they cannot actually see in the books.

- Ask children to use language to talk about things that might happen in the story that they haven't yet read about, or things that could happen.
- Children should be encouraged to use language to express their imagination and ideas
- Ask children to predict what might happen in the story.
- Ask children to imagine what characters in the story might be thinking or feeling.

ASK QUESTIONS AND ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION

During shared reading, ask questions about the pictures and story to encourage children to use language, including abstract language.

- Ask younger children to label pictures: "Do you remember what this animal's name is?"
- Ask younger children to describe details of the pictures or story: "How is the fire engine getting to the people at the top of the building?"
- When they have had practice with a story, ask the child to recall something about the story: "Can you tell me what happened to Isabella the night before?"
- Ask children to predict what's going to happen in the story.

READ STORIES MORE THAN ONCE

Take advantage of the fact that children have favorite books, and they quickly learn what happens in the story and are eager to talk about what they know.

- Use repeated readings to extend conversations about the story.
- Children can answer questions about the story—who, where, what, why, how many, how much, how long, and how far.
- With some prompting, they can connect stories to their own real life experiences.

BUILD ON THEMES

Pick out books that are about the same theme, such as "under the sea" or "the rain forest," including non-fiction or expository books.

- Reading several books on the same theme gives children a shared topic for extended, rich conversations.
- Conversations about a theme provide opportunities for the provider to "recycle" vocabulary—use the new theme-based words and encourage children to use them. This helps children remember the new words and deepens their understanding of the meanings of the words.
- Theme-related activities, such as constructing a mural that shows different fish and coral, further encourage children to use and learn the new language from the books that have been read together.

The Partnership for Reading, a project administered by the National Institute for Literacy, is a collaborative effort of the National Institute for Literacy, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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