Classroom Essentials for Building Communication Skills

1 Provide a language-rich and structured environment with visual supports.

2 Teach vocabulary along with each activity and routine.

3 Support communication throughout the activities and routines of the day.

Visual supports help children understand and process the information given in directions, lessons, activities, and social interactions.

Examples of ways to tailor visual supports to differentiate for varying needs of individual children:
- Familiar and environmental text
- Black & white or colored drawings
- Photo representations
- Individual schedules that allow movement of the parts
- Representative objects
- Child and/or group photos of actual class members

Object Schedule

Focus on Communication and Vocabulary

Support language by talking to children during activities.

- Describe what you are doing.
- Explain the meanings of words you use.
- Ask questions and provide prompts for children who need help with expression.
- Don't forget these two important factors:
  - Providing opportunities to make <u>choices</u>
  - Providing <u>wait time</u>

Use gestures and facial expressions

Introduce new and interesting words.

Give them lots of time to learn new words.

Provide objects and pictures.

Sing and recite rhymes and poems.

Communicate with families and send information home.

Read, read, read!

Vocabulary Skills in Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (2017)

FELDS addresses both **receptive and expressive vocabulary** skills through 4 benchmark areas:

Receptive:
C.1.a. Demonstrates understanding and responds to vocabulary across topics (body parts, feelings) and for purposes of following requests/directions.
C.1.b. Demonstrates understanding of words or lines from books and songs, positional words, plural and past tense, and knows words in multiple environments.

Expressive:
C.2.a. Uses descriptive words, pronouns, and adds new words to speaking vocabulary at an approximate for age level:
        Ages 2-3 (500 words); Ages 3-4 (1,000 words); Ages 4-5 (1,500 words)

C.2.b. Combines words into sentences to describe objects and express ideas. Names some colors, shapes, relationships, uses of objects.

Using Visuals to Incorporate Vocabulary during Routines

There are numerous opportunities for enhancing vocabulary during daily routines – and lessons are even better if the words and concepts are displayed visually in the classroom.

Using visuals helps to emphasize vocabulary during routines:
- To provide additional opportunities for children to hear the words
- To increase practice using the word
- To increase opportunities for children to physically perform actions associated with the concepts
- Help children remember the meanings and uses of words
- Facilitate the use of the vocabulary as part of their expressive communication.

Use prompts to support vocabulary:
- Word board and/or AAC device
- Word picture board to cue use of words
- Ask questions
  - What's next? Show me
  - What do you need?
- Use cloze (fill in the blank)
  - All clean, throw _____.
  - Put it in the _____.
  - Wash hands, get some _____.

Opportunity

Note chances to incorporate vocabulary lessons

Position and location words:
- "on hook"
- "hang up"
- "take out"
- "put away"

Build in other skills
- Ask questions
  - "What's next?"
- Use the cloze strategy
  - "Hang your coat on the _____."

Coming to school

coat on hook

hang up backpack

take out lunch
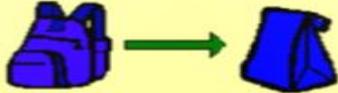
put lunch away

Arrival at school		
1		Take off coat (scarf, mittens, boots and hat)
2		Open Backpack
3		Take out work
4		Take out lunch
5		Hang up coat
6		Hang up backpack

First   Then

Circle Time Schedule
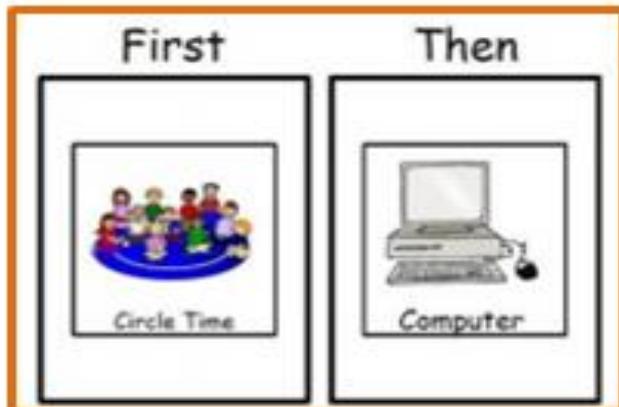
First   Then

Visuals using First/Then and First/Next/Then strategies are not only helpful for structuring schedules and transitions but provide built-in opportunities for lessons using vocabulary words such as first, then, next, last. These words can also be applied to daily activities such as lining up.

first   next   then
circle time   binder   snack
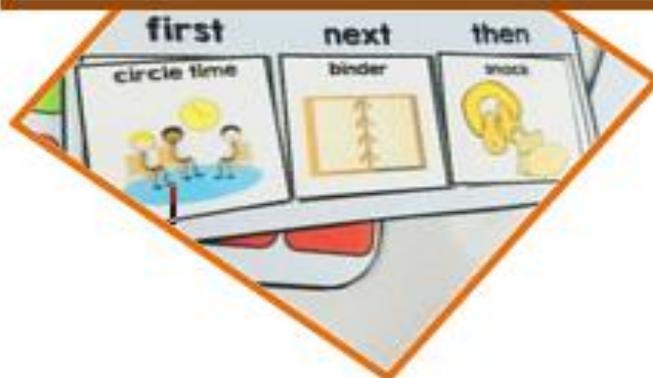
Include strategies in your daily plans for supporting children during routines such as Circle/Meeting Times. It is important that all children have chances to participate in lessons and discussions.

now	later	today	ready
diff'rnt	same		
know	read	sing	
show	tell	see	
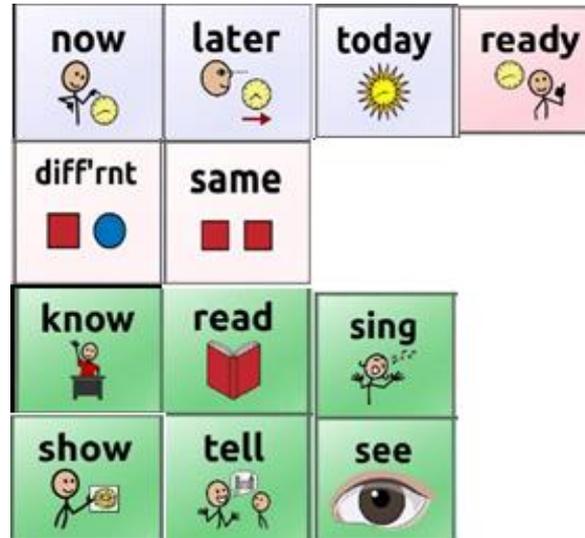
Remember to provide theme-related visuals at play center and activity areas.

helicopter	car	bus
train	motorcycle	airplane

Zoo Words
monkey
zebra
elephant

Family Words
mom
dad
brother
sister
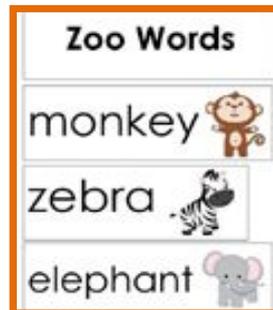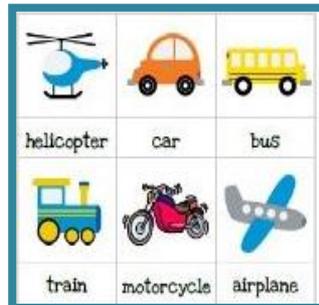
Vocabulary should be taught along with each activity and routine. Understanding word meanings and having appropriate systems in place will help all children communicate.

Facilitating Choice-making is a good strategy for encouraging and motivating children to communicate. Examples: choosing movements for transitions, songs, and greetings. Snacks, centers, toys, and rewards can be built into daily routines.
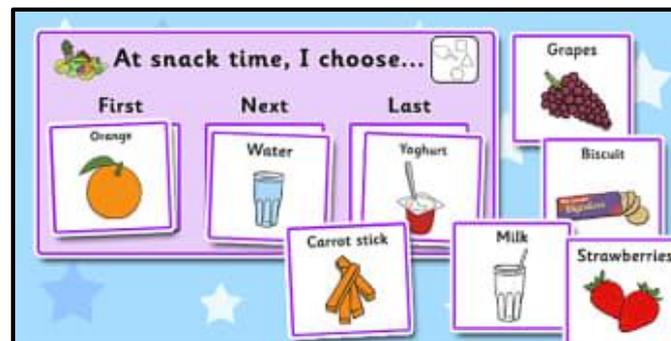
Making Choices and Requests

Ask

water | book
paint | bricks
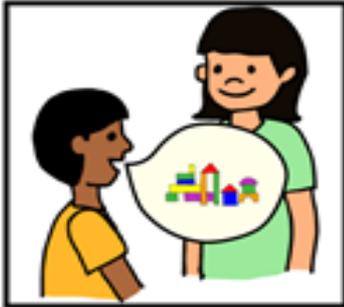
Levels of Support and Prompting:
- Show the child the object or picture of the target vocabulary.
- Use the strategy of "expectant pause" to indicate that you expect a response.
- Say the word, point to the object/picture.
- Ask the child a question, example, "Do you want the flashlight?"
- Prompt the child to request by "tell me" or "show me".
- Use a choice board or communication board or device.

choose

water | apple juice | orange juice

Library | Kitchen | Cars | Blocks
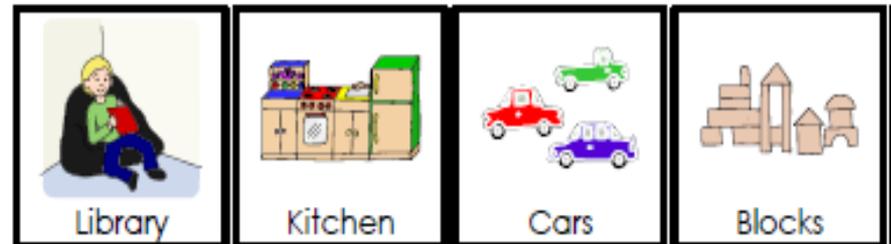
Social Language Skills in Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (2017)

FELDS addresses **social communication** and language skills through Language and Literacy Domain (IV) as well as Social and Emotional Domain (III) benchmark areas:

III.A.1.a. Recognizes emotions in books, pictures, and on a person's face.
III.B.1.a. Recognizes and names own emotions
III.C.3.a. Uses social problem solving to increase cooperative play with peers
III.D.3.a. Demonstrates willingness to initiate and participate in daily rituals and routines
III.D.4.a. Verbally or nonverbally uses words to communicate wants, needs, personal preferences, thoughts and feelings

IV.A.3.a. Follows multi-step directions with reminders and follows one-step directions with mastery.
IV.E.3.a. Demonstrates awareness of nonverbal communication and conversational rules, responding to adult and peer interactions
IV.E.3.b. Demonstrates use of social expressions for taking turns, responds to social conversations.

Visuals for Supporting Social-Emotional Vocabulary Development

Social Vocabulary

- Teach the word meanings.
- Model both verbal and physical skills.
- Provide various modes for communication.
- Facilitate lots of practice.

Emotions and Self-Regulation
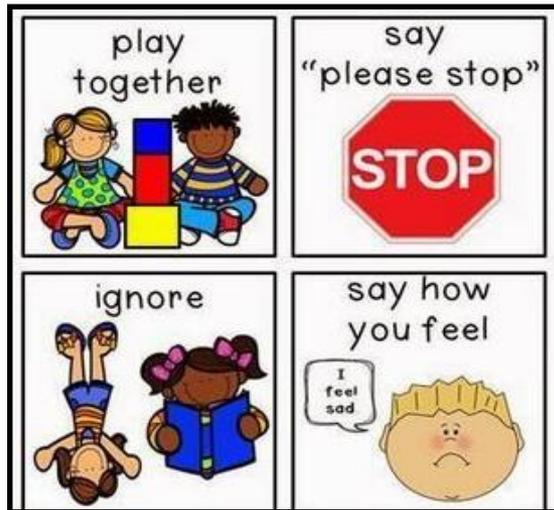
Many words associated with rules, expectations, and emotions represent abstract concepts and can be difficult for children to understand. Concepts such as safety, kindness, calming down, feelings require visuals, photos, and most importantly guided practice in order to be learned and remembered by children.

Examples of Visuals for Social-Emotional Vocabulary

Strategies from the Conscious Discipline program provide choices for children to select methods to greet people. Strategies like these are helpful in increasing engagement and interaction for children who have difficulty with expressive language.

Conscious Discipline by Dr.
Becky Bailey is copyrighted
By the Loving Guidance
Company, 2011.
Free resources are available to print:
https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/

| Bear Hug | High Five |
| Heartwarming Smile | Wiggly Handshake |

BE KIND

SLOW STOP
Be Safe

I Can Calm
When I Feel...

When I'm Upset

I can look at a book. | I can listen to music. | I can draw a picture. | I can rest on my pillow. | I can do a puzzle.

1 2 3 Go into your shell. Take 3 deep breaths and think calm thoughts
Step 3
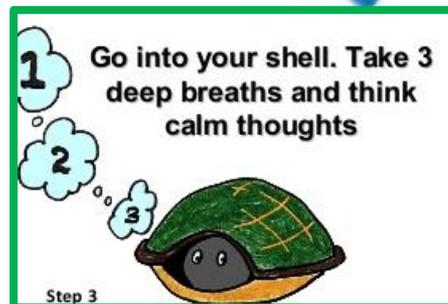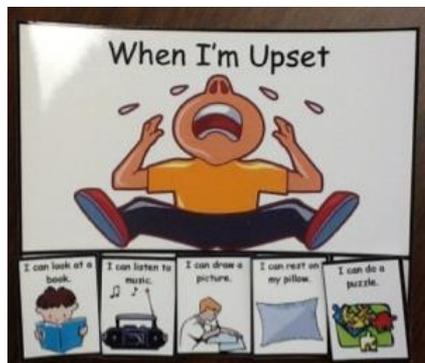
Note: Conscious Discipline visuals are used as examples of numerous visual strategies available for supporting children in understanding vocabulary used for teaching skills such as:
- Safety
- Kindness
- Calm
- Respect
- Emotions

Other examples are shown on the side.

Supporting varying modes of communication is key to children's progress in language development. It is important to provide supports during all activities.

Opportunity

Snack time Vocabulary

hungry

all done

thirsty

like

eat

drink

Snack time can provide extended *opportunities and motivation* for children who are at a stage of learning to make requests about their desires and

Language concepts can be incorporated into snack time:

First/next/then   In/out/open/close
Wait/Share   Put away/clean up

Snack time is a good time to include *hands-on lessons with math and literacy* vocabulary concepts:
Sorting, Same/Different, Shapes, Colors

cereal sorting mat

Shape Sorting with Food!!

Food Rhymes

I LOVE TO EAT FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Literacy and Language Skills in Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (2017)

FELDS addresses vocabulary related to **literacy and language** skills through benchmark areas:

IV.A.1.a. Engages in communicative interactions during play
IV.A.1.b. Responds to factual questions and read aloud texts
IV.A.2.a. Responds to simple questions about what is being learned, uses information during play

IV.F.3.a. Recognizes that print and symbols covey meaning (common signs, lists, labels)
IV.F.4.a. Demonstrates comprehension of meaning of text by pointing to pictures, responding to conversations

Example: FELDS continuum and resources

2. Uses increased vocabulary to describe objects, actions and events (expressive)

Age: 2-3 years	Age: 3-4 years	Age: 4-5 years
Benchmark a. Increases vocabulary rapidly, including descriptive words, pronouns and/or plurals (e.g., big, happy, you, me, shoes) (typically has a speaking vocabulary of approximately 500 words) VROM ⓘ	**Benchmark a.** Adds new words to vocabulary weekly (e.g., repeats words and integrates new words in play scenarios) (typically has a speaking vocabulary of approximately 1,000 words) VROM ⓘ	**Benchmark a.** Uses a large speaking vocabulary, adding new words weekly (e.g., repeats words and uses them appropriately in context) (typically has a vocabulary of more than 1,500 words) VROM ▶ ⓘ

http://Vrom link for additional information, lessons, video examples

Teaching Vocabulary Words

Identify a target word from daily routines, classroom book, lessons (ex. math).

This example will use the word "*busy*" from a classroom read-aloud *Come Out and Play, Little Mouse.*

When planning lessons to teach the use of vocabulary it is important to consider the levels and needs and determine how each child might use words. It is important to develop strategies that support communication in context during hands-on activities.
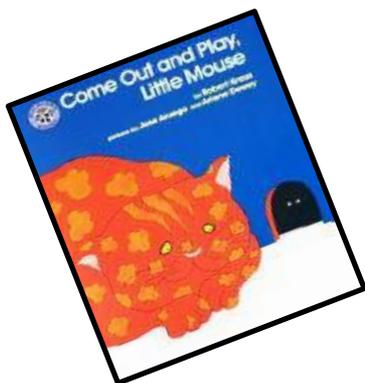
1 **Find the word**. Show the word with visuals in your class, show word with pictures in books. Find the word on child's AAC device if appropriate.

2 **Define the word**. Explain the meaning of the word. Sometimes it is easier to define a word using example sentences: "If you are busy, you are playing or working." "When you are busy, you are trying to finish what you are doing."

3 **Use the word**. Use the word throughout the day in examples. "Our class is busy cleaning up." "Look how busy we are doing our artwork." In addition, use the opposite, "It's our rest time. It's time for our bodies to be quiet and still, not busy."

4 **Provide opportunities for Practice**. Show pictures and ask "Is she busy?" Provide cloze strategies sentences "You are working hard, you are very _____".

5 **Provide examples and experiences with the word**. Read books using the word. Make up songs using the word. Some books are The Busy Little Squirrel, Richard Scarry's Busy Town, Little Miss Busy, The Busy Body Book, Honeybee Man, Henry Has a Busy Day.

Supporting Communication during Activities

The following example for planning uses a plan for support that is adapted from AssistiveWare Core Word Classroom: Core Word -5 Minute Filler.   The examples of word boards and activities are from various resources for visual supports and are cited. http://www.assistiveware.com/assistiveware-core-word-classroom.

There are *multiple benefits* of the development of a planning document such as the one shown for Mr. Potato Head, including the important factor of *informing all staff* about concepts and vocabulary that should be included in the activity. Other benefits include:
- Providing information to staff about *prompts* to facilitate communication
- Assuring that *varying aspects of language concepts* will be included in prompts
- Providing information needed to *develop supports* such as word boards, word cards, and/or program AAC devices
- Guiding staff in developing materials in advance so that they are *readily available* to children throughout the day and in multiple areas of the classroom

Note that the plan for supporting the activity includes words that children might use for *various reasons and is not limited to requests*. These words are a guideline for expanding communication for purposes of commenting and interaction. However, it is important to include *pictures of items specific to the activity* when word boards are developed.

The chart is a guide to choosing **visuals** to include on the activity board.

Notice that it is intended to support a wide range of concepts:

- verbs, descriptions, quantities, prepositions

- likely functions

- icons and visuals for questions and comments

Example Planning Matrix

Young children are often highly motivated by play, routines, and hands-on activities. These are opportunities for incorporating language and communication.

Supporting Activities and Play *Enhancing Vocabulary – Facilitating Interactions*			
Target Words & Concepts	Verbs	Want, like, help, need, put, make, get	
	Describing	funny, happy	
	Quantity	More, one, two, all, again	
	Prepositions	On, here, in, off	
Functions	*Needs & Wants*	*Getting & Giving Information*	*Social Interaction*
Questions & Prompts	Want	What next?	My turn
	Want more	Where to put?	Your turn
	Not that	Put that on	Want to play?
	Need help	Take that off	Where's the ear?
	All done	Looks funny, silly	Do you like it?
		Looks good, bad	
		I like it	
		I don't like it	
		Do it again	

Plans for Supporting Activity
Mr. Potato Head

Target Words & Concepts		Verbs	Want, like, help, need, put, make, get
		Describing	Not, all done, good, bad, funny
		Quantity	More, one, two, all, again
		Prepositions	On, here, in, off

| Functions	Needs & Wants	Getting & Giving Information	Social Interaction
Questions & Prompts	Want Want more Not that Need help All done	What next? Where to put? Put that on Take that off Looks funny, silly Looks good, bad I like it I don't like it Do it again	My turn Your turn Want to play? Where's the ear? Do you like it?

Plan for support – adapted from AssistiveWare Core Word Classroom: Core Word - 5 Minute Filler. http://www.assistiveware.com/assistiveware-core-word-classroom

Example: Activity Core Word board by Lesson Pix

Examples of Visuals and word Board to support play using a Potato Head toy
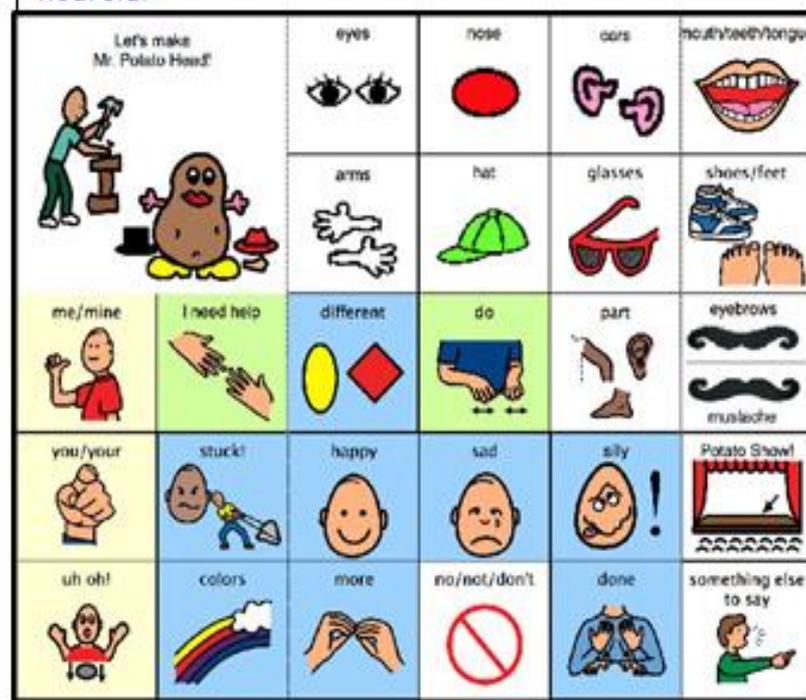
Example: Simple word board using an "I want ____" statement with seven options. Visual icons by Boardmaker (Meyer-Johnson)

eyes	I	want	hat
glasses			arms
ears	mouth		shoes
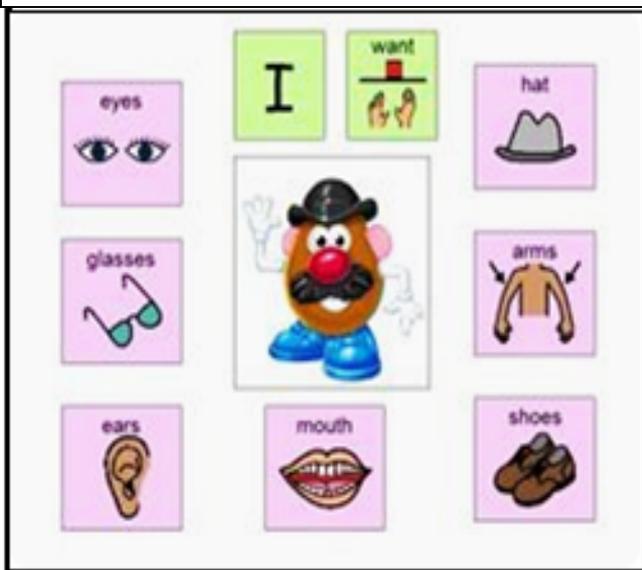
Example: Simple word board with four verbs and six game pieces. Visual icons from Symbol Stix (Chat Editor by Saltillo)

		potato	eye	ear
I				
play			nose	mouth
want	help		hat	
	finish			

Incorporating Vocabulary Skills in Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (2017)

FELDS addresses **vocabulary skills throughout multiple standards**:

Mathematical
V.E-F. – vocabulary skills include those related to spatial directions and locations, directionality, order, position, size, length, weight, group sorting and data

Scientific Inquiry
VI.A-F. – vocabulary skills include those related to five senses, objects and features of the world, plants and animals, motion, sorting and classifying by properties, water, rocks and soil, time of day, weather, familiar objects and people, constructing simple structures.

Social Studies
VII. A-H. – vocabulary skills include those related to family, traditions, food, culture, characteristics of self and others, routines of families and classrooms, personal space, environmental characteristics, spatial words, sequence of events, schedules, rules and expectations, problem solving, wants and needs, simple tools and technology

## Creative Expression Through the Arts
VIII.A-E. – vocabulary skills include those related to open-ended process art, musical activities, communicating ideas and responding to movement to express thoughts and feelings, creative play, describing art of self and others, showing preferences for art forms

What's Missing?

AAC devices and/or communication supports such as word boards will not be needed by all children in many classrooms.

Young children who have language impairments and/or delays, as well as children with typically developing communication skills can benefit from activities which include and enhance target vocabulary.

Mr. Potato Head's Five Senses:
Hear with ears
See with eyes
Smell with nose
Taste the tongue
Touch with hands

Problem-Solving stories:
What happened to Mr. Potato Head? How does he feel? What should he do next to solve his problem?
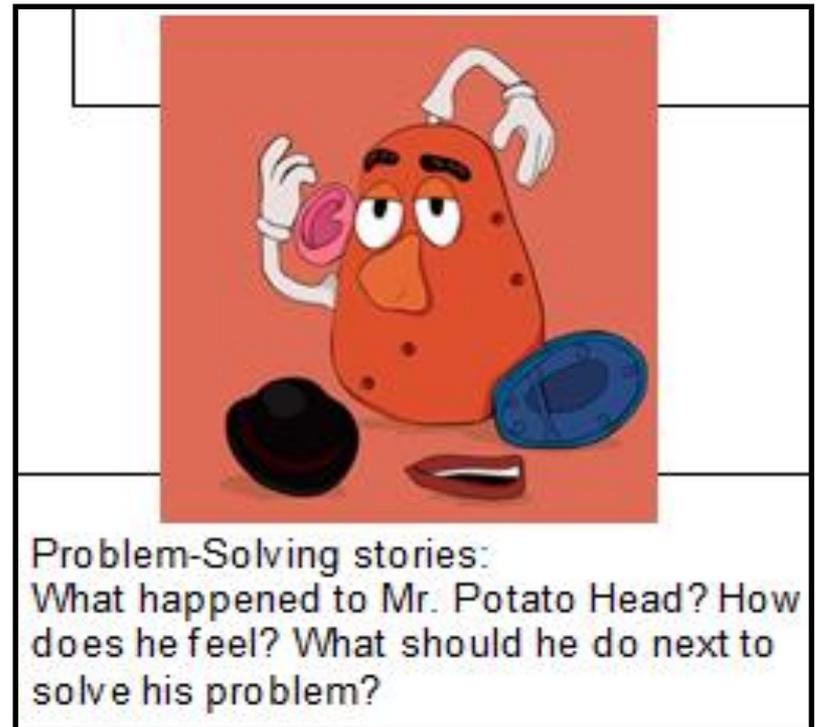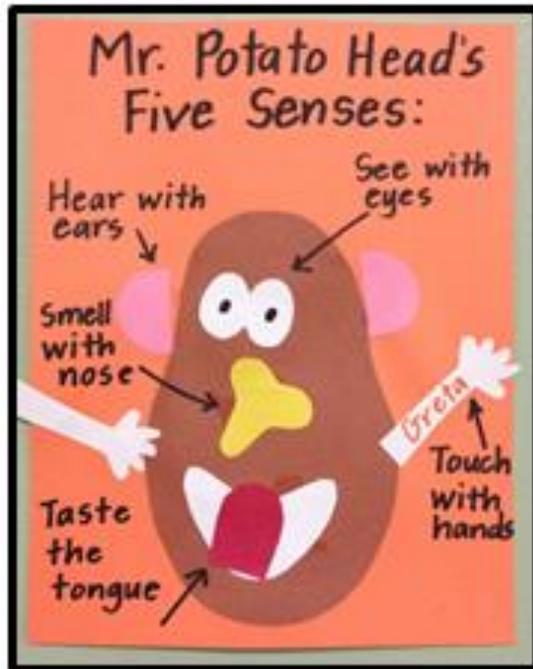
Plans for Supporting Center Activity
Blocks/Building Center

Target Words & Concepts	Verbs	Want, like, help, need, put, make, get	
	Describing	Not, all done, good, bad, high, big, little	
	Quantity	More, all, again, some	
	Prepositions	On, here, in, up, under	
Functions	**Needs & Wants**	**Getting & Giving Information**	**Social Interaction**
Questions & Prompts	Want	What next?	My turn
	Want more	Where to put?	Your turn
	Not that	Put that on	Want to play?
	Need help	Take that off	Watch this!
	All done	Build up, push down	Do you like it?
	Different	I like it	
	Put on	I don't like it	
		Do it again	

Facilitate and support vocabulary and concept development during center play.

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I Can Build With Blocks
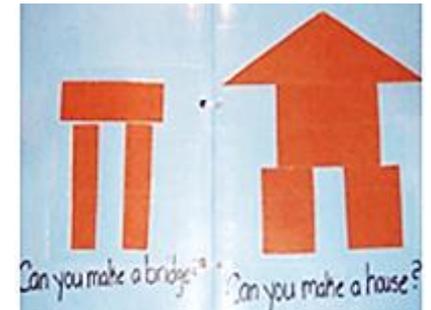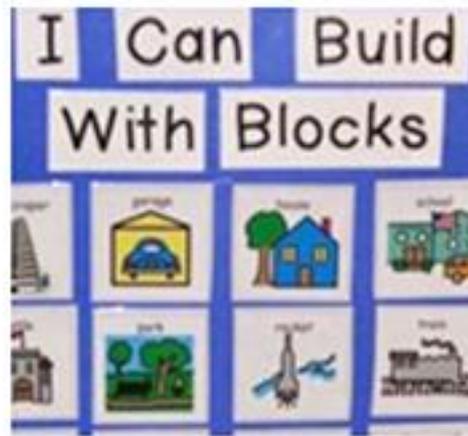
Templates for building Vocabulary: matching, first/next, shapes, sizes

Classroom staff should plan and prepare visuals and other strategies to enhance use of vocabulary during center play. Many children require prompts, motivation, and ideas in order to take advantage of opportunities to communication and interact during busy center play activities.
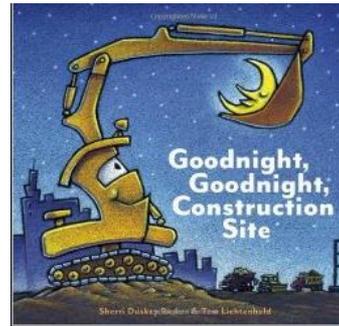
Place books related to classroom themes in the block center. ***Books can be used to expand lessons and language concepts.*** Adults should call attention to and read books to children in centers.

What things impact communication?
- developmental levels, delays, disabilities
- language impairments
- language learning in the home
- experiences from family dynamics, culture

What are some motivators for children's communication?
- Needs and Wants (including protests)
- Getting and Giving Information
- Social Interaction
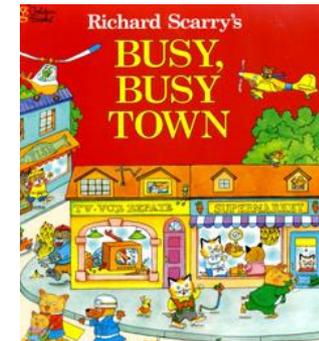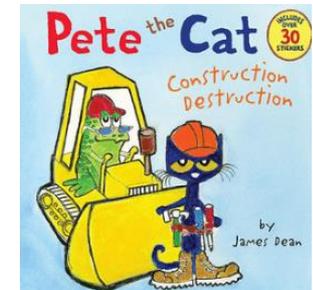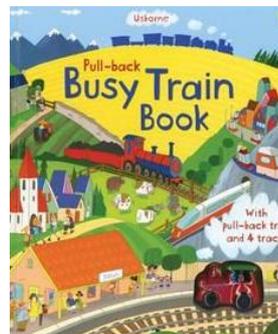
<u>Observe Children's Communication</u>
Check for Functions, Modes, and Needs of Support

What is meant by "modes" of communication? It refers to the method or way that a child gets his/her message across. It can also refer to the way that a child is able to understand what others want to relay. Examples are below:

- Sounds and gestures/actions, including crying, pointing, facial expressions, eye-contact.

- Verbalizing words or word-approximations

- Showing/selecting objects, photos, drawings that represent objects/activities/feelings

- Symbolic systems such as sign language, picture/tactile system, communication board, writing, speech

- Augmentative and alternative systems

Using your Observations to Plan Supports

What are some *strategies* to support children's development of communication?

- Observe in order to *plan lessons* that facilitate communication.

- *Develop visuals* to support your lessons and children's routines.

- Provide visuals in all parts of the room so that they are *accessible*.

- *Train and inform* all classroom staff, as well as family members about the importance and use of visuals. Provide copies so that vocabulary and visuals supports will be consistent.

- Use *prompts* appropriately and intentionally.

Remember the importance of *wait time* and *encouragement*.

References and Resources

Using Visuals
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Boardmaker and Boardmaker Share: https://mayer-johnson.com/

CARD: http://card.ufl.edu/resources/visual-supports

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