


## Fostering Language Development

Accomplished early childhood generalists understand how language develops and realize that early childhood is a particularly critical time for language acquisition. Teachers understand that language development is a complex process that proceeds through distinct stages. They understand, for example, that receptive language develops before expressive language. They stay attuned to the changing body of knowledge about young children's language acquisition and use this knowledge to plan successful learning experiences.

Accomplished early childhood teachers recognize the varying levels of language proficiency among the children in their classroom, and they differentiate teaching to meet each child's needs. They recognize typical and atypical patterns of development, and they know when it is appropriate to consult with families or to refer children to specialists for evaluation. For example, teachers know the difference between minor misarticulations and those speech patterns that interfere with children's fundamental ability to communicate. Teachers create learning experiences and a classroom environment that provide children with a variety of daily opportunities to use language to interact and socialize with others. Because they recognize that frequent opportunities to interact with mature speakers are critically important to children's language development, teachers engage in numerous conversations with children every day.

Accomplished early childhood teachers know that communication is a tool that human beings use to meet their physical, social, and emotional needs. Effective communication skills are integral to children's self-expression, to their development of social relationships, and to their learning. Teachers help children understand that language allows them to organize and express their views and questions about the world, demonstrate their growing expertise, and communicate with other people.

Accomplished early childhood teachers have a clear understanding of how second languages are acquired. They value the home languages of children who are English language learners, and they understand that a child's native language is the foundation for literacy and learning. To the best of their ability, teachers seek ways to promote English language learners' home language development at the same time that they advance children's ability to communicate in English.



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The classrooms of early childhood teachers are inclusive places where varieties of language are accepted and where teachers model a variety of uses and means of oral, visual, and written language. Accomplished teachers understand that language development is influenced by such factors as home environment, including the home language and the frequency and nature of adult-child interactions, and health problems such as hearing challenges. Teachers understand that children from some homes may have heard fewer words and fewer positive affirmations than children from other homes. To help compensate for such circumstances, teachers intentionally expose children to enriched vocabulary and provide positive affirmations throughout the day.

Accomplished early childhood teachers recognize the interrelatedness of language to children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, which in turn may affect a child's self-esteem. Teachers recognize that young children may need support in such areas as building relationships, joining groups, and communicating wants and needs. Early childhood teachers are aware that problems with relationships can affect children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, and they actively work to help children with such concerns.