# Additional Ideas for Development of Oral Language

# Across the Curriculum

1. **Concept Sorts**

Concept sorts provide children with the opportunity to **think** and talk about how they can ***compare and contrast*** items to develop an understanding of concepts and attributes. The teacher initially demonstrates for children the sorting of items within categories.

Children can then be asked to sort according to one of the following two methods:

• Predetermined categories or closed sorts (e.g. "Sort the pictures into two groups: animals and plants.")

• Open categories or open sorts (children are given the items and asked to figure out how they can be sorted)

Open sorts allow children to demonstrate more problem-solving as they look for the common features among the items. Children need to determine the categories they will use for the sorts. With open sorts, children may not sort items the way the teacher expects. **Having children explain their choices in open sorts provides an excellent opportunity to develop oral reasoning skills.** The following apply to both closed and open sorts:

Provide pictures of familiar items related to current topics or books, which children can sort into different categories, such as animals and plants; cars and boats; night and day. Children can do sorts with prepackaged picture decks or with pictures cut from magazines such as:

animals = farm and zoo

foods = nutritious and snacks

clothing, activities = winter and summer

things in a house = furniture and appliances

1. **Language Purposes**

Teachers and students use language in specific ways to participate in learning and assessment tasks. Pick out one purpose per week and focus on developing language for that purpose.

* + Discussing ideas and asking questions
  + Summarizing instructional and disciplinary texts
  + Following and giving instructions
  + Listening to or presenting a mini-lesson
  + Explaining something
  + Giving reasons for a point of view
  + Writing essays to display knowledge on tests
  + Communicating behavioral expectations (“raise your hands”)

1. **Graphic Organizers**

Use graphic organizers to help students organize ideas about words.

* One example is a concept wheel, where the word is put in the middle of a circle, and concepts surround it: examples could be words that answer who, what, when, where, why, or how. Other words could be related to a specific topic: photosynthesis, for example, could be surrounded by words like sunshine, making food, sun, chlorophyll, oxygen, carbon dioxide.
* A Venn diagram could be used to explain what similarities/differences there are among words
* There are many graphic organizers. A web or tree can also be used to show relationships.

1. **Work on Idioms**

Help students understand common idioms that are used in the English language. Student can draw cartoon pictures of idioms as well such as “it's raining cats and dogs.”

• **Actions speak louder than words**

People's intentions can be judged better by what they do than what they say.

**• An arm and a leg**

Very expensive or costly

**• At the drop of a hat**

Without hesitation; immediately

**• Barking up the wrong tree**

Looking in the wrong place. Accusing the wrong person.

• **Bite off more than you can chew**

To take on a that is way too big.

• **Curiosity killed the cat**

Being inquisitive can lead you into an unpleasant situation.

• **Feel a bit under the weather**

Feeling slightly ill.

**• Hit the nail on the head**

Do or say something exactly right.

**• Hit the sack**

To go to bed.

• **Let the cat out of the bag**

To share information that was previously secret.

• **Piece of cake**

A job or task that is easy or simple.

1. **Object Box**

The Object Box or “feely bag” is a simple, ordinary box (or bag), such as a shoe box which is large enough to contain a number of simple familiar household and school objects. Students use oral language to guess what they’re touching. A variation is to use the negative descriptor (this cannot be a \_\_\_ because \_\_\_).

1. **Picture games**

Picture games might also be used as guessing games when the child is fairly comfortable with the language. One student draws a card from a stack of picture cards or magazine clippings and starts to describe it. For example, the pupil holding the picture might say "It is blue." "You wear it". "It keeps you warm," pausing after each sentence to see whether the others can guess the item on the clipping or card.

1. S**tory Telling**

A good way to begin storytelling if you haven’t already used this practice is to start with story books such as fairy tales, folk stories, or fables. Choose a story that you like and are familiar with (e.g., Goldilocks and the Three Bears). Read the story a few times and then practice telling the story in the mirror. You are storytelling, not reading, so you don’t need to retell the story word for word. You may want to use props to help you remember the story and keep the interest of the children. Don’t forget to use voice inflections and repetitive phrases. Repetitive phrases will encourage the children to participate. When you tell the story again, the children will be listening for the phrases so they can join in on the fun.

Once you’ve told the story to the children, read the book to them. After they have become familiar with the story, you can put the book along with any props in the reading corner for children to practice retelling the story.

After you’ve told several stories from familiar books, you will begin to feel more comfortable telling stories that you have made up on your own.

Children love to tell stories. If you model storytelling often, the children in your class will want to be storytellers as well.

Another way to use storytelling is to provide students with a sentence that is the beginning of a story; for example, "The boy who lived next door had a very strange pet." Have students complete the story, and then retell in their own words. Focus on the sequence of events and sentence structure. Remember to **wait patiently** while students put thoughts together, and **praise** students’ efforts to use new words and sentence patterns.