

Communication and Language *INSET*



Teaching and modelling vocabulary in early years

A short INSET template to use with your team which will support professional development to improve practice and outcomes for children.

Aim for the session

- For staff to feel confident in the approach of teaching and modelling vocabulary and consider examples of how to use it in their practice.

Pre-meeting preparation

- Print out copies of Appendix A, or have an option to be able to display the text.
- Have the vocabulary teaching 'practices' and the 'definitions' (Appendix B) separated out in preparation for Exercise 2 where educators will be matching them up.
- Ensure the facilitator is familiar with the practices for teaching and modelling vocabulary.
- Follow this link to the EEF's Early Years Evidence Store to develop a secure knowledge and understanding of this approach <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/evidence-store/communication-and-language?approach=teaching-and-modelling-vocabulary>

What does the evidence say?

- There is strong evidence that teaching and modelling vocabulary to children in the early years can have a positive effect on their oral language skills.
- **Explicit vocabulary** teaching strategies have been shown to be effective, both alone and in combination with **implicit vocabulary** teaching strategies.
- How you implement teaching and modelling vocabulary needs careful consideration. Studies where children receive the same vocabulary support show those whose language skills are developing ahead of age-expectations make accelerated language progress above both those at an earlier stage in development and those experiencing poverty. Those more at risk will need more exposure to vocabulary practices.

Agenda

Overview

- Invite staff to briefly share what they know about teaching vocabulary in early years and why it matters.
- Summarise discussions and share the following:

Research tells us that communication and language skills are crucial in the early years as

they form the foundation for all subsequent learning and development, including literacy, social-emotional development, and cognitive skills. It's a key factor in terms of life success for children and young people.

- Discuss current practice in relation to teaching and modelling vocabulary, strengths and areas for development.

Exercise 1: Unpicking the statutory guidance

Share the following paragraph from the Communication and Language Educational Programme which can be found in the EYFS statutory framework:

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively.

- Identify and highlight the key practices for teaching vocabulary, referred to in this paragraph (back-and-forth interactions, number and quality of conversations, language-rich environment, commenting, echoing back, new vocabulary added).
- What does this look like in our current practice?

Exercise 2: Taking a closer look at the practices

In Appendix B you will find the explicit and implicit practices which have been found to be effective in teaching and modelling vocabulary.

- Share each of the practices from Appendix B with staff. Match the practices with the definitions.
- Spend time discussing each practice. Record examples of how you would use each practice within your own setting. You may want to consider examples of how you would apply the practice in various areas of continuous provision.



This is an exercise you can return to in future meetings, focusing on different areas of provision each time.

Reflections and next steps

- Review key takeaways from the discussions.
- Agree at least two actions for how the strategies can be embedded into practice.
- Decide on a date for a review of this approach and next steps to support development and sustainability.



Inspired to learn more?

The Liverpool City Region and Beyond Stronger Practice Hub

provides advice, shares good practice and offers evidence-based professional development for early years practitioners. You can find more information on the website [here](#). This is where you can also find links to a short recorded CPD session on Communication and Language and other resources.

The Education Endowment Foundation

Learn more about early years communication and language in the **EEF Evidence Store**, where there is a specific section focusing on the approach of teaching and modelling vocabulary. Follow [this link](#) to show how the approach may be implemented including short 'spotlight' films and written examples.

Ofsted

Ofsted's 'Best start in life: a research review for early years' is a three-part subject-based curriculum research review focused on early years education. In part 2 of this report, specific reference is made to the teaching and modelling of vocabulary as a way of effectively developing children's communication and language skills. You can read this document [here](#).

Our Website <https://www.evertonnurseryschoolandfamilycentre.org/strongerpracticehub>

Our e-mail sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk

Telephone 0151 233 1969

Hub Address Liverpool City Region and Beyond Stronger Practice Hub
C/O Everton Nursery School and Family Centre
Spencer Street
Liverpool
L6 2WF



Please scan the QR code and sign-up to receive news from our Hub by email, including upcoming courses and events, links to additional resources, and more.



Appendices

Appendix A

The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively.

Extract taken from the [Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework 2024](#)

Appendix B

Naming and labelling	Providing the spoken word for a given object, activity or concept. Particularly useful for new or less familiar words.
Explaining and showing	The adult provides information to support the child's understanding of the spoken word. This could be through words, visuals, gestures, use of objects or a combination of these.
Repetition	Intentionally reinforcing the use of a specific key word, throughout the day/week/month, both in planned and spontaneous opportunities.
Imitation	The adult repeats a word after a child has used it, using clear speech. The repeated word is said with emphasis.
Recasting	The adult repeats the word or phrase the child used but corrects the articulation of a word.
Extending	The adult imitates a phrase a child has used but adds an additional word or two, that could enhance their vocabulary or vocabulary use.
Commenting	Articulating an observation to highlight a key word.

