

Kindergarten Oral Language Development: Understanding, Asking and Responding to Questions

Developmental aspects	Emerging With direct support... 	Developing With guided support... 	Applying With minimal support... 	Extending 
The Child	With direct support may listen to and use language for play and collaborative learning. May not have enough language for conversation to be meaningful.	With guided support listens to and is beginning to use language for play and collaborative learning. Is beginning to participate in conversations.	With minimal support uses conventional language for play and collaborative learning. Is able to contribute to conversations.	Adjusts language use for play and collaborative learning. Uses language for a range of purposes and actively contributes to conversations.
Knowledge of the Content and Structure of Language				
Understanding, asking and responding to questions	With direct support may understand the difference between a question and a comment or response.	With guided support understands questions; asks simple questions and may respond on topic.	With minimal support asks and answers questions on topic.	Asks thoughtful questions; responds on topic and extends ideas.
The Support/Scaffolding*	The Model: showing, instructing, explaining, directing, making explicit, demonstrating, giving examples	The Coach: structuring, sequencing, focusing, cueing, guiding, organizing, supporting	The Advisor: suggesting, reminding, prompting, monitoring, asking for elaboration	The Mentor: extending, stretching, wondering aloud, exploring, "what if-ing"
*a variety of supports (teachers, peers, environmental, etc.) can be provided at any stage of development				

Scenario: This teacher knows that asking thoughtful questions is an important dimension of learning for children of all ages. He is also aware that at the beginning of kindergarten, most children do not understand the difference between a question and a comment or response. He has decided to focus explicitly on this aspect of oral language development.



Direct Support

For the first part of the year, the teacher provides direct support through *modeling, explaining, and giving examples* of simple questions and responses. He *explicitly* teaches the difference between a question and a comment. For example, each day the "star of the day" brings a favourite item from home to show the rest of the class during sharing time. Other children in the class are invited to ask questions about the item, and the "star" responds. The teacher *directs* the children through this process step-by-step, using words such as, "Now Surjeet is going to ask Sharif a question about his rabbit, and Sharif will answer Surjeet's question."



Guided Support

The teacher *organizes* many experiences in which children practice asking and answering questions in partners, in structured small-group activities, and in whole-class experiences. He offers guided support by *structuring opportunities* for students to ask questions when new materials or experiences are introduced into the classroom. He *supports* them by *giving cues* such as, "Now it's my turn to ask a question, and you can respond," or "What questions do you think of when you see this picture?" He *focuses* their attention on questioning with comments such as, "Right now we are thinking about questions we can ask when Franco's grandpa comes to show us his gardening tools." He also *encourages* the students to ask "fat" questions that go beyond simple facts, and helps them develop criteria for thoughtful questions.



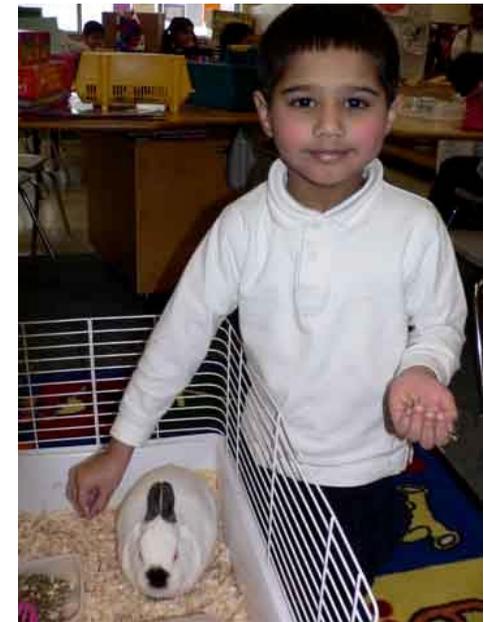
Minimal Support

As the children become more confident in asking and answering questions on topic, the teacher *prompts* them to ask themselves questions and look for possible answers throughout the kindergarten day. For example, he asks Janelle, "What are you wondering about the fish?" when he sees her observing at the aquarium. Most students are learning to ask thoughtful questions, suggest possible answers, and explain their answers with minimal support. The teacher monitors their thinking and *prompts* them by *asking for elaboration* on their ideas.



Without Support

As the year passes, the teacher notices that without support, many students are not only asking more thoughtful questions throughout the day, but are also developing confidence to explore a range of possible answers. He often *wonders aloud* and asks, "What if..." questions to stretch their thinking further.



Inquiry- or problem-based approaches to instruction effectively foster an appreciation of the interconnectedness of learning. Successful learners enjoy inquiring, solving problems, and making connections both independently and with others.
BC Primary Program, p. 25