

Kindergarten Oral Language Development: Speaking in Sentences

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.
Speaking and Listening				
Speaking in sentences	With direct support may use single words or short phrases modeled by others.	With guided support uses words or phrases modeled by others.	With minimal support expresses thoughts and ideas in short sentences.	Expresses thoughts and ideas in some detail using a variety of sentences.
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: During her family visits at the beginning of September, this teacher learns that most of her students have not attended pre-school or other early learning experiences. She notices that many families speak in the cultural dialect of the community, and that some students are not familiar with school vocabulary. Using the oral language continuum as a guide, the teacher observes the class for several weeks and determines that most students need direct or guided support with speaking and listening skills. The teacher consults with the resource teacher and speech language pathologist, and they decide that the *Talking Tables* program would benefit all children in the class. They invite a teaching assistant and an interested parent to join them in leading *Talking Tables* activities. They plan that each child will have a 25-minute *Talking Tables* experience in a small group three times a week, led by one of the team.



Direct Support

The first few *Talking Tables* lessons focus on the theme of starting school. The group leaders provide direct support by *showing* the children how to play the word games, *explaining* what is expected, and giving *explicit instructions* as the children learn new vocabulary, participate in chants and rhymes, and repeat short sentences. A few students are reluctant to speak at first, but gradually begin to follow the examples of their more confident classmates.



Guided Support

As the children become familiar with *Talking Tables* activities, the group leaders *guide* them to make sentences using simple words and phrases about the topic of each lesson. They provide guided support by using the *structured activities* outlined in the *Talking Tables* lesson plans. The teacher notices that most children are becoming more confident about speaking during other classroom activities, and *cues* them to use complete sentences throughout the day.



Minimal Support

The classroom teacher decides to set up some vocabulary and sentence card games that children can play during centre time, following a similar format to the games already learned in *Talking Tables* lessons. She introduces each game by playing a few rounds with the whole class, and *reminding* the students about how to help one another use the games successfully. With this minimal support, the children learn how to *make suggestions* and *prompt one another* as they play the games on their own.



Without Support

Near the end of the first term, the teacher observes each of her students during centre time, taking note of their growth in speaking and listening, and especially the length and complexity of their sentences. She notes that all but two students who needed direct support in September have progressed along the continuum, and that most are speaking in complete sentences without support.



...bridging is necessary for many students as they shift from the casual, conversational style of home communication into the more formal and abstract communication that characterizes school. A focus on oral language is also beneficial for students who come to Kindergarten speaking a language other than Standard English, or for students who have not had the amount of exposure to literature that schools anticipate.