Let’s Talk Website
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Homepage

Supporting Students
COMMUNICATION NEEDS

PROVIDING STRATEGIES FOR
Supporting Student Communication

Receptive Language Strategies

The state department of education where this project is being developed defines receptive language as understanding the meaning of words. Before individuals are able to use language effectively to communicate with one another, they must first understand the language.

More Info

Expressive Language Strategies

The state department of education where the project is being developed defines expressive language as using words and phrases to communicate effectively. An individual’s ability to successfully communicate with others is dependent upon these crucial expressive language skills.

More Info

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Receptive Language Strategies

The state department of education where this project is being developed defines receptive language as understanding the meaning of words. Before individuals are able to use language effectively to communicate with one another, they must first understand the language.

This section will provide various receptive language strategies that teachers can implement within their early childhood classrooms to support their students' receptive language communication skills. It is important to note that many of the strategies are ones that have been implemented and tested by certified Speech-Language Pathologist professionals, who have first-hand experience using the given strategies with students.

Click on each of the strategies below to learn more.

- **Visual Supports**
- **Structured Choices**
- **Modeling Parallel Talk**
- **Sign Language**
- **Physical Model**
- **Familiar Routines**
Visual Supports

Visual supports can be used in the classroom in a variety of different ways including visual pictures, visual daily schedules, visual task charts and “First, Then” visuals. This strategy is beneficial for students because visuals provide a longer processing time than spoken word.

"First, Then" Chart

Visual Task Chart

Visual Daily Schedule
Structured Choices

Structured Choices is defined as the teacher providing the student with two appropriate choices for the child to choose between. Structured choices can be utilized throughout several different aspects of a student’s day.

When a student is asked a question, it means that they need to process the message being communicated to them, in addition to needing to formulate a response. By providing the student with a structured choice, the student no longer needs to decide between two objects instead of needing to independently formulate their own response. This is crucial for these students because when a teacher offers structured choices, it helps to ease some of the anxiety that the student may feel when trying to respond.

EXAMPLE:
During meal time, the teacher can ask the student, “Would you like milk or water?”

Modeling Parallel Talk

While modeling parallel talk, the teacher uses simplified language, shorter sentences and less complex syntax that are consistently redundant. During this form of modeling, the student is not expected to verbally respond, but instead by listening is able to form concrete connections between the linguistic structure of the sentence and the language target.

EXAMPLE:
When the child and the teacher are looking at a picture of a baby, the teacher will use redundancy when they say, “I see a baby. The baby is small. The baby is crying. The baby is hungry.”
Sign Language

Sign language is known as a form of communication that does not require any verbal speech output, but instead uses physical hand gestures in order to portray meaning. When using this strategy within the classroom, the teacher will use a sign accompanied with a verbal word when giving the student a direction.

This strategy is beneficial for students with receptive language delays because by teaching students basic signs, they are able to make connections between gestures and words.

EXAMPLE:
When it is time for the student to clean up, the teacher will utilize the sign “all done” while also offering a verbal direction, “When I count to 2 toys will be all done.” Each time the teacher says the word “all done” it will be accompanied with the sign.

Frequently Used Classroom Signs:
- Help
- Stop
- More
- Bathroom
- Eat
- Drink
- All Done
Physical Model

**Physical Models** can be described as a physical "hand-over-hand" movement performed by a teacher to model a specific behavior that they are asking the child to perform. This strategy is often beneficial when students are struggling to understand a verbal message from an individual and a picture does not suffice.

**EXAMPLE:**
If a teacher is instructing a student to put their toys in the basket and the student is not understanding the message, the teacher can use a hand-over-hand model and place their hand over the student’s to physically show them how to put their toys in the basket.

When teachers are performing this type of modeling, they continue to give a verbal instruction, such as, “put in.” This physical movement accompanied by the verbal instruction is helping to make a concrete connection between the verbal message and the physical action that is needed to be taken to complete the task.

Familiar Routines

**Routines** are an integral part of any classroom that you will step foot into. When students are learning these routines, initially the learner completes a task with the support of a more skilled participant, but with repeated opportunities, the learner internalizes underlying concepts and learns to perform the task independently.

**EXAMPLE:**
The teacher may have the same morning gathering routine where the students listen for a specific song indicating that they need to find their color card and then locate the corresponding colored spot to sit on. Once all of the children have found their prospective places, the students then listen for their color to be called, which will signal them to place their color card in the mini bin.
Expressive Language Strategies

The state department of education where the project is being developed defines expressive language as using words and phrases to communicate effectively. An individual's ability to successfully communicate with others is dependent upon these crucial expressive language skills.

This section will provide various expressive language strategies that teachers can implement within their early childhood classrooms to support their students' expressive language communication skills. It is important to note that many of the strategies are ones that have been implemented and tested by certified Speech-Language Pathologist professionals, who have first-hand experience using the given strategies with students.

Click on each of the strategies below to learn more.

- Daily Routines
- PECS
- Visual Supports
- Modeling Sentence Structures
- Asking Open-Ended Questions
- Sign Language
- Engage in Turn-Taking
Daily Routines with Predicted Responses

Daily Routines typically take place at the same time each day. When a classroom routine occurs frequently throughout the school day or week, students are able to make concrete connections between the daily routine and the expected response that will be asked of them.

EXAMPLE:
This strategy occurs when a teacher creates the routine of singing a "Good Morning" song to their students at group time and goes around the circle to have each of the students introduce themselves. With repeated practice, the students will be able to anticipate that when the teacher sings the phrase, "Who are you?" and points to the student, that they are expected to respond with their name.

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Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) was developed by Lori Frost and Andrew Bondy, as a system that teaches students to request items by giving the teacher a picture of the item in exchange for the tangible object.

This strategy is beneficial for students with expressive language delays because when students are engaging with PECS, they are developing symbolic thought by making concrete connections between how pictures, similar to words, can represent tangible objects.

EXAMPLE:
During breakfast time, the teacher will show the students what is being offered for breakfast and then ask the student what they would like to eat. The student using PECS will then request a banana by giving the teacher the picture of a banana. In exchange for the picture, the teacher may verbally model a sentence structure to the student by saying, "I want a banana, please!" and then give the student the banana.

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Visual Supports

Visual supports also referred to as visual aids, help to mediate and support communication interactions between students and whomever else is involved in the conversation.

While in the classroom, a teacher may use a picture, one form of a visual support, or a sentence stem with a student to help facilitate sentence expansion and the use of word combinations.

Examples of sentence stems that are typically in the form of visual picture cues mimic a common sentence form, such as:
- "I + want + ____.
- "I + like + ____.
- "I + don't + want + ____.
- "I + don't + like + ____.

In this situation the student will place a picture cue in the blank space at the end of the physical sentence stem, the teacher will then verbalize the sentence while point to each word as she reads.

Modeling Sentence Structures

Modeling Sentence Structures occurs in the classroom when a teacher provides the student with the words to use to successfully communicate with their peers when they are unable to formulate their words independently.

Students who possess verbal communication skills in addition to students who are physically able to form words but unable to organize them into sentences, commonly benefit from teacher-modeled sentence structures.

EXAMPLE:
In the situation of a student not asking for a turn, the teacher will provide a sentence structure so that the student can appropriately request a turn with the desired object. One possible sentence structure that would be modeled by the teacher would be “Can I please have a turn when you're finished?” For students who do not possess as complex of a vocabulary, the teacher may simplify the sentence structure to, “My turn, please?”
Asking Open-Ended Questions

Asking open-ended questions keeps students engaged in conversations. Because yes/no questions typically do not offer opportunities for answer elaboration, it is recommended to use “wh” questions as a more productive option to foster expansive expressive language communication.

“Wh” questions include:
- “What?” questions
- “Where?” questions
- “When?” questions
- “Who?” questions

When teaching students appropriate responses to “wh” questions, it is suggested that by modeling these questions and their answers consistently in routines, students will start to make connections and ultimately understand. By providing the answer before expecting the answer from a student, they are able to make concrete relationships between the question and the desired answer or response.

EXAMPLE:
For example, the teacher will start by saying to the student, “Where is the ball? In the box.” The teacher will then repeat this phrase several times, showing the student that the ball is in fact in the box. After repeating the phrase, the teacher will begin to add a pause between “Where is the ball?” and “In the box.” to give the student an opportunity to pick up on the social cues and produce the desired behavior independently.
Sign Language is a tool that can be beneficial for a student's receptive language communication as well as their expressive language communication. By associating a specific word with a gesture, students have the ability to communicate with their actions without the need of verbal output.

EXAMPLE:
Students will be taught simple signs that are frequently used within the classroom. The teacher will begin by modeling the sign for the student. Once the sign has been established, the students will now have the opportunity to use the signs in order to communicate their needs.

Frequently Used Classroom Signs:
- Help
- Stop
- More
- Bathroom
- Eat
- Drink
- All Done
Engage in Turn-Taking

**Turn-taking** often initially begins by taking place between an adult and the child while participating with a highly engaging toy that lends itself to turn-taking. The teacher will model taking a turn before asking the student if they would like a turn. As the student becomes more proficient in their turn-taking skills while engaging with a teacher, they can then begin to utilize these skills when engaging with their peers.

**EXAMPLE:**
When the teacher and the student are cooperatively doing a puzzle, the teacher will say, “My turn” and put one of the pieces in the correct place. The teacher will then hold out a puzzle piece towards the student and provide wait time to allow the student to request a turn. If the student does not request a turn, the teacher will model “My turn” The student will then be able to request a turn through verbal output, gesture towards the object, sign-language gesture, or pointing to themselves, which would all be acknowledged as acceptable expressive communicative responses.
Feedback

This is a website that will be updated frequently as I encounter additional receptive and expressive language strategies. Please follow the link below to the short 10 question survey. This survey will provide me with additional feedback regarding how useful the strategies are as well as the usefulness of this digital resource. Thank you in advance for your support in the development of this collaborative resource.

Feedback Survey