

# Highly Effective Teachers Use Key Language and Literacy Strategies All Day, Every Day, With Every Child!



## Planned Language Approach (PLA)



Early Head Start and Head Start programs have a responsibility to ensure that teaching staff have and use key skills known to support language and literacy of children when they are hired, and that they continue to develop and refine their skills. EHS/HS programs are responsible for:

- ▶ **Hiring** high-quality teachers who interact with children in positive, supportive ways, use appropriate grammar, intentional vocabulary choices to teach children new words, and show sincere interest in what children do and say.
- ▶ Providing **targeted professional development and on-going reflective supervision** that ensures that ALL teaching staff are well-versed in, and consistently use, proven strategies that promote children’s language and literacy as well as other key areas of development.
- ▶ **Pairing training with mentoring** and/or coaching to support teachers to understand, and fully use, essential teaching approaches and strategies, individualized so that each and every child can learn.
- ▶ Creating a conscious culture of continuous learning and improvement documented by **targeted Professional Development** plans which are developed from data (i.e., child progress toward closing the achievement gap) and based on the skills and needs of individual teachers.
- ▶ Implementing a **rigorous evaluation process** that rewards teachers who master and use new skills well and imposes consequences for those who do not improve in the agreed upon ways.



Highly effective teachers are not only able to select and identify a specific strategy that is appropriate for a given situation, they can also explain the reason that strategy is used for that specific child and/or situation.

## Research-based key strategies that work

### OWL: Observe, Wait, Listen

- Respond to the child’s lead with sustained interest and interaction (Hanen Early Language Program, 2011).



### Share the moment!

- Let the child know you are listening with a gesture, leaning toward him/her, using eye-contact (if that is culturally comfortable for the child), etc.
- Comment on CHILD’S interests.
- Ask REAL questions.
  - Show interest and create anticipation. For example, ask “What if?” and “What’s next?”
  - Provide choices, such as “Do you want peanut butter or cheese?”
  - Encourage creative answers. For example, ask “What is that?” “Why did she do that?” (Pepper & Weitzman, 2004).



**FREQUENT use of “teacher talk”** throughout the day and in every setting indoors and out. These conversations include:

- Pretend talk
- Rich vocabulary, frequent use of rare words, and complex sentences
- Extended conversations
- Cognitively challenging conversations
- Conversations with contextualized and decontextualized language
- Opportunity for prolonged practice using oral language (Mooney, 2005).



## Encourage rather than praise!

Rather than just saying “good job,” teachers will:

- Participate in children’s play.
- Encourage children to describe their efforts, ideas, and products.
- Acknowledge children’s work and ideas by making specific comments. Describe (not all at once):
  - Physical movement, control of tools, use of space, self-help-skills in working on a project, control or expression of emotions, vocabulary to describe the product, writing associated with creations, math and science concepts, revealed self-identity, interactions.
  - Make opportunities for children to respond and engage in conversations. conversations (Pierce & Porter, n.d.)



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## Strive for Five!

- Engage in frequent, extended conversations in which there are at least **5 exchanges** for both the teacher and the child.
- Facilitate extended conversations among the children and with other adults.



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**Take advantage of spontaneous opportunities** to talk with each child informally throughout the day (Pierce & Porter, n.d.)

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**Use academic language and decontextualized language** regularly in ways that slightly stretch each child’s level of language (i.e., zone of proximal development).

- Use new and different words with children throughout the day including meal and play times.
- Introduce rich, rare, unfamiliar and “juicy” vocabulary to children.

**Show affection, empathy, and sincere interest and attention** in what each child has to say and respond accordingly.



**Ensure that every child** has frequent individual contact with adults throughout the day.



**Use good listening skills**, appropriate syntax, and a large vocabulary.



**Use children's interests** as a basis for conversation.



**Engage in interactive reading and book sharing** with individual children and in small groups (Justice & Kaderavek, 2002).



**Intentionally point out letters and make letter sounds** that are in words that are interesting to children, such as in their names and in environmental print.



**Model the uses of print** when making and following a shopping list, a recipe, or looking for a favorite television program or movie in a newspaper