

Language Modeling and Conversations: Novel Words

Narrator: Welcome to this short presentation on Language Modeling and Conversations: Novel Words. This presentation will highlight the importance of using new and novel words in your conversations with children. We will also introduce a few strategies for using novel words. These strategies help us build children's vocabularies and help adults learn new words as well.

The House Framework helps us think about all of the important elements needed to support children's preparation and readiness for school. The elements are the foundation, the pillars, and the roof. Language modeling and conversations is an important part of the foundation. This presentation on novel words is one in a series of modules designed to help adults support children's language, cognitive, and social development and lay the groundwork for success in school.

Teacher: Who knows this body part here?

Children: Antenna!

Teacher: What are these body parts?

Children: Antennas!

Teacher: Antennas. Let's put our antennas up.

Narrator: You'll recall that conversations and especially extended conversations help children develop more complex language and thinking skills. Extended conversations are back-and-forth exchanges of several turns between the child and adult. These exchanges become rich and even more valuable when adults add varied vocabulary and sentence forms. This module will focus on adding varied, new, and novel vocabulary.

Children love the new and novel. Get ready to arouse their curiosity and attention. Why focus on vocabulary? Research tells us that vocabulary has an impact on how well children learn to read. Vocabulary is related to children's reading comprehension.

Child: It's called...a satellite.

Narrator: Vocabulary knowledge is at the core of how well children understand ideas and concepts in science, social studies, math, and other areas of knowledge. And teachers and other adults take an active and important role in children's vocabulary development. Let's look at some ways to build children's vocabularies. One method is to embed new vocabulary into your conversations. When you restate and expand on what the child says or does, you can add or insert new words. Let's listen.

Teacher: Look, Dylan, look at the roly-poly.

Dylan: Oh...

Teacher: Isn't that cool? It's got a hard shell on top of it. Or they used to be called potato bugs. Can you say "potato bugs"?

Dylan: Potato bugs.

Teacher: Uh-huh...

Girl: But it's a roly-poly.

Teacher: Uh-huh...Because when you touch it, what does it do?

Girl: It rolls up into a ball.

Narrator: Another way to help build children's vocabularies is to intentionally teach new words. Identify new words to use in lessons or activities. Plan ahead so that you can give the definition and use the word in a sentence.

Girl: It's mixing up into the water.

Teacher: Yeah, it's dissolving in the water!

Boy: I cannot see any more sugar in my water.

Child: Me either!

Child: Me, either!

Girl: I still can.

Teacher: Can you see any more sugar in your water?

Children: No.

Teacher: Then what did it do, Erin?

Erin: It dissolved.

Teacher: It dissolved.

Narrator: The new vocabulary words will mean the most if they relate to concepts and activities that already interest the children. Use books that have new and appealing vocabulary. Be excited when children ask, "What's that mean?" And be prepared to give a definition and help with the meaning of the word.

Teacher: Neighbor, what's a neighbor?

Child: A neighbor.

Teacher: A neighbor is somebody who lives really close to you. The next apartment or the next...?

Child: House.

Teacher: House

Neighbor. Say that word. One, two, three...

All: Neighbor.

Girl: My neighbor, his name is Perry, he lives across the street.

Teacher: Across the street.

Narrator: Other classroom toys and materials can also help build vocabularies. Know the names for all the vehicles in the block area or all the tools in the toolbox or all the shoes in the dress-up area. And think of interesting and vivid words to describe all those materials. Even with the best of plans, it can be difficult to remember to use novel words and to remember a good definition while in the midst of a classroom activity. Use reminders like word lists and notes to help spark your own memory.

In this presentation, we introduced teaching practices to help build young children's vocabularies, provide exposure to new words, teach new words and their meanings, and offer opportunities to use novel words. Thank you for listening.

Check out our tips for teachers and useful resources to fill your teacher tool kit with ideas you can use. Have fun in the world of new, novel, interesting, appealing, and wonderful words.