

Pre-K: Language Modeling

Title: Center Time Talk about Tools

During center time, the teacher engages a few students in an extended conversation about making shapes with pretend tools.

Frequent Conversation

- The teacher talks regularly with the students in the dramatic play area and maintains back-and-forth exchanges by asking additional questions related to the students' responses. For example, "If you were going to cut that into a square, how would you do that?" and "If we have a rectangle, how do we make it into a square?"

Open-Ended Questions

- The teacher asks many open-ended questions. She asks, "What are you building?" to a student that is playing with tools. She then asks him, "Why are you cutting a rectangle?" and "If you were going to cut that into a square, how would you do that?" The student is required to put language together to communicate something more complex than a simple one-word response.

Repetition and Extension

- The teacher acknowledges the student's comments by repeating some of the words they use in their conversation.
- Examples include:
 - Student: I'm going to cut a rectangle
 - Teacher: You're cutting the rectangle?
 - Student: To cut with a saw.
 - Teacher: You would use your saw to cut?
- The teacher consistently focuses on the students' attempts to use language, and then builds directly on the students' contributions by repeating and extending them. For example, when a boy says, "I wanted to shape like a triangle." The teacher affirms his response by repeating and extending, "Oh, you're cutting it; you're cutting the table top in a different shape.... into a different shape, a square."

Self- and Parallel Talk

- The teacher provides language for some of the students' actions when she says, "Look at you sharing; you're sharing those tools." "You're working with that socket wrench, aren't you?" "Regan is using the socket wrench, and Lexton is using the screwdriver."

Teachers model language when they intentionally encourage, respond to, and expand on students' comments or questions. Using follow-up questions, repetitions, and extensions of the students' responses, the teacher is promoting students' language use in a meaningful way.