



Toddler: Language Modeling

Title: Encouraging Language during Free Choice

During individual time, the teacher supports children's use of language through conversations about the materials in the home center.

Supporting Language Use

- The teacher elicits a conversation about the colors of cups and prompts a child to respond by asking follow-up questions. She says, "They're both blue, huh? This one is dark blue, and this one is a lighter shade of blue, you see. What else is blue? My shirt is blue. Do you have anything blue on?"
- The teacher approaches another child and asks her questions, giving the child an opportunity to use language. For example, "Are you slicing? Are you using your knife to slice your mushroom, Nadia?" "What are you going to do to your mushroom? Are you going to cut it?"

Repetition and Extension

- The teacher acknowledges a child's verbal contribution by repeating the word "cut."
- The teacher extends the child's response, "Yes, we use a knife to cut or to slice."

Self- and Parallel Talk

- The teacher narrates a child's actions, saying, "You're handing me the cup, the second cup."

Advanced Language

- The teachers in this classroom consistently use complete sentences when speaking to children. For example, "You have two eating utensils in your hand. What do you have? You have a fork and a knife." "You can slice it. You can use your knife to chop it up. We can dice it."
- The teacher consistently labels objects such as "fork," "knife," "spoon," and "cup."
- The teacher encourages India to answer her question by giving her a specific response to say "nope" (referring to the child's shirt not being blue).

While the range of language used by children in a classroom will vary, teachers can intentionally expose children to language-rich environments and provide them with opportunities to practice using language.