Inclusive Education

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TE TĀHUHU O TE MĀTAURANGA

Support expressive language

A suggestion for implementing the strategy 'Supporting language and communication skills' from the Guide: Behaviour and learning

Includes:

- Understand expressive language
- Expressive language challenges
- Give students extra time
- Ideas to support conversations
- Activities to improve conversation skills
- Useful resources

Understand expressive language

Expressive language is the use of words, sentences, gestures, and writing to convey meaning and messages to others.

Expressive language is important because it enables learners to be able to:

- express their wants and needs, thoughts and ideas
- argue a point of view
- develop their use of language in writing
- engage in successful interactions with others.

Expressive language challenges

Learners with speech, language and communication needs, and behavioural difficulties are often in situations where they are required to use higher level language skills to resolve situations and conflict.

Consider what might be barriers for learners in the following situations:

- retelling their side of the story
- discussing their feelings
- discussing how others may be feeling
- apologising and resolving conflict
- agreeing to consequences and rules
- thinking and understanding what went wrong
- remembering new information about expectations
- having to listen, process, comprehend, and respond in high stress situations.

Give students extra time

Expressive language is the use of words, sentences, gestures, and writing to convey meaning and messages to others.

After an incident, allow time to calm down before discussing what happened and what next.

Be aware that children with well developed expressive language will be more capable of retelling an event than a child with speech, language and communication needs.

Resolving a situation through conversation can be very challenging for a child with speech, language and communication needs.

Ideas to support conversations

Strategies to support learners to engage in conversations.

Negotiation or conflict resolution:

- Support with pictures or drawing.
- Model new and key language.

Re-telling events:

- Talk it through first.
- Storyboard ideas in sequence.
- Provide sentence starters.

Build confidence using language:

- Use a puppet or toy.
- Encourage the toy to carry out the actions.

Increase vocab:

- Represent new vocabulary and concepts using objects and pictures.
- Talk more to learners who talk the least.

Communication breakdown:

- Teach learners strategies to use (for example, gesturing for a speaker to stop or by saying "I don't understand").

Talking about emotions and feelings:

- Teach vocab for emotions, thoughts and feelings.
- Use pictures of different facial expressions to explore language.

Talking to others or sharing in a group:

- Give time so learners can process language and think about what they want to say.

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Strategy: Supporting language and communication skills
Suggestion: Support expressive language
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inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/behaviour-and-learning/support-expressive-language

Activities to improve conversation skills

The social skills toolbox at Do2Learn has a range of activities on the following topics.

- Tone of voice and volume control
- Starting a conversation
- Participating in reciprocal conversation
- Paying attention and listening to others
- Responding to questions
- Waiting your turn to speak
- Staying on topic
- Ending a conversation

Useful resources

Improving communication skills

Information to support increasing communication skills through understanding purpose and using visual aids.

Publisher: Do2Learn

Visit website

Community circle ready to use resources

Examples of visual and written agreements to support community or democratic class meetings.

Publisher: Goalbook

Visit website

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