

Build language-rich environments

A suggestion for implementing the strategy 'Helpful classroom strategies years 9-13' from the Guide: [Speech, Language and Communication](#)

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- Includes:**
- Develop language-rich displays
 - Use visual prompts
 - Build subject-specific vocabulary
 - Use narrative frameworks

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From

Guide: [Speech, Language and Communication](#)

Strategy: [Helpful classroom strategies years 9-13](#)

Suggestion: [Build language-rich environments](#)

Date

05 June 2026

Link

inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/speech-language-and-communication/9-13-build-language-rich-environments

Develop language-rich displays

Create displays that extend children's language growth. Regularly refresh the displays in collaboration with ākonga and whānau.

Ideas for rich language environments:

- Display big ideas with visuals.
- Use zones to make it easy to find key supports. For example, chemistry and biology areas or inquiry zones.
- Use images, photos and displays to prompt language-rich conversations.
- Include photos of shared activities such as field trips to prompt ongoing discussions.
- Create vocabulary and word walls. Keep them uncluttered. Refresh them to reflect current topics.
- Use pouches, resource boxes, photos or QR codes so students can take resources to their desks or personal devices.
- Make spaces that are unique to Aotearoa, for example, spaces reflect te ao Māori and te reo Māori is prominent and integrated across all areas.
- Create displays that give ākonga access to key vocabulary, task steps, success criteria, thinking tools and models.

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Use visual prompts

Tuluiga Aiiloilo-Maka from Wiri Central School talks about how she uses visual prompts to stimulate conversations and develop vocabulary. The visuals inspire writing and are the basis for oral presentations. (Starts at 1:23.)



Video hosted on Vimeo <http://vimeo.com/945992019>

Download the [video](#)
[transcript](#).

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Build subject-specific vocabulary

Use techniques that help students to build their subject-specific vocabulary.

Techniques include:

- Help students to take an active role by creating their own vocabulary lists and visual dictionaries.
- Ask students to identify a personal vocabulary list from a reading.
- Link words with images, graphics, physical movements or signs to support recall.
- Create word walls in collaboration with students.
- Use graphic techniques that include colour and shape to support recall.
- Use games such as Pictionary, Articulate or Charades to reinforce meaning. In Articulate students must guess the word from a description.
- Reinforce new words by using them repeatedly and encouraging students to use them.
- Add current vocabulary to wall displays. Remove old displays. Old displays can be photographed or turned into a reference book.

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Use narrative frameworks

Narrative frameworks, for example, those from te ao Māori, support culturally relevant and language-rich approaches. They can assist understanding and recall by providing reference points or metaphors for complex concepts and systems.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/JScjuv3rgnA>

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Source:

[Kia Takatū ā-Matihiko | Digital Readiness programme](#)
<https://youtu.be/JScjuv3rgnA?si=Ua3hOkIzmvmzqWSE>

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