

# Develop expressive language

A suggestion for implementing the strategy

'Key areas to support' from the Guide: [Speech, Language and Communication](#)

- 
- Includes:**
- Build knowledge of expressive language components
  - Use oral language development steps
  - Enrich language experiences
  - Build oral language confidence and capability
  - Adopt expressive language strategies
  - Support writing

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From

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

Strategy: [Key areas to support](#)

Suggestion: [Develop expressive language](#)

Date

18 June 2026

Link

[inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/speech-language-and-communication/develop-expressive-language](https://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/speech-language-and-communication/develop-expressive-language)

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## Build knowledge of expressive language components

Expressive language is the language that we produce or use to convey meaning and messages to others. It includes words and sentences, as well as signs, symbols, gestures and writing.

Expressive language includes:

- phonological patterns, for example, rules for combining and using phonemes, and spelling conventions
- morphemes, for example, how words are formed, and parts of words such as stems, root words, prefixes, and suffixes
- sentence structure
- vocabulary
- social use of language, for example, appropriate conversation skills and writing for a specific audience.

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## Use oral language development steps



He potuama mō te reo ā-waha  
**Stepping stones in oral language**

Source:

Adapted from Ministry of Education, Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

<https://tewhariki.tahurangi.education.govt.nz/he-poutama-m-te-reo--waha-stepping-stones-in-oral-language/5637169380.p>

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## Enrich language experiences

- ✓ Make the most of languages spoken at home as the foundation for language learning.
- ✓ Comment on what students are doing. This is less pressure for students than asking questions.
- ✓ Model how to say things. For example, if a student wants to join in a game say, “Ben, you could say, ‘Can I join in?’”
- ✓ Recast by adding more detailed language, or more correct language. For example, if the students says “pen blue”, recast to “Yes, the pen is blue.”
- ✓ Extend on what students say. For example, if an ākongā says, “He’s sad. He lost his bag”, kaiako can add “Yes. He’s sad because he lost his bag.”
- ✓ Use specific and descriptive vocabulary in everyday interactions that is matched to the student’s level of language development.
- ✓ Repeat new and less familiar vocabulary and provide opportunities for ākongā to use them appropriately and immediately.
- ✓ Provide simple student-friendly definitions for new vocabulary.
- ✓ Encourage students to monitor and self-correct. For example, “Did he ranned or did he run?”
- ✓ Create class visuals, or help ākongā to create personalised visuals, to help them remember new vocabulary and sentence structure conventions.

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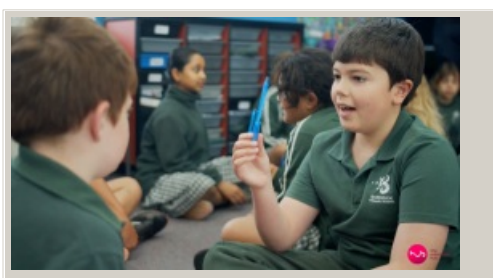
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## Build oral language confidence and capability

Teachers from Burnside Primary share the findings of their multi-year focus on supporting and improving oral language.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/dXy9bKcbBRo>

Closed Captions

Source:

[Education Hub](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXy9bKcbBRo&t=7s>

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## Adopt expressive language strategies

Adopt strategies to help ākonga to learn new words, use correct grammar, construct sentences and express their needs and ideas.

- ✓ Engage in two-way conversations with ākonga.
- ✓ Prompt conversations by commenting, describing and narrating rather than direct questioning.
- ✓ Encourage all forms of communication including NZSL, use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), as well as using gestures, hand signals, objects, pictures and writing.
- ✓ Encourage active participation when telling and reading stories and pūrākau.
- ✓ Offer a variety of verbal games and waiata.
- ✓ Chant and repeat familiar stories, waiata or songs and rhymes.
- ✓ Offer sentence starters or choices and prompts to reduce the complexity of responses required of ākonga.
- ✓ Wait for ākonga to use sentences, make choices or request items so that they can practise expressing themselves.

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## Support writing

Help students to enjoy writing.

If handwriting is a barrier, add options such as oral storytelling, keyboards and voice typing that allow ākonga to develop deeper writing skills, such as generating language, ordering ideas and paragraph structure.

- ✓ Provide inspiration and language through activities, real life experiences, photos, discussions, images and videos.
- ✓ Provide prompts such as story starters and sentence stems.
- ✓ Use planning tools such as storyboards and brainstorming templates.
- ✓ Offer a variety of handwriting tools such as colours, pen types and surfaces.
- ✓ Offer a variety of supports such as alphabet, word or blends charts and phonics cards.
- ✓ Use checklists so students can self-check their writing. For example content, editing, grammar and quality checklists.
- ✓ Offer keyboards, voice typing and multimedia options when appropriate. This is particularly important for students creating more complex writing compositions and people who have specific difficulties producing handwriting.

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