

KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST-GRADE STUDENTS' ORAL LANGUAGE AND EARLY LITERACY SKILLS

by:

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Oral language and early literacy skills are vital building blocks for a child's academic and social success. In kindergarten and first grade, these interdependent abilities form the foundation for reading, writing, and effective communication. During this critical period, nurturing oral language development and literacy skills is essential for helping children become proficient readers and writers. By understanding the connection between these skills, educators and caregivers can create supportive environments that foster learning and growth.

Listening, comprehending, and expressing ideas through spoken words is known as oral language. Children can utilize language effectively in social situations because to its essential elements, which include vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, and pragmatic skills. Oral language development in kindergarten and first grade is essential to literacy because it creates the groundwork for understanding, decoding, and communicating ideas in written language. Children who have a strong oral language foundation are more likely to understand the connections between words, sounds, and meanings, which will help them succeed in reading and writing.

The link between oral language and literacy is evident in several ways. One of the most significant connections is phonemic awareness, which is the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words. This skill is essential for learning phonics, where children connect sounds to letters and blend them to read words. Similarly, vocabulary development is crucial for reading comprehension, as children must understand the meaning of the words they encounter in print. A rich vocabulary,

built through conversations, storytelling, and exposure to new experiences, enables children to grasp the nuances of language and text.

Listening comprehension is another critical aspect of literacy development. Before children can read independently, they need to understand stories and information presented orally. Listening comprehension builds the skills of inference, prediction, and connection-making, which transfer directly to reading comprehension. Expressive language skills, which involve using words and sentences to communicate ideas, further support literacy. Children who can organize and articulate their thoughts verbally are better prepared to express them in writing.

To support the development of oral language and literacy skills, educators and caregivers can implement several effective strategies. Interactive read-aloud are one of the most impactful practices, as they encourage children to engage with stories, ask questions, and explore new vocabulary. Storytelling and encouraging children to share their own narratives foster sequencing, vocabulary growth, and expressive language skills. Additionally, phonological awareness activities, such as rhyming games and syllable clapping, help children develop an understanding of sounds in words.

Vocabulary enrichment can be achieved by introducing new words in meaningful contexts, such as during conversations, while reading books, or through hands-on experiences. Social interactions, including group discussions and role-playing, provide opportunities for children to practice using language in diverse situations. Incorporating drawing and early writing activities also helps children connect oral language with written expression, building their confidence and understanding of literacy concepts.

Parents and teachers play a crucial role in creating language-rich environments that promote oral language and literacy development. By modeling effective communication, reading aloud with enthusiasm, and encouraging curiosity about language, they inspire children to explore and enjoy the world of words. These

interactions not only build foundational skills but also cultivate a love for learning that supports children's academic and personal growth.

In conclusion, oral language and early literacy skills are closely intertwined and essential for the development of reading and writing proficiency. In kindergarten and first grade, nurturing these skills through meaningful interactions, engaging activities, and supportive environments lays a strong foundation for lifelong learning. By prioritizing the connection between listening, speaking, and literacy, educators and caregivers equip children with the tools they need to succeed academically and communicate effectively in all aspects of life.

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