Preschool Language Learning

Throughout the preschool years, young children continue to acquire and use new and more complex language abilities as part of interactions with other children and adults. You can boost children’s language learning by increasing their opportunities to engage in conversations and by both encouraging and supporting their language use during everyday classroom activities.

Learning Guide: Supporting Preschoolers’ Language Learning

- Identify the different classroom activities that match children’s interests and provide them opportunities to communicate with others.
- Provide children lots of opportunities to participate in those interest-based activities.
- During interest-based activities, pay particular attention to what interests a child. Follow the child’s lead, and shift your attention to what captures the child’s attention.
- Pay attention to how a child verbalizes or attempts to communicate with you and others. Notice the language the child uses to express ideas, wishes, needs, and requests. Focus on the situation on how the child describes events and experiences.
- Provide multiple opportunities for children to use newly learned language during everyday classroom activities and routines.
- Provide opportunities for word play by engaging the children in rhyming games and guessing games, doing finger plays, singing songs, doing finger plays, or naming opposites.

For more ideas, consult colleagues or explore online resources, including the idea-page series “Enhancing Children’s Language Development in Preschool Classrooms” from Arizona State University.