

Objective 10 Uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills

Strategies

- Build on the child's language. Rephrase what the child says and then add more.
- Learn as much as you can about the communication styles of the families in the program.
- Plan specific experiences where children will be encouraged to talk and to use their communication skills.
- Model appropriate conversational skills, e.g., taking turns, eye contact, speech volume, and using polite words.
- Provide many opportunities for children to hear and use language. Engage in frequent conversations with each child. Listen carefully to what is being said. Children will talk more when they know teachers listen.
- Provide interesting experiences for children to discuss.
- Try to maintain conversations with children for extended exchanges. Listen carefully to what the child is saying. Respond with related comments and open-ended questions that keep the conversation going. Try to get the child to tell you more about the topic. For preverbal children, model this conversational style using their cues to guide you. For example, when the infant reaches for a rattle and grunts, say, "Do you want your rattle? What are you going to do with your rattle?" Hand the baby the rattle and when he shakes it say, "Oh you are shaking it." When the baby squeals with delight say, "You like shaking your rattle."
- Encourage the use of social words in context, e.g., "please" and "thank you." Provide them as options on a child's communication device.
- Use the same communication system as the child, e.g. point to pictures on her picture board to ask if she wants to go outside.
- Organize kindergarten children into discussion groups of four or more. Begin with topics they want to talk about. Support them as needed to listen to others (including communicating with children using communication devices), take turns, add relevant information, stay on topic, etc. Include less skillful as well as more skilled children in the group. As children become more skillful, increase the number of children in the group.