

SIMPLE ACTIVITIES FOR LANGUAGE INTERACTION



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Vocabulary Development

Children’s vocabulary increases at an amazing rate – about 3000 words a year. However, in vocabulary development we need to look at not only the size of a child’s vocabulary but also the depth and complexity of vocabulary knowledge.

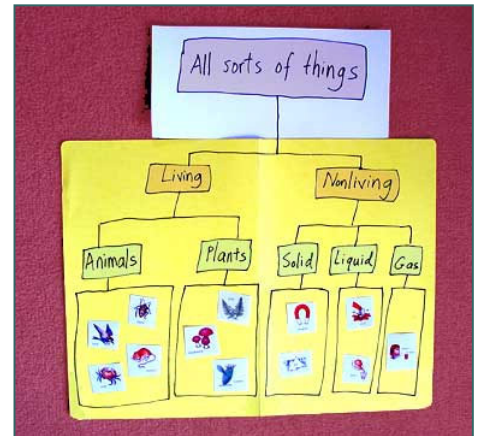
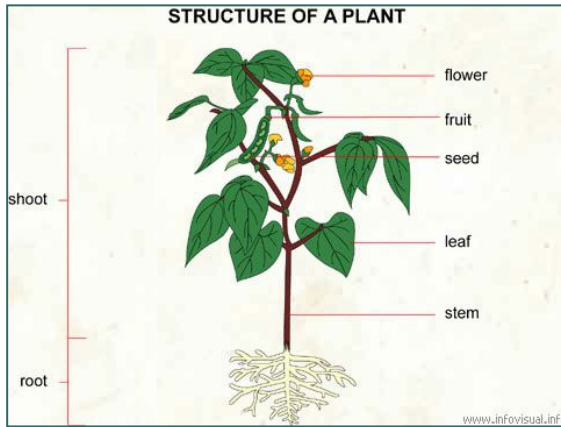
Focus on:

- Saying a new word out loud
- Learning the meaning of the word
- If the word has more than one meaning
- How it links to other words
- Using the word in many contexts

Simple Activities

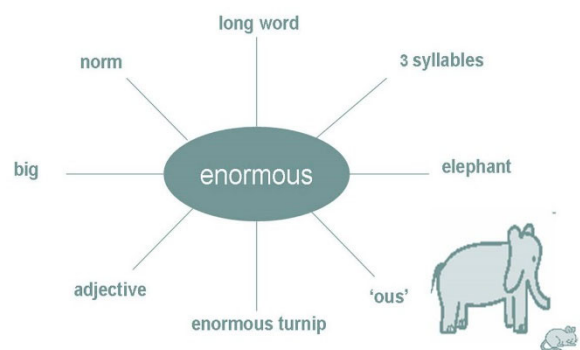
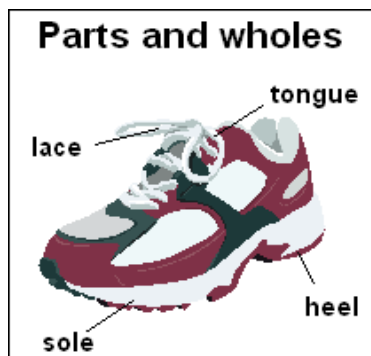
1. **Categories:** Children take it in turns to choose a category card, throw a dice and then think of that number of words in the given category.
2. **Sorting:** Provide children with a variety of pictures and ask them to sort according to different criteria.
3. **Word of the day:** Explicitly teach a new word each day and challenge the children (and yourself) to include the word in each activity of the day.
4. **Parts and wholes:** Using an ‘object of the day’ students brainstorm the names of the individual parts (eg. *shoe – lace, tongue, heel* etc.)
5. **Colourful language:** Teach children to use similes and metaphors in relation to their own personal experience. (eg quiet as a mouse)
6. **Brainstorm:** Children must think of things that can fit a describing word. (eg. narrow – road, passage, bridge, foot, escape, mind, margin)
7. **Mind maps:** Brainstorm words for a topic using classification frameworks. (eg. trees – types, needs, parts, what they do for us etc.)
8. **Build on:** Individual children asked to stand up and name 5 things they see in the room, without hesitation. Once they are confident with this try adding an adjective and then adjectival phrases. Further complexity can be added by describing things which cannot be seen.
9. **Noun wrapping:** Children are asked to wrap a noun by adding an adjective before or an adverbial phrase after the noun. Eg. “*The dog ran.* “ becomes “*The big black dog ran quickly towards me with his teeth bared.* “

10. Tennis Elbow Foot: Children in pairs, one is the server and the other the receiver. Use a timer or regular beat of 2 wooden blocks. Server says a word, (eg. *leaf*.) receiver, in time given must say a word that links with that word, (eg. *branch*) and the game continues – *tree, bough, twig, trunk, wood, fire, heat, summer . . .*



Words to describe emotions

embarrassed 	frustrated 	excited 	afraid 	surprised
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Describing


Describing is an important skill because it helps children talk about their experiences accurately.

Focus on:

- Attributes of an object
- Telling about something


Simple Activities

1. **Object of the Day:** Have an object of the day and discuss the name of all its different parts and what they are used for.
2. **News Talk:** 'SCUMPS' Stands for Shape, Colour, Use, Materials, Parts and Size. A framework to be used for presenting show and tell or guessing the hidden object.
3. **Describing a Partner:** Children sit opposite each other in pairs and take turns to describe each other's appearance in detail. Use a prompt checklist to help (eg. height, eye colour).
4. **Guess Who?:** Use this as a 'departure' game (eg. to go outside). Tell the group 'I am thinking of someone who.....' describe a feature of the person, clothing etc. until the identity is guessed.
5. **What am I?:** One child chooses an object and describes it while the class has to guess what it is. A visual prompt checklist may be useful (eg 'SCRUMPS' cards).
6. **Feely/Object Bag:** One child chooses an object from a bag without the other children seeing. The child has to describe the object for the others to guess.
7. **Measure up!:** Select an object in the classroom and demonstrate how to make comparisons. (eg This book is bigger than the pencil but not as big as me. This book is as big as Sally's lunchbox.)
8. **Same and Different:** In pairs the children are asked to compare items (eg. lunchboxes, shoes, bags) and report on one thing that is the same and one thing that is different.
9. **I Spy:** Describe an object within sight and encourage the children to guess what you are describing.
10. **What could I do with:** Children describe what they could do with (eg. a piece of string, a hammer, a broom, sticky tape, a spade, a ball of wool).




What is it?


What size is it?



What colour is it?



What shape is it?




How are they different?




What am I?


I am usually black or brown. I am worn when it's hot. I am worn on the feet. I don't have laces.



I am long and thin. I have a buckle. I am worn on the waist. I help to keep pants up.








I come in lots of different colours. I have sleeves, buttons and a collar.



Describing Objects

We can talk about

- Its shape 
- Its colour 
- How it feels 
- Where it is found 
- What it is used for 

What could I do with?



Active Listening and Following Instructions

Active listening involves listening to what is being said and working out the important information. The information is then used to provide an appropriate response.

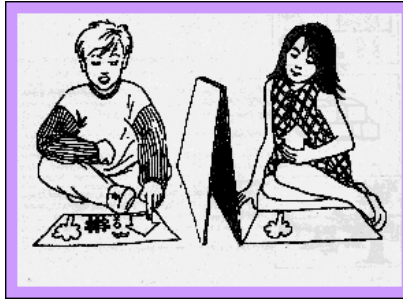
Focus on:

- What to listen for
- Using visual scaffolds
- Using terms such as first, next and last
- Encouraging children to create a picture in their head

Simple Activities

1. **Barrier Games:** In pairs children give each other instructions to complete a task (eg. drawing a picture, placing objects on a mat)
2. **Bug on a Rug:** Children listen to instructions about where to put a bug.
3. **Key Words** Children listen to a story read by the teacher and make a response (eg. clap, put a dot on a page) when they hear a particular word or name.
4. **Maps:** Children follow directions on a simple map to discover a secret.
5. **Absurd:** Children listen to absurd sentences or paragraphs and identify what is wrong.
6. **Listen and draw:** Children must draw a picture by following the teacher's instructions.
7. **Simon says:** Give 2 or 3 instructions at a time.
8. **Bingo games.**
9. **Guessing games:** Give 3 or more clues about an object or person in the room for the children to guess. Extension – give clues about an animal in the zoo or an object connected with the classroom theme.
10. **Obstacle course:** Prepare a sequence of objects and give directions for each child to follow (eg sit on the chair, walk around the table, roll over the mat).

Barrier games



Location

Choose and place items in relation to each other on a picture board. (eg. Put the boy in front of the tent.)

Construction

Describe the steps in building a particular construction.

Treasure map



Bug on a rug

big **little** spider frog bug caterpillar

Put the fly on the big rug.

Put the frog on the little mat and the spider on the big mat.

Recounting and Reporting

Recounting and reporting occur naturally in many everyday situations both at home and at school. Although similar to storytelling, the main purpose of a recount is to talk about past events in the order in which they occurred.

Focus on:






- Using planners to teach the structure and language features of recounting and reporting
- Providing opportunities for oral presentations to be rehearsed
- Using pictures to help with sequencing.

Simple Activities

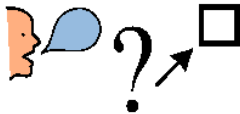
1. **Old photographs/memorabilia:** Children can use photographs, real objects or souvenir items to recall past events.
2. **Recalling a school experience/excursion:** Ask the children to recall a recent school event or excursion. Use photographs and brainstorm the topic to create a timeline of events or make a class book. The children can then use this to retell their ideas to a partner.
3. **News Talk:** This useful resource provides visual scaffolds for activity based sharing and event based news.
4. **Book talk:** Students report to the class about a book they have shared at home.
5. **Talking Lists:** List items which are needed in a given familiar situation. (eg. what would you need to pack for a summer holiday, play equipment in your school yard).
6. **Just in case:** Store a variety of objects in an old suitcase or basket. The objects could be random or relate to a theme. Change the collection regularly. Select an object and ask students to answer basic questions or talk about an experience that included the object.
7. **Get it? Got it? Good!:** In this activity students listen to short 'stories' read by the teacher and identify the main idea.
8. **Prepared reports:** Children present a report on a topic of their own choice. When they are planning the report use planning proformas to help them organize and sequence ideas.
9. **Using newspaper cuttings:** Children can prepare an oral report from a newspaper cutting. The written report can be used in the presentation or children can make up their own using the photograph and headline.


10. **Photographs:** Children in pairs with a picture from a magazine or your own photograph. One child studies the picture for a minute and then passes the picture to his partner before recalling as many of the details as possible.


My news plan. Name _____


 When?	 Who?	 Where?
What happened?		Feelings? 
What happened in the end?		Feelings? 

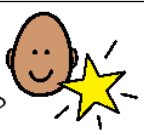
Tell us what you made.

What is it called? 










What does it look like?
or
What does it do? 

What did you use? 

What were the steps to make it? 

What do you like best about it? 

On the weekend...

 basketball	 sport
 helped Dad	 shopping
 friend	 TV / videos
 zoo	 birthday party
	 drawing

Story Telling

Children's ability to 'tell a story' reflects their growing life experiences and developing communication and thinking skills. Oral story telling is an essential pre-cursor to the ability to write stories. Children will be more successful if given the opportunity for frequent practice using story prompts.

Focus on:

- Modelling oral story telling
- Highlighting the structures of stories
- Sharing stories with rich language
- Teaching time concepts and complex sentence structures

Simple Activities

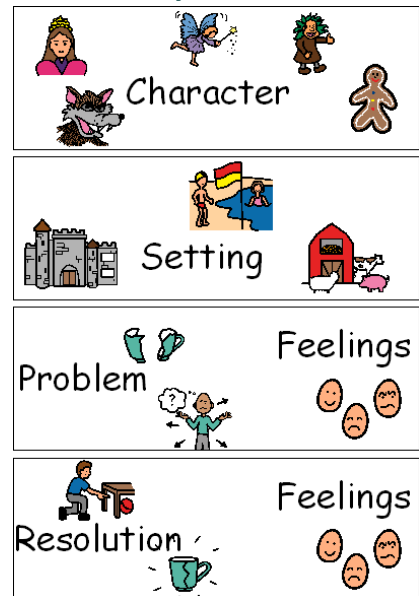
1. **Picture books:** Encourage the children to invent stories to accompany picture books without text, using illustrations as a stimulus for ideas.
2. **Using a series of pictures:** Select some illustrations from stories to use as story starters (some old readers or shabby library books could be cut up and used for this). Instruct the children to put the pictures in a sequence. In turn, the children are asked to say a sentence or paragraph to match each illustration.
3. **Puppets:** Use puppets to dramatise familiar stories.
4. **Theme stories:** Invite the children to choose a theme for the story. Maybe all the characters will be dinosaurs, or perhaps the story involves magic.
5. **Descriptive stories:** Involve the children in making up stories using plenty of descriptive words. 'The lady chased the dog' becomes 'The lady in the polka-dot dress chased the fuzzy yellow dog across the street'. These stories are particularly fun to illustrate.
6. **Retelling a story:** After sharing a story with the children try retelling it with visual prompts (pictures, felt boards, props) or act it out.
7. **Changing a story:** Children can retell a familiar story, but change one significant element (eg. setting, characters, problem, and resolution).
8. **Story cue cards:** Prepare colour coded cards with a variety of story elements – characters, setting, problem, resolution. Children select cards from each element and compose a story that includes all the elements.
9. **Story alive:** Students tell a story from another person or animal's perspective. A mouse, snail or other small manageable animal can be introduced into the classroom as a pet and become the focus for oral story telling.

10. **Ideas box:** Make a collection of unusual objects (eg. pieces of clothing, walking stick etc) or interesting pictures which the children can use as starters for story ideas. For older children, have an ideas box with interesting beginnings or story titles they can choose.
11. **Character interviews:** After several readings of a story, a student assumes a character's role and others in the group ask questions related to the character. Roll a 'who, what, when, where, why, how' cube to help formulate a question.
12. **Happy hats:** Children select a hat and tell "Who might wear it....? When they might wear it....? Where they might wear it....? etc



10. Ideas box.

8. Story cue cards



Asking and Answering Questions

Questions are important for learning and to develop thinking strategies, social problem-solving and planning. Explicit teaching of a broad range of questions and how they are used is important to develop higher level thinking skills which also facilitate reading comprehension and maths problem solving.

Focus on:

- Matching questions to the student's needs and abilities
- Encouraging students to take the role of questioner
- Using questions to help students move from what they know to the next stage of development
- Waiting longer for an answer to a question to provide more processing time

Simple activities

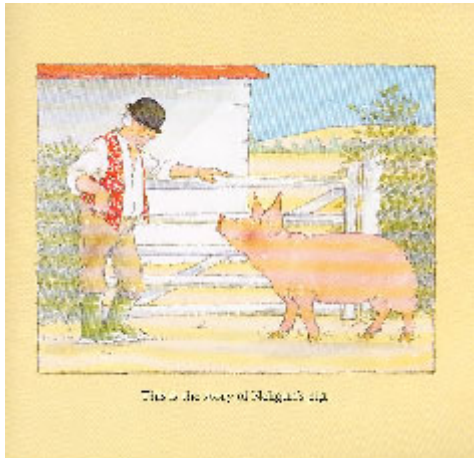
1. **Book based questions:** Take time to plan the questions you will ask while sharing a book. Write the questions on post-it notes and stick them on the relevant page of the book. Plan questions with a range of complexity (use *Levels of Questions by Blank, Rose and Berlin*).
2. **Twenty questions:** One student thinks of an item or famous person and the rest of the group must ask questions to determine what it is. The Question Game is a visually scaffolded version of this activity.
3. **Roll a question:** Use question cubes to help children formulate questions. Write *who, what, where, when, why and how* on each face of the cube. In pairs, children take turns to roll the cube and then formulate a question that starts with the word on the top face of the cube.
4. **Interviews:** In pairs, students ask each other questions to find out about each other. Brainstorm questions which could be asked (see *Roll a question*, above).
Variations:
 - Getting to know you - In pairs students ask each other questions to get to know each other. Discuss the types of questions you might ask to gain interesting information.
 - Oral history – interview a staff person at the school about changes in the school and local community.
 - Character interview – One child pretends to be a character from a familiar book and the other children ask questions about what happens to the character in the book.
5. **Dilemmas:** Students examine pictures and use questions to assist their understanding of the problem and to find a solution. One student takes the role of the person in the picture and answers the questions.

- 6. **Clues:** Children prepare a list of clues (between 3 and 6) for an object, person or place. They read them to a partner and ask, 'Who am I?', 'What am I?' or 'Where am I?' The partner then tries to guess, but can also ask clarifying questions.
- 7. **Ball game:** Sit in a circle and introduce a topic for the game – what we eat for breakfast, things we like to do. Model, "I eat for breakfast. What do you eat (name)?" as you roll the ball to the child you have named. The child then answers, "I eat What do you like (name)?" as he rolls the ball to another child.

INTERVIEWS



2.D Where are they?



2.B What is happening?

1.F What is this?

1. Book based questions.

Discussing and Reasoning

The ability to discuss, argue and reason allows children to think divergently, clarify ideas and revise what they say. Children need to be familiar with describing, reporting and explaining before engaging in argument.

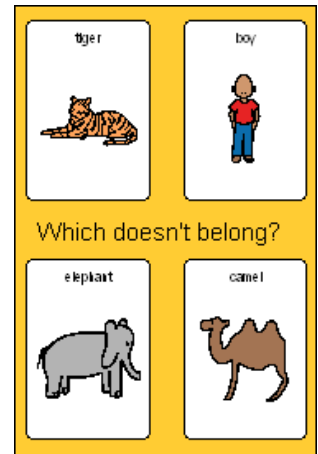
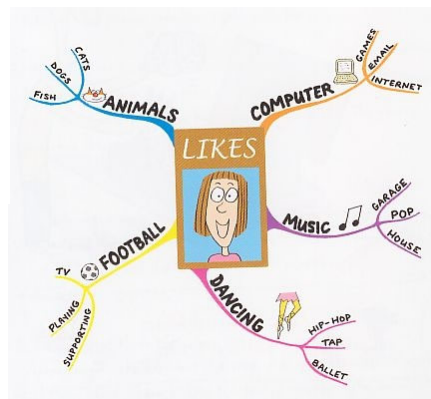
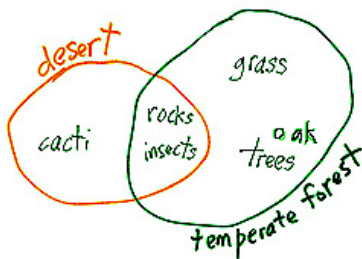
Focus on:

- Developing group skills
- Modelling and teaching the structural features
 1. State the issue
 2. Present different points of view
 3. Recommend
- Starting with real objects or situations before moving to the abstract
- Using themes to develop deep knowledge of a topic
- Using the Levels of Questions (Blank 1978) to guide discussion.

Simple Activities

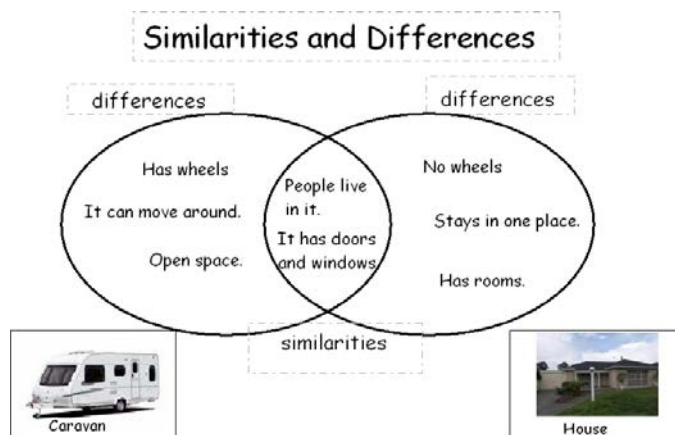
1. **Association:** Each child places a picture card on the pile one at a time and describes how it goes with the previous picture (eg. socks go with shoes because they are worn on the feet).
2. **Which one doesn't belong?** Set out 3 or 4 objects or large pictures. All but one should have something in common (eg. all red, all animals). Discuss the names and the features of each object/picture then decide which one doesn't belong.
3. **What's the use?** Students select an object and discuss its uses. Students can be creative and try to come up with a number of alternative uses for the object. Students can also discuss what they could use if they didn't have the object (eg. if you didn't have an umbrella to keep you dry what else could you use?)
4. **Riddles:** Give three clues describing something and the students have to guess what it is. If a guess is incorrect, explain why (eg. carrot is not fruit). Students can later attempt to make up their own riddles.
5. **Similarities and differences:** Compare two objects or characters and plot the similarities and differences on a Venn diagram (eg 2 circles that overlap). The features, which are common to both will be recorded in the overlapping portion.
6. **Character analysis:** After sharing a book spend time discussing the characters (eg. what they looked like, what they did, what they said). Help the students to explain and justify the character's actions.
7. **Sticky situations:** Students are asked to explain what they would do if they were in a difficult situation. (eg. you arrive at the airport without your ticket, you borrow a friend's computer game and it gets damaged).

8. **Role play arguments:** In pairs or small groups have the children role-play situations (eg: ownership of a pencil, sharing the computer).
9. **Brainstorming:** Students contribute ideas related to a topic or issue. Encourage everyone to take turns to contribute. Allow no criticisms of people or ideas. Record the suggestions and accept all ideas.
10. **Ranking items:** Students are asked to rank items in order of importance. (eg. 6 animals that make the best pets, 5 favourite sports, 5 best party games)



Venn diagram

<http://k-8visual.info/>

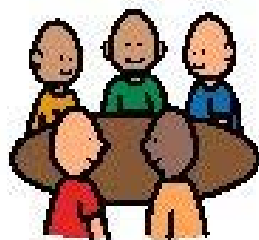


Social Interaction

The rules about social interaction are implicit, flexible and arbitrary. Language interaction and rules for speaking and listening at school will be very different from those at home.

Focus on:

- explicitly teaching rules about social interaction
- providing a range of learning situations for children to learn and practice social skills



Joining In

1. Decide if you want to join in



2. Say "can I play too?"



3. Choose a good time



4. Say it in a friendly way

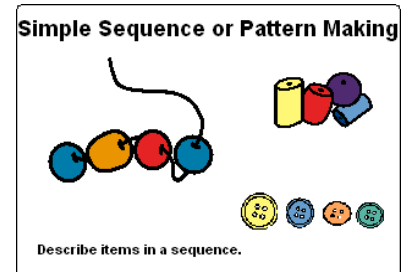


Barrier Games

Barrier games are simple procedures based on giving and receiving instructions. They involve 2 students working together. They either have a small screen between them or sit back to back. One student provides instructions and the other follows the instructions to draw, create, make or match.

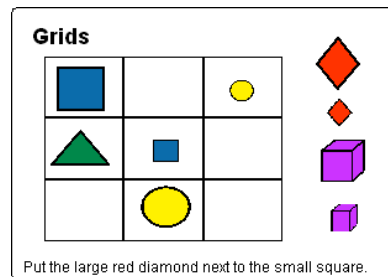
Focus on:

- Working effectively in groups
- Developing listening skills
- Giving explicit information to the listener
- Asking questions to gain more information
- Using a range of descriptive words



Types of Barrier Games

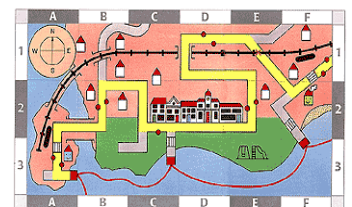
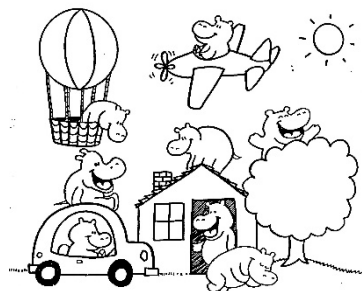
- simple sequence or pattern making
- matching and ordering
- coloring in
- assembly
- construction
- location – placing objects on a picture or map
- mapping – describing and drawing a route between two locations
- positioning objects in grids
- spotting the difference
- decorating dolls and toys



Useful materials to use for barrier games include:

- picture outlines
- maps
- blocks
- beads
- construction materials
- counters
- magazines
- masks
- toys
- wrapping paper

Which Hippo?



SIMPLE ACTIVIES FOR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

RESOURCES

Oral language

54001801	First Steps Oral Language Resource Book	Education Department of Western Australia
61081101	Language Strategies for Older Students	Prouty, V & Fagan, M
17014401	Let's Talk – Activities for oral language	Rowe, G
61075001	Oracy for Preschool Program – A language program for young children	Wallis, A
61075101	Oracy – Too Program	Wallis, A
17018701	Oral Language and Early Literacy in Preschool	Roskos, K Tabors, P & Lenhart, L
61061601	Time for Talking – Speaking and listening activities for lower primary students	Love, E & Reilly, S

Strategies

25011501	I see what you mean – Children at work with visual information	Moline, S
66109801	Mind Maps for Kids – An Introduction, The shortcut to success at school	Buzan, T
18011301	One In Eleven – Practical strategies for teaching adolescents with a language disability	Brent, Mandy Et Al
66110501	The Visual Supports Handbook – Visual support strategies to enhance learning	Hadley-Buxton, J
17015801	Visual Strategies For Improved Communication - Practical supports for school and home	Hodgdon, L
66134901	Graphic Organisers—Years K-3	Null Petersen, Casey

Concepts

61077401	Beginning Concept Kit	Levine, L
61068601	Conjunction Stuff Book 1	Rees, H & Clark, R
61068701	Conjunction Stuff Book 2	Rees, H & Clark, R

Questioning

63316901	Catching on to Comprehension (Series) – Book A	Darkin, L
63313501	Comprehension Made Easy (Series) – stage 1	Burgess, T
61081001	Easy Questions for Young Listeners	Miles, J
17015501	Effective Questioning	McCandlish, S & Webb, R
61078101	From What to Why Developing Children's Thinking Skills	DECS

Listening		
61072501	Follow Bee.....Understanding & following directions	Hill, B
61078201	Going Places – Adventures in listening and thinking	Rasmussen, A & M
61070601	Listening Skills Package	DECS
61076602	Look! Listen! Think (Middle)	Edwards, J
61081401	Listening in Room 14-Pre K-K	McDonald, M; Shaw-King, A

Phonological Awareness		
63172401	A Sound Way – Phonological Awareness – Activities for early literacy	Love, E & Reilly, S
17016001	Developmental Phonological Disorders – A practical guide for families and teachers	Caroline Bowen
63312201	Picture Based Phonological Awareness Resource	Silvereye Educational Publication
63311101	Reading Rhymes - Short vowels	Love, E & Reilly, S
63175701	Sounds Abound	Catts, H & Vartiainen, T
63311201	Sound Blends (21 titles)	Love, E & Reilly, S

Sequencing		
61067801	Sequencing Games & Language Activities	Silvereye Educational Publication
61068501	Sequencing Stuff	Rees, H & Clark, R
61067201	Photo Sequencing Kit	DECS Speech Pathologists

Social Skills		
66100601	Diddly Dots Too!	Payne, H & Ahang,1
19010501	My Social Stories Book	Gray, C & White, A
25010902	Skillstreaming the Elementary School Child	McGinnis, E & Goldstein, A
66119001	Social Skills Teaching for Junior Classes	Van Der Kley, M
66097601	Stop Think Do Social Skills Training	Petersen, L
25011901	Teaching Social Skills in Early Childhood – Lets Talk About It	Howard, A

Story Telling		
61084601	Story Box - A program to develop narrative skills	Wallis, A
61068401	Story Stuff	Rees, H & Clark, R
61077501	Story Talk – An oral story telling kit	Love, E & Reilly, S
63274203	Targeting Text –Lower Primary—Narrative, Poetry, Description, Response	Blake Education