



## #5 Oral Language

### Guiding Principle

It is powerful to harness the established power of children's oral language to literacy learning from the beginning, so that new literacy knowledge and new oral language powers are linked and patterned from the start. Children with the least preparation for literacy learning need such an integrated approach if they are to catch up to their classmates (Clay, 2001, p. 95).

So my discussion proceeds on these assumptions: that literacy learning includes reading and writing, that the aim is to have children reading a variety of texts using a range of flexible strategies (including but not restricted to attacking unknown words phoneme by phoneme), and composing simple messages in writing. As children work towards this end goal, oral language is both a resource and a beneficiary. (Clay, 2001, p. 95)

### A Little Background

The importance of oral language is well documented in research and through controlled observations with children.

Children's "oral language competence forms the basis for their future growth in literacy that they approach with the same inventive skills they have used in learning to talk... It is the school's obligation to extend the opportunities for children to use language for an ever increasing range of purposes – especially to use it to learn" (King, 1985, p. 37).

Because of the interrelationship among reading, writing, and oral language, you will want to revisit *Promising Literacy for Every Child: Reading Recovery and a Comprehensive Literacy System* (RRCNA, 2014), referred throughout this document as the Guide. This Oral Language Toolkit relates to Guide Component 2 (Effective Classroom Instruction, pages 33–37), Guide Component 3 (Literacy Assessment, pages 38–41), and Guide Component 4 (Effective Interventions pages 42–46).

### Review "An Introduction to RRCNA Professional Learning Toolkits"

Please refer to the [brief introduction to all toolkits](#) on the RRCNA website for background information and ways to use the resources in each toolkit.

### How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit provides a wide range of resources available through RRCNA. The leader(s) of your professional learning community will want to choose resources that meet the needs of teachers and children in your context. You will, of course, want to include other resources available to you to enrich the experience.

#### Professional Learning Toolkits

are an extension of *Promising Literacy for Every Child: Reading Recovery and a Comprehensive Literacy System* (RRCNA, 2014), referred throughout this document as the Guide. Be sure to read ["An Introduction to RRCNA Professional Learning Toolkits"](#) prior to using this specific toolkit.

#### Intended Participants

This toolkit is appropriate for classroom teachers, coaches, interventionists, ESL teachers, literacy specialists, and administrators.

## ► Initial Sessions

### Session One: Self-Assessment of Learning Community

1. Read and Discuss. Prior to the first session, give participants access to Marie Clay's 2004 article, "Talking, Reading, and Writing" in *The Journal of Reading Recovery*. This article should stimulate conversations about the importance of oral language and ways to include oral language opportunities in daily interactions with children.
2. Self-Assessment. After discussing Clay's article, evaluate current oral language teaching and learning practices in the school or grade level. Set some goals for your learning related to this toolkit.

### Sessions Two and Three: Assessment of Students

1. Student Assessment. Use the RRCNA Professional Learning Module "Assessing Oral Language with the Record of Oral Language." This will take 2 sessions with opportunities to practice the administration with students between sessions. The module shows a way to observe a child's control of the structures of the English language and to monitor change over time. Teachers will have a way to assess the oral language behaviors of individual children when needed. This module can be purchased from RRCNA. Participants will also need the book *Record of Oral Language* (2007, 2015), by Marie Clay et al., available from Heinemann.
2. Participants may choose a 'focus' child with low scores to follow throughout this study of oral language. Read and discuss chapter 2 in the *Record of Oral Language* to explore guidelines for teacher actions following the administration and scoring of the assessment task. Chapter 3 offers information about speakers of other dialects or other languages.

## ► Subsequent Sessions

1. You may want to view the RRCNA webcast "Oral Language Development" as a group. This webcast is available through RRCNA for \$45 for members and \$75 for non-members. This provides an overview to stimulate conversations and future planning for learning.
2. Preview the list of RRCNA resources and decide which ones will be useful for your learning community.
3. You may wish to use a jigsaw arrangement for resources you select. Instead of a session planned for the whole group, individuals or small groups may work together on selected activities with various resources and then bring information back to share with the larger group. For example, some participants may want to target resources that address language needs of English language learners and share with the group. Or individuals or small groups could divide journal articles to read and share with the group.

## ► Application of Learning

A crucial aspect of community learning is for participants to apply what they learn in their own settings and to share with others in the professional learning community. Think about ways to measure changes in your learning as well as changes in student learning. For example, if participants use the Record of Oral Language module, they will want to share their experiences and their findings after assessing some children.

## ► Final Session(s)

Participants should take time to evaluate their progress based on the goals set in Session One. Set goals for future learning and applications.

## RRCNA RESOURCES FOR USE IN PLANNING SESSIONS

### Interactive Leader-Directed Professional Development Module (20% discount for RRCNA members)

#### **Assessing Oral Language with the Record of Oral Language DVD** – 2 sessions with practice between \$140

This module focuses on a technique for observing a child's control of the structures of the English language and for monitoring changes in control over time. The module includes video examples of concepts described in the *Record of Oral Language* book by Marie Clay and colleagues. Videos show the full administration of the Record of Oral Language with two students and additional examples for deeper learning. (Participants will need the book *Record of Oral Language* (2007) by Marie Clay et al., available from Heinemann.)

### On-Demand Webcasts (\$45 for members; \$75 for non-members)

Most webcasts are sessions from past National Reading Recovery and Early Literacy Conferences sponsored by RRCNA.

#### **Oral Language Development: Theory Into Practice**

Adria Klein and others

Explore best practices for oral language development in the classroom that promotes equity and access to instruction for all students, including English learners. Examine open website from the New Teacher Center including videos of classroom practice, participation structures that support oral language, and new language readers.

#### **Structure is an Important Source of Information**

Sue Duncan

Although this webcast focuses on Reading Recovery children, it is helpful in demonstrating the importance of structure or syntax as a source of information as readers read texts. It assists children to solve words in reading and it gives them a feed-forward and feedback mechanism as they read. The webcast explores ways of supporting the learning of a child who finds structure difficult.

#### **Understanding Text Complexity**

Janet Bufalino

Designed for Reading Recovery teachers as well as classroom teachers, this webcast focuses on how teachers can analyze the complexities of meaning, structure, and visual information in a text to help choose the 'right book' for one student or a group of students.

#### **English Language Learners: The Importance of Language to True Literacy**

Kathy Escamilla, Jill Kerper Mora, and Susan O'Leary

The target audience includes K-3 classroom teachers, Reading Recovery teachers, and other professionals. Explore effective ways to promote literacy learning with English language learners by examining positive research/evaluation outcomes.

### Free Webcast

#### **Closing the Achievement Gap for English Language Learners**

Yvonne and David Freeman

The presenters first describe three types of English learners and then explain four research-based keys that lead to academic success for limited formal schooling and long-term English learners. For each key, they share strategies, culturally relevant materials, and teacher stories.

### Free Audio File

#### **Develop Oral Language with Nonfiction**

Heather Jung and Sally Chadbourn (2013)

Develop students' oral language when you cultivate a classroom community of children who learn how to determine important information about nonfiction topics and pose questions during conversations, reading, and writing.

## Audio Files for Purchase

Audio files are sessions from past National Reading Recovery and Early Literacy Conferences sponsored by RRCNA.

### **What “Developing Literate Minds” Means in the Classroom**

Peter Johnston (2016)

Explore the relationship between classroom practices and students’ developing literate minds, including their control of attention, self-regulation, social imagination as well as more conventional aspects of literate development such as comprehension. Developing literate minds requires understanding the relationships among classroom talk, the individual and the collaborative mind, and the nature of literacy.

### **Oral Mentor Text (K-2)**

Connie Dierking and Sherra Jones (2016)

An oral mentor text provides a structure for literacy teaching, including language structures, vocabulary, and writing craft required by the Common Core State Standards. This resource becomes a valuable teaching tool.

### **Purposeful Talk and Inquiry to Deepen Comprehension in Content Areas (3-6).**

Sherry Kinzel (2016)

Learn strategies to support purposeful talk and inquiry of content area students which lead to purposeful writing that depends understandings of content area concepts.

### **What Works for English Language Learners in Reading Intervention (K-2)**

Dion Peachey and Caryn Beach (2015)

Learn how to collaborate effectively to support ELLs literacy learning through conversation, reading, and writing including videos of lessons and collaborative conversations.

### **What Works with English Language Learners (K-6)**

Jennifer Reardon (2015)

Learn about the What Works Clearinghouse new ELL Practice Guide for classroom teachers. Explore research-based recommendations back by experts and evidence to help your ELLs grow in language, literacy, and content areas.

### **Comprehending Through Collaborative Conversation (K-6)**

Sherry Kinzel (2015)

Common Core State Standards expect students in Grades K-12 to engage in ‘collaborative conversations.’ Explore the rationale and practice of helping learners use conversation as a tool for comprehension.

### **Building Language Opportunities for Emergent Writers (K-2)**

Annalese Lynch and Carol Ann Prokopchak (2015)

Beginning language learners need tools to be writers. Small changes open opportunities for children to use oral language structures and vocabulary throughout the day, building language for writing in meaningful ways.

### **Develop Oral Language with Nonfiction (K-6)**

Heather Jung and Sally Chadbourn (2014)

Develop students’ oral language when you cultivate a classroom community of children who learn how to determine important information about nonfiction topics and pose questions during conversations, reading, and writing.

### **Why Teach Listening? (K-6)**

Shari Daniels (2014)

Go beyond telling them to pay attention. Understand the listening process, model, and teaching metacognitive listening skills. Examine listening barriers and nonverbal cues.

### **Powerful Mentor Texts for Scientific Writing (K-2)**

Pamela Bauser (2014)

Empower young writers to meet Common Core Writing Standards using mentor texts immersing students in science literacy. Connect reading to oral language and writing through purposeful conversations and inquiry.

### **English Language Learner Challenges Require Responsive Teaching! (K-6)**

Jennifer Reardon (2013)

Compare the Observation Surveys and Records of Oral Language of an average-progress ELL and a limited-progress ELL. Explore teaching moves and growth in oral language and literacy.

### **Teaching for Comprehension during Guided Reading (K-6)**

Jan Richardson (2013)

Small group instruction offers opportunities for students to accelerate while they read and interact with an instructional level text. Learn techniques for improving engagement and supporting meaningful conversations before, during, and after reading.

### **Readers Workshop with Limited Language Learners (3-6)**

Mary Clare Moller and others (2013)

Learn how to develop, implement, and integrate meaningful minilessons, small group lessons, and individual conferences that support students with limited language within the structure of readers workshop.

### **Big Ideas to Support ELLs in Reading (K-6)**

Vicki Burlingame and Jean Lampe (2013)

Innovate ideas to provide support to ELLs within guided reading. Learn the importance of big ideas; thinking deep, not wide; and slowing down to speed up to assist in comprehension.

### **Joining the Literacy Club at Ages 3 and 4**

Rita Perre-Davis and Emily Davis (2013)

Find out how immersing preschool English language learners in talking, reading, and writing increases literacy learning. Examine student work and documentation of progress.

### **Listening to Yourself Reading (RR, K-2)**

Joe Stouffer (2013)

Consider how auditory input and the sound of the reader's voice as he reads aloud is a multifaceted asset to the development of a robust literacy processing system.

### **Deepening Comprehension Through Dialogue (K-6)**

Cissy Clock and Christy Moore (2013)

Deepen students' comprehension, create a sense of community, and develop personal character through conversations around authentic literature. Discover the power of dialogue and its benefits in the classroom.

### **Classroom Conversations with Purpose (K-6)**

Angela Schoenbeck and Lesley Miller (2013)

Explore literacy and language data to develop explicit instruction that increases the complexity of student talk. Data and instructional techniques with diverse learners engaging in authentic experiences are shared.

## **Journal Articles (click titles to open/download)**

Ashdown, J., & Simic, O. (2000). [Is early literacy intervention effective for English language learners: Evidence from Reading Recovery](#). *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 5(1), 27-42.

Cazden, C. B. (2005). [The value of conversations for language development and reading comprehension](#). *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 9(1), 1-6.

Clay, M. M. (Spring 2004). [Talking, reading, and writing](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 3(2), 1-15.

Compton-Lilly, C. (2005). [Nuances of error: Considerations relevant to African American Vernacular English and Learning to Read](#). *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 10(1), 43-58.

Dixon, M. (2014). [Put your ear a little closer: Tuning in to a child's language to aid literacy acquisition](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 13(2), 16-24.

Jones, N. K. (2011). [Language choices: Responding to language diversity and deviation](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery* 10(2), 7-25.

- Kim, Y. (2010). *Scaffolding through questions in upper elementary ELL learning*. *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 15(1&2), 109-137.
- McVee, M., and Pearson, P. D. (2003). *Talking the talk: A close examination of teacher-student discourse around written artifacts*. *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 8(1), 47-71.
- Morrow, L. M. (2005). *Language and literacy in preschools: Current issues and concerns*. *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 9(1), 9-19.
- Pu, Ch. (200). *Rethinking literacy instruction to non-LEP/ESL-labeled language minority students*. *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 15(1 and 2), 137-155.
- Rabin, B. (2014). *TALK to think, learn, and teach*. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 13(2), 5-15.
- Rodriguez, C., & Torres-Elias, A. (2009). *Refining the craft of teaching English language learners*. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 9(1), 53-61.

## Books

- Rodriguez, C. (2009). *Achieving literacy success with English language learners: Insights, assessment, instruction*. Worthington, OH: Reading Recovery Council of North America.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Books

- Clay, M. M. (1998; 2014). *By different paths to common outcomes: Literacy learning and teaching*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. (see chapters on language)
- Clay, M. M. (2007; 2015). *Biks and gutches: Learning to inflect English*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Clay, M. M. (2007; 2015). *Record of Oral Language: Observing changes in the acquisition of language structures*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Clay, M. M. (2001). *Change over time in children's literacy development*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Dorn, L. J., & Saffos, C. (2005). *Teaching for deep comprehension: A reading workshop approach*. York, ME: Stenhouse. (See Chapter 5, "Understanding language for comprehending texts" on pages 51-64.)
- Johnston, P. H. (2004). *Choice words: How our language affects children's learning*. Portland, Me: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Johnston, P. H. (2012). *Opening minds: Using language to change lives*. Portland, Me: Stenhouse Publishers.
- McGee, L. M., & Richgels, D. J. (2014). *Designing early literacy programs, 2nd Edition*. New York, NY: Guilford Press. (See Chapter 2, "Accelerating children's language and literacy learning in exemplary prevention classrooms" on pages 14-37.)

### Articles

- Giroir, S., Grimaldo, L. R., Vaughn, S., & Roberts, G. (2015). Interactive read-alouds for English learners in the elementary grades. *The Reading Teacher*, 68(8), 639-648.
- Lysaker, J., & Hopper, E. (2015). A kindergartner's emergent strategy use during wordless picture book reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 68(8), 649-657.
- Snell, E. K., Hindman, A. H., & Wasik, B. A. (2015). How can book reading close the word gap? Five key practices from research. *The Reading Teacher*, 68(7), 560-571.
- Wasik, B. A., & Iannone-Campbell, C. (2012-2013). Developing vocabulary through purposeful, strategic conversations. *The Reading Teacher*, 66(4), 321-332.



Reading Recovery Council  
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