

Section II

Oral Language

Rationale

The development of literacy begins through the use of spoken language. Oral language provides a means to observe children as they learn to construct conceptual meanings through words. Children who are developing language appropriately will demonstrate an increasingly complex use of words in explanations. Comprehension as shown through the production of structural relationship of words in spoken language will provide indicators of the child's knowledge about meaning and communicating. Given the close relationship between reading and language, we could expect that children with well-developed oral language skills and appropriate instruction will move into printed text easily.

While oral language has many functions, most of which occur in a social context, the purpose of these assessments are limited in scope. This oral language assessment relates to children's ability to effectively use semantic (meaning) and syntactic (function and grammar) cueing systems while communicating to support the learning of reading and writing skills.

In order to establish instructional priorities for each child in the emergence of literacy development the Oral Language assessment is used. These tools help teachers understand what individual children know specifically about speaking and listening to construct and communicate ideas.

Definition

Oracy is fluency in speaking and listening. In this document we use the term Oral Language which includes the expressive(speaking) and receptive(listening) aspects of language.

The chart on the following page provides an overview of Oral Language assessment in the MLPP. Each tool is identified, along with the purpose for the assessment, and the appropriate grade level for use of the assessment. This chart is meant as a guide for the teacher's choice of assessment tools. The selection of the appropriate assessment is best determined through the teacher's ongoing observation of students within the classroom environment.

| Assessment Options at Second Grade | | |
|---|---|-------------------------|
| Tools | What is Assessed | Appropriate Use |
| Oral Language Sample Free Recall or Picture Prompt | Ability to demonstrate syntax and complexity of sentences, vocabulary, identification and elaboration of ideas. | Preschool – first grade |
| Oral Language Rubric | Ability to use expressive language which communicates ideas, organization and structure, vocabulary, style and voice, conventions, and non-verbal communication elements in ways that connect to knowledge about text usage in reading and writing. | Grades 1–3 |
| Listening Checklist | Ability to flexibly use a variety of listening skills in gaining meaning from an expressive language presentation of ideas in either group experiences or individual conversations. | Grades 1–3 |

Assessment Guidelines for Preschool–First Grade Oral Language Assessment

Teachers will listen to each child in the classroom during informal interactions to determine which children are using oral language flexibly and readily to understand and express conceptual meanings with others in the classroom that corresponds with level 3 on the rubric provided (page 29).

Children *not* exhibiting strong oral language skills [“3”s on the rubric (page 29) in syntax, vocabulary, and elaboration] should be assessed individually. The assessment area should be quiet and free from major distraction. Generally, a small table where the teacher can sit beside the child is sufficient.

Procedure

1. Show all the picture cards to the child and allow her or him to select one. Do not discuss the pictures during this preview.
2. Place the chosen picture on the table in front of the child and say, **Tell me a story about the picture.** Transcribe the child’s entire response. You may prompt the child by saying, **Tell me more,** or **What else can you say?** Do not ask leading questions.

3. Score the completed transcription using the rubric. For the syntax rubric, you may use the child's typical speech to assess use of regular and irregular verbs and regular and irregular plurals, if necessary. Write the scores on the paper with the script. Add the child's name and date of assessment to the scored script, and place it in the child's portfolio. Enter each of the three scores on the student record sheet.
4. Repeat the assessment during kindergarten and first grade as appropriate until the child obtains a score of three, indicating typical performance, on each element of the rubric.

Analysis

Analyze the child's performance. Ask yourself the following questions as you consider the response the child has given.

Syntax

"Does the child use this language at home or in social situations?"

"Is the child aware that school language and home language differ?" (Look for play situations where the child is "playing" school.)

Vocabulary

"Is the child using language that is more familiar and affective?"

"Is the child using language that is comparative and formal?"

"Is the child able to separate description based on form and function?"

Elaboration

"Does the child use analogies and/or metaphors to connect ideas and experiences?"

"Does the child string events or ideas, rather than using categories of ideas and events?"

Note: Consider if low scores are reflective of a child's typical oral language, or question whether poor performance, at least in part, is due to lack of experience with the content of the pictures?

Additional Oral Language Sample

If an additional language sample is indicated when a student's performance lacks consistency with observed classroom behaviors, consider taping an oral language sample without a specific picture prompt. Choose a topic the child has expressed interest in, and provide an open-ended prompt; i.e., "Sintenesha, tell me about your birthday party." Using the rubric supplied, score the child's recorded response.

PreK-First Grade

Oral Language Sample Scoring Rubric

Syntax

- 4 - Uses appropriate syntax of the English language with complex sentences. Regular and irregular plurals and past tenses are used correctly.
- 3 - Uses appropriate syntax of the English language. Regular plurals and past tenses are used correctly. Irregular forms are not.
- 2 - Uses correct English syntax for very simple sentences and inappropriate use of plurals and past tenses.
- 1 - Uses very little correct syntax of the English language, and inappropriate use of plurals and past tenses. May use only present tense, even when prompted. No complete sentences used.

Vocabulary

- 4 - Uses interesting vocabulary some of the time, including use of descriptive adverbs and/or adjectives.
- 3 - Uses basic language consisting mostly of nouns and verbs with some use of adjectives.
- 2 - Uses very simple, basic language consisting mostly of nouns and verbs with little use of adjectives.
- 1 - Unable to name some of the elements of the picture. Lack of vocabulary impedes storytelling.

Elaboration

- 4 - Relates the elements in the picture while using extensive prior knowledge and past experiences. The narrative is substantive and well organized.
- 3 - Relates the elements in the picture incorporating past experiences and prior knowledge.
- 2 - Uses a simple sentence or two while relating the elements in the picture to each other.
- 1 - Gives labels for elements in the picture; i.e., boy, house, etc.

**Oral Language Sample
Preschool–First Grade**

Individual Score Sheet

Student _____ Grade _____ Date _____

Enter the number of points given to the student after each task.

| No. | Content | Score | Comments |
|-----|-------------|-------|----------|
| 1. | Syntax | | |
| 2. | Vocabulary | | |
| 3. | Elaboration | | |

Picture Content Suggestions

Check types of pictures used with child.

- CS Child selected
TS Teacher selected

- | CS | TS | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | School related (children playing with blocks) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Home related (children getting into car or on bus, a few adults and children in a family) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sports related (soccer or basketball game) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Pet related (child feeding dog) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Chore related (people picking apples) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Urban street scene with people of different ages |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other—describe _____ |

Assessment Guidelines for Expressive Language (Speaking)

First –Third Grade

Procedure

1. During the normal classroom routine observe individual children using expressive language (speaking) in both large groups and small groups.
2. Identify four or five students to observe closely for a period of time using the Expressive Language Rubric on page 29. Continue until you have assessed each child in your classroom
3. After completing the information at the top of the rubric;
 - record the individual focus child’s name,
 - record the names of group participants,
 - describe the context of the observation (i.e. small group discussion of informational text or compare/contrast of two versions of a fairy tale, large group science reports), and
 - record on the rubric the qualities the student demonstrates in the oral interaction.
4. Utilize the expressive language rubric throughout the year in a variety of contexts and with several groupings of students.
5. Record the student’s level(s) of performance on the student’s profile.
6. Analyze the marked rubric(s), place in the student’s portfolio and use as a guide when making instructional decisions.

Analysis

Analysis of the student’s expressive language (speaking) performance will provide further information. The following questions about the student’s performance will help in designing instruction:

- Is this experience typical of this child’s speaking?
- How is this experience similar to other expressive language interactions?
- Does the context and participants allow this student to demonstrate her/his strengths in oral language?
- What further experiences are needed to gain a better understanding of this child’s speaking abilities?

Student's Name _____ Context of Observation _____

Date _____ Group Participants _____

FIRST-THIRD GRADES EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE (SPEAKING) RUBRIC

| | 4 Experienced | 3 Capable | 2 Developing | 1 Beginning |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Ideas/Content | Stays focused on topic, expresses main ideas clearly and elaborates with supporting details. | Stays on topic expresses main ideas clearly and elaborates with some supporting details. | Varies topic somewhat and presents ideas with few supporting details. | Lacks focus on topic and presents ideas without supporting details. |
| Organization/Structure | Sequences ideas and words in a logical manner with effective transitional words and connecting ideas. | Sequences most ideas and words in a logical manner with some transitional words and connecting ideas. | Presents ideas with some attention to sequence, transitional words, and connecting ideas. | Presents ideas with little attention to sequence, transitional words, or connecting ideas. |
| Vocabulary | Confidently uses colorful and figurative language to describe events or ideas including exhibits and concepts beyond personal experiences. | Uses some colorful language to describe events or ideas and may include objects and concepts beyond personal experiences. | Uses minimal description to present events and ideas which are limited to own personal experiences. | Presents ideas with little or no description. |
| Style/Voice | Presents ideas with style and creativity using appropriate elements of voice (diction, inflection, volume, pace, etc.). | Presents ideas with some style and creativity using appropriate elements of voice (diction, inflection, volume, pace, etc.). | Presents ideas with minimal style and/or creativity and use of elements of voice (diction, inflection, volume, pace, etc.). | Presents ideas in a flat or monotone voice. |
| Conventions | Consistently uses appropriate syntax of the English language with complex sentences. Regular and irregular plurals and past tenses are used correctly. | Uses appropriate syntax of the English language Regular plurals and past tenses are used correctly although not irregular forms. | Uses correct English syntax for very simple sentences. Inappropriate use of plurals and past tenses. | Uses mostly incorrect English syntax. Inappropriate use of plurals and past tenses. May use only present tense, even when prompted. Few complete sentences used. |
| Non-Verbal | Displays feelings and emotions congruent with ideas through gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, posture, etc. | Displays some feelings and emotions congruent with ideas through gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, posture, etc. | Displays few feelings and emotions through gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, posture, etc. | Presents ideas showing little physical involvement. |
| Oral Language Convention | Consistently uses various language conventions, both formal and informal, appropriately for the context. | Recognizes and generally uses formal language conventions although there are still occasional lapses which are inappropriate for the context. | Mixes formal language with informal language conventions without regard for the context. | Primarily communicates using informal language patterns. |

Assessment Guidelines for Receptive Language (Listening)

First –Third Grade

Procedure

1. During the normal classroom routine observe individual children using receptive language (listening) in both large groups and small groups.
2. Identify four or five students to observe closely for a period of time using the Receptive Language (Listening) Checklist on page 31. Continue until you have assessed each child in your classroom
3. After completing the information at the top of the checklist;
 - record the individual focus child's name,
 - record the names of group participants,
 - describe the context of the observation (i.e. small group discussion of informational text or compare/contrast of two versions of a fairy tale, large group science reports), and
 - record on the checklist the qualities the student demonstrates in the oral interaction.
4. Utilize the receptive language checklist throughout the year in a variety of contexts and with several groupings of students.
5. Record the student's level(s) of performance on the student's profile.
6. Analyze the marked checklist(s), place them in the student's portfolio and use as a guide when making instructional decisions.

Analysis

Analysis of the student's receptive language (listening) performance will provide further information. The following questions about the student's performance will help in designing instruction:

- Is this experience typical of this child's listening?
- How is this experience similar to other receptive language interactions?
- Does the context and participants allow this student to demonstrate her/his strengths in oral language?
- Does the student apply or use more than one purpose in listening to the message?
- Does the student understand and is s/he able to apply the appropriate skills to fulfill the identified purpose(s) of listening?
- Does the student exhibit flexibility in the application of the diverse purposes of listening, including selecting a purpose consistent with the speakers?
- What further experiences are needed to gain a better understanding of this child's listening abilities?

Student's Name _____ Context of Observation _____
Date _____ Group Participants _____

Receptive Language (Listening) Checklist

First-Third Grades

This checklist is used to record the teacher's observations of what students know and are able to do using receptive language skills for varying purposes. These categories for listening may be used to identify a child's ability to receive, attend to, interpret, and respond appropriately to the purpose of the sender.

Appreciative Listening

- Pays attention to context and style
- Responds visibly to color, sound, language and rhythm
- Identifies with message of the sender
- Relaxes

Empathic Listening

- Lets sender do the talking
- Lets sender know s/he cares
- Shows interest
- Asks open-ended questions

Comprehensive Listening

- Elaborates on what has been said
- Asks for clarification of sender's intended message
- Brings up related issues
- Summarizes
- Explains message to others in own words
- Relates message to personal experience
- Understands relationship among ideas
- Listens for main idea and supporting details

Discerning Listening

- Determines the main message
- Sorts out details
- Decides what's important
- Makes sure nothing's missed
- Takes notes
- Asks for clarification
- Concentrates
- Eliminates distraction
- Repeats to confirm accuracy

Evaluative Listening

- Relates what is heard to personal beliefs
- Questions sender's motives
- Listens for factual support of message
- Accepts or rejects message
- Actively agrees or disagrees with message
- Responds selectively
- Expresses skepticism