

Birth to Age 5:

- There are well-documented disparities in the number of words children know by socio-economic class at as young as three years of age.
- It is just as important to *respond* to children's attempts at communication as it is to give them exposure to many words.
- Children's questions are a wonderful opportunity to build language ability on topics that they are already interested in.

Preschool to Grade 4:

- Model for children the kind of complex syntax and vocabulary diversity that you hope to develop in them.
- Instructional quality in early childhood goes beyond *what* teachers provide, to *how* they provide it. Think in terms of the three dimensions of early childhood instructional support : Concept Development, Quality of Feedback and Language Modeling (Source: <http://teachstone.com/classroom-assessment-scoring-system/>.)
- In the classroom, engage in theme-oriented activities - they are better sources of knowledge than word walls! Here are two *sources* for finding topics of engaging activities:
 - (1) Children's prior acquired knowledge, up to the current grade;
 - (2) Children's interests : start from the questions that children ask.

Grades 4 to 8:

- Instruction should scaffold students' development of deep reading comprehension skills (e.g. academic language, perspective-taking, complex arguments, and relevant content knowledge).
- Start from the questions that students themselves ask. This effective approach will inject engagement into classroom activities.
- Classroom discussion and debate foster students' skills in perspective taking, complex reasoning, and academic language, while also providing unique learning opportunities for English language learners and students with reading problems.
- Information-rich topics relevant to the lives of students tend to generate rich discussion and debate.
- Resource: Word Generation Curriculum materials (wordgen.serpmedia.org)



Classroom discussion works!

Enabling Conditions:

- Are students actually speaking?
- Can students hear each other?
- Do students listen actively to each other?
- Do students respond to each other's ideas?
- Do students deepen their own and their peers' reasoning?

Source: Cathy O'Connor, Professor, Boston University School of Education

Useful Teacher Moves:

- Can you say more?
- Can you repeat what ** said?
- Do you agree with **? Why/why not?
- Let me play devil's advocate.
- Can you recap your argument?
- Explain to ** why you disagree with him/her.
- What's the strongest argument you have for that claim?

Ramps to Full Class Discussion:

- Turn-and-talk
- Jot before talking
- Small-group debates with assigned positions
- Partner debates with position switch
- Four-corner debates
- Fishbowl debates