

Birth to Five

INTRODUCING NOVEL WORDS TO PRESCHOOLERS

One way to extend conversations with children in the classroom is by incorporating novel words. Here are several strategies for including novel words in conversations.

Incorporating novel words takes planning.

- Identify novel words:
 - » Brainstorm with colleagues.
 - » Search children's books, poems, and songs.
 - » Use a thesaurus to find alternative ways to say the same word.
- Select materials that expand children's vocabulary:
 - » Small vehicle sets (e.g., ambulance, crane, helicopter)
 - » People figures (e.g., astronaut, pediatrician, chef)
 - » Everyday materials in dramatic play (e.g., colander, stethoscope, helmet)
 - » Children's books
- Create child-friendly definitions in advance:
 - » Simple
 - » Focus on attributes
 - » No unfamiliar words

Incorporating novel words takes intentionality.

- Select words that are important for comprehension and useful in everyday interactions.
- Allow for spontaneous conversations with children and use novel words in these conversations.
- Model rich vocabulary in responses to children.
- Be aware of the words a child already understands and add novel words that build on familiar concepts.
- Expose children to novel words and have conversations with children during any activity during the day like: meal time, circle time, story time, free play experience, and dramatic play.