

HANDOUT 13: Effective Expression

Effective Expression

A third major theme of the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy and the CA ELD Standards is effective expression. The standards call for children to learn to convey their ideas, opinions, and knowledge about texts and topics in all subject matter. This section provides guidance on writing, discussing, presenting, and using language conventions in transitional kindergarten.

Writing

Children see print used purposefully, such as when menus, routines, and the day's news are posted and discussed. They observe adults record their thoughts as children dictate them. They find magazines, books, posters, brochures, coupons, and catalogs throughout the environment, such as in block, dramatic play, art, and science centers. They have available throughout the room a variety of writing instruments and surfaces on which to write and draw, including stationery, envelopes, postcards, message pads, note pads, and poster paper. Children are prompted to use written language for their own purposes. They are encouraged to scribble, draw, and make letter like marks on paper and other appropriate surfaces. They have access to computers and letter tiles. They are given numerous opportunities to express themselves in writing, and teachers guide them to employ the print concepts, phonological awareness skills, and phonics and word/print recognition skills they are learning. Writing activities occur daily and are systematically and strategically planned.

Teachers build from the following California Preschool Learning Foundations in Writing (California Department of Education 2008). In preschool, at around age 60 months, children:

- 1.1 Adjust grasp and body position for increased control in drawing and writing.
- 1.2 Write letters or letter-like shapes to represent words or ideas.
- 1.3 Write first name nearly correctly.

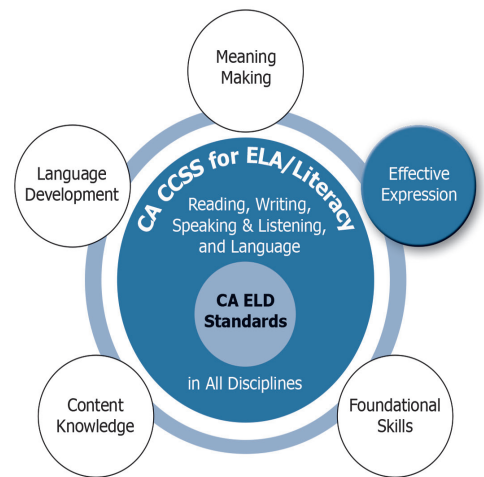
Transitional kindergarteners make considerable progress toward the kindergarten writing CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy. They learn to draw, dictate and use emerging knowledge of the alphabetic code to compose opinion pieces, informative/explanatory texts, and narrations (W.K.1–3).

Discussing

In transitional kindergarten, teachers support children's skill in discussion by building from the following California Preschool Learning Foundations in Listening and Speaking (California Department of Education 2008). In preschool, at around age 60 months, children:

- 1.1 Use language to communicate with others in both familiar and unfamiliar social situations for a variety of basic and advanced purposes, including reasoning, predicting, problem solving, and seeking new information.
- 1.2 Speak clearly enough to be understood by both familiar and unfamiliar adults and children.
- 1.3 Use accepted language and style during communication with both familiar and unfamiliar adults and children.

Using the preschool foundations as a springboard, teachers guide transitional kindergarteners to make progress toward achievement of the kindergarten CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy in the strand of Speaking and Listening, which include following agreed-upon rules for discussion (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion) and continuing



a conversation through multiple exchanges (SL.K.1a, b), asking and answering questions and requesting clarification (SL.K.2) as well as providing clarification (SL.K.3). Teachers use some of the following approaches, among others and as appropriate, to support children's progress in discussion:

- Encouraging children to address one another, modeling and teaching students to make eye contact with single and multiple listeners as they share their thoughts
- Providing wait time in teacher-facilitated group discussions before calling on a child, thus giving everyone think time, which is especially important for ELs and for children who are, at this point, less verbal than their peers
- Making use of a prop (such as a foam ball or stuffed toy), which is passed from one child to another, to signal who has the floor
- Strategically asking questions that prompt children to build on or respond to one another's comments, such as "Can someone add to what Nga just said?" "What questions do you have for Jean?" and "What else do you know about what Frank just said?", thus guiding children to listen to one another and to stay on topic
- Encouraging children to address one another in a group discussion
- Avoiding responding to every child's comment during a group discussion, thereby allowing children to continue the conversation and converse with one another (in other words, teachers become one member of the group rather than the dominant member; group conversations are held, rather than a series of one-on-one dialogs with the teacher)
- Helping the most enthusiastic contributors give others the opportunity to speak

In addition to posing questions, such as those discussed in the overview of the span in this chapter, teachers may provide sentence starters to prompt small group or partner discussions. For example, teachers may pause during a read aloud and ask children to think about and then turn to a neighbor and complete one or more of the following sentences:

I think _____.

The character is _____.

What is really interesting about what our teacher just read is _____.

Something I learned about my world is _____.

This made me think of _____.

I wonder _____.

The author _____.

It takes time for young children to learn to effectively engage in discussions. Teachers involve children in determining expectations for discussions, model effective discussion behaviors and comments, and provide many opportunities for children to discuss texts and topics with one another across the curricula.

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