Vocabulary

Vocabulary is knowing the meaning of words, including words for things, concepts, feelings and ideas. The more words children know the easier it is for them to learn to read. Children enter school knowing anywhere between five thousand and twenty thousand words; the actual number depends on how much they have been spoken and read to.

A strong vocabulary helps children with reading in two ways: First when children are beginning to read they sound out words. It is easier for them to recognize a word they are sounding out if they have heard it before. Second, if there are too many unfamiliar words in a text it will be difficult for him or her to understand the whole story.

A solid grasp on vocabulary can open many doors for children. Strong vocabulary skills give children the tools they need to express their emotions, ideas and experiences. There are many ways, as adults, that we can help our children increase their vocabulary.

For all ages:
- Talk with the child about what is happening in his day- narrating your day exposes the child to words he may not hear often
- Use real life objects to teach new vocabulary words.
- Talk clearly and repeat ideas that interest the child
- Read together everyday
- Children of all ages love rhymes which often contain words they do not hear in everyday language
- Use the specific word for places, things, and ideas. For example, use the proper word “Horse” instead of the modified word “Horsie”.

Birth to two years old (early talkers):
- Even if the child is just babbling, listen and answer with interest
- Ask questions and leave room for the child or baby to answer, Give children about 15 seconds to answer
- Repetition is especially important at this age as it reinforces the names of things

Two and three year olds (talkers) & four and five year olds (pre-readers):
- Talk with the child about what you are feeling- understanding emotions gives the child a way to communicate through words
- Strive for Five- Try to keep an interaction going through 5 exchanges (e.g. adult-child-adult-child-adult)

*information for this page was cited from Early Literacy Storytimes @ your library by Saroj Nadkarni Ghoting and Pamela Martin-Diaz