Planning and teaching oral language through the Blank language levels

Workshop aims

- To understand the background and rationale for using the Blank Language levels
- To have an overview of language development
- To use the levels to assess pupil's language comprehension
- To apply the model to high quality teaching in the classroom
- To develop targeted interventions for groups and individuals

Background to the Blank language levels
Define the terms

Speech  Language  Communication

What are the Blank levels?
• based on the work of Blank, Rose and Berlin
• graded language according to four levels
• pupil moves from concrete experience to abstract thinking
• also called the ‘Language of learning’ scheme
• gives professionals a common vocabulary

A useful framework for the classroom
• to assess pupils’ language skills
• to help adults adapt their language and questioning
• to structure a teaching sequence and guide differentiation
• to plan for targeted groups and individuals
• to support behaviour management
Language development

Blank language levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>single words</td>
<td>phrases</td>
<td>factual sentences</td>
<td>inference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMING</td>
<td>DESCRIBING</td>
<td>RETELLING</td>
<td>JUSTIFYING</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concrete → abstract

Level 1: Naming

*Single words- nouns and verbs*

- What is this?
- Find another one like this
- Show me a...
- Point to the...
Level 2: Describing
Phrase level

Questions

Category skills
- Function
- Things that go together
- Sorting

Describing words / concepts

Level 3: Retelling
Factual sentences

Level 4: Justifying
Inference

- why
- predict
- opinions
- solve problems
- could/should
- social situations
Language development (Blank)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level One</th>
<th>Single word vocabulary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• core nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• core verbs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level Two</th>
<th>Phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• who, what, where</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• categories,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• different</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level Three</th>
<th>Factual sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• range of sentence types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• similarities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• negatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• definitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• how and when</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level Four</th>
<th>Inference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• why</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Task: Blank levels sort

- What's this?
- Find a big black pot.
- How did the bulb grow?
- Explain how you made your project.
- Why did they behave that way?
- Point to the ...?
- What could you do if you forget your money?
- Who planted the flowers?
- How do you think the character felt?
Assessing language comprehension

Blank levels assessment

TALC Primary (ELKLAN)
High quality teaching – use of the Blank levels

Blank language levels

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NAMING
iron
magnetic
durable

DEscribing
concrete

REtelling
abstract

JUSTIFYING
Why do you think this happened?

Explain what happened
1. Think of a pupil with weak language skills and identify his / her Blank level

2. Consider how to differentiate teaching input and tasks accordingly

Targeted language support
• groups
• individuals
Oral comprehension programmes

http://readingformeaning.co.uk/materials/
Duff et al (2008) Reading with Vocabulary Intervention
Task: create your own Blank level interventions.....

- Level one
- Level two
- Level three
- Level four

Thank you for coming...

Evaluations
Course flyers