Language Modeling

Indicators

Frequent Conversation	Open-ended Questions	Repetition and Extension	Self- and Parallel Talk	Advanced Language
• Back-and-forth exchanges • Contingent responding • Peer conversations	• Questions require more than a one-word response • Students respond	• Repeats • Extends/ elaborates	• Maps own actions with language • Maps student action with language	• Variety of words • Connected to familiar words and/or ideas

Behavioral Markers

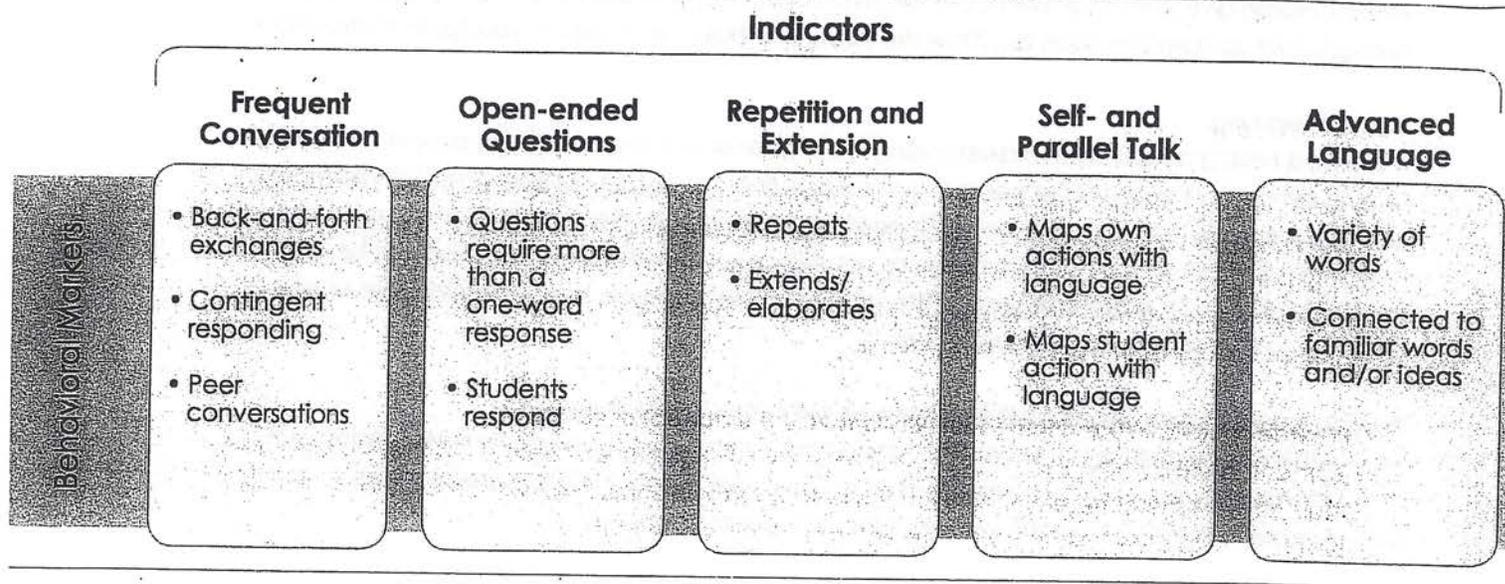## What is it?

Teachers model language when they intentionally encourage, respond to, and expand on children's speech. Strong language modeling also consists of engagement in meaningful conversations between teachers and children. That is, teachers repeat children's words in more complex forms and ask follow-up questions. Children are consistently exposed to a variety of language uses and forms, such as requesting, rejecting, commenting, conversing, predicting, and affirming.

Why is it important?

Children's language expands when they are given opportunities to use the language that they know and when adults model more complex language. By hearing various uses and forms of language, children develop new language skills. These language skills are important to children's academic and social success. For some children, a language-rich classroom can be an important supplement to the language they hear in their home environment.

How can I improve language modeling in my classroom?

Ask open-ended questions.
Children generate thoughts, information and reasons when asked a question that doesn't have a known answer. Questions like, "What do you think?" or "How do you know?" encourage children to use language in more sophisticated ways, rather than just giving right answers or short responses.

Have conversations.
Conversations can occur throughout the day during structured times, such as meeting time, and unstructured times, such as snack and free play. Converse with children individually and in small and large groups. Listen to what children say and respond in a way that shows you are interested in what they have to say. Ask follow-up questions to keep the conversation going and include some open-ended questions to encourage children to contribute more to the conversation.

Promote child-initiated language.
Encourage children's use of language by giving them opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas. Provide relevant and interesting topics and things for children to talk about.

Repeat and extend children's responses.
Build on what children say, model appropriate and more complex language and syntax, and provide examples for the different ways we use language. For example, if a child says, "That boy gives me his boat," a teacher may respond, "Evan gave you his boat." This response models the social language skill of using a person's name and offers correct grammatical forms.

Use self-talk and parallel talk.
Talk about what you are doing or what the children are doing to help them link language and action in a way that can help develop their vocabulary and language skills. An example of self-talk would be: "I'm going to give each of you two graham crackers. I'm opening the box, and now I am handing them out to each of you." In parallel talk, you provide language for children's actions such as, "You put on a chef's hat and an apron, and now you're getting out a pot."

Use advanced language.
Use different kinds of words, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and prepositions, as well as new or unfamiliar vocabulary. Talk about these words in simple terms that relate to the children's lives. For example, if a child lists all the colors in her hat, "Red, blue, yellow, green," respond with, "It's a multi-colored hat." This links what the child knows to more advanced language and summarizes known concepts with a new related word.

Encourage children to talk to one another.
Provide opportunities for peer interactions and model conversations. Use clear language to model interactions: "Kiara, do you want the truck? Ask your friend, 'May I have the truck?' " Encourage children to share stories and talk with one another. Comments like, "Meal time is a great time for us to talk with our friends!" encourage children to initiate conversations with each other.