

Accommodating learners with barriers to learning in the Grade R classroom

TIPS FOR HELPING LEARNERS WITH LANGUAGE BARRIERS

- Find out more about the language barrier – for example, what is the child's home language, at what age did he/she begin speaking?
- Share your ideas with the learner's parents about how they can encourage and support their child.
- Seat the learner in a place with few distractions.
- Use facial expressions, actions, pictures and objects to explain vocabulary and concepts.
- Encourage translations by other learners.
- Introduce new vocabulary at the beginning of a new theme, topic or concept.
- Pay special attention to abstract concepts – for example, higher, bigger than, etc.
- Use short sentences with pauses between sentences when explaining or giving instructions.
- Repeat concepts, rephrasing them and explaining them as simply and clearly as possible.
- Start with the concrete (explain what you mean by using objects and actions), move to the semi-abstract (pictures) and then to the abstract (writing).
- Gently correct language errors. For example: Learner: 'I eated meat at home.' Teacher: 'Yes, you ate meat at home.'
- Gently expand the learners' vocabulary. For example: Learner: 'My mommy is wearing a dress.' Teacher: 'Yes. Your mommy is wearing a pretty dress today.'
- Do pre-reading activities to introduce new vocabulary and place stories in context – for example, use a poster and flash cards.
- Focus on what the learner is telling you (the message) and not always on how the language is used (or the pronunciation).
- Provide lots of opportunities for the learner to speak.
- Use language games often.

