

Resource Guide: Speaking, Listening and Writing

The purpose of this Resource Guide is to outline the importance of speaking, listening and writing to rigorous and equitable ELA lessons. This guide describes the reciprocal process of reading with speaking and writing, and the inputs and outputs that students must access to master receptive and expressive language in the ELA classroom, as well as the instructional habits a teacher should have in mind regarding speaking, listening and writing when planning lessons using complex text.

Receptive and Expressive Language

The reciprocal relationship between oral and written language is highlighted in the table below. Linguists determine receptive language as inputs—words that are heard, processed and understood. Expressive language are outputs—words that are generated by an individual.

	Receptive Language	Expressive Language
Oral Language	Listening	Speaking
Written Language	Reading (decoding + comprehension)	Writing (handwriting, spelling, written composition)

Receptive language requires an individual to process inputs in the brain, and to build what is being read or heard around their working memory and schema.

Expressive language requires an individual to generate outputs in the brain. Doing so requires a level of mastery with content and vocabulary, but also in doing so, this process strengthens and solidifies information in the brain.

For this reason, reading, writing, speaking and listening are reciprocal, mutually beneficial processes. This means that the best instruction for speaking and writing is grounded in textual information, vocabulary and knowledge that students are reading and exploring.

Best Practices for Speaking, Listening and Writing Instruction:

- Speaking and listening instruction should be grounded in textual evidence, to reap the full benefits of the mutually beneficial process of reading and writing.
- Writing tasks should require textual evidence, and students should write using the vocabulary and knowledge they are acquiring through texts. Doing so will not only enhance their writing skills but will also solidify newly acquired vocabulary and knowledge into their schema and memory center.
- Because most children can access receptive language earlier than expressive language, it's important that students listen to grade-level, complex text regularly. Doing so will allow students to access complex ideas and to think critically about texts. They can further solidify this thinking by being asked to speak and write about the topics they are studying.
- The standards demand three main types of writing tasks: argument, expository and narrative. This is because research shows that these are the types of writing most college and early career writers must have fluency with for early success. Argument and expository writing are particularly important for students enrolled in undergraduate programs, and this type of writing should be accessed and instructed regularly and routinely across all grade levels.

“For children in preschool and the early grades, receptive and expressive abilities do not develop simultaneously or at the same pace: receptive language generally precedes expressive language. Children need to be able to understand words before they can produce and use them.