

DEVELOPING ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

Academic language is the language used in content area classrooms. It is linked to higher order thinking processes and developed by extensive modeling and scaffolding of classroom talk. (Zwiers 2008, p. xi) In order to develop academic language, students must be immersed in a language-rich, interactive environment.

Students should have daily opportunities to talk and write about what they read and hear in the classroom each day using formal academic language.

Language in the content areas

Each of the core content areas has some language in common. For example, all content areas will use language to describe cause and effect, sequencing and inferencing. Phrases such as “This is probably because...” and “_____ resulted in _____,” and “I can infer that...” would occur in all content areas during academic discussions.

Academic language also contains specialized language unique to the subject.

For example:

Language Arts

language structures allow for:

- interpretation
- persuasion
- inferring cause and effect

Math

mathematical language:

- tends to be more abstract
- includes specialized meanings of common terms such as variable, cancel, balance, and positive
- utilizes:
 - ◆ comparatives: 5 is greater than 3, Joe is twice as old as Georgia
 - ◆ prepositions: divided by, multiplied by
 - ◆ passive voice: x is defined as a number greater than 12
 - ◆ reversals: The number x is five less than y

Social Studies

contains words and phrases used to describe:

- the past
- the present
- point of view
- analysis of relationships between persons, places, and events

Science

focuses on:

- classification
- procedures
- description of phenomena
- inductive arguments
- use of passive voice