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Oral language development through children creating and telling their own stories

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Developing oral language – speaking and listening skills – is the foundation for reading and writing. We do not expect children to read and write words they have never spoken or heard in context. Unfortunately, many children come to school with vocabularies that are insufficient for comprehending even simple texts, or for writing simple stories. Early intervention teachers are aware of this challenge.

How does one get children aged 3 – 5 years old to create, tell, re-tell, and perform their own stories? A key way is through performance literacy – a rich interactive learning process that is often transformational and that stimulates the imagination. Simply put, performance literacy is the process of teaching students to write and perform stories. In contrast to more traditional storytelling applications in schools, the performance literacy process uses storytelling to develop all components of literacy, encouraging both academic and social growth and affirming students' cultural identities by encouraging them to express and validate what they already know. (Willingham, 2004; Pink, 2005; Dillingham, 2005; Fisher & Frey, 2007; Adomat, 2009; Stanley and Dillingham, 2009, 2010; Pei-lin Yang, 2016).