



# Let's keep talking:

## Oral language development in the early years

### SUMMARY



Language is the foundation for children's learning and success. Children use oral language to become good thinkers and communicators, and to develop the literacy skills they need to achieve well in school and beyond. This report draws together a range of evidence to look at how well children are developing the oral language skills they need when they start school. We also look at how early childhood education (ECE) can help children to develop these important skills.

ERO found that while most children's oral language is developing well, there is a significant group of children who struggle, and Covid-19 has made this worse. Quality ECE makes a difference, and the evidence shows there are key teaching practices that matter. We recommend five key areas of action to support children's oral language development.

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### What is oral language?

Oral language is how we use spoken words to express ideas, knowledge, and feelings. Developing oral language involves developing the skills and knowledge that go into listening and speaking. These skills are important foundations for learning how to read and write. ERO looked at eight areas of language development:























## What ERO did

### Data collected for this report included:

- National and international studies, including Education Endowment Fund research
- Ministry of Education statistics on ECE attendance
- Our surveys of ECE teachers, new entrant teachers, and parents and whānau

### Site visits of:

- ECE services across Aotearoa New Zealand
- New entrant classrooms across Aotearoa New Zealand

### In-depth interviews with:

- Parents and whānau
- ECE teachers
- New entrant teachers
- Speech-language therapists and other experts

We appreciate the work of all those who supported this evaluation, particularly the parents and whānau, ECE and new entrant teachers, speech-language therapists, and key informants who took part in our surveys and interviews. Their experiences and insights are at the heart of what we have learnt. You can find the full report and good practice guide on oral language on ERO's evidence and insights website [www.evidence.ero.govt.nz](http://www.evidence.ero.govt.nz)



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