Interesting Materials
Children are most likely to communicate about materials and activities that interest them. Use favorite games or fun materials to encourage children to communicate.

Example: If you know a child prefers the computers, he may be more likely to communicate about a computer than other materials in the room. He can follow directions using concepts on the computer or tell you about the objects or actions on the screen using concepts such as top, last, empty, or most.

Out of Reach
Materials or toys can be placed in view but out of reach to encourage children to use words and sentences that request an item and describe where it is.

Example: The iron may be stored on the shelf above the ironing board in the household center. If a child would like to iron, she will need to ask an adult to get it by answering a where question.

Inadequate Portions
Just a few of the materials needed for an activity can be provided initially. This will give the children opportunities to describe the locations or types of additional materials when requesting.

Example: If the children are decorating Valentine’s cards, the children can be given the paper and one crayon. When the children want additional crayons or decorations, they need to request and describe what and where. Adults can expand on the child’s request to continue the conversation.

Choice Making
Children can be shown the options between two or more activities or materials and then encouraged to initiate communication to choose one. (This is an easy one with your curriculum!) After requesting, additional turns can be added that include concepts when the adult responds with an expansion of the child’s request.

Example: During planning time, the children can be given a choice between two or three centers. If the child initially points to the center they would like, the adult can model appropriate words for the child to repeat. After the child responds he wants the manipulatives, the adult can ask, “Do you want the gears in the box on top of the legos or the Lincoln logs beside the bristle blocks?” (The child’s response can be correct without using any concepts, but it is an opportunity to hear them used in context.)
Assistance

Situations when children will need assistance to participate encourage children to make requests where concepts can be used.

Example: If the computers are off, the children going to that center are naturally encouraged to use words to ask for assistance to turn the computers on.

Sabotage

“Forgetting” to give the children all of the materials they will need to complete a task is an example of sabotage. The children problem solve to determine what materials are missing and then have the opportunity to communicate what is wrong or missing and where it might be.

Example: During an art activity, the children may be given the paintbrushes but no paint. When they realize they are unable to paint, they can ask the adults for paint. The adult encourages brainstorming ideas of what is needed and where it could be.

Silly Situations

Creating situations where something unexpected happens that violates the natural routine or order encourages children to communicate to tell you what happened that was silly.

Example: When helping a child with her shoe, the adult puts the shoe on the child’s hand instead of the child’s foot. This silly situation encourages the child to protest and explain where the shoe should go. Materials can be exchanged. The art supplies could be in the household center and the groceries in the book corner.
Classroom Strategies that Promote Communication

**Following the Child’s Lead**
When interacting with a child, do what the child is doing and talk about what the child is talking about. Children pay attention longer to things that they are interested in.

Example: Instead of building a house with the legos, if a child is pretending their legos are an airplane, the adult can pretend their legos are an airplane too and have a conversation about where the airplane going, when it will get there, who is sitting where, and what you are doing. (Lots of concepts can be used in pretend play.)

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**Providing Novelty**
Adding a new twist to a familiar routine can keep children engaged and attentive and encourage communication.

Example: The class could take a new route from the playground to the classroom one day and then the adult can encourage them to talk about what was different or new. Soap in a pump or a bar of soap with a picture provides new vocabulary opportunities.

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**Incidental Teaching**
When the child says something to the adult, the adult encourages the child to use more advanced language by restating the child's words and asking for more information. If the child still doesn't use more advanced language, the adult should model the words for the child to repeat.

Example: A child is working on saying two words together. The adult and the child are pretending to cook beans in housekeeping. The child says, “Cook.” The adults says, “Cook what?” The child says, “Cook.” The adult models, “Cook beans.” The child imitates, “Cook beans.” The adult responds, “Yes, you are cooking beans.”

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**Mand-Model Technique**
When playing with the child in an activity of his choice, the adult specifically instructs the child to use words to communicate about activities or events. If the child is unable to respond, the adult can model and have the child repeat them. This may work well for children who interact less or aren’t likely to initiate communication.

Example: At snack time, the child points to the juice. The adult says, “Tell me what you would like.” The child says, “That.” The adult says, “What is that?” The child doesn’t respond. The adults tells the child to, “Say ‘juice.’” The child says, “juice.” The adults says, “Grape juice.” “I like grape juice,” too.

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**Systematic Commenting**
When the adult follows the child's lead, she can describe what the child is doing emphasizing the concepts the child can develop. The child may or may not choose to repeat the adults comment.

Example: The child is racing two Matchbox cars on the floor. The adult observes the child and then comments, “The corvette is behind the garbage truck.” This strategy gives the child more opportunities to hear language in context.