THE NATIONAL CENTER ON Quality Teaching and Learning

PRESENTER NOTES
FOCUSING CHILDREN ON LEARNING GOALS

This guide walks you through the ***Engaging Interactions:*** Focusing Children on Learning Goals in-service suite. These are suggestions so please use the materials as you see fit. This in-service suite includes PowerPoint slides and supporting materials.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Presenter PowerPoint slides (14)
- Projector and audio equipment
- Optional Learning Activities:
  - » *Video Review of Counting Syllables* (with slide)
  - » *Discussion of Classroom Scenarios*
  - » *Planning in Your Classroom*
- Tips for Teachers
- Tools for Supervisors
- Helpful Resources
- Flip chart or similar large paper and markers for writing participant ideas

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- The purpose of this presentation is to describe strategies teachers can use to help children understand what they are learning.
- This is one in a series of in-service suites on *Engaging Interactions.*
- Three main strategies to help children focus on learning goals are discussed: setting the stage before the activity; making targeted statements to direct focus during the activity; and providing "wrap-up" statements at the end of the activity.
- The presentation includes video clips that illustrate examples of teachers using these strategies.
- As necessary remind participants that anywhere examples and nonexamples are used (e.g., *Tips for Teachers*) they are specific to the concept being discussed. The nonexamples may be appropriate behaviors in other circumstances.
- Optional learning activities offer participants opportunities to discuss and practice using these strategies.
- Optional learning activities are described in detail at the end of this document.

NOTE

The Supervisor Planning Guide is an overarching tool that applies to multiple suites in the *Engaging Interactions* series.

NCQTL

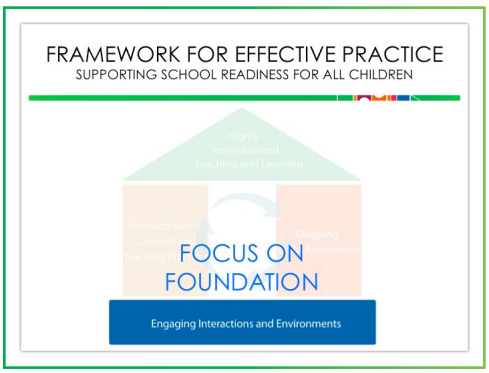
SLIDE 1:
FOCUSING CHILDREN ON LEARNING GOALS

Introductions:

- Begin the training by giving participants background information on yourself.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves (e.g., where they are working, their current role, etc.)

Introduce the topic:

- *Focusing Children on Learning Goals* focuses on strategies teachers can use to help children understand what they are learning.



SLIDE 2:
FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Introduce the NCQTL Framework for Effective Practice:

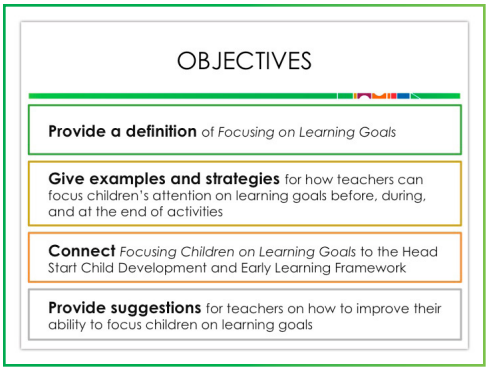
- The House structure supports school readiness for all children.
- The foundation represents effective and engaging interactions and environments.
- The pillars represent research-based curricula and teaching practices and ongoing child assessment.
- The roof represents highly individualized teaching and learning.
- All components interact with each other and are essential for effective everyday practice with all children.
- This presentation fits into the foundation of the House.

Relevance of the NCQTL Framework to participants' everyday work:

- Provides the Head Start Community with a visual framework for effective teaching practice in classrooms.
- Guides thinking about all the practices that support school readiness.
- Organizes training and professional development.

Introduce Instructional Interactions:

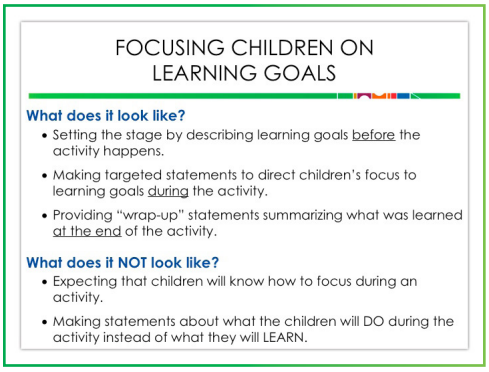
- Interactions are the classroom processes that are important for children's social and academic development.
- When teachers create positive emotional relationships, organize the learning environment, and focus on cognitive and language development, children make greater gains that help them succeed in school and life.
- There are three broad blocks to the foundation: Social and Emotional Support, Well-organized Classroom, and Instructional Interactions. The Engaging Interactions series fits into the Instructional Interactions block. Specifically, focusing children on learning goals is one example of these interactions.



SLIDE 3:
OBJECTIVES

Outline objectives for presentations:

- Provide a definition of *Focusing Children on Learning Goals.*
- Give examples and strategies for how teachers can focus children's attention on the learning goals before, during, and at the end of activities.
- Illustrate the connection between focusing children on learning goals and the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.*
- Provide suggestions for teachers to help them improve their ability to focus children on learning goals.



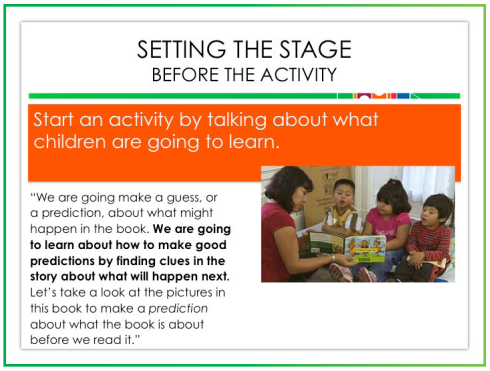
SLIDE 4:
FOCUSING CHILDREN ON LEARNING GOALS

Teachers can focus children on learning goals by:

- Setting the stage before the activity—this helps children to understand the process and purpose of the activity before it begins.
- Making targeted statements to direct focus during the activity—this encourages children to stick with the lesson.
- Providing "wrap-up" statements at the end of the activity—this helps children explain what they're learning.

Focusing children on learning goals does NOT happen by:

- Beginning an activity without outlining the learning goals.
- Conducting an activity without reminding children of learning goals and ending the activity without summarizing what children learned.
- Making statements about what children will DO instead of what children will LEARN.



SLIDE 5:
SETTING THE STAGE: BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Focusing children on learning goals involves starting an activity by talking about what children are going to learn.

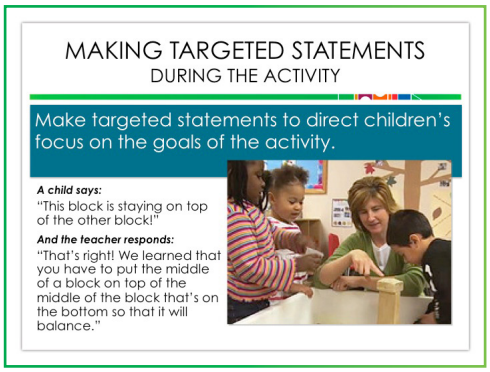
For example, a learning goal might be to know the definition of "prediction" and to be able to make a prediction.

Given example:

- At the beginning of a lesson, the teacher introduces the concept of prediction—rather than beginning the lesson by reading the book without mentioning a learning goal.
- The teacher also uses the word "prediction" as she is giving the directions to make children more familiar with it.

Additional example:

- At the beginning of an activity on making patterns with blocks, the teacher says, "Right now, we are going to learn what a pattern is and how to make patterns. A pattern is something that has an order and can be repeated."



SLIDE 6:
MAKING TARGETED STATEMENTS: DURING THE ACTIVITY

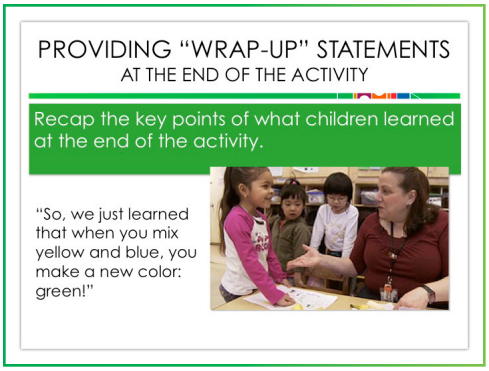
Another strategy to focus children on learning goals involves making targeted statements to direct children's focus on the goals of the activity.

Given example:

- In this example the learning goal is about how blocks balance on top of each other to build a tower.
- During a lesson about balancing, the teacher responds to a child who is excited that a block appears to be staying on top of another block. This makes the child aware of the learning by bringing her attention to the learning goals of the activity, rather than just saying, "Good job, you did it."

Additional example:

- The learning goal for this lesson is how flowers grow. As the children are planting flowers a child says, "I'm watering my flower." The teacher says, "Yes, you are giving the flower water to grow. The plant drinks the water through its roots and the water travels up the stem to make the flower grow!"



SLIDE 7:
PROVIDING "WRAP-UP" STATEMENTS: AT THE END OF THE ACTIVITY

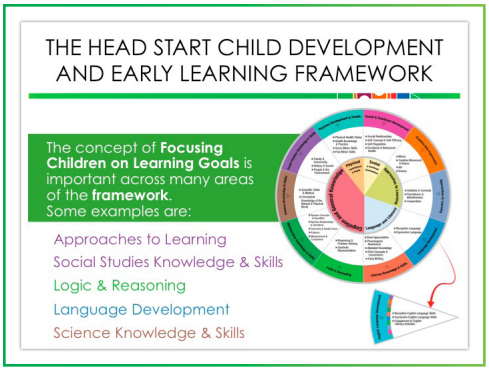
Finally, another way to focus children on learning goals involves recapping the key points of what children learned at the end of the activity.

Given example:

- Learning goal: Mixing two colors together creates a new color.
- At the end of a lesson on primary colors, the teacher summarizes what the children learned about creating green from mixing yellow and blue, rather than saying, "Alright, we made lots of green paint today!"

Additional example:

- At the end of a lesson on floating and sinking the teacher says, "Today we learned about floating and sinking in water. We learned that things that are light and don't weigh a lot—like the leaf—float. And, things that are heavy—like the rock—sink."

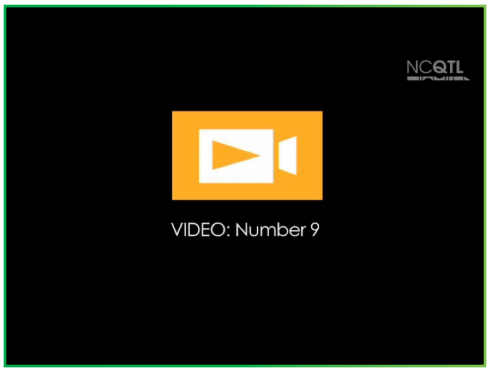


SLIDE 8:
THE HEAD START CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Introduce the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework*:

The concept of focusing children on learning goals can be connected to many domains of the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework, including:

- Focusing children on learning goals supports children's development in the domain of Approaches to Learning. By making targeted statements throughout an activity teachers can help children maintain interest and attention in an activity and persevere in a task until completed.
- Teachers can focus children on learning goals in the domain of Social Studies Knowledge & Skills when children write books about children's families so that children can explore the domain element of Self, Family & Community.
- Teachers can focus children on learning goals in the domain of Logic & Reasoning when teachers help children think through problems and offer strategies to solve them. For example, when a teacher recaps a lesson by encouraging children to draw pictures or symbols that illustrate the lesson, the process will require the children to think through what was learned.
- In the domain of Language Development, when promoting receptive language skills, teachers can focus children on the learning goal of being careful listeners prior to reading a story at circle time.
- Teachers can make targeted statements to focus children on the learning goal of observing during the scientific method. For example, during an experiment a teacher could say "What did you observe when the trains' magnets got close to each other?"



Length of video: Approximately 4 minutes and 21 seconds

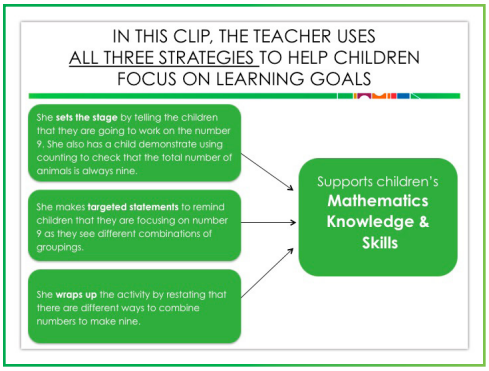
SLIDE 9:
VIDEO: NUMBER 9

Introduce the video.

Inform participants that they will view a video that shows a lesson on numbers and operations, specifically on different ways to combine groupings of dogs and squirrels to make the number 9.

Ask participants to look for examples of how the teacher focuses children on learning.

VIDEO



SLIDE 10:
IN THIS CLIP, THE TEACHER USES **ALL THREE STRATEGIES** TO HELP CHILDREN FOCUS ON LEARNING GOALS

Video example of focusing children on learning goals:

- In this clip, there were many instances of the teacher engaging in instructionally supportive interactions that focused children on learning number concepts and mathematical operations by combining or separating different groups of dogs and squirrels.
- The teacher **sets up the activity** by telling the children that they are going to work with number nine. Also she has a child demonstrate how to use counting as a strategy to check that the total number of animals is always nine.
- Throughout the activity she makes **targeted statements** to direct children's focus to thinking about combining different groupings to make the number nine. "But I want nine." "I like nine." "Let's see if I have nine."
- Finally, she **wrapped up** the activity by restating the learning goal of introducing children to mathematical operations, more specifically addition. "Eight dogs and one squirrel still gives me nine. I was taking one group of animals and putting a different group of animals to still make number nine."
- All three of these interactions supported the development of children's mathematics knowledge and skills.

NOTE

These are videos of real teachers and children. Participants may notice that at times not all children are fully engaged in the activity. Should they bring up unrelated comments, it is important to redirect them and explain that this video has been edited to illustrate the teacher's use of strategies to focus children on learning.

OPTIONAL

LEARNING ACTIVITY:
VIDEO REVIEW: COUNTING SYLLABLES

You may use the *Counting Syllables Video Review* learning activity to discuss further with the group.

SLIDE 11:
WHEN CAN I FOCUS CHILDREN ON LEARNING GOALS?

Opportunities to focus children on learning goals occur throughout the school day in different activities. For example, during small group instruction a teacher can recap what happened when the children took turns balancing on a board. Another example might be when a teacher uses circle time before reading a book about frogs to explain that the children are about to learn about the life cycle of a frog.

SLIDE 12:
IMPROVING PRACTICE

Three ways to improve instructional interactions in the classroom:

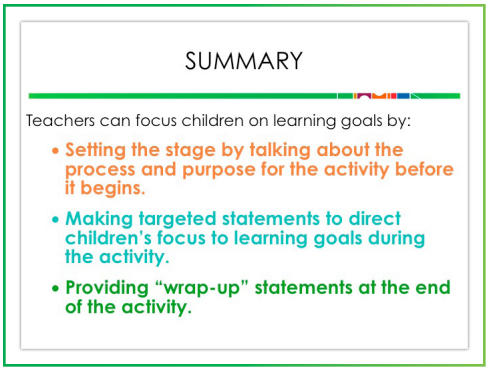
Videotape – Teachers can videotape and watch their classroom's interactions. This can help them to observe moment-to-moment interactions with students and reflect on their practice.

> **Example:** For example, a teacher videotapes her interactions with children during center time in the science center. She notices that she talks about seasons and that the leaves change colors and fall off the trees in the fall, but doesn't tell the children that they will learn about each of the four seasons during the science center activity. She could have said, "We can see all of the leaves changing colors on the trees outside. Today we will learn about seasons and what happens to the leaves during fall, winter, spring, and summer."

Practice with a peer – It can also be helpful for teachers to "practice with a peer" by either having a peer teacher conduct a live classroom observation, or watch a video together of a teacher's practice. Fellow teachers can provide feedback on each other's behavior and children's cues and responses. Together teachers can think of ways to improve a teacher's interactions in the classroom to more often focus children on learning goals.

> **Example:** For example, when observing how a teacher engages children in book-reading at the beginning of a lesson on caterpillars and butterflies, her peer teacher might notice that the teacher asks a lot of questions to the children about what they know about caterpillars and butterflies, but never tells them that they will be learning about how caterpillars turn into butterflies. The peer teacher might suggest that the teacher plan out, before the lesson, a clear statement to tell the children what they will learn during the lesson.

Watch a "master teacher" – Another way to improve practice is to view examples of a more skilled teacher's interactions with children, either live or on video. Observing the master teacher's strategies can provide ideas for how to improve a teacher's own instructional interactions.



SLIDE 13:
SUMMARY

Review strategies to focus children on learning goals:

Setting the stage: to prepare children for learning by talking about the process and the purpose of the activity before it begins.

Making targeted statements: to focus children on the learning goals during the activity.

Providing "wrap-up" statements: to summarize what the children learned at the end of the activity.

HANDOUT

Based on participant roles:

Distribute and review *Tips for Teachers* handout. This tip sheet provides multiple strategies that teachers can use and examples of what these strategies look like in the classroom.

Please note that the strategies for "What this looks like in action" and "What it is not" are examples specific to those strategies. The behaviors in the nonexamples may be appropriate in other instances.

Distribute and review *Tools for Supervisors: The Supervisor Planning Guide* provides strategies for coaches, mentors, or supervisors to use to help teachers enact change in their practice.

Distribute the *Helpful Resources* handout and review key resources.

You may also complete the optional learning activities described after Slide 14, including *Video Review of Counting Syllables, Discussion of Classroom Scenarios,* and *Planning in Your Classroom.*

SLIDE 14:
CLOSING

Provide participants with NCQTL contact information and encourage them to visit our website for additional resources.

OPTIONAL

LEARNING ACTIVITY: VIDEO REVIEW OF COUNTING SYLLABLES

Suggested placement: After Slide 10.

The *Counting Syllables Video Review* learning activity can be used to discuss strategies that further focus children on learning goals with the group.

This video shows an example of a teacher setting up an activity by telling the children that they will be learning to count syllables or "little sounds" in their names.

Refer to the *Video Review of Counting Syllables: Facilitator Guide* for specific details.

Depending on the number of participants, this activity can be done in the large group or participants can be divided into smaller groups of 3–4.

Directions: Inform participants they will review the video, look for, and write down specific examples of strategies that focus children on learning goals.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Video Review of Counting Syllables* handout and review directions.

Introduce the video.

Explain that the teacher is conducting a lesson on counting syllables—a phonological awareness skill.

OPTIONAL SLIDE PPT

PPT

Show optional video slide *Counting Syllables.*

Participants record examples of observed strategies as they watch the *Counting Syllables* video.

Strategies

Participants discuss examples of strategies they observed in the video directly in the large group or after discussion in the smaller groups.

Connecting strategies to domains

Participants share examples of domain and domain elements from the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework* they observed being supported in the video. Participants discuss examples directly in the large group or in the smaller groups.

NOTE

The *Counting Syllables* video is provided courtesy of The Center for Advanced Teaching and Learning: http://curry.virginia.edu/research/centers/castl.

OPTIONAL

LEARNING ACTIVITY: DISCUSSION OF CLASSROOM SCENARIOS

This learning activity provides an opportunity for participants to practice how they might use strategies to help children focus on learning goals in their own classrooms.

This activity offers four options: Identifying strategies, generating statements/questions, creating a script, and role play. The facilitator may use any number and combination of the four options.

Refer to the *Discussion of Classroom Scenarios: Facilitator Guide* for specific details.

NOTE

If you have a large group, consider dividing participants into several smaller groups for this activity.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Discussion of Classroom Scenarios* handout and review directions:

- Each group completes the assigned activities depending on the chosen option(s).

DISCUSSION

Have small groups share back with the larger group.

For the role-play option

Encourage participants to comment based on their assigned role of teacher, child, or observer.

Possible questions to ask:

- What did you notice the teacher doing?
- How did the children respond?
- What other ways could teachers implement this strategy?

OPTIONAL

LEARNING ACTIVITY: PLANNING IN YOUR CLASSROOM

This learning activity provides an opportunity for participants to develop a plan for how they might incorporate strategies to help children focus on learning goals into planned activities in their own classrooms. Refer to the *Planning in Your Classroom: Facilitator Guide* for specific details.

NOTE

If you have a large group, consider dividing participants into several smaller groups for this activity.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Planning in Your Classroom* handout and review directions:

- Each group completes the assigned activity.

DISCUSSION

Have small groups share back with the larger group.

NOTE

The *Planning in Your Classroom* handout can also be reviewed and distributed to participants for use in their own classrooms without engaging participants in the learning activity.

This document was prepared under Grant #90HC0002 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, by the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning.

FALL 2012