



This guide walks you through presenting the ***Engaging Children in Conversations*** suite. This suite includes PowerPoint slides and supporting materials.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Presenter's PowerPoint slides (15)
- Projector and audio equipment
- Optional slide: Say HELLO
- Learning Activity 1: Beginning the Conversation
- Learning Activity 2: Video Review
 - » Video Viewing Guide
 - » Supporting Video Examples
- Learning Activity 3: Conversations around the Classroom
 - » Pictures of Learning Centers
- Tools for Teachers: Say HELLO
- Tips for Teachers
- Tools for Supervisors
- Helpful Resources List

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- This is one in a series of in-services on *Language Modeling and Conversations*.
- This presentation focuses specifically on basic strategies for engaging children in conversations.
- Learning activities offer participants opportunities to discuss and practice strategies by viewing videos, and engaging in role play.
- This presentation includes interactive language facilitation strategies from *Language is the Key*. Presenters who have a copy of this video-based program may consider including this resource as part of the presentation.
- HELLO is an over arching framework that links and organizes the five conversation suites. HELLO is described in the optional slide, *Tools for Teachers: Say HELLO*, and *Tools for Supervisors*, which appear in each of the five conversation suites.



SLIDE 1: ENGAGING CHILDREN IN CONVERSATIONS

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.).
- Ask participants to tell about the last meaningful conversation they remember.

Introduce Topic:

- Engaging Children in Conversations focuses on strategies teachers can use to engage children in meaningful conversations.

EMPHASIZE *

Promoting conversations fosters children's cognitive and social development.

Conversations enhance children's language skills.

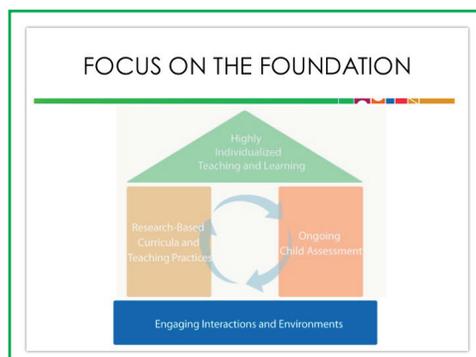


SLIDE 2: FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Review 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 for all children.



SLIDE 3: FOCUS ON THE FOUNDATION

- This presentation fits into the **foundation** of the HOUSE.
- Meaningful conversations are a critical component to creating **engaging interactions and classroom environments**.



OBJECTIVES

- To identify the benefits of conversations with children.
- To learn the key elements of meaningful conversations.
- To understand basic strategies.
- To identify opportunities for conversations.



SLIDE 4: OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the benefits of teachers engaging in conversations with young children.
2. To learn the key elements of meaningful conversations with young children.
3. To understand strategies teachers can use to engage children in conversations.
4. To identify opportunities in the classroom to have conversations with children.

NOTE

Optional slide *Say HELLO*: This slide provides an overview and visual that represents the five in-service suites on conversations. Show this slide if you plan to present all five conversation suites.

BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN

Conversations help young children develop and learn new skills:

- Build and extend children's **vocabulary**.
- Assist children in learning how to communicate more **clearly** and **accurately**.
- Provide opportunities to learn new **concepts** and **skills**.
- Foster children's ability to communicate their **feelings** and **ideas** verbally.

SLIDE 5: BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN

- Children are rapidly learning new words and how to communicate more effectively during the preschool years.
- Engaging in conversation supports children's development:
 - » Language development: vocabulary growth, how to communicate more clearly and accurately.
 - » Cognitive development: learn and understand new concepts and skills.
 - » Socio-emotional development: as language expands children can express their ideas and feelings more easily.

...AND BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS

- Conversations build positive relationships between children and teachers.
- Conversations support curriculum and assessment:
 - Tell what children already know.
 - What they are ready to learn next.
 - How well they are learning new skills.

SLIDE 6: ...AND BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS

- Meaningful conversations create positive interactions.
- Positive interactions build into strong teacher-child relationships.
- Conversations assist with:
 - » Curriculum development
 - » Lesson planning
 - » Conducting ongoing assessment
- Conversations provide a tool for teachers to:
 - » Assess what the children already know.
 - » What they are ready to learn next.





LEARNING ACTIVITY:

BEGINNING THE CONVERSATION

Set-up the activity: Let's begin by thinking broadly about conversations and reflecting on our personal conversation experiences with children or other adults.

HANDOUT

Distribute a copy of the *Beginning the Conversation* handout to each participant.

ACTIVITY

Have participants divide into small groups of 3–4 to discuss the following questions:

1. What do you and/or the children you work with love to talk about?
2. What do you and/or the children you work with find frustrating in conversations?

DISCUSSION

Share ideas from small group conversations with large group:

- Record discussed ideas onto a sheet visible to participants.
- Tally repeated ideas to indicate multiple similar responses.
- Leave these ideas up throughout the training.
- Refer back to similarities as you move through the training material.

KEY CONVERSATION ELEMENTS

In meaningful conversations with young children, teachers:

- Actively listen to what a child says.
- Physically get on the child's level.
- Match the tone and feelings of the conversation to a child's affect.
- Promote multiple reciprocal back-and-forth verbal exchanges.

SLIDE 7: KEY CONVERSATION ELEMENTS

Definition of a conversation:

- Back and forth verbal exchanges.
- Between at least two people.
- Where one person initiates the speaking.
- While the other person engages in active listening and then responds appropriately to the first person's language.

Key elements for engaging children in conversations:

- Active listening:
 - » Provides opportunity for children to engage in conversation.
 - » Provides children time to express complete thoughts.
 - » Limits adult interruption.
 - » Allows adults time to listen.
- Child's level:
 - » Adults lower to child's level.
 - Sit in a chair or on ground.
 - Crouch down to child's height.
 - » Provides opportunity to connect during conversation.
 - » Non-verbally communicates that adult is listening and respects the child's ideas.
- Conversation tone:
 - » Awareness of tone and feelings expressed in the child's statements.
 - » Respond with sensitivity to the child's expressed tone and affect.
 - » Communicates that the teacher is listening and understanding the child's words and feelings.
- Reciprocal exchanges:
 - » Multiple back-and-forth exchanges between participants on a topic.
 - » Providing time for children to respond before adults take another turn.

NOTE

- Children learn language best when given multiple opportunities to express their ideas and feelings.
- However, we know that adults tend to dominate conversations with children.



KEY CONVERSATION ELEMENTS

C. A. R.:

- **Comment**
- **Ask**
- **Respond**



Adapted with permission:
Cole, K., Anderson, M., Hester-Sykes, A., & Lim, Y.S. (2006). Language is the key: Video programs for building language and literacy in early childhood. Seattle, WA: Washington Learning Systems.
Hartquist, C. Collecting evidence on language and literacy. 4th year annual report. (April 2004). Unpublished report, California Institute on Human Services, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA.

SLIDE 8: KEY CONVERSATION ELEMENTS

Key elements for engaging children in conversations:

- **C A R:** Simple strategies for getting a conversation going around children's interests.
 - » **Comment and wait**—Make a comment on what a child is doing and wait for the child to respond.
 - » **Ask a question and wait**—Ask a question that relates to what a child is doing and wait, providing time for the child to think and respond.
 - » **Respond by adding a little more**—Follow up the child's response by providing a little more complexity to the child's language, allowing the child to hear a language model just above the child's current level.

Ask participants if they are familiar with *Follow the C A R*, from *Language is the Key*. (Note: Many of the Head Start Grantees may have a copy of this video series.)

CONVERSATION TIME

Routine times that easily elicit conversations:

- Arrival and departure
- Times of extended play
- Meal and snack times
- Small group activities
- Transitions



SLIDE 9: CONVERSATION TIME

Routine times easily elicit conversations:

- **Arrival and departure**—Opportunities for greeting conversations that connect home and school.
- **Extended play or free choice**—Teachers can interact with children through conversations about what they are working on during that time.
- **Meal and snack times**—A natural time for conversations regarding school, family, food, interests, plans, etc.
- **Small group activities**—Opportunities for conversations connecting activities and stories to children's interests and experiences.
- **Transition times between activities**—During times of transition teachers can use conversations to assist children in making connections and problem-solving.





SLIDE 10: VIDEO: CONVERSATION WITH CHILDREN MONTAGE

Video example of teachers engaging children in conversations:

Set-up video: Inform participants that they will view a video that provides examples of teacher-child conversations across three different routine times:

- Arrival
- Free play
- Small group outdoor activity

PLAY VIDEO 

NOTE 

Video can be paused after each example for discussion.

VIDEO REVIEW

- Actively listening.
- Physically, on the child's level.
- Matching tone and feelings.
- **C A R:** Comment, Ask, Respond
- Promote multiple reciprocal exchanges.



SLIDE 11: VIDEO REVIEW

DISCUSSION 

Discuss key elements from video examples:

- Ask participants what key elements they noticed the teachers using in their conversations with children.
- Then, reveal slide text outlining the key elements observed in the videos.

REMEMBER!

Meaningful conversations happen in language-rich classroom environments.

- Encourage meaningful talk among children and adults.
- Involve all classroom members in promoting conversations with children.
- Make sure adults are providing models of quality conversations.
- Throughout the entire day!

SLIDE 12: REMEMBER

NOTE 

Language rich classrooms are critical for developing children's language abilities.

- All adults are constantly modeling for children how to communicate and engage in conversations.
- All classroom teachers need to intentionally plan for quality conversations with children throughout the entire day.



NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

Set the stage:

- 1) Get down on the child's level.
- 2) Listen to what the child says.
- 3) Match the tone of the conversation to the child's affect.
- 4) Take turns talking.



SLIDE 13: NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

Review strategies to engage children in conversations:

Set the stage:

- Down on the child's level.
- Actively listen to what the child says.
- Match tone of the conversation to the child's affect.
- Provide opportunities for turn taking, reciprocal exchanges.

Now it's your turn.

Start the conversation:

- 1) Comment on what the child is doing or what the child is interested in.
- 2) Ask a question that relates to the child's experiences or interests.
- 3) Respond by adding a little more to what the child says
- 4) Give the child enough time to respond.



SLIDE 14: NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

Review strategies to engage children in conversations (continued):

Promote conversations the build on children's interests and experiences:

- Comment on what children are doing.
- Ask questions.
- Respond by adding a little more to model new language.
- Always wait and provide the child with enough time to respond.

HANDOUT

Based on participant roles distribute and review handouts.

Tips for Teachers: This tip sheet for teachers includes simple, straightforward suggestions and reminders for how to build extended conversations using expansions.

Tools for Supervisors: This is a guide to focus supervisors in on conversations in classrooms. It provides several essential elements to capture extended conversations. Note: this tool corresponds with the five NCQTL conversation suites.

Tools for Teachers: These are supplementary materials to support teaching and learning by providing teachers with a visual reminder.

Helpful Resources: This is a list, for the participants, of additional resources related to the importance of engaging children in conversations.





LEARNING ACTIVITY:

VIDEO REVIEW

Three additional video examples are provided to give participants opportunities to observe teacher-child conversations.

HANDOUT

Video viewing guide:

- Distribute a copy of the video viewing guide to each participant.
- Encourage participants to watch first and write after.

PLAY VIDEO

Participants watch a video example.

ACTIVITY

Provide a minute or two at the conclusion of each video for participants to write their observations.

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share their observations:

- Share evidence of each key element as observed from the videos.
- If participants do not see an example of a key element, have the group brainstorm how that element could be embedded into the conversation. (Remind the participants that these are real teachers and children, engaged in real classroom experiences!)

EMPHASIZE *

- Active listening
- Child's level
- Conversation tone
- Reciprocal exchanges
- Follow the C A R:
Comment and wait.
Ask a question and wait.
Respond by adding a little more.

LEARNING ACTIVITY:

VIDEO REVIEW (continued)

Possible examples for discussion:

Example 1: Going to the grocery shop

- Note how the teacher provides the child with time to formulate a response. She also helps him realize that it's okay to take time to think before responding.
- Note how the teacher acknowledges the child who enters the screen and then returns right back to the conversation with the focal child.
- Note that this child seems to be a beginning conversationalist. Ask participants for other ideas of strategies the teacher could have used with this child. For example, using pictures or objects, making more comments, etc.

Example 2: Taking a trip to the park

- Note the teacher's tone, she is very expressive and shares excitement with the children.
- Note how the teacher uses non-verbal communication to help all children understand what she is saying.
- Note how the teacher scaffolds the child's language. She first asks a question and when the child has difficulty answering she provides the child with possible words to use. The child then responds. The teacher then continues engaging with the child in conversation.
- Note how the teacher engages multiple children into the conversation and follows up with them throughout the conversation.
- Note how the teacher switches between English and Spanish, supporting both languages in the conversation.

Example 3: Conversation in the garden

- Note the difference in the interaction when the teacher is standing versus when she lowers herself to the children's level.
- Note how the teacher focused the child in on the other child's statement, promoting communication between the children.
- Note how the teacher follows up with the child about his experience outside of school, encouraging him to make connections between home and school.





LEARNING ACTIVITY:

CONVERSATIONS AROUND THE CLASSROOM

Set-up the activity:

Every classroom environment provides many opportunities for conversations. However, teachers need to be ready to build on these opportunities. This activity is designed to prepare teachers to intentionally think about how classroom learning centers can initiate meaningful conversations.

HANDOUT

Distribute a copy of the *Conversations Around the Classroom* handout to each participant.

ACTIVITY

Role-Play Conversations:

Have participants divide into small groups of 2–3 to role-play conversations. If you are meeting with teachers in their classroom, have them tour the learning centers. If the training is not in a classroom, use photographs of learning centers. These photographs can come from your own center; early childhood books, such as *Designs for Living and Learning* (Curtis & Carter, 2003) or participants' classrooms. You can also use photos that have been provided with this training material.

Using classroom learning centers have participants brainstorm conversational topics and role-play conversations about the materials and potential activities. Encourage participants to take note of interesting topics that emerge to share with the group.

DISCUSSION

Take time to come back together as a whole group and discuss conversations that stemmed from each learning center.



SLIDE 15: CLOSING

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

Now it's your turn.

Start the conversation:

- 1) Comment on what the child is doing or what the child is interested in.
- 2) Ask a question that relates to the child's experiences or interests.
- 3) Respond by adding a little more to what the child says
- 4) Give the child enough time to respond.

OPTIONAL SLIDE: SAY HELLO

Note: This slide outlines the series of five conversation suites. Recommended placement for this overview slide is after slide 4.

Engaging Children in Conversation is one in a series of five suites focused on engaging children in conversations. These five suites can easily be remembered by "Saying **HELLO**." This progression begins with teachers **H**aving conversations with children and then **E**xtending these conversations into thick verbal exchanges. Three strategies then outline how to create thick verbal exchanges: **L**isten and ask questions, **L**isten and expand, and **O**ffer new words. This suite is focused on having conversations with children.

The five HELLO suites include:

Have conversations.

- Suite: *Engaging Children in Conversations*

Extend into thick.

- Suite: *Extending the Conversation: Thick and Thin*

Listen and ask questions.

- Suite: *Extending the Conversation: Asking Questions*

Listen and expand.

- Suite: *Extending the Conversation: Expansions*

Offer new words.

- Suite: *Extending the Conversation: Novel Words*