



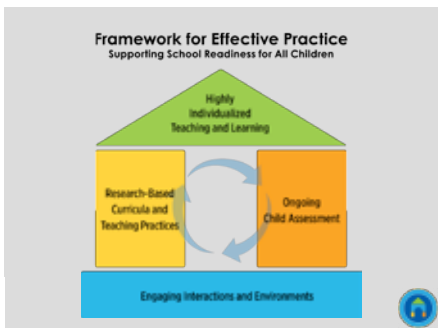
The National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning

Presentation Script
Engaging Children in Conversations



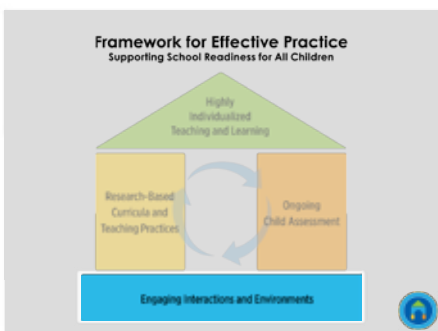
Slide 1:

Hello, and thank you for joining us today at the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning. In this presentation we will discuss the importance of conversations with children in the classroom. By promoting conversations with children teachers can foster children's cognitive development and enhance their social and language skills. This presentation is about basic strategies to engage children in conversations.



Slide 2:

The National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning's House represents a framework for effective teaching practices which supports school readiness for all children.





Slide 3:

Engaging children in conversations fits into the foundation of our framework. The foundation of the house represents engaging interactions and environments which are the fundamental elements of quality preschool practice.

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:

We have four objectives for our presentation. By the end of this presentation you will be able to: identify the benefits of teachers engaging in conversations with young children; learn about the key elements of meaningful conversations with young children; understand strategies teachers can use to engage children in conversations; and identify opportunities in the classroom to have conversations with children.

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:

To start it is helpful to understand why conversations are beneficial to young children. We know that children are rapidly learning new words and learning how to communicate more effectively during the preschool years. Adults who engage children in conversations help support children's development in several ways.

- Conversations with adults enhance children's language development. They extend children's current vocabulary and assist children in learning how to communicate more clearly and accurately.
- Conversations enhance children's cognitive development. They provide opportunities for children to learn new concepts and skills.
- Conversations enhance children's social-emotional development. As children develop more sophisticated language skills they become able to express and communicate their feelings and ideas verbally.

...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:

Teachers also benefit from engaging with children in conversations. Conversations that are meaningful to children create positive interactions that build strong teacher-child relationships. Conversations with children provide teachers with knowledge of what the children already know, what they are ready to learn next, and how well they are understanding new skills. Therefore, conversations are a useful tool in curriculum development and planning as well as in conducting ongoing assessment.

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:

Conversations consist of back-and-forth verbal exchanges between at least two people. One person initiates the speaking while the other person engages in active listening and then responds appropriately to the first person's language.


Children learn language best when they are given many opportunities to express and communicate ideas and feelings. Several key elements contribute to a meaningful conversation.

- Often teachers tend to dominate conversations with children, so adults need to use active listening. Active listening helps adults ensure that a child is given the opportunity and allowed enough time to express her complete thoughts without interruption.
- When engaging in active listening teachers should get down on a child's level. They can sit on a chair or on the ground with a child or crouch down to a child's level. Being at a child's level allows the teacher and child to connect and shows that the adult is listening to and respects the child's ideas.
- Active listening also helps a teacher be sensitive to the tone and feelings expressed in a child's statements. This enables a teacher to match a child's affect and shows the child that the teacher is really listening and understanding.
- Active listening allows for reciprocal conversations, where participants engage in multiple back-and-forth exchanges

KEY CONVERSATION ELEMENTS

Follow the C A R:

- Comment,
- Ask,
- Respond



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Slide 8:

Throughout the entire process of engaging in conversations with children, teachers should follow the child's interest in order to maintain and extend the conversation. A way to get a conversation going is to use three simple strategies: comment, ask questions, and respond, also known as CAR.

- First, comment and wait- make a comment on what a child is doing, and after making a comment wait for the child to respond.
- Next, ask a question and wait. Asking a question that relates to what a child is doing is an effective way to engage a child in a conversation focused around the child's interests. Waiting after posing a question allows the child time to think and respond.
- Finally, respond by adding a little more. Once a child responds, follow up with a response that adds a little more complexity to the child's language. This allows a child to hear a language model that is just above the child's current level.
- Additionally, when speaking with a child who uses a home language other than English and the child responds in English, repeat the child's response in the home language. This strategy supports language development for children who are learning more than one language.

CONVERSATION TIME

Routine times that easily elicit conversations

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

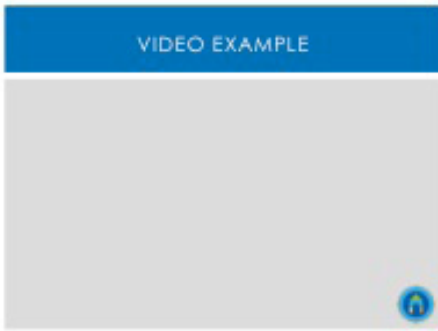


Slide 9:

Using the classroom schedule teachers can plan times that will naturally present opportunities for conversation. While conversations can and should occur throughout any time of the day, it is helpful to keep in mind routine times that more easily elicit conversations.

- Arrival and departure greetings present opportunities for conversations connecting home and school.
- During times of extended play or free choice in the classroom teachers can interact with children by talking about what children are working on.
- Meal and snack times present natural opportunities for conversations. Conversations can be about school, family, the food being eaten, or children's interests and activities.
- Small group activities, including book reading, can be a time to engage children in conversations that make connections between activities or stories and the children's own experiences.
- During times of transition teachers can use conversations to assist children in making connections and problem solving.

Let's watch as teachers engage children in conversations within these routines.

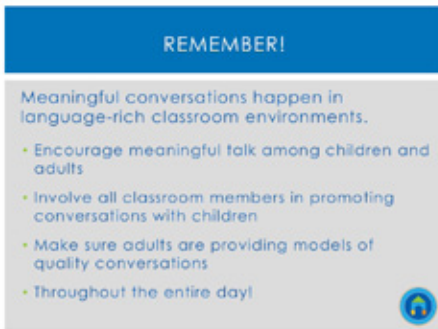


Slide 10: (View Video)



Slide 11:

These videos show you examples of conversations between teachers and children. Notice how teachers used the key conversation elements during routine times to engage with children in conversation.



Slide 12:

Language-rich classroom environments play a critical role in developing children's language abilities. We must remember that as adults we are constantly modeling for children. Therefore, it is not only a lead teacher's responsibility but in fact the responsibility of all adults participating in children's lives to model good communication and engage children in conversations. Adults must be intentional and plan for quality conversations with children throughout the entire day.



Slide 13:

Let's review how to make your conversations even more meaningful. In conversations with children we want to be down on the child's level and actively listen to what the child says. We want to match the tone of the conversation to the child's affect and provide opportunities for turn taking.

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

Start the conversation:

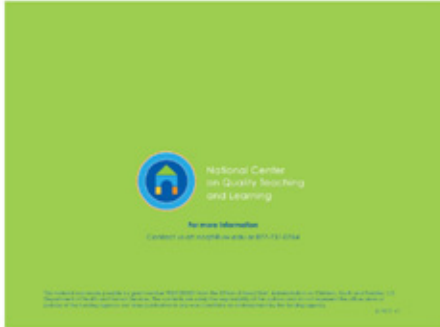
- 1) Comment on what the child is doing or what the child is interested in
- 2) Ask questions that relate to the child's experiences or interests
- 3) Respond by adding a little more to what the child says
- 4) Give the child enough time to respond




Slide 14:

Additionally, we want to encourage conversations that build on the children's interests and experiences. We want to ask questions and model new language in our conversations with children, while providing them with enough time to respond.

Now it's your turn. Take these practical strategies back to your classroom and engage children in conversations.



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Slide 15:

This presentation gave you some basic strategies for engaging in conversations with children. Watch the presentations on extending the conversation for more in-depth strategies for engaging children in conversations that increase their language skills.

Thank you for joining us and please visit our website for more resources to support effective instructional practices in the classroom.

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