



The National Center on
Quality Teaching and Learning

Presenter Notes

Engaging Children in Conversations



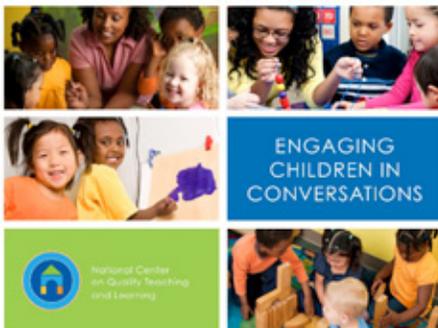
This guide walks you through presenting the Engaging Children in Conversations suite. This suite includes PowerPoint slides and supporting materials.

Materials Needed:

- Presenter's PowerPoint slides (15)
- Projector and audio equipment
- 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
- Tips for Teachers
- Tools for Supervisors
- Helpful Resources List

Icon Key:

-  Video
-  Activity
-  Discussion
-  Handout
-  Helpful Resource



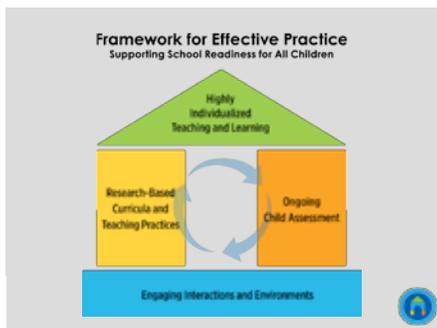
Slide 1:

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:

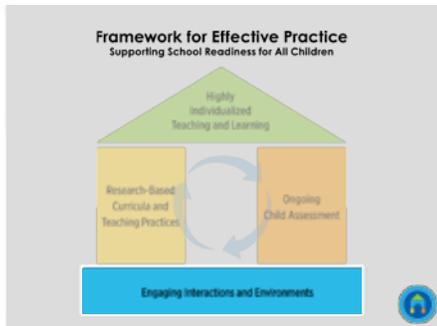
- Engaging Children in Conversations focuses on strategies teachers can use to engage children in meaningful conversations.
- Emphasize two main points:
 - Promoting conversations fosters children's cognitive and social development.
 - Conversations enhance children's language skills.



Slide 2:

Introduce NCQTL:

- National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning
- Framework for effective practice supporting school readiness for all children (House Structure)
 - Consists of four components for quality teaching and learning
 - All four components interact with each other and are essential for effective everyday practice for all children.



Slide 3

Foundation of the House:

- This presentation fits into the foundation of the house.
- Foundation represents engaging interactions and environments, which are the fundamental elements of quality pre-school practice.

Connect NCQTL Framework to participants everyday work:

- A visual way to provide the Head Start community with a framework for effective teaching practice in classrooms
- A way to organize training and professional development

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:

Outline objectives for presentation:

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

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:

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.

A 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 annoying, frustrating or do not enjoy in conversations?

D 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:

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

Important 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

Follow the C A R:

- Comment,
- Ask,
- Respond



Follow the child's lead and then:

- Comment and wait, or
- Ask question and wait, or
- Respond by adding a little more and wait, or
- When speaking in the home language and a child says a word in English, repeat the word in the home language

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Slide 8:

Key elements for engaging children in conversations:

- Follow the 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
 - For children who speak a home language other than English, and the child responds in English, repeat the child's response in their home language. This strategy supports language development in both languages.
-  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



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Slide 9:

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 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 four different routine times:

- Arrival
- Free Play
- Meal (Breakfast)
- Small group outdoor activity

 View Video

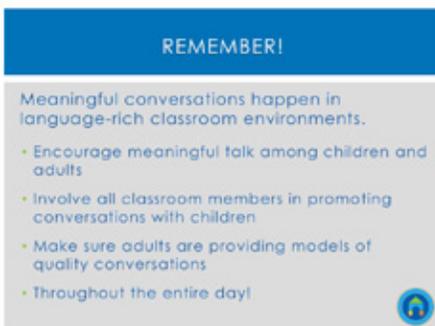
Note: Video can be paused after each example for discussion.



Slide 11:

Discuss key elements from video examples:

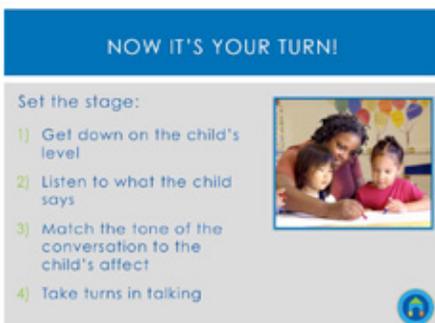
-  Ask participants what key elements they noticed the teachers using in their conversations with children.
- **Then** reveal slide text outlining the key elements observed in the videos



Slide 12:

Important note to remember:

- 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.



Slide 13:

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 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:

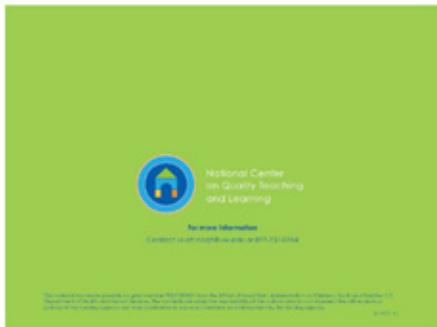
Review strategies to engage children in conversations: (continued)

Promote conversations that 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

Based on participant roles:

-  Distribute and review Tips for Teachers
-  Distribute and introduce Tools for Supervisors
-  Provide Helpful Resource list and highlight key resources that may be especially interesting based on participant roles



National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning

For more information:
Contact us at ncqtl@ed.gov or 800.727.2004

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Slide 15:

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

Note: This presentation is a first step. See other in-service suites for teaching strategies to extend conversations and foster thinking skills.

Learning Activity: Video Review



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



Video viewing guide

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



Participants watch a video example



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



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!)

Key elements to reinforce:

- Active Listening
- Reciprocal Exchanges
- Child's Level
- Follow the C A R: Comment and wait, Ask a question and wait, Respond by adding a little more
- Conversation Tone

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 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.

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.