



**The National Center on  
Quality Teaching and Learning**

## *Helpful Resources*

*Engaging Children in Conversations*



Burman, L. (2008). *Are you listening? Fostering conversations that help young children learn*. St. Paul: Redleaf Press.

This book provides early childhood educators with a resource for using conversation as a learning tool. It offers a model for how conversations can assist children in strengthening their social, cognitive and language skills. Additionally, it provides practical guidelines for promoting conversation in early childhood classrooms.

Cole, K., Maddox, M., Notari-Syverson, A., & Lim, Y.S. (2006). *Language is the key: Video programs for building language and literacy in early childhood*. Seattle, WA: Washington Learning Systems.

This video series provides learning materials to support early language and literacy development in young children. Teaching three simple strategies to encourage children to talk, this resource focuses on following the child's lead to engage in conversations with young children.

Conezio, K., & French, L. (2002, September). Using language during science activities. *Beyond the Journal*. Retrieved from <http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200209/UsingLanguageeDuringScienceActivities.pdf>

This article discusses how conversations can be used to guide scientific thinking. It outlines specific ways in which language can enrich a four step cycle of scientific reasoning.

Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (2003). The early catastrophe: The 30 million word gap by age 3. *American Educator*, 27(1). Retrieved from <http://www.aft.org/pdfs/americaneducator/spring2003/TheEarlyCatastrophe.pdf>

This article summarizes a longitudinal study focused on identifying aspects of children's early experiences that contribute to their language development. Following the lives of one- and two-year-old children through home observations, this study reveals wide gaps in the amount of talk, vocabulary growth, and style of interaction across socio-economic levels by a child's third birthday.

Jablon, J., & Stetson, C. (2007). Tips for talking with children. *Teaching Young Children*, 1(1), 8-9. Retrieved from [http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/naeyc/tyc\\_vollissue1/index.php?startid=9](http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/naeyc/tyc_vollissue1/index.php?startid=9)

This resource is a simple one page article that outlines ten tips for engaging in meaningful conversation with young children.

Massey, S. (2004). Teacher child conversation in the preschool classroom. *Early Education Journal*, 31(4), 227-232.

This article discusses engaging children in conversations during three critical times throughout the day (book reading, playtime, and mealtime). It incorporates examples of how teachers can model and facilitate conversations to enhance oral language development.

Seplocha, H., & Strasser, J. (2009). Using fanciful, magical language in preschool. *Teaching Young Children*, 2(4), 17-19. Retrieved from <http://www.naeyc.org/files/tyc/file/FancifulLanguage.pdf>

This article provides practical ways teachers can increase children's vocabulary in the preschool classroom. Additionally, it provides specific examples of novel vocabulary words that can be introduced in the various classroom activity centers.