



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

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Presenter PowerPoint slides (14)
- Projector and audio equipment
- Optional slide: *Say HELLO*
- Learning Activities:
 - » *Beginning the Conversation*
 - » *Video Review*
 - » *Conversations Around the Classroom*
- Tips for Teachers
- Tools for Teachers
- Tools for Supervisors
- Helpful Resources
- Flip chart or similar large paper and markers for writing participant ideas

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- This presentation focuses specifically on basic strategies for engaging children in conversations.
- This is one in a series of five in-service suites called *Language Modeling and Conversations*.
- Learning activities offer participants opportunities to discuss and practice strategies by responding to 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 overarching framework that links and organizes the five *Language Modeling and Conversations* in-service suites. HELLO is described in the optional slide at the end of this document, as well as in *Tools for Teachers* and *Tools for Supervisors*. These three documents appear in each of the five in-service suites.

NOTE

For more specific information on promoting culturally and linguistically responsive conversations with children, refer to the *Revisiting and Updating the Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Birth to Five* at: http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/Dual%20Language%20Learners/ecd/culture_and_diversity/manage_pub_00602a1_092305.html, and to the *Strategies for Supporting All Dual Language Learners*, a document developed by the National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness at: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/docs/dll-strategies.pdf>



EMPHASIZE *

Promoting conversations fosters children's cognitive and social development.

Conversations enhance children's language skills.

SLIDE 1: ENGAGING CHILDREN IN CONVERSATIONS

Introductions:

- Begin the training by giving participants background information about yourself.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves (e.g., where they are working, their current role, etc.).
- Ask participants to share their most recent meaningful conversation.

Introduce the topic:

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



SLIDE 2: FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Review 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 for all children.
- This presentation fits into the *foundation* of the House.
- Meaningful conversations are a critical component for creating engaging interactions and classroom environments.



OBJECTIVES



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

SLIDE 3: OBJECTIVES

- To learn the key elements and benefits of meaningful conversations with young children.
- To understand strategies teachers can use to engage children in conversations.
- To identify opportunities in the classroom to have conversations with children.

OPTIONAL SLIDE PPT

Optional slide *Say HELLO*: This slide provides an overview and visual that represents the five in-service suites on Language Modeling and Conversations. Show this slide if you plan to present all five conversation in-service 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 4: 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: Children expand their vocabulary, and learn to communicate more clearly and accurately.
- Cognitive development: Children learn and understand new concepts and skills.
- Social and 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. They:
 - Assess what children already know
 - Determine what children are ready to learn next
 - Monitor how well children are learning new skills.

SLIDE 5: ...AND BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS

Meaningful conversations create positive interactions. Positive interactions build 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
- Determine what children are ready to learn next
- Monitor how well children are learning new skills.





LEARNING ACTIVITY:

BEGINNING THE CONVERSATION

Introduce the activity.

Let's begin by thinking broadly about conversations and reflecting on our personal conversation experiences with children or other adults.

Have participants divide into small groups.

HANDOUT

Distribute the learning activity *Beginning the Conversation* to each participant.

Review directions and give time for participants to discuss the questions.

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:

- Listen actively to what a child says.
- Get on the child's physical level.
- Match the tone and feelings of the conversation to a child's emotions.
- Promote multiple, reciprocal, back-and-forth verbal exchanges.

SLIDE 6: KEY CONVERSATION ELEMENTS

Ask participants to share examples of how they would define a conversation. Then share this definition:

Conversations are back-and-forth 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.

Highlight the four following points:

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

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Set the stage.

Based on this definition, here are key elements for engaging children in conversations.

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

DISCUSSION

Encourage participants to comment on these key elements and how they may vary across diverse cultural and linguistic contexts.

NOTE

Children learn language best when given multiple opportunities to express their ideas and feelings.

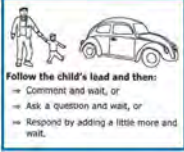
This is important for adults to remember as they often tend to dominate conversations with children.



PROMOTING CONVERSATIONS

C. A. R.:

- Comment
- Ask
- Respond



Follow the child's lead and then:

- Comment and wait, or
- Ask a question and wait, or
- Respond by adding a little more and wait.

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SLIDE 7: PROMOTING CONVERSATIONS

Start the conversation.

- **C A R:** Simple strategies for conversing about 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.


NOTE

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 8: CONVERSATION TIME

Routine times easily elicit conversations:

- **Arrival and departure** – Offer opportunities for conversations that connect home and school.
- **Extended play or free choice** – Teachers can have conversations with children about what the children are doing.
- **Meal and snack times** – A natural time for conversations regarding school, family, food, interests, plans, etc.
- **Small group activities** – Offer opportunities for conversations connecting activities and stories to children's interests and experiences.
- **Transition times between activities** – During classroom transitions, teachers can use conversations to assist children in making connections and problem-solving.

NOTE

Preferred times for conversations may vary across cultures. Be sure to elicit participant input as appropriate.

EMPHASIZE

Daily routines and free play are good times for conversations!





Length of video: Approximately 2 minutes and 13 seconds

SLIDE 9: VIDEO: CONVERSATIONS WITH CHILDREN

Introduce the video.

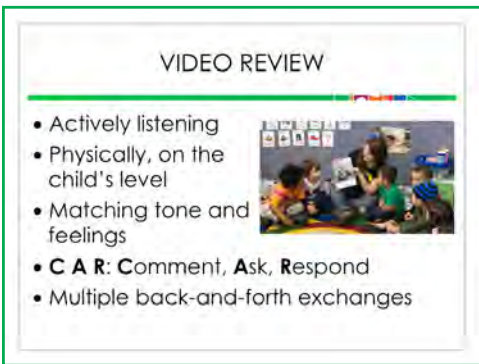
Inform participants that this video provides examples of teacher-child conversations across two different routine times:

- Mealtime
- Small group activity

VIDEO 

NOTE 

Video can be paused after each example for discussion.



SLIDE 10: 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.



SLIDE 11: 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.

EMPHASIZE 

Teachers that engage in high quality verbal interactions with children throughout the day encourage cognitive and language development.

NOTE 

For children who are dual language learners, teachers need to provide high-quality verbal interactions in the home language of the child as well as in English. When a teacher does not speak the home language of the child, they need to effectively model English to support children's learning of English and work with families to support development of the home language. See resources on the National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness website: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic>.



NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

Set the stage:

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



SLIDE 12: NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

Review strategies to engage children in conversations:

Set the stage:

- Get down on the child's level.
- Listen actively to what the child says.
- Match the tone of the conversation to the child's affect.
- Provide opportunities for turn-taking and reciprocal exchanges.

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

Start the conversation:

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



SLIDE 13: NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

Review strategies to engage children in conversations (continued).

Promote conversations that build on children's interests and experiences.

Start the conversation.

- **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: This tool supports teaching and learning by providing teachers with a visual reminder.

Helpful Resources: This is a list 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

Distribute the *Video Review* handout to participants and review directions.

- Encourage participants to watch first and write after.

VIDEO

Show video examples: *Going to the Grocery Shop*, *Taking a Trip to the Park*, and *Conversation in the Garden*.

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!)

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LEARNING ACTIVITY:

VIDEO REVIEW

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.

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:

CONVERSATIONS AROUND THE CLASSROOM

Introduce 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.

Have participants divide into small groups of 2–3. 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 in-service suite. These photos are attached to the *Conversations Around the Classroom* handout.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Conversations Around the Classroom* learning activity to each participant, and review directions.

Have participants brainstorm conversational topics and role play conversations about the materials and potential activities for different learning centers. Encourage participants to take note of interesting topics that emerge to share later with the larger group.

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share examples from their small group discussion with the larger group.



SLIDE 14: CLOSING

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



OPTIONAL SLIDE: SAY HELLO

Note: This slide outlines the series of five in-service suites on Language Modeling and Conversations. The recommended placement for this overview slide is after Slide 3.

Engaging Children in Conversations is one in a series of five in-service suites focused on engaging children in conversations. These five suites can easily be remembered by “Say **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 in-service suite is focused on basic strategies for promoting conversations with children.

The five HELLO in-service suites include:

Have conversations.

- In-service suite: *Language Modeling and Conversations: Engaging Children in Conversations*

Extend into thick.

- In-service suite: *Language Modeling and Conversations: Thick and Thin Conversations*

Listen and ask questions.

- In-service suite: *Language Modeling and Conversations: Asking Questions*

Listen and expand.

- In-service suite: *Language Modeling and Conversations: Expansions*

Offer new words.

- In-service suite: *Language Modeling and Conversations: Novel Words*