



This guide is for presenters of the **Language Modeling and Conversations: Thick and Thin Conversations** in-service suite. This in-service suite includes PowerPoint slides and supporting materials. Please use and adapt these materials as needed for specific audiences.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Presenter PowerPoint slides (15 slides)
- Optional slide: *Say HELLO*
- Projector and audio equipment
- Learning Activities:
 - » *Video Review*
 - » *Conversation Practice Vignettes*
 - » *Developing an Action Plan*
- 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 how to increase the duration and quality of conversations with children.
- This is one in a series of in-service suites called *Language Modeling and Conversations*.
- Learning activities offer participants opportunities to discuss and practice strategies by viewing videos, engaging in role play, and planning for conversations in their classrooms.
- HELLO is an overarching framework that links and organizes the five in-service suites on *Language Modeling and Conversations*. 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>



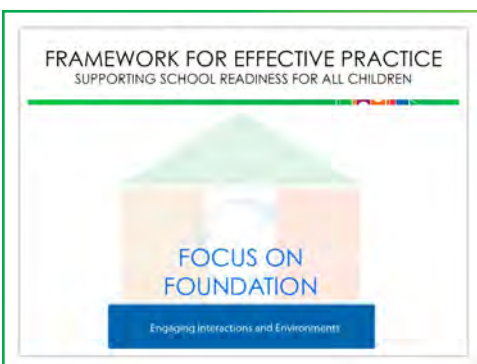
SLIDE 1: CONVERSATIONS: THICK AND THIN

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.).
- In a small group or with the large group, ask participants to share an activity or routine in their own lives (e.g., meals, bedtime, car trips) where they take time to have long conversations with family and/or friends.

Introduce the topic:

- *Conversations: Thick and Thin* focuses on the importance of increasing the quality and duration of conversations with children.
- Highlight two main points:
 - » Engaging children in conversations fosters language, cognitive and social development for children.
 - » These benefits are greatly impacted by the quality of what is said in a conversation.



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.
- This presentation fits into the *foundation* of the House.
- Extended conversation supports engaging interactions between children and teachers in the classroom.



OBJECTIVES



-  To define extended conversations
-  To identify the benefits of extended conversations
-  To learn what makes an extended conversation a "thick" conversation

SLIDE 3: OBJECTIVES

Outline objectives for the presentation:

- To define extended conversations.
- To identify the benefits of engaging children in extended conversations for children and teachers.
- To learn what makes a "thick" extended conversation.

WHAT ARE EXTENDED CONVERSATIONS?

Extended conversations are rich, back-and-forth exchanges that help children develop more complex language and thinking skills.



SLIDE 4: WHAT ARE EXTENDED CONVERSATIONS?

Define extended conversations:

Extended conversations are rich back-and-forth exchanges that help children develop more complex language and thinking skills.

- **Rich exchanges:** A conversation that includes a varied vocabulary and complex sentence forms.
- **Back-and-forth exchanges:** Conversations with equal verbal communication between the child and adult (taking turns).

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 in-service suites.



WHAT DO EXTENDED CONVERSATIONS LOOK LIKE?

In extended conversations with children, teachers:

- Take into account children's interests and experiences.
- Provide opportunities to scaffold language development.
- Expand on children's ideas and actions.



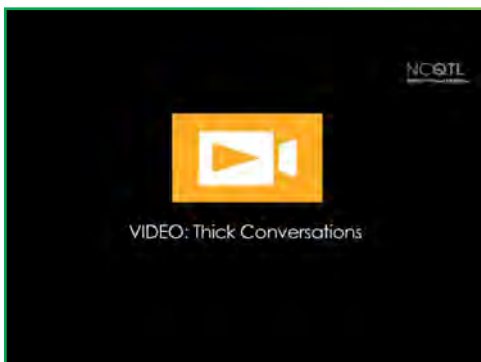
SLIDE 5: WHAT DO EXTENDED CONVERSATIONS LOOK LIKE?

Key elements of extended conversations:

- Take into account the children's interests and experiences:
 - » Conversations focus on topics children are interested in.
 - » Conversations focus on experiences children have had and can relate to.
- Provide opportunities to scaffold language development:
 - » Conversations are individualized to the children engaged in the conversation.
 - » Adults use these conversations to provide children with "just the right amount of help" to support clear communication.
- Expand on children's ideas and actions:
 - » Conversations focus on what children are currently doing or thinking about.
 - » Adults provide comments and questions to assist children in thinking a little more about their ideas or actions.

NOTE

The idea of "just the right amount of support" refers to an adult scaffolding a child's learning by building on what a child is able to do and varying types and intensity of support in response to the child's needs.



Length of video: Approximately 1 minute and 4 seconds

SLIDE 6: VIDEO: THICK CONVERSATIONS

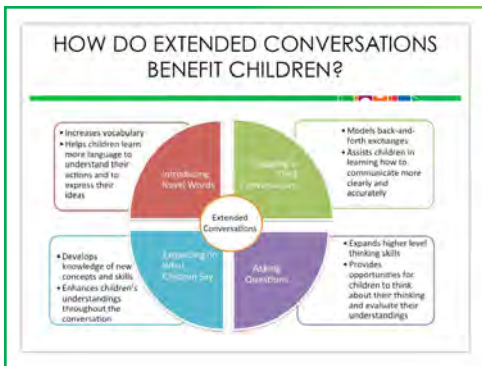
Introduce the video: Inform participants that this video provides two examples of extended conversations between a teacher and a child during dramatic play and storybook reading.

VIDEO 

DISCUSSION 

Ask participants how these examples illustrate an extended conversation.





SLIDE 7: HOW DO EXTENDED CONVERSATIONS BENEFIT CHILDREN?

Extended conversations benefit children's:

- Language development
- Cognitive development
- Social and emotional development

Extended conversations:

- **Provide models** of appropriate conversation skills.
- **Support** higher level thinking through meaningful questioning.
- **Expand** on children's language to include new concepts and skills.
- **Increase** children's vocabulary by introducing novel words.

The graphic on this slide illustrates the four components of extended conversations:

- Engaging in thick conversations
- Asking questions
- Expanding on what children say
- Introducing novel words

This presentation focuses on the first component, **engaging children in thick conversations**.

When adults engage in thick conversations with children, they:

- Model back-and-forth exchanges
- Assist children in learning how to communicate more clearly and accurately.



SLIDE 8: HOW DO EXTENDED CONVERSATIONS WITH CHILDREN BENEFIT TEACHERS?

Extended conversations:

- Inform teachers of children's interests and understandings.
- Assist teachers in planning curriculum, as teachers can build on children's current knowledge and skills to teach new concepts and develop new understandings.
- Provide informal assessment opportunities to determine children's current skills, future needs, and ongoing learning.

WE WANT "THICK" CONVERSATIONS!	
THIN:	THICK:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children use and hear limited language. • Questions only require one word answers. • Stops thinking process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include multiple two-way exchanges • Children use and hear a variety of language. • Respond to children's interests and ideas. • Promote higher level thinking skills. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explaining • Connecting • Comparing • Imagining possibilities

EMPHASIZE *

"Thick" conversations include multiple back-and-forth exchanges.

SLIDE 9: WE WANT "THICK" CONVERSATIONS!

We want children to engage in conversations that **promote thinking** and encourage them to **express their own ideas**. "Thick" conversations provide these opportunities.

There are two types of conversations: "thick" and "thin."

"Thin" conversations:

Limit opportunities for children to hear and use language.

Use questions that elicit short one word responses:

- Example: "Did you paint a picture?"
- Response options:
 - » Verbally say, "yes" or "no."
 - » Non-verbally respond with a nod or shake of the head.

Transfer simple information between teacher and child, typically specific knowledge the child already has.

Limit opportunities for the child to engage in creative thinking or problem-solving.

Stop the conversation after the child has responded.

"Thick" conversations:

Include multiple two-way exchanges between teacher and child.

Provide opportunities for children to learn and practice a variety of language and communication skills:

- New vocabulary
- Clear language structure
- Conversational turn-taking

Respond to children's interests and ideas:

- Support and scaffold children's understandings.
- Help children develop new knowledge.
- Inform teachers of what children know and are interested in.

Encourage children to engage in higher level thinking:

- Explaining their thinking
- Making connections
- Making comparisons
- Imagining possibilities





Thick Conversation Example

Teacher: What was your favorite part of creating this piece of art?
Child: I liked making the plane.
 Teacher: Oh, you made an airplane. Tell me how you made this airplane.
Child: I drew on the paper and folded it up.
 Teacher: I see. You drew your design on the paper with markers and then folded the paper into an airplane. What is your next plan going to get?
Child: I am going to fly it in the sky.
 Teacher: Very interesting, how do you know that your plane will fly?
Child: Because I made these wings.
 Teacher: Oh I see, so you think that the wings help the airplane fly. I think that is an excellent hypothesis. How will you test your idea that the wings will make your plane fly?
Child: I will throw it. (Throws plane and laughs) I did it!
 Teacher: Yes, your airplane soared across the table! How do you think you could make your airplane fly higher?
Child: I will make it another wing. (Child heads back to the drawing and writing center.)

Thin Conversation Example

Teacher: What did you make?
Child: A plane.
 Teacher: Does it fly?
Child: Yes.

SLIDE 10: COMPARING THICK AND THIN CONVERSATIONS

Here is a comparison of language exchanged in a thin and thick conversation.

Introduce the examples: These two conversations took place in a Head Start classroom during an extended work time, where a child spent 20 minutes in the drawing and writing center. During this time the child drew a design on a piece of paper with five different colored markers, then carefully folded the paper several times. After making the final fold, the child gets up from the table smiling and approaches the classroom’s lead teacher.

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to identify differences in these two conversations.

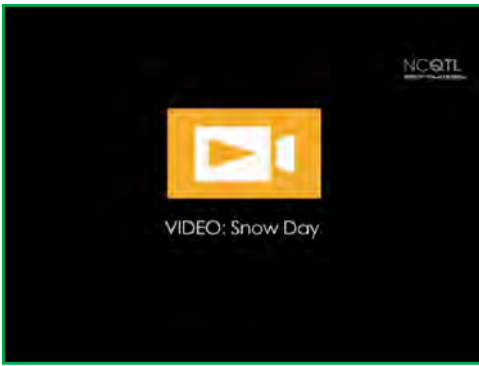
Possible responses:

“Thin” conversation:

- Child hears 7 words.
- Child speaks 3 words.
- Child has 2 opportunities to practice language skills.

“Thick” conversation:

- Child hears 113 words.
- Child speaks 41 words.
- Child has 6 opportunities to practice language.
- Child is encouraged to share information and fully engage in the conversation.
- Child brings new information and ideas to the conversation.



Length of video: Approximately 2 minutes and 57 seconds

SLIDE 11: VIDEO: SNOW DAY

NOTE

For this slide choose either option A or B, based on the time allotted for this training and the needs of your audience.

Option A:

Introduce the video: Inform participants that this video provides an example of a teacher engaged in a “thin” and then a “thick” conversation with the same child. Have participants pay attention to the differences in the amount of language exchanged, as well as the child’s interest and engagement in the conversation.

VIDEO

DISCUSSION

Ask participants how this example illustrates an extended conversation.

NOTE

The video can be paused after each example for discussion.

Option B:

Complete *Video Review Learning Activity* (outlined on the next page).





LEARNING ACTIVITY:

VIDEO REVIEW

Introduce the activity:

Let's observe a teacher engaging in conversation with a child. First, we view her in a "thin" conversation and then we will see her engaging the same child in a "thick" conversation.

HANDOUT

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

As we view this video, analyze teacher-child conversations. As you watch each clip, use the *Video Review* to write examples of what the teacher says. Based on your observations, outline the feedback you would give to this teacher.

VIDEO

NOTE

Pause video to provide time for activity between clips.

DISCUSSION

Share with the person next to you your observations and the feedback you would provide to the teacher. Also, discuss the two questions at the bottom of the *Video Review*. Complete the same process for the "thick" conversation example.

- After viewing the video and completing the activities described above, bring the large group back together.
- Ask for volunteers to share insights from small group conversations with the large group.
- Presenters can choose to discuss as many of the questions as time allows.

VIDEO REVIEW

- Shows interest in what the child is doing
- Expands on the child's ideas
- Extends thinking by asking questions
- Connects to prior experiences
- Scaffolds language development



SLIDE 12: VIDEO REVIEW

Use this slide to summarize the video discussion regarding the conversation examples.

Specific notes to discuss:

- Child engagement:
 - » Engagement level in “thin” versus “thick” examples
 - » Cues the child provides to show she is engaged and interested in the conversation
- How the teacher extends the conversation:
 - » Shows excitement and interest in the child’s snow day drawing
 - » Expands on the child’s ideas and comments
 - » Asks questions to extend the child’s thinking
 - » Connects the conversation to the child’s prior experiences (e.g., What will they do when they are snowed in the house?; How will they clean the snow off the car?)
- Opportunities the teacher uses to scaffold the child’s language:
 - » Expands on the child’s words/phrases
 - » Provides clarifying language
 - » Adds new vocabulary

ENGAGING CHILDREN
IN CONVERSATIONS

- Actively listen to what a child says.
- Match the tone and feelings of the conversation to a child's emotions.
- Build on a child's experiences and interests.
- Promote many back-and-forth verbal exchanges between partners in the conversation.



SLIDE 13: ENGAGING CHILDREN IN CONVERSATIONS

Basic conversations elements must be in place before “thick” extended conversations can occur.

These elements are:

- Active listening
- Matching the tone and feelings of the conversation to a child’s affect
- Building on children’s experiences and interests
- Promoting multiple back-and-forth exchanges

NOTE

These conversation elements are outlined in more depth in the suite entitled *Engaging Children in Conversations*.



EXTENDING THE CONVERSATION

- Encourage multiple back and forth exchanges.
- Provide opportunities to extend children's language.
- Respond to children's interests and ideas.
- Encourage children to engage in higher level thinking.



EMPHASIZE *

Once a child and teacher are engaged in conversation, it is the teacher's role to extend the conversation.

SLIDE 14: EXTENDING THE CONVERSATION

Review strategies to extend conversations.

Encourage back-and-forth exchanges:

- Discuss topics children are interested in and can relate to.
- Take turns speaking.
- Provide time for children to respond.

Encourage higher level thinking:

- Share what you know and/or understand.
- Explain your thinking process.
- Introduce new concepts or skills.

Talk with children about activities they are engaged in:

- Comment on what children are doing.
- Ask questions about what children say or do and what they can do next.
- Encourage children to make comparisons, consider other possibilities, and/or think beyond the here and now.

Extend children's language:

- Expand words by adding a little more.
- Add new vocabulary.
- Model proper language use.

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION 

There are cultural variations around communication and language practices (e.g., emphasis on nonverbal versus verbal communication). As appropriate, invite participants to share examples of how they might apply these strategies with children in their own classroom.

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 visual supports teaching and learning by serving as a reminder for how to engage children in rich back-and-forth exchanges.

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





LEARNING ACTIVITY:

CONVERSATION PRACTICE VIGNETTES

This learning activity provides an opportunity for participants to role-play and discuss “thick,” extended conversations. Have the participants break into small groups for this activity.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Conversation Practice Vignettes* handout to each participant.

Within each group have participants decide who is going to role-play the teacher and the remaining group members will role-play preschool children.

NOTE

Have group members switch off the role of the teacher (if role-playing multiple vignettes).

Outline the activity:

- Four vignettes are provided for role-playing and discussing extended conversation scenarios.
- Based on the amount of time available for this activity, presenters may choose how many vignettes each small group is responsible for.

Possible options:

- Each group is assigned one vignette to role-play and discuss.
- Each group is assigned two vignettes (either #1 or #2 and either #3 or #4) to role-play and discuss.
- Each group role-plays and discusses each of the four vignettes.

DISCUSSION

Ask for volunteers to share their observations and responses from their small groups. Take time to hear an example from each of the four vignettes.



LEARNING ACTIVITY:

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

This learning activity provides an opportunity for participants to develop a plan for how they intend to integrate this content into their individual classrooms/centers.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Developing an Action Plan* handout to each participant.

Introduce the activity:

- This handout is designed to assist participants in planning opportunities to engage in extended conversations with children.
- The first column provides space to select a time of day and location that is appropriate for engaging in an extended conversation with a child or group of children.
- The second column provides space to outline the topic of conversation and how this topic fits with a child's or children's interests.

Provide time for participants to work alone or together to plan meaningful opportunities to engage in extended and "thick" conversations in their classrooms.

Have participants organize into small groups and share their action plans. If time allows, bring large group back together and have several volunteers share their plans.



SLIDE 15: 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. Recommended placement for this overview slide is after Slide 4.

Thick and Thin 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 extending conversations into thick verbal exchanges.

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*



For more Information, contact us at: NCQTL@UW.EDU or 877-731-0764

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