

Language Modeling and Conversations: Expansions

Narrator: Welcome to this short presentation on Expansions. This presentation is one in our series on language modeling and conversations. In it, you'll learn about using expansions to extend your conversations with children to support their language learning, and to use conversations to develop children's thinking and understanding.

The National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning uses the House Framework to represent the effective practices that are needed to aid in school readiness for all children. There are four components: Effective and Engaging Interactions and Environments, Research-Based Curricula and Effective Teaching Practices, Ongoing Child Assessment, and Highly Individualized Teaching and Learning. All components are necessary, and all need to work together. This presentation on expansions fits into the foundation of the House. Expansions are teaching practices that support more engaging interactions and language learning. Expansions are ways to expand on what the child says or does during their turn in a conversation. Adults expand by adding more words or adding more information. An expansion should also invite the child to another turn so it keeps the conversation going.

Extending the conversation has a number of benefits for children. Such conversations benefit children's language development and can also benefit their cognitive and social development. Taking turns, asking questions, commenting, and using novel words are all ways to keep the conversation going. Let's think specifically about how to use expansions as another way to extend the conversation. Adults can expand by adding more language to a child's words. Think about how to add language to make the child's phrases more complete. Adults also make children's phrases more complex by rephrasing and using language that is just a bit more sophisticated. And adults expand by adding new or interesting vocabulary. Now, let's listen to what expansions sound like.

Teacher: You already used your trash?

Child: Yeah, I already used it, but -- or not, or not reusing them right now.

Teacher: Oh. How did you use your trash?

Child: I, I...The blue box is the reusable trash, and the green box -- and the green trash box, it is, it is the trash.

Teacher: You were talking about the recycle bin. Ahhhh. What things do you put inside the recycle bin?

Child: Um, paper?

Teacher: Paper. Awesome. Can you think of anything else?

Child: Bottles?

Teacher: Bottles, perfect. Anything else?

Child: Sodas!

Teacher: Sodas? The ones you actually drink? Or what they come in?

Child: What -- what, when, what if I already drink all the soda?

Teacher: Okay, so that's called aluminum can.

Child: Aluminum can.

Teacher: Yeah, that word was hard to say.

Narrator: This presentation highlighted the use of expansions to extend conversations with children. These examples focus on adding more language. Expansions can also add more information to scaffold children's thinking and understanding. Learn more in our in-service on using expansions. Check out our tips for teachers and helpful resources. Try to use expansions in your next conversation with a child and have fun with this practice. Thank you for listening.