

## **Focus on Background Knowledge: Planned Language Approach Big 5**

Deborah Mazzeo: Hello, and welcome. Thank you for joining us today for the second Planned Language Approach Big 5 webinar with a focus on background knowledge. Last month, we talked about alphabet knowledge in early writing, and this month we're focusing on the next Big 5 skill, which is background knowledge.

As a reminder for those who may not have been on the first webinar, the Big 5 is one of the five components of the Planned Language Approach. They are the key skills that are critical for later school success, including grade-level reading. I want to be sure that you join us again in March on the 21, at the same time for a webinar on the third Big 5 skill, which is book knowledge and print concepts.

My name is Deborah Mazzeo, and I am the Cultural and Linguistic Practices coordinator at the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, and you can see on the screen my two very dear colleagues, Jan Greenberg, who's the senior subject matter expert on child development, and Karen Nemeth. She's the senior training and Technical Assistance specialist for dual language learners, and I'm happy to be able to co-present with them today, and you'll be hearing their voices shortly as we proceed through the slides here. Before we begin, I'll just take a moment to go over some information regarding the webinar in case there are any new folks that are on. We'll be using some of the features of this webinar platform to help us interact. At the bottom of your screen, you'll notice some widgets.

If you have any questions during the webcast, you can submit them through the purple Q&A widget. We'll try to answer these during the webcast, and please know that we do capture all the questions. If you have any tech questions, please answer or enter them there as well. A copy of today's slide deck and additional resources are available in the resource list, which is the green widget. We encourage you to download any resources or links that you may find useful. Throughout the session, we'll be using the blue group-chat widget to engage with each other, and I appreciate those of you who have already contributed to the chat. You will find additional answers to some common technical issues located in the yellow help widget at the bottom of your screen if you run into any problems. Each of the widgets are resizable and movable for a customized experience. You just click on the widget, and you move it by dragging and dropping and resizing with the arrows at the top corners.

And finally, if you have any trouble, just try refreshing your browser by pressing F5. Be sure to log off of your VPN and exit out of any other browsers. So, I also want to mention that this is DLL Celebration Week. During this weeklong event, we are highlighting resources. We're hosting live chats. Hopefully, you're seeing the social media announcements on Twitter or Facebook, and we've been delivering webinars of which this is one. Hopefully you or someone you know has received a DLL Week Celebration box that you can see there on the slide, and hopefully they've shared the contents with you, but if not, you can download the resources from the website that is in the resource list, and I believe Jan just posted it in the chat for you,

so if you scroll down to the bottom, it'll say, "Download the zip file," and that's where you can find all of the resources that were on a flash drive in the boxes.

We just want you to know to participate in tomorrow's live chat that's happening in the Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practices community. That's the CLRP, MyPeers Community, at 1 o'clock p.m. Eastern Time, or if your preferred language is Spanish, join the live chat in [speaks Spanish] community on MyPeers, and we'll have them simultaneously in English, and in Spanish, and you'll see that tomorrow's focus is on the research that powers our work with DLL, so that's what we'll be chatting about in the live chat. I also want to mention for those of you who are working in tribal programs I encourage you to join our partners on the AI/AN Language and Cultural Community on MyPeers. We're doing a lot of cross-posting this week because today is International Mother Language Day, and the focus of UNESCO is on tribal language this year. 2019 is the Year of Indigenous Languages.

And then finally we also invite you to create and post on social media using the hashtag #BrilliantDualLanguage Learners. And we're interested in knowing, have any of you participated in any of the DLL Celebration Week activities yet this week? So, if you'll take a moment to respond just with a quick yes or no and be sure to hit submit, and I'll be interested in seeing the responses to that. If you haven't yet participated, you know, tomorrow, again, I encourage you to enjoy MyPeers and participate in our live chat. Share the pictures or different ideas with the community on MyPeers on what you're doing to support children who are DLLs and their families in your programs. I'm going to give it another second to see. So, far, it looks like there's about 68 persons who have not yet participated, so we hope that that changes for tomorrow. All right. I'm going to go ahead and push this result out to the audience here.

All right. So, it says, "Seventy percent have not yet participated, and 30 percent have," so I hope those of you who have, have really found the information and resources that have been shared valuable and thanks for your contributions, and we hope the rest of you will start to chime in so thanks for that. All right. So, here is what we're covering today. The topics are all interwoven and connected throughout the presentation. I also want to bring your attention that you may have noticed in the resource list that there is a multi-paged PDF titled "Background Knowledge." You all are the first to receive this newly updated document, which is the basis for today's webinar. There is also a link to the new background-knowledge web page on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, or we call it the ECLKC or "E-Click" for short.

As many may have heard me say before, there is now a page for each of the Big 5 skills, so if you're used to how the PLA used to look, there's been a little bit of a different formatting now on the webpage. So, at the end of this presentation, we're hoping that you'll be able to understand the connections to a Planned Language Approach, the connections to coordinated approaches and then also the connection for background knowledge to the Early Learning Outcomes Framework. We're also hoping that you'll be able to explain what the research says about background knowledge. We'll cover the development trajectory from birth to age 5 and identify strategies to support children who are dual language learners, so, hopefully you'll be able to describe and identify those and then finally identify effective practices for supporting each skill in different early-learning settings. So, when we talk about background knowledge, we include the points you see on the sky. First is information that children learn and store in

their memory: information about themselves, other people, objects and the world around them. So, we know children learn from their experiences, and often those begin with the experiences within their families, right? So, for example, they learn about animals from having pets, or maybe they live on a farm with livestock. They learn about transportation by riding in cars or buses or trains. They learn their family's way of doing things, their languages, their routines, their cultural beliefs, in different settings such as at home or in stores or restaurants and places of worship, and children begin to make connections between what they see and hear in these places, and so that fills their background knowledge.

Background knowledge also includes beliefs, values, rules and expectations in children's cultures, environments and languages, so even very young children begin to understand the routines of their lives and the words people say to them. They learn when and how to eat, play, walk, run. They also learn how people interact with one another, what people wear, what different objects are called and how we use them in our languages. Children use this background knowledge as they begin to talk and write and use books and other print materials, so that's why it's one of the key language and literacy skills. Children may develop this knowledge in one or more languages, and then it transfers to the other language. As children grow and they have meaningful interactions with new people and new environments and their new languages, they continue to build on this prior knowledge. So, I won't spend too much time on this because many may know from last month's webinar that the implementation of the Big 5 involves a coordinated approach. All of these activities listed on the slide involved implementing a coordinated approach: supporting background knowledge as part of the curriculum, assessing children's learning of background knowledge and supporting families to develop background knowledge.

So, our conversation on background knowledge today is only one slice of that pie, the PLA pie. It's part of that Big 5 for all, but all of the other pieces are important, too. You can see that little image, that pie image, on the screen. The five pieces of the PLA are aligned to sections of the DLLPA, the Dual Language Learner Program Assessment, which is a wonderful resource for assessing your own systems and services for supporting children who are DLLs and their families. If you're implementing a Planned Language Approach, you're implementing a coordinated approach to serving DLLs, and just know that a coordinated approach is required by the Head Start Program Performance Standards for serving children who are DLLs and their families.

All of the Big 5 skills and our conversation today on background knowledge are supported by research and connected to the Language and Literacy domain of the ELOF, the Early Learning Outcomes Framework, and while we're here showing the ELOF goals, child care programs will see that background knowledge will also align with state early-learning-and-development standards. This slide focuses on the infant-and-toddler goals associated with background knowledge, and those appear under the Language and Communication domain, and three subdomains, which you can see on the slide here, are attending and understanding, communicating, and speaking, and the third one is vocabulary.

For preschoolers, the goals associated with background knowledge also appear under Language and Communication and those same three subdomains: attending and understanding,

communicating and speaking and vocabulary. Now, these goals are relevant for children in classrooms, family child care, and home-visiting settings. I'll note here too that it's important to know what's happening throughout the birth-to-5 spectrum. Children grow and develop so quickly, so it's important to not just focus on the age group that you teach but also to know the entire spectrum to be able to meet children where they are and be able to scaffold from there. So, with that, I am going to turn it over to my colleague, Karen, and, Karen, I will let you take it away.

Karen Nemeth: Well, thank you, Deb. My favorite part, talking about the research that is behind all of the sophisticated guidance that we get from Head Start. We have the Program Performance Standards. We have the Planned Language Approach document. We have the Early Learning Outcomes Framework, and Head Start communicates all these expectations for what should be happening in our programs, but it's really kind of amazing how clearly all of that guidance connects to current and compelling research, and that's what I'm going to be talking about, so, you know, we are saying some of the same things here that you hear a few minutes ago, but now we're going to talk about how the research supports these things like the idea that children connect information they're learning to the familiar concepts or schema that they have in their brains that they start building from birth, and that means that that information comes from their experiences, particularly the experiences that are related to their life at home and in the context of the culture.

We know that gaps in children's background knowledge may make it harder for them to understand what they read and hear. The more they know, the more foundation they have that they can connect new knowledge to. If they have less knowledge, there's less for the new words to connect to, so I like to explain it like background knowledge is kind of like fuel, right? Like, you need to fill the car up with fuel if you want it to go, but you can't just fill the car up with fuel and then sit there and wait for something to happen, right? You have to turn on the engine, and the engine has to use the fuel. Well, it's kind of the same thing, what the research says about children. You have to fill them up with as much knowledge as possible, but it doesn't really do much for them until they act on that knowledge, until they use that knowledge, so they make those connections. They do hands-on activities. They talk about it, and that's where all this guidance that you see on the ECLKC and in the standards and the ELOF comes from that research about building and construction those connections.

So, we know that children have similarities and differences in their background knowledge, things that they all share in common and things that are unique to each child, because each child has their own fund of knowledge, their own collection of knowledge that they've gained for everything that happens in their life, at home, in the community and wherever they go and also at school, so we want to really focus not on just what we tell children but what we give them as fuel that they can use, right? So, we want to know, for example, that language is something that's constructed. It's not just received and soaked in. It's constructed by the child's brain. They have to make sense out of it and figure out how to use it. Each new word is attached to prior knowledge, and language is built on those connections, so we need strong platform of prior knowledge. A lot of that fuel has to be in there.

Home-language learning builds stronger content knowledge. When you support children's home language, we actually give them more that they can understand. The more they understand, the more knowledge they get, so when they learn new words in a new language, they got all of this knowledge to connect to because we've helped them understand things by supporting their home language. And also when you observe a child at play, you can see how they reveal their interests, and when a child shows you their interests, they reveal things they have background knowledge about. You know, a child that is always interested in digging up bugs out in the yard of the school is a child who shows you he probably has some thoughts and some knowledge and knows some things about those bugs, and whether it's in a home language or in English, you can build on that because you see what connections are going to work for that child, right? So, we want to make sure that we keep capturing this idea.

You know, for children who are dual language learners, this can be especially important because they're not only learning new information but whole new language as well, so we want to support their home language as a way of supporting how much they understand, right? It's not just a nice thing to do for children. It actually is critical to their comprehension, and that helps them build that background knowledge, and that is what helps them then to better as they learn English. We can learn about a child's background knowledge even if they speak a language you don't know if you take the time to just be with the child and observe their play, observe their activities. You'll start to see, what are the things that they gravitate to? What are the things that are familiar to them? And when you observe those things, you'll see how you can make connections that build both their home language and their new language in English. So, following a child's interest is an important component of the research, and you have a video clip now that's going to show you about how this can happen at home, and I think you might be watching.

[Video begins]

Boy No. 1: I love that one chocolate.

Man No. 1: [Indistinct]

Woman No. 1: There's the chocolate. I didn't see that. It's inside the cake.

Man No. 1: [Indistinct].

Woman No. 1: Yeah, that's our favorite part.

Boy No. 1: I love my [Indistinct] cake. I love my food.

Woman No. 1: I love food too, especially...

Boy No. 1: I love [Indistinct] food.

Woman No. 1: Like that big food? Do you like the...

Boy No. 1: I love my snacks here.

Woman No. 2: Hey.

Boy No. 1: And I'm 4?

Woman No. 2: Yeah.

Boy No. 1: I'm 4?

Woman No. 2: 4.

Boy No. 1: Me — me M?

Woman No. 2: Yeah, no, you are 4.

Boy No. 1: Me 4 like [Indistinct]

Woman No. 2: [Speaks native language]

Boy No. 1: I love my N. I love my four.

Man No. 1: Oh, you love—you love your M and your four.

Boy No. 1: I love my four.

Man No. 1: Okay. We look for three with you.

Boy No. 1: I love three. Amila is 3.

Woman No. 2: Yeah, Amila is 3.

Man No. 1: Ah, Amila is 3. Yes.

Woman No. 2: Yeah.

Amila: [Indistinct]

Woman No. 2: Look.

Boy No. 1: I love my [speaks native language].

Boy No. 1: I want to go eat.

Man No. 1: In Arabic [speaks native language]

Woman No. 2: [Speaks native language] Yeah.

Man No. 1: [Speaks native language]

Woman No. 2: In English, magnet.

Man No. 1: [Speaks native language] [Speaks native language] magnet.

Boy No. 1: Magnet.

Man No. 1: Magnet [speaks native language]. In Arabic, what is that?

Boy No. 1: [Speaks native language]

Man No. 1: [Speaks native language]

Boy No. 1: [Speaks native language]

Woman No. 2: Very difficult, huh?

Amila: Mama [Indistinct]

Man No. 1: [Speaks native language] like Moroccan [Speaks native language]. [Speaks native language]

Boy No. 1: [Speaks native language]

Man No. 1: [Speaks native language]

Woman No. 2: Yeah.

Man No. 1: Okay, [speaks native language]? Okay, [speaks native language]?

[Video ends]

Karen: Okay. Now you could see that that family was speaking several languages. They typically speak Moroccan, French, and Arabic at home, and they're all also learning English, so they use English in this video, but could you notice a strategy that they use to help the child make connections? They didn't just wait for connections to happen. They did something to help that child make connections, so if you noticed that, type it in the chat box. What do you think those parents actually did, and isn't it interesting that building those connections between prior knowledge and new knowledge can happen at home and at school? And we can really benefit from partnerships with families that... to support what they do at home as much as we support how... what we learn from them can help us in school. So, see if you notice any of the strategies that the parents used and type them into the chat box to share with each other.

And while you're thinking about that, I'm also going to ask you, what do you think the child showed us about what he already knows? How did the child show what he already understands? And by giving the child plenty of chance to do the talking, the parents were able to see what he understood and where he might have had something wrong, and then they could discuss it, but they didn't just talk at him. They talked with him, and they listened when he talked too, so it really is fun to see, and so one of the things that really is noticeable, I see Sylvia says, "They got down on his level." Yes, they're really having a conversation with him and engaging him so that his brain can process that information, and they had actual items, and then I see Yvonne is saying that the dad also encourages the child to repeat the words in English, and then the dad said, "And here is how we say it in Arabic, and here is how we say it in Moroccan," and so he didn't just hope the child noticed, but he specifically explained, what did the words mean, and how were the words connected? So, powerful, and we can all do that, can't we? All right.

So, we also want to share a couple of other resources here that are available for you today and on the ECLKC. This is a resource called Gathering and Using the Language Information Families Share, lots of great questions that you can engage with families to help you understand a child's background knowledge and experiences, and we offer these resources that are for teachers and for families, and this is called, The Importance of Home Language Series, and it has... And it's available in multiple languages. Okay, and now we're going to hear a little bit about how the developmental progression of these skills and background-knowledge learning comes from infants on up, and we're handing it over to Jan, so, Jan, are you ready?

Jan Greenberg: I am ready, so thanks, Deb and Karen, for the great background information about background knowledge, and so, yes, now we're going to go from that big picture to

starting our conversation about background knowledge and development progressions, and we're going to start that with babies, and so thinking about what Deb and Karen have already shared about what background knowledge is and how children get it and having that connection to language, we know that babies begin to learn about the world around them even before they're born. We know that with every interaction that babies and young children have with their environment and people in them they begin to learn about how things work, how people respond, what it feels like to be hungry or full or wet or dry or sleepy or alert, and we know that babies develop background knowledge primarily from all of their various experiences in their world and by interacting with adults who will help them make sense of all those experiences, so here is one short example to reflect what's in the developmental progression for the goal that you're looking at. Child learns from communication and language experiences with others.

So, 8-month-old Juanita touches a soft stuffed animal that her mother has given her, and then she touches the hard floor, so her mom describes what she's touching and how what she's touching feels in Spanish, and so her mom is helping Juanita develop knowledge of textures, new vocabulary words and also how to make sense of what she's feeling, so now when Juanita comes to the infant classroom, she now notices that there are hard and soft surfaces, and her teachers do the same thing that her mom was doing. They describe the surfaces and how the different surfaces feel in Spanish, and so Juanita's teachers are helping her build on knowledge and language that she's developing at home, so there's one quick example about a progression in action.

Okay, so how do we support babies to develop and build on the background knowledge that they come with? And actually before I go into these strategies and practices that you're looking at on the slide, I want to note a difference between strategies and practices and specific learning experiences for activities. We sometimes get questions from people about wanting more information about specific learning experiences or specific activities, and one answer that will give you is that your curriculum has lots of those, lots of specific learning experiences and activities, so you can think about those experiences and activities as the vehicles for using different strategies and practices, and the wonderful, lovely thing about strategies and practices is that they can be used across different experiences, different activities, routine, transitions and everything else that happens during a baby's day, and so with that, here are some strategies that support babies, and I'm guessing if you're looking at them you're thinking, "Wow, these possibly look kind of familiar to me and think that maybe I'm even using some of these strategies and practices already when I'm interacting with infants and toddlers, when I'm supporting adults to interact with infants."

I do want to point out that first one: Notice when babies are alert and interested. You might think that's an interesting strategy for building background knowledge, but when babies are alert, it means they're available to what you have to offer, so when you notice they are alert and interested, take advantage of those moments to interact, so talk to them about their daily routines like feeding and stifling and swaddling and tummy time.

Use their home language if you know it. When they are alert, offer them safe toys and objects with a variety of textures. Why a variety of textures? Because that gives you something to talk



with them about. You can tell them about smooth, bumpy, soft. Intentionally use words in children's home language or use sign language as you are talking with them and describing what they are experiencing with all of the sensors that they're using to experience them, and engage babies in conversations, and I love this one. You can watch them for their responses, and you can respond in kind with different facial expressions, gestures, words, signs. Each time a baby babbles and coos or gives you an expression or a gesture, make sure that when you are having that back-and-forth conversation with a baby you give that baby time to respond.

Sometimes, they just need time to process what you've said or what you've asked, so give them time. Model the give and take of a conversation. Providing and reading a variety of culturally and linguistically appropriate books, hopefully you've got books with interesting photos and illustrations of objects, animals and people to point to and talk about. These are things that — that may be familiar to children or may be new to children, so, it's a great way for building background knowledge and building on background knowledge, and finally take babies out into the community, and maybe you're doing that in a variety of ways, whether you're in a center-based program, a family child care or you're a home visitor working with families at home and during socialization, but when you're getting babies out in the community, talk to them about what they're seeing and hearing and smelling and touching and pacing. Again, these are all ways to build background knowledge.

So, okay, so the next thing that we're going to see is a video, and I want to give you just a little setup for this. So, the video you're about to see takes place during indoor play, and you'll see two female teachers and two infants. One is a non-mobile infant, and the other one is a mobile infant, and I'll ask you to pay attention to the teacher who's wearing the red sweater, and as you are watching this video, look for strategies that you see the teacher using. What is she doing to support children's development for background knowledge, and then maybe what do you see the child or children doing as she's interacting with them? And as you're watching, go ahead and post responses in the chat box.

[Video begins]

Woman No. 3: Oh, you're choosing the shaker with the bells. Come on, Mia. You want to come? You want to come see our toys? You're still waking up, huh? Okay. Let me help your friend, Mia. I think she's feeling a little shy. Ms. [Indistinct], can I trade you? [Chatter] Mia, come here. How are you? Huh? Have you seen the friends in our classroom, hmm? Yeah? We have some friends in here, huh? Do you want to play? What do you want to play with? Look who we have here. Let's see.

Woman No. 4: Is it good? [Indistinct]

Woman No. 3: What do you choose, huh?

Woman No. 4: [Indistinct].

Woman No. 3: Have the purple ring.

Woman No. 4: Yeah?

Woman No. 3: Oh, you're going to use the ladybug? Huh? [Lyrics] ♪ Ladybug, ladybug Shake, shake, shake ♪ ♪ Ladybug, ladybug Shake, shake, shake ♪ I see you. I'm still here. Yes. I had to go and get your friend, Mia. She was feeling a little shy. Yes. What's this one? [Speaks Spanish] Shake, shake, shake. Shaky, shake, shake. Shake, shake, shake. You're making sounds, Mia. When you shake it, it makes a sound, huh?

Woman No. 4: [Indistinct]

Woman No. 3: Uh-oh. Oh. Shaky, shake, shake, shake.

[Video ends]

Jan: Okay. I'm going to stop this video now. And so what strategies did you see the teaching using? How is she building children's background knowledge? Okay. "Describing everything to the child, encouraging play with options." Okay. "The teacher never quits talking." Well, she was talking to them about what they were seeing and doing, and, yes, she was possibly using the children's home language although I did love that she used the word [speaks Spanish], which might have been a familiar word to Mia. "She was comforting. She was narrating." Yep, she was narrating what children were doing. "Assisting the child in feeling more secure before working on the language, source of information, labeling words to describe items, parallel talk with children."

These are great. These are great responses. When she was interacting with the infant, she was noticing when the infant was ready for an interaction, and so she knew that that child was alert and ready. Yeah, she used descriptive words, mapping action, using neutral sounds, child's language. She offered interesting toys for the child to play with, and then she could describe what those toys were like, what the characteristics of the toys were like, and she was engaging with some back-and-forth exchanges with the two children so, you know, kind of having little mini conversations with them, and all of those strategies and all of the ones that you're posting help babies learn about how things work, how people respond, how they're—you know, what kind of space they're in, including feeling shy when there are strangers in the room who are videotaping them, so all of those things sound like simple strategies, but they're incredibly powerful for building babies' background knowledge.

Okay, so that is about babies, so now we've got another goal: Child initiates nonverbal communication and language to learn and gain information. And we're going to use this now to talk about toddlers, and, you know, I would say that we're continuing using similar kinds of practices to build toddlers' background knowledge because we know they build it through interactions with others and with guided opportunities to safely explore their world. Adults provide toddlers with lots of meaningful hands-on experiences. They describe what toddlers see, hear, smell and touch and why they do or not do certain things, and we know that toddlers learn words in the languages they hear, so it's so important that they hear lots of languages during this incredibly exciting time of development, and so, wow, lots of strategies for supporting toddlers, and if you take a moment to look at them, you'll notice some similar strategies to ones that I just shared about supporting babies, so I'm just going to touch on a couple of them here. So, we want to help children safely explore their world.

They're much more mobile now. They are into and want to be into everything. They're incredibly curious about the world around them, so do things like turning over rocks to look to see whether there are insects there or feed birds or draw pictures in the dirt with sticks or collect interesting objects when you're out on walks with children and describe all of those things that they are doing and seeing. Teach them new and interesting words and concepts, and again, you know their home language. Use it. You can talk to them about things like how seasons change or what kind of weather is happening during the day or how things grow, and you can use really interesting words because they will learn them, and they will build them up. As you're providing and reading books to them, toddlers can now listen to books with simple story lines, and that gives you something more to talk with them about, and build on what they know by stretching and expanding that knowledge, so say you're looking at a book, or maybe you actually have some frogs, some pictures of frogs, or you're actually looking at frogs, and you could say something like, "Remember when we saw the ducks swimming with their webbed feet? Well, frogs have webbed feet too, and those spots of skin between their toes help them to swim fast," so connecting what children already know to something new that you are introducing them to.

So, more strategies here, so, you know, respond to the questions that they have. Provide more information. Sometimes, depending on the question, you could say something like, "That's a good question. Let's think about how we could find out the answer," and that gives you a little bit more opportunity to engage in a language interaction about their question. Give them feedback that helps them learn more about the world so going back to the example of the duck, so maybe you're looking at a book, and there's a picture of a swan, and the child says, "Duck," and you could say, "Well, yes, it's a type of duck, but it's a swan. See how it has a long neck," so you're adding more information. You can talk about objects and animals and their categories, so you can say things like, "Cows, chickens and sheep live on farms. They are all farm animals," or you could say, "Here is a knife, a fork and a spoon. They are all silverware," or you could really blow their minds with an interesting word by saying, "Here is a knife, a fork and spoon. They are called eating utensils." You can share interesting words like that with children.

Make sure you're encouraging and supporting imaginary play in all kinds of ways and with all kinds of materials, including things like empty cardboard boxes, and you can say, "Look at this box. We can pretend it is a car, a boat or a fire truck." Encourage them to show what they know in a variety of ways. They can paint. They can draw. Children who are beginning to scribble and write, that's another way of showing what they know, and talk to them about what they are creating. And then finally if you have children who are using assistive technology as identified on their ISFP, encourage them. Support them in using that to communicate what they know about people and objects and what's going on in their environment and to ask and to respond to questions so, again, lots and lots of strategies for building toddlers' background knowledge.

Okay, so another video, again, I want to set it up first, so this one takes place during a group socialization, and you'll see two female home visitors, a mom and two toddlers, and again watch for what the adults are doing to support children's background knowledge and then how the child responds.

[Video begins]

Woman No. 5: ...water on there. Can you water the flowers?

Woman No. 6: That a boy.

Woman No. 5: Can you do it?

Woman No. 7: Are you tangled together?

Woman No. 8: I know it. Yeah, he's getting ready to take a drink. Hey, look! Look! Watch! He's like, "Let me have a drink first, and then maybe we'll talk."

Woman No. 7: Did you say anything or...

Woman No. 8: Good job, bubba. I like that you drink water so good.

Woman No. 7: Stack it on up!

Woman No. 5: Can you put some on the flowers? They're thirsty, too. Yeah. There you go. Oh, good job, bubba. Ooh, look.

Woman No. 5: Yeah.

Woman No. 7: Come here so they can water the flowers.

Woman No. 5: That might have been a little much.

Woman No. 7: Dump them in there.

Woman No. 5: There you go. You going to have some more?

Woman No. 7: This is my water bottle.

Woman No. 5: Well, it's the kind of water I drink. So, he sees Smartwater, and he's —

Woman No. 7: Well, we'll just give that to you, okay?

Woman No. 5: It's a good job. Can I get a high five? No?

Woman No. 8: Yeah, let him water his flower.

Woman No. 5: Oh, yeah, there you go. Water them more.

Woman No. 8: You're sharing?

[Video ends]

Jan: So, what did you notice? Oh, what? Let me stop. So, what did you notice about what the adults were doing to support that child's background knowledge? You can type that in the chat box. As we're waiting, I — Yes. Oh, there we go. "Follows..." Okay. "Followed the lead of the child. She labeled relatable experiences from the home. He knows that this is the type of water that I drink. She used familiar language. Relating his thirst to the flowers being thirsty." Yep, yep. "Engaging in the activities with the child. He was familiar with the brand because his mother drinks it." Yep, yep. "Again, mapping out the child's actions and adding to what he knows about drinking water and being thirsty, yeah, so spoke about how the mom drank the water, so he's mimicking." Okay. These are all really great. Yes. "Expanded vocabulary."

All right. So, yeah, you definitely get the idea about using various strategies for supporting toddlers' background knowledge, and I just want to draw your attention to the questions that are now on the slide. We're not going to answer these here, but these are some questions for you to consider and answer as you're in your programs, implementing strategies that support and build children's background knowledge. We know that parents and families are key here because what children know and learn about the world around them starts at home, so after this webinar, take some time to answer the questions either on your own or with others in your program, and I am now going to turn this over to Karen to talk to us about supporting preschoolers' background knowledge. Karen?

Karen: Well, my goodness, Jan, you said so many times, "Let the child show you what they know," ways for the child to show you what they know, and I want to know why. Why, Jan? Why were you so focused on asking the child to show you what they know? Because when they express what they know, that's how we see the sign of where we can build that connection and grow their background knowledge, right? So, that starts with babies and in toddlers who are getting more active and learning more, but the big change that comes between toddlers and preschoolers is, by the time we get to the preschool child, they've got a lot of knowledge, and some of it's right, and some of it might not be right, but they have a lot more knowledge, so we need to give them even more time to express, and we shift away from that focus of babies and toddlers where we're doing so much of the talking, and as they get older, we do less of the talking, and we encourage the child to do more of the talking, and then we have got...

Talking is an action they perform to process the knowledge that they're learning and make those connections, and that's how we know how they're doing with those connections, right? When children talk to you, they show you what they're getting and what they're not getting, and, like, I had a preschool child once who heard about blackouts, and she explained to me that the black comes out and comes up to your door and turns off your light. Well, that's very sophisticated, but it's not correct, but if she didn't tell me, I would have no way of helping her fine-tune her background knowledge. I had to let her talk. I can't just tell her what a blackout is and walk away, right? That's what these components of the developmental progression really help us understand.

We want children to develop that knowledge in their English and their home language. We can acknowledge what's culturally meaningful to them as well as new things they learn in school to build those funds of knowledge, so we have an example of a 4-year-old named... a group of 4-year-olds who are tending to their little plants that they're growing in the community garden near their family child care home, and they make sure that the sprouts get Sun and water, and as two of the children are learning about the plants and the water cycle and where food comes, they all get something different out of that experience.

One of the children eats an apple for a snack, and he tells the family child care provider that his dad said apples were also plants, and they need Sun and water, so he's making new connections to the existing knowledge he already has, and he's making his own connections between what he learned at home and what he learned in the program.

So, the family child care provider responded that he is continuing to develop his background knowledge of plants, so that helped her make a plan. She chooses a story that has to do with

plants, and then she collects some nonfiction books to put out on display about plants because she's seeing that these children have this interest. She's going to use it to grow their knowledge, and that means if I'm going to choose a counting activity, I could choose anything to count. Why not choose something to count that has to do with plants? So, I'm connecting and helping those children grow their background knowledge.

So, these are the strategies that we talked about or the practices that we talked about for supporting preschoolers. We want to show our own curiosity and interests, but we also want... We don't want to plant our interests on children. We don't come in every morning and say, "Here is what I think children will be interested in." We come in saying, "I want to learn what each child is interested in," and share age-appropriate nonfiction and fiction texts and give them more information and something to talk about. Use rich, conceptual talk with real information. Like, we don't say, "Pick that up." We say, "Would you please pick up that purple ball?" Right? And give them lots of information to add to their fuel. We like to pursue projects or scenes or explorations that give children extended opportunities to build their background knowledge and experience what's in their environment and engage children in concrete meaning-making activities, things that are meaningful to each child, so, you know, you might read the story of Goldilocks and the three bears, and couple of the kids are just really worried that the Goldilocks broke the baby's chair, but a couple of others will be asking you, "Well, what is porridge?" And somebody else might want to practice growling like a bear.

One story connects with different kinds of background knowledge, different interests for each child, and we can use our plans and activities to make those connections in ways that are responsive and that encourage children to do that talking and express their knowledge. And so now here is a slide with a lot more on practices, and some of them we've already talked about, but we want to make sure that you ask questions that encourage thinking and reasoning about everyday experiences, so, you know, one example might be if you might... A teacher might ask, "Why do you think the police siren makes such a loud noise?" That's a very practical question that would get a child thinking, but if you have children in your classroom that speak a variety of languages, you might also learn questions that are general questions in the children's home languages. Like, you might ask, "Why did that happen?" and learn to say that in the home languages of the children. If you say, "Why did that happen?" you could use that question in a lot of different areas and get children talking and processing. And you know what? It's okay if they tell you things in their home language that you don't understand. We're not trying really to build your background knowledge, right? We're trying to let the child process and think critically and express themselves, and if you take notes or record what they're saying, you can translate it and grow from there, okay?

We also want to provide gentle but accurate feedback when a child is confused or they misunderstand, right? I had to tell that child, "No, no, the blackout is not a black thing that comes to your house and turns your light off," right? We want to have daily conversations about topics of interest. Do you? Do you have conversations with each child on a regular basis? And then talk about items and categories, how things go together, how they compare, and then support children's use of assistive technology just as Jan said, which will now be more clearly articulated as they have a detailed IEP plan in preschool, and that's something that you could follow using technology to help.

So, we're going — before — Oh, this video clip is showing, so I will explain it to you after it's over. It's real quick.

[Video clip begins]

[Speaking Spanish]

[Video ends]

Karen: Okay. Because we're getting close to the end, I cut that slide off, but I wanted to remind you that that video and the video that I showed earlier with the family talking about the snacks in Moroccan and French and Arabic, those videos we borrowed from our colleagues at Teaching at the Beginning, which is a website and a YouTube channel where they've collected a — a lot of videos demonstrating early childhood first and second-language learning, and you can see from that example how many ways encouraging a child to do the talking helps you learn what they know and where to go next and that it's not just about teachers, but it could be family members supporting that background knowledge just as well, so we're coming to the end now, and I'm going to hand it back to Deborah, and I want to thank you all for your comments and questions and hope we'll see you at our next video, I mean, our next webinar. Deborah?

Deborah: Thank you so much, Karen. So, I believe now we'll just advance the slide and encourage you to reach out to us if you have any other questions, and you will see the evaluation link, and we appreciate any feedback that you can provide us. We'll take it into account as we prepare for the next webinar, and we thank you so much for your time, and we apologize for the technical difficulties at the beginning with accessing the slides, so thank you all so much. Have a lovely afternoon, and we hope to be back on with you again in March.

So, thanks so much. Bye-bye.