

Chit-Chatting With Children: Creating Meaningful Conversations

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It Starts in the Heart CD-Get Ready

Chorus
 Good Morning, Good Morning Let's get ready the brain smart way
 Good morning, Good morning Get ready to start the day
 Get your hands ready – shake, shake (Shake your hands)
 Get your arms ready – stretch, stretch (Reach your arms up high)
 Get your brain ready – CROSS, CROSS (Touch your right elbow to your left knee and then left elbow to right knee crossing the midline of the body. If this is too hard for young children have them cross the midline of the body in some fashion)
 Get your focus ready – breathe, breathe (Breathe in deeply through the nose, hold it and exhale slowly)
 Get your hands ready – shake, shake
 Get your arms ready – stretch, stretch
 Get your brains ready – cross, cross
 Get your focus ready – breathe, breathe

Repeat Chorus
 Connect with a friend – shake, shake (Turn to your partner and shake their hand)
 Connect with a friend – clap, clap (Clap both hands with a partner)
 Connect with a friend-hip, hip (Bump hips gently with a partner)
 Connect with a friend – hug, hug, hug (Give your partner a big hug)
 Good morning, good morning Let's get ready the brain smart way

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Learning Objectives

1. Explain the relationship of conversation to language, literacy, cognitive, social, and academic development
2. Explain how conversation fits into the bigger language construct
3. Name elements of a conversation
4. Use developmentally appropriate practices and activities to develop and enhance conversational abilities in young children

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Why We Need to Know Language Development

Why We Need to Know Language Development...

- Oral language is the foundation on which reading is built. <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/languagearts/elementary/olangp>
- "Among the best indicators of a child's potential for success with reading and writing are his/her oral language and metalinguistic skills". R. Katz, Shankweiler & Liberman (1981); Kemper (1985); Mann, Shankweiler & Smith (1984); Shankweiler, Liberman, Marek, Forwler & Fischer (1979)
- "The level of language acquisition serves to determine reading achievement levels". Smith (1978)



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Why We Need to Know Language Development

- Teachers consistently identified children as high academic achievers if they used language "with notable skill and power." Loban, 1976
- Children with strong oral language skills in kindergarten later became the most proficient readers and writers. Loban, 1976
- There is a positive relationship between metalinguistic awareness and reading proficiency Turnner, Nesdale & Wright, 1987
- Babies' and preschoolers' exposure to more and to specific kinds of adult talk around them related positively to later reading proficiency Hart & Risely, 1995



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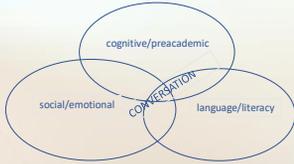
Learning Objective One

Explain the relationship of conversation to language, literacy, cognitive, social, and academic development

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Developmental Domains Overlap

"Keep in mind that during the preschool years, children are learning about their world through oral language, and the primary means of this is through conversation." Ezell & Justice, 2007



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Reciprocal Nature of Learning

"Cognitive development in the preschool years has important implications for children's social and language development, and social and language development play an essential role in cognitive growth. Children construct their understanding of a concept in the course of interaction with others." Vygotsky, 1978; Berk and Winsler, 1995

Copple, C. and Bredekamp, S., Eds. (2009) Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs, 3rd Edition. NAEYC



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Cognitive/Preacademic

"The more that families talked with children everyday, the higher were preschoolers' IQs, particularly when parents used rich and complex language." (Hart & Risley, 1999)

"When adults ask questions and talk with children as they play together, adults are scaffolding children's learning through what they say to children, thus fostering cognitive development." (Berk and Winsler, 1995; Vygotsky, 1962)

"When encouraged with meaningful activities and questions, children often do express, compare, and challenge their views and discuss social justice issues among themselves and with teachers." (Lee, Ramsey, Sweeney, 2008)



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Social/Emotional

"Conversations are the means through which children see that other people may have a different perspective than their own." (Harris, 2005)

"Adult responsiveness to children's interests and concerns in conversations, and the degree to which what adults say connects to what children have just said to them, contribute greatly to children's social understanding." (Ensor & Hughes, 2008)



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Language/Literacy

"As preschool teachers assess their current conversational interactions with children and make plans to include quality conversations throughout the school day, they must keep in mind the magnitude of the importance of conversation to children and their subsequent literacy skills." (Massey, 2004)



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By five years old...

- Foundation for language and speech has been formed
- Communication is almost adult like
- Children have started to learn to read and write
- Conversation has been instrumental in forming language, social, literate and cognitive foundations



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Learning Objective Two

Explain how conversation fits into the bigger language construct

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Ways we Communicate

- Oral language (most effective and efficient)
 - Listening
 - Speaking
- Written language
 - Reading
 - Writing
 - Illustrations
- Gesture
- Sign language
- Body language
- Augmentative Communication



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Oral Language and Communication

Use: Pragmatics
 Content: semantics
 Form: syntax, morphology, phonology

Conversation and Vocabulary

- Tier I, II, III words (Beck, et al.)
- Rare words
- Types of words (noun, verb, adverb, adjective, preposition, articles, pronouns, conjunctions)
- Literate language features (mental and linguistic verbs)



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Rewrite the following to include rich vocabulary

1. We are going for a walk.
2. Sonya built a house.
3. You made a cake.
4. Jose moved the magnets.
5. Lucy said she couldn't go.
6. Bob thought he would eat the cake.



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Conversation and Sentence Structure

- Types of sentences (a sentence in English is basically subject-verb-object, e.g., The boy hit the ball.)
- 4-5 year old children use 4-5 or more words in a sentence
- Literate language features (elaborated noun phrases, conjunctions, adverbial phrases)



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Combine the following simple sentences to make them more complex.

1. She wore the big hat. The hat was red.
2. John ran a race. Paul rode his bicycle.
3. Mary had a green dress. She liked her green dress. It was comfortable.
4. Jake walked home. He was slow.
5. Josie called Lilly. Lilly was sick. She had the flu.



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Learning Objective Three

Name elements of a conversation:
creating conversations in the
preschool classroom

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Conversations

Much research has been done about listening and speaking with children. The conclusion is that engaging in conversations with children will improve oral language abilities and create better thinkers. These conversations have to be both partners talking and listening.

It is not drilling children with questions about his/her day or having him/her sit quietly to listen to the book. It is responding to children's questions. It is making predictions while reading a book and having an interactive dialogue. Strive for five meaningful serve and returns.



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What is a conversation?

Definition of conversation: (n) the exchange of ideas by spoken words.

- A give and take of talk
- A dialogue
- A serve and return of information in both contextualized and decontextualized settings. Strive for five!
- Young children must learn to share information with language;
 - they must learn to question with language;
 - they can protest with language;
 - they can describe, give directions, explain, argue, convince and plan with language.



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Characteristics of a Conversation

Child-teacher or child-child

- More than one exchange

Multiple children (classroom discourse)

- Multiple exchanges but maybe not with same child
- Discourse is conversation or narrative



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Different Kinds of Talk

- Business talk = everyday interactions, commands, non-enriching speech
- Extra talk = those utterances that point out connections to other things
- The sheer amount of “extra talk” was the best predictor of vocabulary at age 3 and at 4th grade—over and above the effects of SES.

Source: Hart, B & Risley, T.R. (1995). Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young Children. Baltimore: Paul Brookes Publishing Co.



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Business Talk/Extra Talk

Teacher Talk	B	E
1. Go get your coats.	X	
2. The spider has lots of legs.		X
3. Four of you votes for a giraffe as you favorite zoo animal.		X
4. Stop hitting Jordan.	X	
5. Time for lunch. Get lined up and get your tray.	X	
6. The author of the books we read is the person who wrote the words.		X



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Elements of Conversation

- Initiate a topic
- Take a turn
- Maintain a topic
- Change a topic
- Repair a conversational breakdown
- End a topic



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Conversation Initiation

- Comment
- Ask questions
- Answer questions
- Predict
- Infer

Teachers need to acknowledge each child's verbal contributions to conversations and discussions.



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Comments

- I see you have six blocks in your tower.
- John brought a collection of shells to share.
- Oh my, I broke my pencil.
- I wonder what the boy will do next.
- I think this bag is bigger than this other one.
- I expect if we move this plant to the sunlight it will grow better.



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Conversation Questions

For example:

- "What do you think will happen next?"
- "Why do you think Goldilocks went into the house?"
- "Why is Baby Bear's bowl the small one?"
- "How do you think Papa Bear felt?"

These types of questions begin conversations and engage in deep thinking. These conversations will improve a child's ability to think.



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Comments and Questions Should Be Cognitively Challenging!

- Low: yes/no or one word answer
- Medium: requires labeling, describing, recalling, requesting information, sequencing
- High: hypothesis, comparison, imagination, opinion, evaluation, prediction, classifying, inferring



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Examples of Questions Include....

- Tell me what you remember about _____. (Recalling)
- In what ways are _____ and _____ alike? (Comparing)
- What differences do you find between _____ and _____? (Contrasting)
- Which of the items in the basket go together for some reason? (classification)
- What do you think will happen to the ice if we take it out of the freezer? (hypothesis or prediction)



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Examples of Questions Include....

- What can we call this group of things? (Labeling)
- What is the order of the blocks for this pattern? (Sequencing)
- Why did Baby Bear’s chair break when Goldilocks sat on it? (Inferring causes)
- How do you think the Little Old Lady felt when she heard the footsteps? (Inferring emotion)



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Turn Taking

- Pass the baton
- Turn taking games
- Say partner name
- Strive for five
- Eye gaze



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Maintain a Topic

- Question
- Comment
- Expansion
- Repetition

Change a Topic

- Warn your listener
- Make a connection to prior topic



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Repair a Breakdown

- Can't hear response
- Didn't understand a word
- Don't know about the topic (background)
- Change of topic without warning

End a Topic

- Polite
- Scripted phrase



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When and Where

- Learning Centers
- Shared Reading
- Meal time
- Play time
- Small Group

- ANYTIME/ANYWHERE



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Article Review

- Test, Cunningham & Lee. (2010) Talking With Young Children: How Teachers Encourage Learning. Dimensions of Early Childhood, Vol. 38(3), 3-14.



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Learning Objective Four

Use developmentally appropriate practices and activities to develop and enhance conversational abilities in young children

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Conversation Checklist

What's the purpose?

- Guideline for observation (self or supervisor)
- A guideline for skill analysis
- A guideline for goal development



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How to be a "good" language partner

- Volume
- Articulation
- Grammar
- Rich vocabulary
- Vocal variety (expressive, melodic)
- Speaking rate
- Attentiveness (pleasant, smiling, eye contact, nodding, facial expressiveness)
- Use of gestures
- Affirmative talk



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Facilitation: Methods/Techniques/Modeling

- Self-talk
 - Parallel-talk
 - Extension/expansion
 - Open questions
 - Scripting
 - Waiting
 - Pausing
 - Confirming
 - Repeating child utterance
- model rare words,
complex grammar



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Strive for Five in Conversation

In conversation, try to get at least five exchanges with the child. You may use open ended questions, comments, repetition of child utterance

- Less like this...
- C: Mommy sock
 A: yeah, that's a sock. You know that's a sock
 C: Lo (yellow) sock?
 A: what do you think?
 C: no response



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More Like This....

- C: mommy sock
 A: yes, this is mommy's yellow sock. Where is the other one?
 C: gone
 A: You think it is gone? I think it is under the bed.
 C: (looks under bed) Here sock!
 A: You found it! Here is the sock!
 C: found it!
 A: You found mommy's yellow sock under the bed. What should I do with my sock?
 C: put on
 A: I will put it on



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Less Like This....

- A: we have bananas for snack. Do you like bananas?
- C: no
- A: I am going to cut a banana
- C: no want banana
- A: you have to try it

Goal: Strive for five during snack time.



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More Like This...

- A: We have bananas for snack. They are yellow and I am going to cut them up.
- C: yellow nanas
- A: Yellow bananas are really good to eat.
- C: no like
- A: You don't like bananas? I like bananas because they taste good.
- C: no cut nanas
- A: we can mash bananas like this and put them on a peanut butter sandwich
- C: mash nana, mash nana
- A: you help me mash bananas
- C: me help mash
- A: you are helping me mash bananas



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Conversation Station

Goal of the conversation station is to make conversations a salient, routine part of the preschool curriculum.

- The conversation station has a designated space in the classroom.
- Children can be rotated through the station
- Teacher focuses on the children to promote active, meaningful conversations
- Probably no more than 3 children at a time
- About 10 minutes in length
- Label the station like the learning centers are labeled and have a table with 3 chairs; consider a pocket chart as a table topper. Place picture cards, children's names in chart. Can also use theme props, story books and writing materials.



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What to do in the Conversation Station

Possibilities:

1. Conversation starters
2. Open-ended questions
3. Conversational elements
4. Strive for five
5. Develop theme concepts and vocabulary of the theme
6. Phone a friend
7. Talk to a doll or stuffed animal
8. Hand puppets
9. Storybook extension



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Conversation Station

Purpose: to discuss, develop and practice activities for the elements of conversation

- Initiate a topic
- Take a turn
- Maintain a topic
- Change a topic
- Repair a conversational breakdown
- End a topic



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A Possible Plan

1. Introduce the conversation station to the kiddos (explicitly teach what they will do in the station)
2. Front load the goals of the conversation station
3. Arrange the physical environment (table and chairs, pocket chart, label, materials, etc.)
4. Discuss with the kiddos what can be done in the station (topics, games, elements of conversation, projects, writing, extending theme, vocabulary practice)
5. Provide a topic, if needed to start the conversation
6. Develop a system to assure that each child rotates through the station
7. Evaluate the station, make adjustments where needed



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Teaching Teachers About Turn and Talk

- <http://old.newteachercenter.org/collaborativediscussions/turn-and-talk/implement#main-content>
- This is a video that is available for viewing and explains the Turn and Talk Strategy using three components: plan, implement, reflect.



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Guidelines for Child to Child

- Teacher determines the conversation partners
 - Both need an opportunity to share
 - Pair less proficient speakers with those with better language skills
- Find space in the classroom where all children can sit facing each other knee to knee
- Teacher gives a comment or question about a project, a book, a field trip, etc. (If you were going to make soup, what would you put in it? What could have happened differently in the story)
- Explicitly instruct children what they will do: sit knee to knee, have eye contact, one listens and one talks, then switch talking
- Teacher will signal when time is up
- Teacher can ask children to report out



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Key Takeaways

- Take every opportunity to initiate conversation across the preschool day
- Ask open-ended and cognitively challenging questions
- Listen and respond to your conversational partner over multiple exchanges
- Keep talking



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Thanks for your time and attention today.

Please give us a shout if we can help with anything.

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