Setting the Stage for TALK: Strategies for Encouraging Language-Building Conversations

Elizabeth Burke Hadley, Katherine M. Newman, Jinsil Mock

Discover practical, research-based strategies for creating conversational opportunities in early childhood classrooms to foster young students' oral language development and support their future reading success.

When young children have rich, back-and-forth conversations with a caregiver or teacher, their language abilities blossom (Dickinson & Porche, 2011). Pre-K and kindergarten are important settings for these rich, language-building conversations. In fact, research has shown that young students in language-rich preschool classrooms continue to reap the associated benefits in vocabulary and reading comprehension well into elementary school (Dickinson & Porche, 2011).

Encouraging student talk in the classroom is valuable for many reasons. For example, young students who can express their feelings and ideas are better able to regulate their emotions, resolve conflicts with peers, and attend to activities (e.g., Nix, Bierman, Domitrovich, & Gill, 2013). In this article, we focus specifically on how classroom conversations support students' oral language development. Students' expressive language grows when they are in classrooms in which teachers and students engage in conversations (Bratsch-Hines, Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, & Franco, 2019). These strong oral language skills provide the foundation for learning to read and are important for both decoding print (Marks et al., 2019) and making meaning from text (Kendeou, van den Broek, White, & Lynch, 2009).

Unfortunately, teacher–student conversations in preschool, particularly for students living in poverty, are relatively rare (Justice, Mashburn, Hamre, & Pianta, 2008). For example, a study examining how time was spent in public pre-Ks found that only about 6% of the day was devoted to teacher–student conversations (Early et al., 2010).

Making space for rich teacher–student conversations in preschool is a challenge. As teachers, we work hard to provide a good model for students' language. As a result, we often end up talking much more than students do (Jacoby & Lesaux, 2014). Teachers are sometimes given the message that supporting oral language means talking more, giving more information, and doing more explicit vocabulary instruction. Although explicit instruction is one piece of the puzzle, oral language grows primarily through interaction, through encouraging talk between teachers, students, and peers. When teachers talk too much, it crowds out opportunities for students to try out their developing language skills.

Another obstacle in encouraging classroom conversations is that it can be difficult to carve out enough time to talk with all students. Our classroom conversations are often subject to the Matthew effect, in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. In other words, students who are language-rich, or competent in the verbal interaction style valued in school settings, initiate more interactions and get more responses from teachers, and less verbal students are often overlooked.

Elizabeth Burke Hadley is an assistant professor in the College of Education at the University of South Florida, Tampa, USA; email hadleye@usf.edu.

Katherine M. Newman is a research coordinator in the Peabody Research Office at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, USA; email katherine.newman@vanderbilt.edu.

Jinsil Mock is an assistant professor in the School of Education at California Baptist University, Riverside, USA; email jmock@calbaptist.edu.

In this article, we share research about the importance of rich teacher–student conversations for language development, explain how less verbal students may miss out on opportunities to talk, and give practical strategies that can help create conversational opportunities.

What Does the Research Say?
How Children's Language Grows

Language learning is both cognitive and social. Babies' brains can statistically compute language patterns simply from hearing speech (Kuhl, 2004), but language cannot grow without social interaction (Hoff, 2006). Children learn language from their caregivers when both partners are interested in and talking about the same object or topic of interest. This space of shared focus is termed *joint attention*, and it provides the foundation for language learning from the earliest ages (Tomasello & Farrar, 1986).

Children's language knowledge is both receptive (language they can understand) and expressive (language they can produce). Receptive knowledge often precedes expressive knowledge. Many aspects of students' language development continue growing throughout elementary school, including learning new vocabulary words and learning how to use language appropriately in a range of settings. To gain competence in these areas, students need the chance to not simply hear language but use it.

Research on dual-language learners (DLLs) has demonstrated the importance of child talk for children learning two languages at once (Hammer et al., 2014). A study examining preschool and kindergarten DLLs found that both hearing and using a new language was more powerful for language learning than exposure alone (Bohman, Bedore, Peña, Mendez-Perez, & Gillam, 2010).

This work on language learning has communicated an important message: Language grows through use. Students need to share conversations with a skilled language user, on topics they are interested in, to become proficient users of language themselves.

PAUSE AND PONDER

- Think back over the past couple of school days. How often did you have a conversation with a student that did not follow the typical Initiate-Respond-Evaluate pattern?

- Which students in your classroom do you talk with the most? Which students might be overlooked or excluded in classroom conversations, and why?

- What prevents you from having extended conversations with students?

Language Learning in the Early Childhood Classroom

The interactive view of language learning that we described in the previous section positions preschoolers as active cocreators of the classroom language environment, rather than receptive vessels for teacher talk. Supporting students' oral language, then, involves using practices that encourage active engagement and student talk (Hindman, Wasik, & Bradley, 2019; Justice, Jiang, & Strasser, 2018).

Justice, McGinty, Zucker, Cabell, and Piasta (2013) described the classroom interactions between teacher and student as bidirectional dynamics, in which both teachers and students mirror the other's language. This mirroring effect means that the language environment in the classroom is not solely controlled by the teacher; it is also influenced by students.

We have found similar evidence of bidirectional dynamics in our own work. In a recent study, we examined the kinds of interactions that helped preschoolers learn new vocabulary words (Hadley & Dickinson, 2019). Our results showed that interactions initiated by students were more powerful for word learning than those initiated by adults. Responsive interactions, when adults used a new vocabulary word when responding to students, were positively associated with word learning. In contrast, instructional interactions, when an adult gave a student unsolicited information about a new word, were negatively related to word learning.

In a related study, we also found that students' use of new vocabulary words during play was positively related to growth in word learning (Newman, 2019). Interestingly, teachers' use of target vocabulary was negatively related to word learning. Taken together, these results highlight the need to limit teacher talk and carve out time for students to experiment with new words in a more student-led setting, such as play.

Classroom conversations between peers also help language grow. Students who have lower language skills at the beginning of preschool benefit from being in a classroom with higher-language peers

(Justice, Petscher, Schatschneider, & Mashburn, 2011). Research has shown that peer effects are strongest in well-managed classrooms (Mashburn, Justice, Downer, & Pianta, 2009), where students have plenty of well-structured opportunities to talk with peers.

Beyond Behavior: The Content of Conversations Matters

The content of teacher–student conversations also matters. A long tradition of research has found that talk about topics beyond the here and now supports young students' oral language growth (Dickinson & Porche, 2011). Additionally, talk about sophisticated vocabulary words, having extended conversations on a single topic, and talk that provides new conceptual information promote language development (Bowne, Yoshikawa, & Snow, 2017; Dickinson, Hofer, Barnes, & Grifenhagen, 2014).

Certain preschool settings, such as shared book reading, science activities, and small-group activities such as playing with play dough, are especially good places for these conversations, perhaps because they involve materials that help teachers use complex language (Girolametto, Hoaken, Weitzman, & van Lieshout, 2000). Exchanges that involve procedural talk or talk about behavior are less likely to use complex syntax or be conceptually rich. When teachers take most of the conversational turns, or when their talk focuses mainly on behavior, there is less student talk and that talk is less complex (Girolametto, Weitzman, van Lieshout, & Duff, 2000).

How Conversational Opportunities Vary in the Classroom

In the busy world of a preschool classroom, more verbal students capture their teachers' attention and quieter students often fly under the radar. Observational research in pre-K classrooms has suggested that teachers spend more time in conversations with some students than others (e.g., Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). Students who are shy (Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009) or who have language delays or disabilities (Girolametto, Hoaken, et al., 2000) initiate conversations with teachers less frequently than their peers. In turn, they receive less responsive feedback from teachers and engage in fewer rich, language-building conversations.

Some DLLs do not receive the same opportunities for conversation as their peers (da Silva Iddings, 2005). DLLs' participation in classroom conversations varies based on many factors, including language proficiency levels and their teachers' skill in supporting conversations. DLLs who are allowed to use their primary language in the classroom can often engage in more conversations (Castro, Páez, Dickinson, & Frede, 2011). Unfortunately, many DLLs are placed in English-only classrooms in which they may not be able to fully participate until their expressive English language skills develop.

Setting the Stage for TALK

How, practically, do we draw students into rich conversations? Many articles have offered teachers strategies on how to talk with students in ways that grow their language skills (e.g., Wasik & Iannone-Campbell, 2012), and we will do that, too. First, however, we want to draw attention to the importance of setting the stage for student talk, or creating the environmental conditions that naturally lead to richer conversations. One effective approach is to treat language development as a learning goal similar to letter or number knowledge. We plan when to teach letters and with what materials. The same detailed approach can apply to goals around fostering conversation.

The first step is identifying when to plan for meaningful exchanges with students. Three times of the day are especially fruitful for encouraging student talk: free choice centers, small groups, and mealtime. Although shared book reading is also a valuable setting for talk, it tends to be dominated by teacher, rather than student, talk (Hadley & Dickinson, 2019). These parts of the early childhood schedule offer teachers valuable moments for observing students' interests, following their lead, and responding to students' talk and other nonverbal signs of communication.

The second step is deciding what materials will entice students into conversation that is rich with novel vocabulary and opportunities to explore new concepts. This critical step of preparing the environment for a specific learning goal has been referred to as *mise en place*, a French culinary phrase that means everything in its place. In the cooking world, *mise en place* refers to a chef's practice of placing all ingredients and cooking utensils for a specific dish near the workstation. Such preparation helps the chef focus on making the dish without distractions, forgotten ingredients or tools, or wasted time.

In the early childhood classroom, *mise en place* refers to a similar practice of constraining the environment to support students' exploration of

a specific learning goal (Weisberg, Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, & McCandliss, 2014). For example, following a read-aloud of an informational book on the butterfly life cycle, Carolyn (all teacher names are pseudonyms), a prekindergarten teacher, placed the book and toy replicas of a monarch butterfly, a chrysalis, a caterpillar, and eggs on a leaf in the discovery center. With exciting materials placed invitingly on a shelf at students' eye level, Carolyn has prepared the learning environment to encourage students' engagement with new words and concepts. Like the chef with ingredients and utensils in place, Carolyn and the students can now focus on a specific goal: talking about and learning new words to describe the butterfly's life cycle. When a student turns the chrysalis over in his hands, Carolyn says, "That's a chrysalis! What do you think is happening to the caterpillar inside the chrysalis?"

Importantly, Carolyn did not tell students how to play with the life cycle toys. Rather, the mise en place approach suggests that teachers allow students to direct their own play and exploration with only subtle guidance toward a learning goal. This approach is especially relevant for instructional goals around student talk and language development. The power of student-led talk is that it gives students opportunities to construct their own sentences and try out new grammatical structures and vocabulary in the presence of an expert language user. Instead of controlling the conversation, teachers who make space for student-led talk meet students where they are developmentally and let them lead.

Free Choice Center Time

Success with the mise en place approach during free choice center time relies on three big ideas. First, select props or toys that are linked to interesting, novel content. High-interest materials spark students' verbal engagement. Second, take a few minutes during whole-group time to preview, or advertise, materials—model how students can use them, pose questions that ignite their curiosity, and show students the center in which the materials will live. Third, set aside a good stretch of time to spend with students as they explore materials. Sit at their level, observe or join their play, and respond to their verbal and nonverbal communication.

Small-Group Time

Imagine if each student participated in a high-quality conversation with an adult or peer every school day. Small-group time, when a teacher meets with four to six students for 10–15 minutes of intentional learning, is well suited for meaningful conversations (Dickinson et al., 2014). Although some schools reserve small-group time for highly teacher-directed lessons, we urge against a narrowing of what this time can entail. Basic skills instruction, characterized by closed-ended questions about letter or numeral knowledge, which is pervasive in preschool (Farran, Meador, Christopher, Nesbitt, & Bilbrey, 2017), is not likely to support student-initiated language use. Instead, we recommend that teachers focus on literacy and math skills while simultaneously eliciting student talk, which can lead to greater conceptual understanding in a content domain as well.

Consider a small-group math lesson during which the teacher instructs each student to count interlocking cubes. She then asks each student in turn, "How many do you have?" and students respond with one-word answers: "Four," "Six," and so on. Now imagine that the teacher intentionally gives each student three cubes of one color and two cubes of a different color and tells them to make something. First she asks them to talk about their construction. One student exclaims, "Mine's a robot—look at its arms!" Already the students are using longer, more complex utterances. Next, the teacher prompts them to describe the parts. The student who created a boat says, "I have a lot of green ones on the bottom and some red on top of my boat. They're the people." Then the teacher guides him to notice that the boat has three green cubes on the bottom and two red on the top, and altogether the boat has five. This type of highly interactive small-group lesson enriches students' language *and* mathematical skill development.

Small-group time also provides teachers with opportunities for pairing DLLs or students with language delays with peers who have more advanced English and communication skills (Bond & Wasik, 2009). Peer modeling can promote higher levels of engagement and participation, especially in small-group conversations, which are less intimidating than whole-group or one-on-one interactions (Wasik, 2008).

Mealtime

The casual, social atmosphere of mealtime provides wonderful opportunities for conversations (Gest, Holland-Coviello, Welsh, Eicher-Catt, & Gill, 2006), especially with DLLs and students with language delays, who may be more likely to talk in this low-stakes setting. First, food is typically a fun

and engaging topic for students. Teachers can start conversations about the taste, texture, and type of foods. Second, mealtime is perfect for letting students guide the talk. Whether the topic is birthdays, superheroes, or family, mealtime conversations should build on students' personal lives and interests.

Free choice centers, small groups, and meals are activity settings that set the stage for high-quality conversations because the environmental conditions in each support joint attention between students and teachers around interesting objects and actions (Dickinson et al., 2014). In the following section, we introduce a set of strategies for fostering enhanced teacher–student communication in an approach named TALK: take turns talking, ask openended questions, listen to students' responses and extend them, and keep track of conversations. The TALK approach details specific strategies teachers can use to engage students in conversations once the conversational stage has been set. These strategies are based on correlational and experimental research, and TALK is intended to serve as a convenient mnemonic for remembering these key language support strategies.

TALK: Strategies for Enhancing Teacher–Student Communication

T: Take Turns Talking

The first step in implementing TALK is to take turns talking. Engaging in rich back-and-forth conversations with adults is important in students' development of language skills (Cabell, Justice, McGinty, DeCoster, & Forston, 2015). However, research has shown that teachers often do not provide students with enough time to think and respond to their questions (Wasik & Hindman, 2011). When students do not give an immediate response, teachers quickly ask an alternative easier question, ask another student, or answer their own question. This limits conversations to three turns (a typical Initiate-Respond-Evaluate, or I-R-E, pattern of teacher initiation, student response, and teacher evaluation of the response) in which the exchange is still heavily weighted toward teacher talk. We suggest instead the simple but powerful practice of counting to five before moving on. Students may need a bit more time to process a question and formulate a response than teachers realize.

Once students reply, work on extending the conversation past the typical three turns. Dickinson (2003) suggested that teachers should strive for five, meaning that the goal should be to have five back-and-forth turns between the teacher and students. The third turn is crucial in extending conversations: Resist the urge to evaluate ("That's right!") or praise ("Good thinking!"), which can close off a conversation. Instead, try for a third turn that puts the ball back in the student's court by asking a follow-up question or encouraging students to expand on their ideas, using prompts such as "Tell me more," "Can you tell me why you think that?" or "I wonder why…" (Wasik & Iannone-Campbell, 2012). Consider the two example conversations in Table 1. One uses evaluation/praise on the third turn (I-R-E). The other uses the third turn to prompt the student for more information (Strive for Five). Notice that in the Strive for Five example, although the teacher still guides the conversation, the student has additional opportunities to share knowledge and practice their language skills.

Another way to increase the amount of time students are engaged in rich conversations is to help students talk in productive ways with their peers (Justice et al., 2011). Taking turns in small groups can be difficult for young students. Using talking chips, small tokens that represent conversational turns, can support turn taking and equal participation among students. Begin by posing a topic to

Table 1
Initiate-Respond-Evaluate (I-R-E) Pattern Versus Strive for Five Pattern

I-R-E pattern	Strive for Five pattern
Teacher: What do you think the caterpillar will do next? Student: Take a nap. Teacher: He's going to take a nap inside his cocoon, yes! Good thinking.	Teacher: What do you think the caterpillar will do next? Student: Take a nap. Teacher: I wonder why he needs to take a nap. Student: He's sleepy because he ate all that food. Teacher: He did eat a lot. I think he might use that food for energy to turn into a butterfly.

discuss and distributing a small number of talking chips (two to four) to students. Explain that they must "spend" a talking chip and place it in the middle of the table when they talk. Once they are out of talking chips, they need to wait until everyone has spent all of their talking chips. This strategy can encourage students who may not normally participate by providing them with a concrete way to enter the conversation. It can also help students who may dominate the conversation to listen to other students.

Talking chips can also be used to scaffold back-and-forth peer conversations. After students become comfortable using the basic talking chips, teach them to use talking chips with symbols that represent different talk moves (see Figure 1). For instance, when a student wants to share a new idea, he or she can use the talking chip with a light bulb. Then, another student can agree with what was shared by using the talking chip with a thumbs-up symbol or ask a question using the question mark talking chip.

A: Ask Open-Ended Questions

Asking open-ended questions has been shown to be related to growth in preschoolers' language skills (Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006). This strategy helps to elicit student communication and to generate rich conversations, but it can be difficult to think of questions to ask in the moment.

To support the use of this strategy, teachers can hang a large poster in the classroom with examples of open-ended questions. This is primarily a

Figure 1
Talking Chips for Turn Taking

Note. The color figure can be viewed in the online version of this article at http://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com.

resource for teachers to use throughout the day, so it should be viewable from several angles and printed in large letters. A few general open-ended questions to list on this poster are "Why do you think…?" "Can you tell me more?" "How do you know?" and "How do you think that happened?" Teachers may also find center-specific prompts useful as they visit students doing different activities.

To generate conversations, open-ended questions should focus on topics beyond the here and now. Ask students about the how and why of events ("Why did that happen? What might happen next?"); people's attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and motives; and connections between information in a text and students' own background knowledge (van Kleeck, Vander Woude, & Hammett, 2006).

It is also important to tailor open-ended questions to students' language level. In a recent study, we found that open-ended questions were negatively related to students' vocabulary growth (Hadley & Dickinson, 2019), perhaps because the questions were either too challenging for students or not interesting to them. We asked probing questions such as "How do you know that an eggplant is a vegetable and not a fruit?" and often received no response. This lack of response is an important red flag, suggesting that the joint attention necessary for engagement and learning was not present. What seems to be important about open-ended questions is that they elicit student responses. If they do not achieve this goal, they are likely of limited value.

Another way to develop good open-ended questions is to learn more about students' communities, interests, families, and home lives. Focusing the conversation on a topic of deep personal interest to students can encourage even very reticent students to communicate.
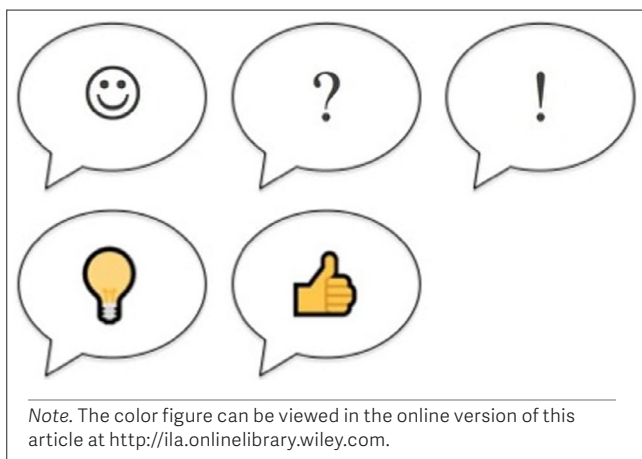
L: Listen to Students' Responses and Extend Them

The next key practice to implement is listening to students' responses and extending them (Justice et al., 2018). One way to use this strategy is during center time, when students are engaged in the flow of an activity. We recommend that teachers sit down and listen for a few moments to orient themselves to the topic of play or the activity. Joining play that is already in progress, rather than redirecting students to something new, is a powerful way of ensuring joint attention, or a shared focus on something students are interested in.

Listening and watching first also helps us notice ways in which students may be eliciting our attention and can help us better attend to the students who may often be overlooked. As described earlier, more verbal or extroverted students make many verbal bids for attention, but other students may have more subtle ways of engaging. Watching for nonverbal overtures, such as students making eye contact, pointing at something of interest, or handing us a toy, is important for building interactions (Hancock, Ledbetter-Cho, Howell, & Lang, 2016).

Besides listening and observing, there are a variety of ways to respond to students that help build conversations. A general principle to follow is to meet students where they are in their language development, then nudge them into slightly more complex language practices (see Table 2).

K: Keep Track of Rich Conversations

The fourth strategy that we suggest, keeping track of rich conversations, was inspired by a disheartening realization that many experienced educators, such as Tonya, have shared with us. Tonya teaches a preschool class of DLLs from diverse countries of origin, including Mexico, Somalia, and Kurdistan. She prides herself on spending time with all of her students to nurture their expressive language skills. Yet, one afternoon, Tonya could not recall the last time she had a meaningful conversation with Yasmine, who was a shy DLL. She wondered if there were other students who, like Yasmine, were missing critical language-building interactions. Tonya decided to tackle this challenge in a systematic way with a simple tool: a conversation tracker (see Figure 2).

Tonya determined that the first step was to keep track of how many conversations with three or more exchanges she shared with each student over a week. Her next step was to make a plan to spend time with students who needed more opportunities for longer exchanges during centers, mealtime, and small-group time. Tonya knew that Yasmine often chose dramatic play during free choice centers,

Table 2
Examples for Extending Student Responses

What is the student doing or saying?	How can I scaffold student's language development?	Example
Playing quietly	Play alongside the student, adding language to his or her play.	The students runs a toy car along the rug. The teacher runs another toy car along the rug and says, "*Vroom! That race car is very fast.*"
Using one- or two-word responses	Echo the student's language and add details.	Student: "Two!" Teacher: "That's right, you moved two spaces."
Using emergent syntax	Rephrase the sentence by modeling standard grammar without explicitly correcting.	Student: "Her didn't listen." Teacher: "She didn't listen, so tell her again what you wanted to say."
Talking about the here and now	Echo the student's response and then extend talk to discuss the future or something pretend/imaginary.	Student: "That car's wheel is broken!" Teacher: "The car's wheel is broken! How will our race car driver get home?"
Sharing a story about something that happened in the past	Echo part of the student's story, substituting a more sophisticated word for an everyday one, putting verbal emphasis on the new word.	Student: "My dog, Roscoe, ran away, and we found him at our neighbor's house!" Teacher: "Your dog, Roscoe, ran away! You *discovered* him at your neighbor's house."

Figure 2
Conversation Tracker and Planning for Conversations

Keeping Track of Rich Conversations Week of September 9-13	
Student Names	**Conversation with 3 + exchanges**
Yasmine	
Lucas	✓
Anthony	✓✓
Genesis	
Trey	✓✓✓
Emma	
David	

Planning for Conversations Week of September 9-13			
	Centers	**Mealtime**	**Small Groups**
Monday	Yasmine- dramatic play; makes soup/sopa and food/comida for her babies; answers in 2-word sentences Lucas Anthony		
Tuesday		Genesis Trey	
Wednesday	Emma Manuel		David Joy

so she planned to spend 5–10 minutes observing Yasmine's interactions, noticing which props she gravitated toward and what role she played when pretending. Knowing that Yasmine often produced two-word utterances in English, Tonya knew she should begin with simple questions to get Yasmine talking initially. She even planned to look up Spanish cognates for the props and thematic words that would not only support Yasmine's learning of vocabulary but also show Yasmine that Tonya valued her home language, which strengthens teacher–student relationships and encourages

DLLs to take more risks during conversation (Souto-Manning, 2010).

After several weeks of keeping track of conversations and planning for longer exchanges, Tonya gathered her checklists and was proud to see that she was engaging in at least four conversations of three or more turns per week with focal students. Moreover, Yasmine had begun approaching Tonya during centers, using her blossoming English skills to comment on favorite games or things she had made with play dough.

Conclusion

Our goal in this article was to review research on the importance of student talk for language development and share strategies to encourage talk in classrooms. We have a special focus on students who do not speak as much as their peers but who can benefit the most from practicing their emerging language skills. We described how teachers can set up their classroom for success using the principle of mise en place, or everything in its place, and shared several research-based strategies for increasing student talk within those settings. Enhancing students' oral language is a critical goal in the early years as it promotes self-regulation skills, builds confidence, and lays the foundation for later reading comprehension. Teachers who help student talk to flourish are taking important steps toward meeting this goal.

TAKE ACTION!

1. Plan which setting you will choose to focus on for teacher–student conversations, such as free choice centers, small-group time, or mealtime.

2. Choose materials (e.g., books, toys, manipulatives) ahead of time that will encourage rich talk.

3. *T:* Take turns talking, with the goal of having at least five turns in each conversation.

4. *A:* Ask open-ended questions that focus on topics beyond the here and now.

5. *L:* Listen to students' responses and extend them.

6. *K:* Keep track of the conversations you have with students, and build in intentional, special time for conversations with students who may need extra oral language support.

REFERENCES

Bohman, T.M., Bedore, L.M., Peña, E.D., Mendez-Perez, A., & Gillam, R.B. (2010). What you hear and what you say: Language performance in Spanish-English bilinguals. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 13(3), 325–344. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050903342019

Bond, M.A., & Wasik, B.A. (2009). Conversation stations: Promoting language development in young children. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 36(6), 467–473. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-009-0310-7

Bowne, J.B., Yoshikawa, H., & Snow, C.E. (2017). Relationships of teachers' language and explicit vocabulary instruction to students' vocabulary growth in kindergarten. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 52(1), 7–29. https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.151

Bratsch-Hines, M.E., Burchinal, M., Peisner-Feinberg, E., & Franco, X. (2019). Frequency of instructional practices in rural prekindergarten classrooms and associations with child language and literacy skills. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 47(2), 74–88. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2018.10.001

Cabell, S.Q., Justice, L.M., McGinty, A.S., DeCoster, J., & Forston, L.D. (2015). Teacher–child conversations in preschool classrooms: Contributions to children's vocabulary development. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 30(Pt. A), 80–92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.09.004

Castro, D.C., Páez, M.M., Dickinson, D.K., & Frede, E. (2011). Promoting language and literacy in young dual language learners: Research, practice, and policy. *Child Development Perspectives*, 5(1), 15–21. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2010.00142.x

da Silva Iddings, A.C. (2005). Linguistic access and participation: English language learners in an English-dominant community of practice. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 29(1), 165–183. https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2005.10162829

Dickinson, D.K. (2003). Why we must improve teacher–child conversations in preschools and the promise of professional development. In L. Girolametto & E. Weitzman (Eds.), *Enhancing caregiver language facilitation in child care settings* (pp. 41–48). Toronto, ON, Canada: Hanen Institute.

Dickinson, D.K., Hofer, K.G., Barnes, E.M., & Grifenhagen, J.F. (2014). Examining teachers' language in Head Start classrooms from a Systemic Linguistics Approach. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29(3), 231–244. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.02.006

Dickinson, D.K., & Porche, M.V. (2011). Relation between language experiences in preschool classrooms and children's kindergarten and fourth-grade language and reading abilities. *Child Development*, 82(3), 870–886. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01576.x

Early, D.M., Iruka, I.U., Ritchie, S., Barbarin, O.A., Winn, D.-M.C., Crawford, G.M., … Pianta, R.C. (2010). How do pre-kindergarteners spend their time? Gender, ethnicity, and income as predictors of experiences in pre-kindergarten classrooms. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 25(2), 177–193. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2009.10.003

Farran, D.C., Meador, D., Christopher, C., Nesbitt, K.T., & Bilbrey, L.E. (2017). Data-driven improvement in prekindergarten classrooms: Report from a partnership in an urban district. *Child Development*, 88(5), 1466–1479. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12906

Gest, S.D., Holland-Coviello, R., Welsh, J.A., Eicher-Catt, D.L., & Gill, S. (2006). Language development subcontexts in Head Start classrooms: Distinctive patterns of teacher talk during free play, mealtime, and book reading. *Early Education and Development*, 17(2), 293–315. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15566935eed1702_5

Girolametto, L., Hoaken, L., Weitzman, E., & van Lieshout, R. (2000). Patterns of adult–child linguistic interaction in integrated day care groups. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 31(2), 155–168. https://doi.org/10.1044/0161-1461.3102.155

Girolametto, L., Weitzman, E., van Lieshout, R., & Duff, D. (2000). Directiveness in teachers' language input to toddlers and

preschoolers in day care. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 43(5), 1101–1114. https://doi.org/10.1044/jslhr.4305.1101

Hadley, E.B., & Dickinson, D.K. (2019). Cues for word-learning during shared book-reading and guided play in preschool. *Journal of Child Language*, 46(6), 1202–1227. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305000919000552

Hammer, C.S., Hoff, E., Uchikoshi, Y., Gillanders, C., Castro, D.C., & Sandilos, L.E. (2014). The language and literacy development of young dual language learners: A critical review. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29(4), 715–733. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.05.008

Hancock, T.B., Ledbetter-Cho, K., Howell, A., & Lang, R. (2016). Enhanced milieu teaching. In R. Lang, T.B. Hancock, & N.N. Singh (Eds.), *Early intervention for young children with autism spectrum disorder* (pp. 177–218). Cham, Switzerland: Springer International.

Hindman, A.H., Wasik, B.A., & Bradley, D.E. (2019). How classroom conversations unfold: Exploring teacher–child exchanges during shared book reading. *Early Education and Development*, 30(4), 478–495. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2018.1556009

Hoff, E. (2006). How social contexts support and shape language development. *Developmental Review*, 26(1), 55–88. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2005.11.002

Jacoby, J.W., & Lesaux, N.K. (2014). Support for extended discourse in teacher talk with linguistically diverse preschoolers. *Early Education and Development*, 25(8), 1162–1179. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2014.907695

Justice, L.M., Jiang, H., & Strasser, K. (2018). Linguistic environment of preschool classrooms: What dimensions support children's language growth? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 42(1), 79–92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2017.09.003

Justice, L.M., Mashburn, A.J., Hamre, B.K., & Pianta, R.C. (2008). Quality of language and literacy instruction in preschool classrooms serving at-risk pupils. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23(1), 51–68. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2007.09.004

Justice, L.M., McGinty, A.S., Zucker, T., Cabell, S.Q., & Piasta, S.B. (2013). Bi-directional dynamics underlie the complexity of talk in teacher–child play-based conversations in classrooms serving at-risk pupils. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 28(3), 496–508. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2013.02.005

Justice, L.M., Petscher, Y., Schatschneider, C., & Mashburn, A. (2011). Peer effects in preschool classrooms: Is children's language growth associated with their classmates' skills? *Child Development*, 82(6), 1768–1777. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01665.x

Kendeou, P., van den Broek, P., White, M.J., & Lynch, J.S. (2009). Predicting reading comprehension in early elementary school: The independent contributions of oral language and decoding skills. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 101(4), 765–778. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015956

Kuhl, P.K. (2004). Early language acquisition: Cracking the speech code. *Nature Reviews: Neuroscience*, 5(11), 831–843. https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn1533

Marks, R.A., Kovelman, I., Kepinska, O., Oliver, M., Xia, Z., Haft, S.L.,…Hoeft, F. (2019). Spoken language proficiency predicts print-speech convergence in beginning readers. *NeuroImage*, 201, article 116021. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuroimage.2019.116021

Mashburn, A.J., Justice, L.M., Downer, J.T., & Pianta, R.C. (2009). Peer effects on children's language achievement during pre-kindergarten. *Child Development*, 80(3), 686–702. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2009.01291.x

Newman, K.M. (2019). *Teacher and child verbal behaviors during guided play: An exploration of vocabulary learning mechanisms* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from https://etd.library.vanderbilt.edu//available/etd-05142019-203356/

Nix, R.L., Bierman, K.L., Domitrovich, C.E., & Gill, S. (2013). Promoting children's social-emotional skills in preschool can enhance academic and behavioral functioning in kindergarten: Findings from Head Start REDI. *Early Education*

and *Development*, 24(7), 1000–1019. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2013.825565

Rudasill, K.M., & Rimm-Kaufman, S.E. (2009). Teacher–child relationship quality: The roles of child temperament and teacher–child interactions. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 24(2), 107–120. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2008.12.003

Souto-Manning, M. (2010). Teaching English learners: Building on cultural and linguistic strengths. *English Education*, 42(3), 249–263.

Tomasello, M., & Farrar, M.J. (1986). Joint attention and early language. *Child Development*, 57(6), 1454–1463. https://doi.org/10.2307/1130423

van Kleeck, A., Vander Woude, J., & Hammett, L. (2006). Fostering literal and inferential language skills in Head Start preschoolers with language impairment using scripted book-sharing discussions. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 15(1), 85–95. https://doi.org/10.1044/1058-0360(2006/009)

Wasik, B.A. (2008). When fewer is more: Small groups in early childhood classrooms. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 35(6), 515–521. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-008-0245-4

Wasik, B.A., Bond, M.A., & Hindman, A. (2006). The effects of a language and literacy intervention on Head Start children and teachers. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98(1), 63–74. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.98.1.63

Wasik, B.A., & Hindman, A.H. (2011). Improving vocabulary and pre-literacy skills of at-risk preschoolers through teacher professional development. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 103(2), 455–469. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023067

Wasik, B.A., & Iannone-Campbell, C. (2012). Developing vocabulary through purposeful, strategic conversations. *The Reading Teacher*, 66(4), 321–332. https://doi.org/10.1002/TRTR.01095

Weisberg, D.S., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R.M., & McCandliss, B.D. (2014). *Mise en place*: Setting the stage for thought and action. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 18(6), 276–278. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2014.02.012

MORE TO EXPLORE

- Dickinson, D.K., & Morse, A.B. (2019). *Connecting through talk: Nurturing children's development with language*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

- Institute of Education Sciences. (2019, May 13). *Dinner table talk* [Video]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dt1l51JiXzk (This video is about having rich conversations during mealtime.)

- Language and Reading Research Consortium. (2020). *Curriculum*. Retrieved from https://larrc.ehe.osu.edu/curriculum/ (The Let's Know! Curriculum supports building oral language skills.)

- National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2011, November 3). Strategies for supporting dual language learners [Podcast episode]. *NAEYC Radio*. Retrieved from https://player.fm/series/naeyc-radio-the-national-association-for-the-education-of-young-children/strategies-for-supporting-dual-language-learners

- "Guess What's in the Bag: A Language-based Activity," a ReadWriteThink.org lesson plan by LaDonna Helm: http://readwrethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/guess-what-language-based-124.html (This lesson plan can help enhance students' oral language.)