



# Moving forward with Child Language and Communication

## Overview

Teachers in a High Scope classroom routinely support children's developing language and communication skills by engaging in authentic conversations throughout the day. Adults look for natural openings as well as use activities within the daily routines to plan opportunities that can offer children time and space to share their thoughts and ideas. Adults use specific strategies that encourage children to continue in conversations. By doing so, teachers share control of the conversations in order to give children practice in becoming conversation partners, able to both listen to others as well as share with confidence.

## Strategies to encourage and support children's language and communication:

- Adults share control of conversations (for example: let children initiate conversations, take turns, wait patiently for children to form thoughts without interrupting)
- Adults observe and listen to children throughout the day (for example: wait for a child to speak first, remain quiet until the child indicates he or she is done talking)
- Adults converse in a give-and-take manner. They make comments, observations, acknowledgements and seek children's ideas.
- Adults ask questions sparingly; questions are open ended (for example to discover a child's ideas and thought process); questions relate directly to what a child is doing.

## Goals for moving forward

1. Examine the differences between open-ended and closed-ended questions and how their use impacts children's interest in continuing to respond.
2. Compare and take a critical look at how adults typically communicate to one another (with comments, authentic questions, active listening on shared or learned interests and with several exchanges) and how difficult it often is for an adult to have similar conversational experiences with children.
3. Understand the various ways young children initiate with, and disengage from communicating with an adult so as to be more knowledgeable and aware of these natural cues to better support children as they grow as conversation partners.

## Implementation plan

1. Explore helpful resources: [Am I asking too many questions? webinar](#), [High Scope conversation clip](#), informational tip sheet [Open-ended questions](#)
2. Intentionally practice the strategies and document how many conversational turns you have with the children.
3. Practice having conversations with children without asking any closed-ended questions.
4. Make a list of typically asked closed-ended questions often used in teacher as well as child initiated activities and re-frame each in the form of an open-ended question. (example, change "What shape is that?" to, "I see circles, squares and triangles on the table. I wonder which shapes you will use?")
5. Use read aloud opportunities to practice asking open-ended questions as well as to practice other strategies listed above. Have the goal to be open conversations rather than the need to finish the book.
6. Use strategies from the sheet, [Moving Forward with Partner in Play](#) to compare the strategies and practice at Work Time.