

A “Strive-for-Five” Conversation Experience

The Quality of Conversations Matters

Responsive and purposeful conversations between teachers and children are powerful in building oral language. When these conversations are strategic, content-rich, and include a number of back-and-forth exchanges, they are also effective in promoting children’s vocabulary development and their understanding of related concepts (Wasik and Campbell, 2012). These extended conversations should give children explicit opportunities to:

- *Hear* new words several times in meaningful contexts
- *Use* the new words in the conversations and related activities
- *Connect* the new words with familiar words and ideas

It is often suggested that we “strive for five” talking turns a piece in our teacher-child learning conversations. Our tool kit for achieving this includes open-ended questions and statements, follow-up questions, and feedback to extend a child’s use of language and higher order thinking. Try it out!

A “Strive-for-Five” Practice Conversation

With a partner, try out a conversation that gives each of you multiple chances to hear and use new vocabulary words*. For this experience you must incorporate:

- 5 or more communication exchanges/person
- 2-3 select vocabulary words relevant to upcoming unit of study
- At least 1 open-ended question
- A validating or clarifying response

Following this experience, consider:

- What was the most difficult part of this conversation?
- How can planning for and modeling such purposeful conversations support your students’ learning?

* We suggest that Coaches/Curriculum Liaisons identify specific topics and vocabulary words relevant to upcoming units of study in order to guide this exercise in serving as both practice and preparation for participating teachers.

Reference: Wasik, B.A. & Iannone-Campbell, C. (2012). Developing vocabulary through purposeful, strategic conversations. *The Reading Teacher*, 66(2), 321-332.