

# Optimizing Classroom Quality through Instructional Support

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Region X Leadership Conference



# Overview

- Building a Foundation
  - Classroom Assessment Scoring System™
- Focus on Effective Instruction
  - Thinking Skills
  - Formative Feedback



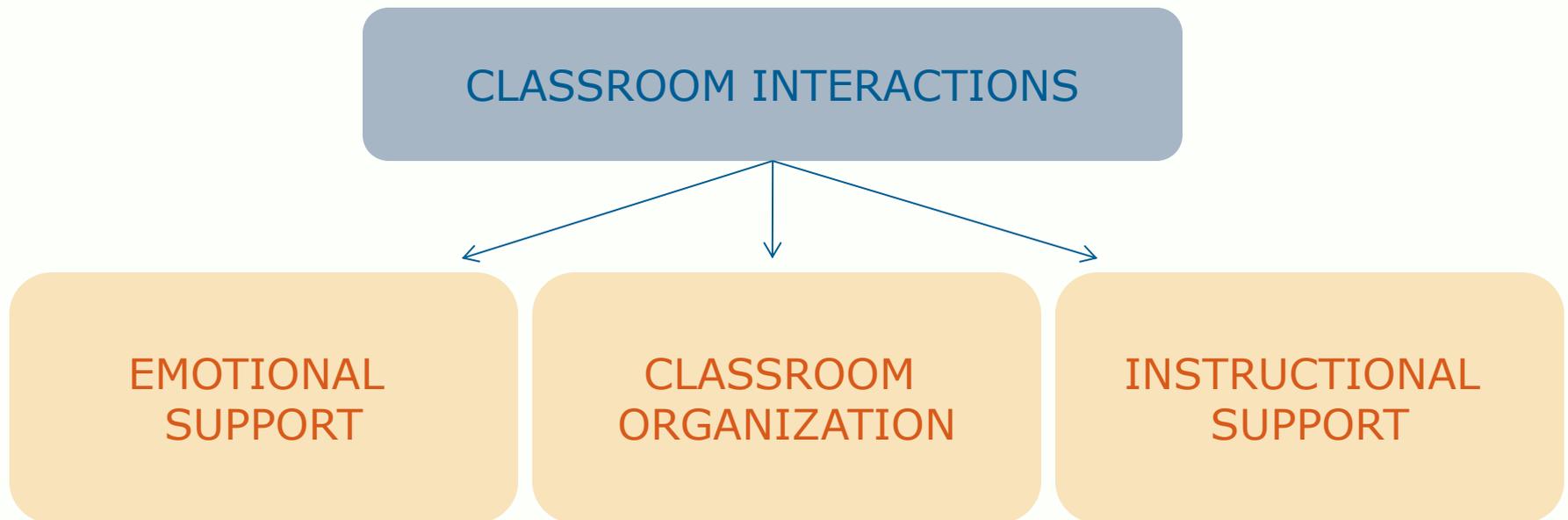
# Brainstorm

- Children's learning improves when...
- Children are more likely to take risks when...
- Children's engagement in classroom activities increases when...
- Children talk and share more when...



# Measuring Teacher-Child Interactions

The CLASS™ lens organizes effective classroom interactions into 3 broad categories or domains.



(Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008)

# Emotionally Supportive Interactions

In settings with effective social and emotional support, teachers:

- Have positive relationships with children
- Foster positive peer relationships
- Notice and respond when children need support
- Recognize and label children's emotions
- Respond to children's ideas and interests



(Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008)

# Interactions in Classrooms that are Organized

- **Classrooms** that support children's ability to get the most out of their interactions with teachers, peers, and tasks through effective management of children's time, behavior, and attention
- **Teachers** have clear and well-established behavior guidelines, create routines to get the most out of each day, and engage children in learning.
- **Children** meet behavioral expectations, know what to expect, and are engaged in learning.

# Instructional Support

## How teachers help children

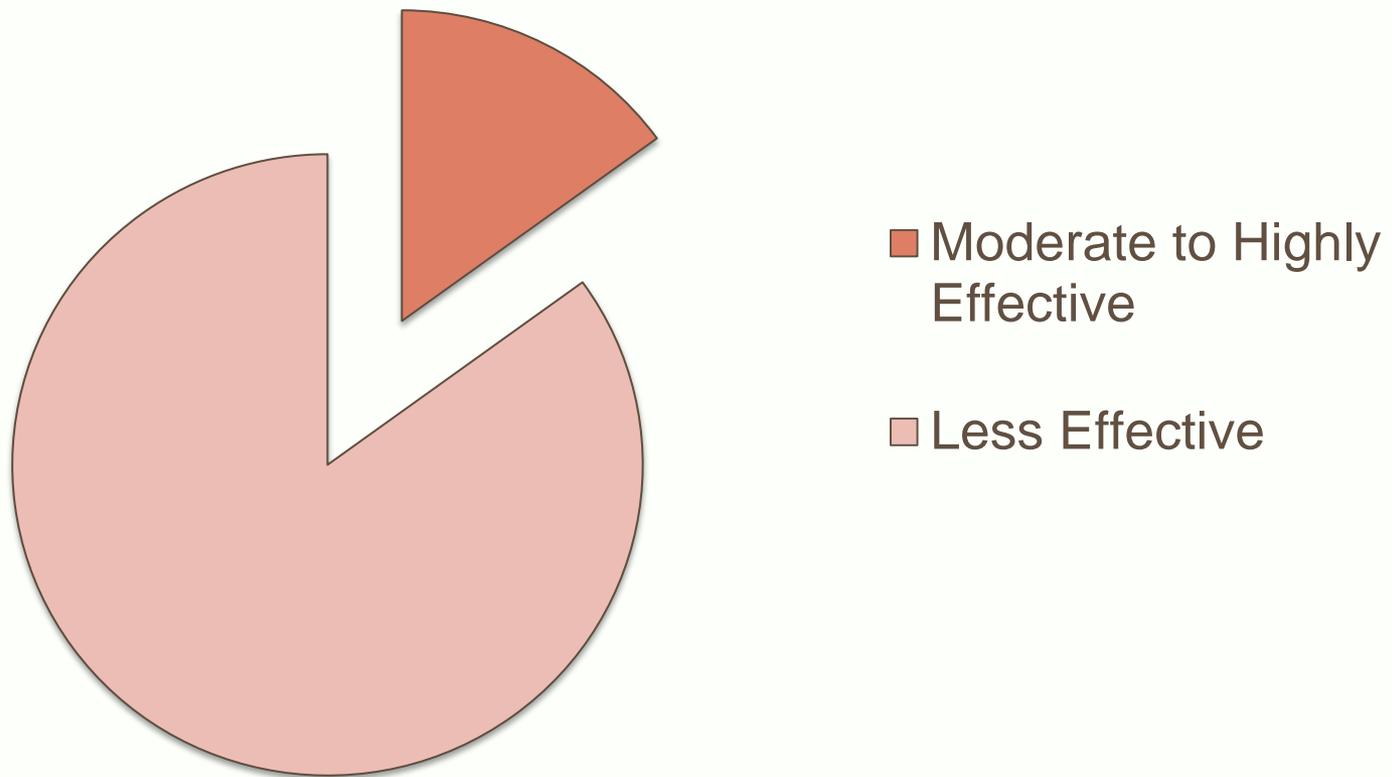
- Learn to solve problems, reason, and think.
- Use feedback to expand and deepen skills and knowledge.
- Develop more complex language skills.



(Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008)

# The State of Quality...

700 preschool classrooms across 11 states

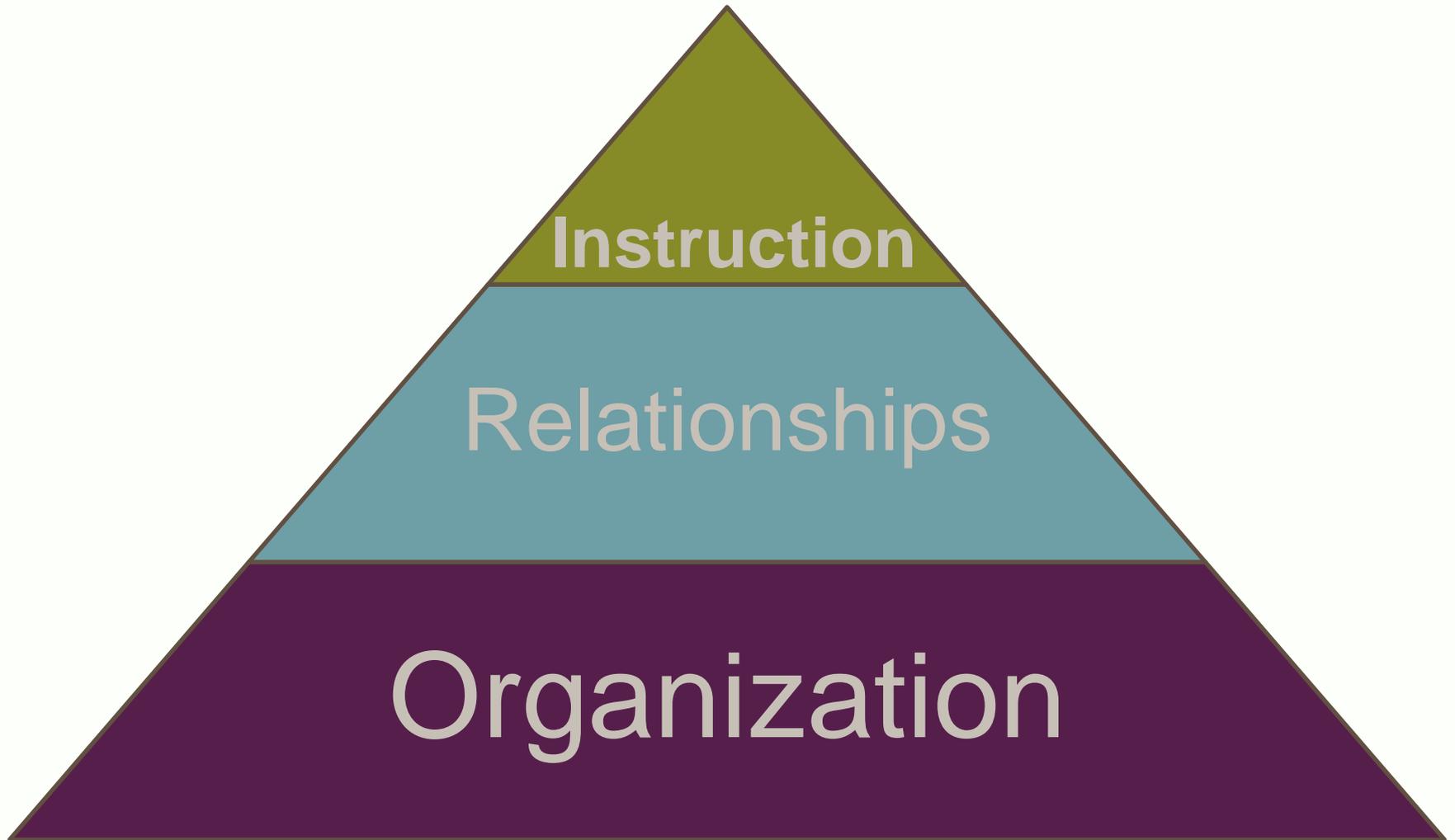


(NCEDL, 2005)



**Building a Foundation**

# Building a Foundation: Begins with Organization and Emotional Support



## Organizing the Classroom

*Imagine a classroom that had few routines, inconsistent behavioral expectations, and little to no engaging materials or activities....*

# Video Title: Fostering Teacher-Child Connections

Video located in NCQTL's Engaging Interactions and Environments In-Service Suites, *Fostering Connections*



## Building Relationships

“A child needs the enduring, irrational involvement of one or more adults in care of and in joint activity with that child. In short, somebody has to be crazy about that kid. Somebody has to be there, and to be doing something—not alone but together with the child.”

-Urie Bronfenbrenner



# Video Title: Teachers Connecting

Video located in NCQTL's Engaging Interactions and Environments In-Service Suites, *Fostering Connections*



## Importance of the 'foundation'

- Classrooms with Higher Emotional Support and Classroom Organization are able to support increased intentional instruction
- Classrooms with effective interactions improve children's math and language skills

## Video Title: Voting

What do you notice about organization and relationships in this video? Focus on these behaviors for now (and not instruction)

Video located in NCQTL's Engaging Interactions and Environments In-Service Suites, *Building a Solid Foundation*





**After the Foundation:  
Building Effective Instruction**

# Fostering Thinking Skills



This portion of the presentation is largely based on materials in NCQTL's Engaging Interactions and Environments In-Service Suites, *Fostering Thinking Skills*

# Objectives

- **Provide a definition** of fostering children's thinking skills.
- **Give examples and strategies** for how teachers can foster children's thinking skills in the classroom.
- **Connect** fostering children's thinking skills to the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.
- **Provide suggestions** for teachers on how to improve their ability to foster children's thinking skills.

# Fostering Children's Thinking Skills

## What does it look like?

- Classroom interactions that focus on “big ideas” and deepen children’s knowledge of the world around them.
- Children’s thinking skills can be fostered during interactions that involve:
  - Using the scientific method
  - Problem-solving
  - Applying knowledge

## What does it NOT look like?

- **Drilling children on facts or skills.**

# Fostering children's thinking skills BY USING THE Scientific METHOD

Provide tasks where children can observe, predict, and experiment.



# Fostering children's thinking skills BY problem solving

Create opportunities for children to  
**brainstorm, plan, and solve problems.**



# Fostering children's thinking skills BY APPLYING KNOWLEDGE

Build on children's natural curiosity by drawing upon their everyday experiences and connecting previous knowledge.

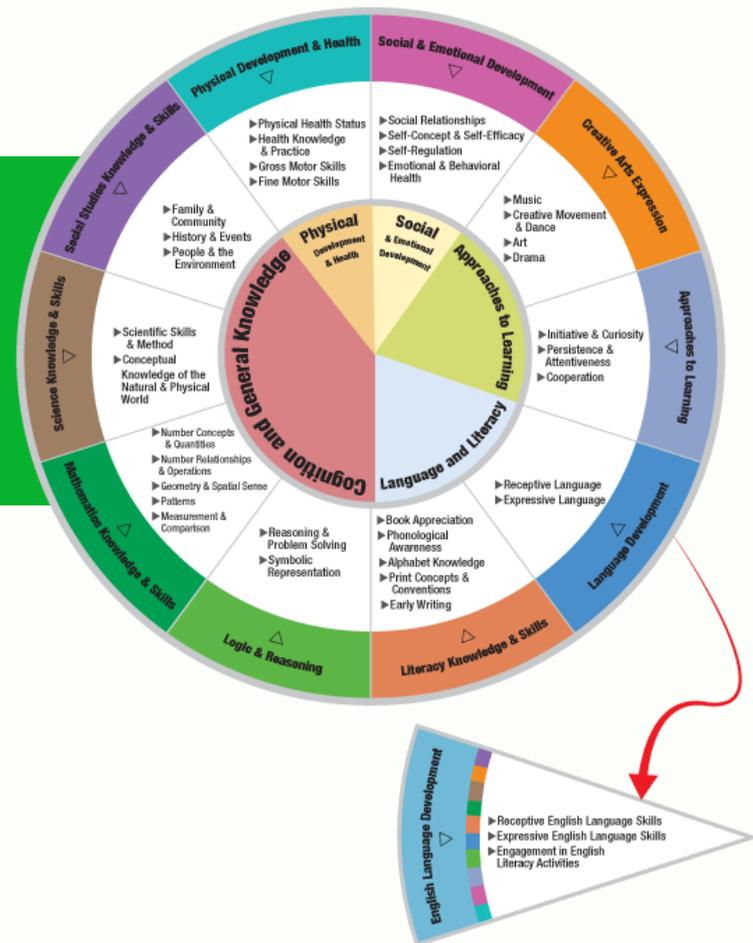


# THE HEAD START CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING FRAMEWORK

The scientific method can be incorporated within many areas of the framework.

Some examples are:

- Logic & Reasoning
- Literacy Knowledge & Skills
- Mathematical Knowledge & Skills
- Social & Emotional Development
- Science Knowledge & Skills



## Video Title: Book Reading

Video located in NCQTL's Engaging Interactions and Environments In-Service Suites, *Fostering Thinking Skills*



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**What Strategies did you see?**

- **Scientific Method?**
- **Problem Solving?**
- **Applying Knowledge?**

**Which child outcome within the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework do these interactions support?**

# In this clip, the teacher asks children to...

**Brainstorm** about fiction vs. information books.

**Draw upon their experiences** when talking about pets being allowed inside.

Supports children's  
**Literacy**  
**Knowledge**  
**& Skills**

## Video Title: Nature Walk

Video located in NCQTL's Engaging Interactions and Environments In-Service Suites, *Fostering Thinking Skills*

**What Strategies did you see?**

- **Scientific Method?**
- **Problem Solving?**
- **Applying Knowledge?**

**Which child outcome within the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework do these interactions support?**

# In this clip, the teacher asks children to...

**Predict** what types of plants they might see on their nature walk.

**Connect ideas** about nature with the book the class read the previous day.

Supports children's  
**Logic & Reasoning Skills**

# Group Activity



# When Can I FOSTER CHILDREN'S THINKING SKILLS?

Teachers can foster children's thinking and understanding throughout the school day in many classroom activities.



## Summary

Teachers can foster children's thinking skills by:

- **Using the scientific method:** Provide tasks where children can **observe, predict, and experiment.**
- **Problem-solving:** Create opportunities for children to **brainstorm, plan, and solve problems.**
- **Applying knowledge:** Build on children's natural curiosity by **drawing upon their everyday experiences and connecting previous knowledge.**

## Want more information?

For more information, check out the in-service *Fostering Thinking Skills* in your NCQTL Engaging Interactions and Environment In-Service Suites



*(contact your ECE specialist or NCQTL for more information for access to the In-Service suites)*

*ncqtl@uw.edu*

# Providing Formative Feedback



This portion of the presentation is largely based on materials in NCQTL's Engaging Interactions and Environments In-Service Suites, *Providing Feedback*

# Objectives

**Provide a definition** of providing feedback that supports engagement and learning.

**Give examples and strategies** for how teachers can provide feedback to children.

**Connect** providing feedback that supports engagement and learning to the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework

**Provide suggestions** for teachers on how to improve their ability to provide feedback to children.

# Providing Feedback that Supports Engagement and Learning

## What does it look like?

- Engaging in back-and-forth exchanges with children that expand their understanding.
- Asking children to explain their thinking.
- Encouraging children's efforts.

## What does it NOT look like?

Teachers providing children with simple *yes/no* or *wrong/right* responses.

# BACK-AND-FORTH EXCHANGES

Engage in back-and-forth exchanges that expand and elaborate on children's learning.



## Example of Back and Forth Exchange

- *Teacher*: I can see you are all enjoying playing with bears. Who can tell me something special about bears?
- *Child*: They sleep for a long time!
- *Teacher*: That's right, they hibernate! When do they hibernate?
- *Child*: In the winter time.
- *Teacher*: Yes, during the winter season! Who knows where they go to hibernate?
- .... Exchange continues.

# EXPLAIN THINKING

**Ask** children to explain their thought processes.



## Example of Explain Thinking

- *Teacher:* How do you think the boy feels in this picture?
- *Child:* I think he's sad.
- *Teacher:* Why do you think that?
- *Child:* Because his friends are in the water having fun and he can't swim.
- *Teacher:* Yes, he might feel a little frustrated.

# ENCOURAGE EFFORTS

**Encourage** children's efforts and help them stick with challenging activities.



## Example of ENCOURAGE EFFORTS

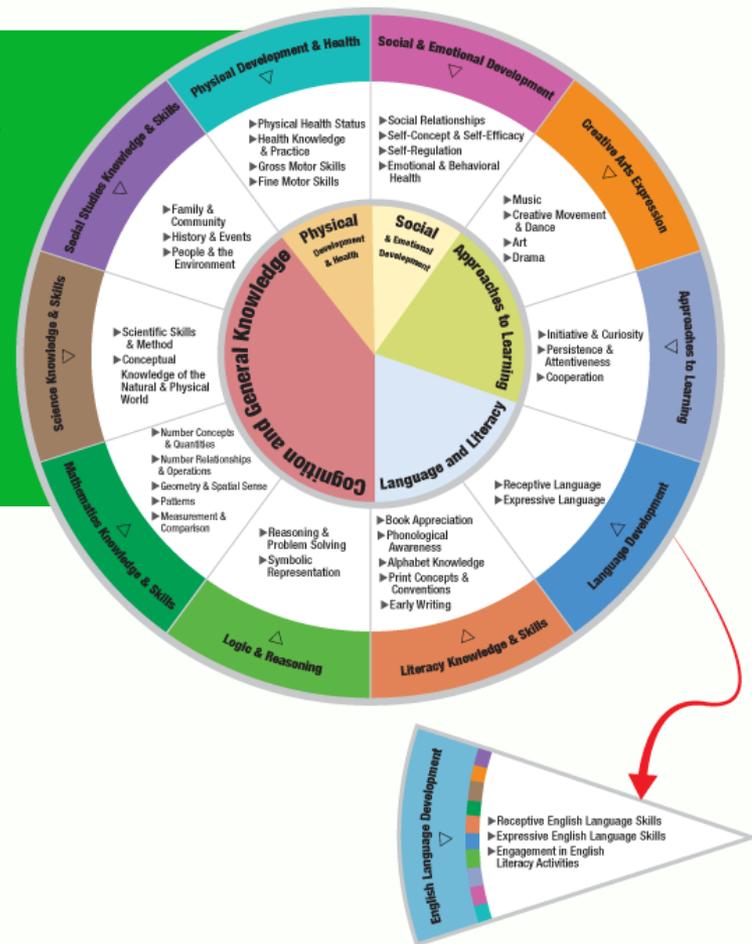
- *Teacher*: I can see how hard you are working to put that pattern together. Keep going, you almost have it!
- *Child*: I'm done!
- *Teacher*: You did it! Friends, look at Maria's pattern. She worked so hard to complete it.

# THE HEAD START CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Providing feedback that supports engagement and learning is important across many areas of the framework.

Some examples are:

- Logic & Reasoning
- Literacy Knowledge & Skills
- Mathematical Knowledge & Skills
- Social & Emotional Development
- Science Knowledge & Skills



## Video Title: Down by the Bay

Video located in NCQTL's Engaging Interactions and Environments In-Service Suites, *Providing Feedback*



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## What Strategies did you see?

- **Back and Forth Exchanges?**
- **Explain Thinking?**
- **Encourage Effort?**

Which child outcome within the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework do these interactions support?

## IN THIS CLIP, THE TEACHER...

Asks children to **explain why they think** the book says hair.

**Encourages their efforts** and recognizes children's effort when they read along with the book

Supports children's  
**Literacy Knowledge & Skills**

## Video Title: Spiderwebs

Video located in NCQTL's Engaging Interactions and Environments In-Service Suites, *Providing Feedback*



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## What Strategies did you see?

- **Back and Forth Exchanges?**
- **Explain Thinking?**
- **Encourage Effort?**

Which child outcome within the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework do these interactions support?

## IN THIS CLIP, THE TEACHER...

**Engages in back-and-forth exchanges** so that children understand why spiders need webs.



Supports children's  
**Science Knowledge  
& Skills**

# WHEN CAN I PROVIDE FEEDBACK THAT SUPPORTS ENGAGEMENT & LEARNING?

Teachers may provide feedback **throughout the school day** in all classroom activities.



Small group is an optimal forum for focused back-and-forth exchanges.

## Improving practice

Video record and review your own teaching.

Practice with a peer.

Watch a “master teacher” in action.

# SUMMARY

Teachers can provide feedback that supports engagement and learning by:

Engaging in **back-and-forth exchanges**

Asking children to **explain their thought processes**

**Encouraging** children's efforts.

Teachers may provide feedback throughout the school day.

Teachers can improve the quality and frequency of the feedback they provide to children.

## Want more information?

For more information, check out the in-service *Providing Feedback* in your NCQTL Engaging Interactions and Environment In-Service Suites



*(contact your ECE specialist or NCQTL for more information for access to the In-Service suites)*

*ncqtl@uw.edu*

# Discussion: What do you notice now about Thinking Skills and Feedback?

## Video Title: Voting

Video located in NCQTL's Engaging Interactions and Environments In-Service Suites, *Building a Solid Foundation*



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Video	Strategies
<i>Down by the Bay</i>	
	Back and Forth Exchanges
	Explain Thinking
	Encourage Efforts
<p><i>What domain and domain elements from the framework are observed in this video? Give examples of the behaviors observed that support these domain(s).</i></p>	
<p></p>	



<i>Spiderwebs</i>	
	Back and Forth Exchanges
	Explain Thinking
	Encourage Efforts
<p><i>What domain and domain elements from the framework are observed in this video? Give examples of the behaviors observed that support these domain(s).</i></p>	

## PLANNING IN YOUR CLASSROOM

The purpose of this activity is to plan classroom activities that utilize strategies for providing feedback presented in this in-service suite. The activity is designed to connect these strategies with specific domains and classroom settings.

**For each activity:**

1. Choose one of the domains of the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework for an area of focus (for example, Logic & Reasoning, Literacy Knowledge & Skills, Social & Emotional Development).
2. Circle one setting for the activity.
3. Plan an activity to do in the classroom using the selected domain, setting, and strategy.
4. Bring it back to the group to discuss how the activity went at your next meeting. What was your experience of the activity? How did the children respond? What went well? What might you do differently in the future?

Learning domain	Setting	Strategy	Activity
Whole group	Whole group	Engage in back-and-forth exchanges that expand and elaborate on children's learning.	
Small group	Small group		
Transition	Transition		
Center	Center		
Meal	Meal		

Learning domain	Setting	Strategy	Activity
	Whole group	Ask children to explain their thought processes.	
	Small group		
	Transition		
	Center		
	Meal		



Learning domain	Setting	Strategy	Activity
	Whole group	<i>Encourage children's efforts and help them stick with challenging activities.</i>	
	Small group		
	Transition		
	Center		
	Meal		



For more information, contact us at: [NCCOTL@JW.EDU](mailto:NCCOTL@JW.EDU) or 877-731-0764  
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When teachers provide feedback it helps children expand their learning and understanding. Effective feedback:

- Is more than a simple yes/no or right/wrong response. It is a back-and-forth exchange between teachers and children.
- Asks children to explain their thought processes.
- Encourages children's efforts and helps them stick with challenging activities.

## WHAT STRATEGIES CAN I USE TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK?

Below are some suggested strategies and examples of what this looks like in action. There are many other ways to encourage engagement and learning through feedback. Please note that some examples may include more than one strategy.

### Engage in BACK-AND-FORTH EXCHANGES with children.

What does this look like in action:	What it is not:
<p>During center time the teacher notices that some children are pretending to work in a bakery. One child plays customer and asks for ice cream. The teacher uses this as a learning opportunity and the following exchange occurs:</p> <p>T: Hmm. Do you think ice cream is made in a bakery?</p> <p>C: <i>(shrugs her shoulders)</i>.</p> <p>T: What does "bake" mean?</p> <p>C: Making it hot.</p> <p>T: What would happen if bakers made ice cream hot?</p> <p>C: It would melt.</p> <p>T: How do you think ice cream is made?</p> <p>The conversation continues.</p>	<p>During center time the teacher notices children pretending to work in a bakery. She hears a child ask for ice cream and moves on to the next child.</p>

### Ask children to EXPLAIN THEIR THOUGHT PROCESSES.

What does this look like in action:	What it is not:
<p>A. The teacher asks a child how many invitations they will need for their class Spring Party. When the child answers "12," the teacher asks him how he got that answer. The boy explains how he counted the six girls and six boys in his classroom. Asking this child to explain his thinking helps the teacher understand how this child arrived at his answer, and also allows the other children to learn from his thought process.</p>	<p>The teacher asks a child how many invitations they will need for their class's Spring Party. When the child answers "12," the teacher helps get supplies to make the invitations without asking additional questions.</p>

**Ask children to EXPLAIN THEIR THOUGHT PROCESSES.**

What does this look like in action:	What it is not:
<p>B. During a small group activity in which children are practicing their cutting skills, the teacher sees a child pile up certain pictures. The teacher asks, "Carla, I noticed that you placed the hat, bat, and cat over to the side. Why did you think to do that?" The child explains that the words sound the same. The teacher responds, "Yes, hat, bat, and cat are alike because they rhyme and belong in the same word family."</p>	<p>During a small group activity in which children are practicing their cutting skills, the teacher sees a child pile up certain pictures but does not ask the child to explain why she did so.</p>

**ENCOURAGE children's efforts and help them to stick with challenging tasks.**

What does this look like in action:	What it is not:
<p>While in the math center, the teacher notices a child attempting to measure a classroom object that is longer than his ruler. She sees that the child is brainstorming a way to mark where the ruler ends, so that he can start measuring from that place. The teacher comments on his efforts saying, "Johnny, I notice how you are thinking really hard about how to measure an object that is longer than your ruler!" This encourages him to keep trying and leads other children to attempt these more challenging activities as well.</p>	<p>While in the math center, the teacher notices a child attempting to measure an object longer than his ruler. The teacher gives general praise saying, "good," but does not specifically comment on his effort.</p>

**WHEN DURING THE DAY CAN I PROVIDE FEEDBACK?**

Teachers can provide children with feedback throughout the school day. During whole and small group time teachers can pay attention to how individual children are responding and understanding—and look for opportunities to support them. During center time, teachers can move around the classroom, observing children's play and learning and look for opportunities to provide effective feedback.

*NOTE: Please note that the strategies for "What this looks like in action" and "What it is not" are examples specific to those strategies. The behaviors in the nonexamples may be appropriate in other instances.*



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Video	Strategies
<i>Book Reading</i>	Observing, Predicting, Experimenting (Scientific Method)
	Brainstorming, Planning, Solving Problems
	Drawing Upon Children’s Experience (Applying Knowledge)
<p><i>What domain and domain elements from the framework are observed in this video? Give examples of the behaviors observed that support these domain(s).</i></p>	
<p> </p>	

<i>Nature Walk</i>	
	Observing, Predicting, Experimenting (Scientific Method)
	Brainstorming, Planning, Solving Problems
	Drawing Upon Children's Experience (Applying Knowledge)
<p><i>What domain and domain elements from the framework are observed in this video? Give examples of the behaviors observed that support these domain(s).</i></p>	
<p></p>	



**Classroom Scenario**

20 minutes

- 1) Divide into groups of 5-8.
- 2) Identify the strategies for the highlighted questions/comments.
- 3) In your groups, role play the scenario based on the script. *Extend* to include *additional strategies* (e.g., brainstorming). Identify one person to be the teacher and the rest to be the children.

After 10 minutes, I will ask 1-2 groups to perform their skit in front of the group. Then, the group will comment on questions such as, “How did the children respond?” “What additional strategies did the group use?”

*Use for noting the additional comments/questions that foster the strategies for Fostering Thinking (i.e., Observing, Predicting, Experimenting, Brainstorming, Planning, Solving Problems, Drawing Upon Children’s Experience)*

Script	Strategies

Scenario 1: Identifying strategies (Option 1) and role play (Option 4).

Learning domain	Scenario 1	Script	What are the strategies for the highlighted questions?
Logic & Reasoning	At water table, the teacher brings out small cups and big cups for an activity.	<p><b>Teacher:</b> Walks over to several children who are playing at the water table. She hands the children cups of two different sizes — big and small, and says: "Here are some cups you can use at the water table today."</p> <p><b>Paula:</b> "Oh boy!" and starts scooping water with one of the big cups.</p> <p><b>Teacher:</b> "What do you think will happen if you pour water from <u>Jamaal's little cup into Paula's big cup?</u>"</p> <p><b>Paula:</b> Shrugs and holds out her cup.</p> <p><b>Jamaal:</b> "Mine's littler."</p> <p><b>Teacher:</b> "Yours is smaller than Paula's cup. What do you notice <u>about the water in Paula's cup?</u>"</p> <p><b>Paula:</b> "There's more."</p> <p><b>Teacher:</b> "That's right! Paula's big cup can hold more water than <u>Jamaal's little cup.</u>"</p> <p><b>Jamaal:</b> Pours more water into Paula's cup.</p> <p><b>Teacher:</b> "How many little cups of water fit into the big cup? <u>Let's count together.</u>"</p> <p><b>Teacher, Jamaal, and Paula:</b> "One, two, three."</p> <p>Paula and Jamaal continue to pour water into each other's cups, as well as experiment with other objects in the water table, while the teacher comments on their interactions and asks what they observe and predict will happen with the different objects.</p>	





Fostering children's thinking skills is important for children's ability to understand bigger ideas in their lives and the world around them. Teachers can effectively foster thinking skills by:

- Using the scientific method to provide tasks where children can observe, predict, and experiment.
- Creating opportunities for children to solve problems.
- Helping children apply knowledge by building on their natural curiosity and drawing upon their everyday experiences.

## WHAT STRATEGIES CAN I USE TO FOSTER CHILDREN'S THINKING SKILLS?

Here are some suggested strategies and examples of what this looks like in action. There are many other ways children's thinking skills can be encouraged. Please note that some examples may include more than one strategy.

Create opportunities for children to **solve problems, experiment**, and figure out how things work.

What this looks like in action:	What it is not:
When children are building towers with blocks, the teacher asks, "What do you think will happen if we add more blocks? Why do you think that?" The teacher then asks children to add more blocks and talk about what happens. This allows children to experiment and learn more from the activity.	When children are building towers with blocks, the teacher asks, "How many blocks does this tower have?" (and asks nothing else).

Make learning meaningful and **connected to children's lives**.

What this looks like in action:	What it is not:
When going outside for a spring nature walk, a child notices flowers blooming. The teacher says, "Tell me about what you see coming out of the ground. Why are the flowers coming out now? Why didn't we see them last month? Have you seen flowers like this at home or somewhere else?" This helps children deepen their understanding of their world.	When going outside for a spring nature walk, the teacher says, "Let's count the number of flowers we see," and encourages no other activity on the walk.

Use **how and why questions that help children think about ideas**.

What this looks like in action:	What it is not:
When reading a story, the teacher asks questions, such as: "How do you think that made her feel? Why do you think that?" to help children think more deeply about the book.	When reading a story, the teacher asks children, "What is the name of this animal?" or "What color is the house?" with a focus on the right answer.



**Link understanding with something previously learned.**

<b>What this looks like in action:</b>	<b>What it is not:</b>
Children are in a center time and playing store, buying and selling various items. The teacher reminds the children about their visit to a store the day before and connects what they saw and did with the current activity.	When children are in center time, the teacher observes their interactions and asks if they are having fun.

**Predict what may happen next.**

<b>What this looks like in action:</b>	<b>What it is not:</b>
When reading a book, the teacher asks questions, such as: "What do you think will happen next?" to help children with their prediction skills.	When reading a book, the teacher reads the book without asking questions, and does not encourage children to talk.

**Brainstorm new ideas, make something in a new way.**

<b>What this looks like in action:</b>	<b>What it is not:</b>
When coloring, the teacher asks children to draw pictures of animals that lay eggs. After the children are done with their drawing, the teacher and children sit together and make a list of all the animals they came up with.	When coloring, the teacher tells children to draw dogs that look just like the picture on the board.

**Compare and contrast to understand similarities and differences.**

<b>What this looks like in action:</b>	<b>What it is not:</b>
When eating lunch, the teacher talks with children about what fruit they see at the table and asks children to compare the shapes and colors.	When eating lunch, the teacher does paperwork while the children eat.

**When during the day can I do this?**

Children's thinking skills can be promoted throughout the school day in many classroom activities including centers, whole group instruction, meal and snack time, as well as transition. What is important is that teachers think intentionally about finding opportunities to do this at different times during the day, and not just during a structured instructional activity.

*NOTE: Please note that the strategies for "What this looks like in action" and "What it is not" are examples specific to those strategies. The behaviors in the nonexamples may be appropriate in other instances depending on children's learning goals.*



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# 21 WAYS TO FOSTER A CONNECTION WITH A CHILD

1. Ask questions.
2. Give warm greetings and good-byes.
3. Laugh together.
4. Play.
5. Listen.
6. Validate feelings.
7. Encourage effort.
8. Give affection.
9. Share in activities.
10. Provide support.
11. Remember what a child tells you.
12. Let the child take the lead.
13. Encourage friendships.
14. Share personal stories.
15. Create special handshakes.
16. Listen to a child's favorite music.
17. Incorporate child's interest.
18. Get on the floor.
19. Give classroom jobs.
20. Maintain eye contact.
21. Call home for GOOD behavior.



# 50 WAYS TO ENCOURAGE A CHILD

1. (Thumbs up)
2. You're on the right track now.
3. You've worked so hard on that.
4. I heard you say how you feel, that's great.
5. Oh, that turned out very well.
6. That's coming along nicely.
7. I'm proud of the way you worked today.
8. You've just about got it.
9. That's the best you've ever done.
10. You stayed so calm during that problem.
11. That's it!
12. Now you've figured it out!
13. That's quite an improvement.
14. I knew you could do it.
15. Congratulations!
16. I love hearing your words.
17. What a super star you are.
18. You solved the problem!
19. Keep working on it, you're almost there!
20. Now you have it!
21. Your brain must be working hard, you figured that out quickly.
22. I'll bet you are proud of yourself.
23. One more time and you'll have it.
24. Great idea!
25. You're amazing!
26. Terrific teamwork!
27. Nothing can stop you now.
28. You have such creative ideas.
29. That's the way to do it.
30. Sensational!
31. You must have been practicing.
32. You handled that so well.
33. I like how you think.
34. Good remembering.
35. You know just what to do!
36. You are really persisting with this.
37. You expressed yourself so well.
38. You did it!
39. I knew you two could figure it out together.
40. Excellent job saying how you feel.
41. I know it's hard, but you are almost there.
42. Fantastic problem solving!
43. I love hearing your ideas.
44. I know that was hard for you, but you stayed so calm.
45. Yes!
46. Look at how you helped each other!
47. You finished faster because you worked together.
48. You kept trying!
49. Excellent try.
50. You are a creative thinker.

