

Encouraging Child-to-Child Conversation



Most preschool and kindergarten classes include regular whole group meetings. Often called circle or group time, these meetings may include listening to stories, singing, fingerplays, and other teacher-led activities. Group meetings are also good times to encourage children to talk directly to each other about what matters to them. Child-to-child conversations during group meetings can help meet several Illinois Early Learning and Development Benchmarks (1.A.ECc, 1.B.ECb, 1.B.ECd, 31.A.ECb).

At the beginning of the week, have children “check in” with each other during the group meeting.

- Invite children to report to the group about things they recently saw or did that they think might interest classmates.
- Invite the listening children to respond. To get started, you can say things like, “Sara, I know you’ve been to the park Josh is talking about. Ask Josh if he saw some of the things you noticed when you went there.”
- You might also say things like, “Josh, you told us about animals you saw at the park. Ask Corina about animals that she saw last weekend when she visited her grandfather.”
- Encourage children to talk about things they have in common. For example, if Noah saw a movie on Sunday, and other children also saw it, invite them to share their views about it.

Make group meeting a time to explore differences of opinion.

- Find opportunities to have children present their points of view. For example, you might say, “Noah says he likes to shop with his family. Joo-Yun, I know you don’t feel that way. Would you please explain to Noah how you feel about going shopping?”
- Encourage children to share and exchange views with each other, instead of reporting and responding mainly to you.

Have children ask for and give information during group meetings.

- Ask some of the children to talk about what they plan to do during the morning. Invite the other children to comment: “Ava and Jaime want to finish making their ambulance, but they need wheels. Who has a suggestion for them?”
- When children come back after being absent, invite other children to tell them about events that they missed and decisions that the class made.
- If a child was absent during a special event, invite him to ask the other children to tell him about the event.
- Keep in mind that your role is that of discussion leader. Find out if the children who asked questions are satisfied with the responses or if they want to ask their classmates anything else.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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