



This guide walks you through presenting the ***Engaging Interactions: Making Learning Meaningful*** in-service suite. These are suggestions so please use the materials as you see fit. This in-service suite includes PowerPoint slides and supporting materials.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Presenter PowerPoint slides (16)
- Projector and audio equipment
- Optional Learning Activities:
 - » *Video Review of Singing Bumblebee* (with slide)
 - » *Discussion of Classroom Scenarios*
 - » *Planning in Your Classroom*
- Tips for Teachers
- Tools for Supervisors
- Helpful Resources
- Flip chart or similar paper and markers for writing participant ideas

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- The purpose of this presentation is to describe strategies that will help teachers to make learning meaningful for children in the classroom by engaging in activities and interactions that support children's understanding of the world around them.
- This is one in a series of in-service suites on *Engaging Interactions*.
- Three main strategies are discussed: linking new learning to children's previous experience, relating concepts to children's lives, and providing children with hands-on learning.
- The presentation includes video clips that illustrate examples of teachers using these strategies.
- As necessary, remind participants that anywhere examples and nonexamples are used (e.g., *Tips for Teachers*) they are specific to the concept being discussed. The nonexamples may be appropriate behaviors in other circumstances.
- Optional learning activities offer participants opportunities to discuss and practice using these strategies.
- Optional slides and learning activities are described in detail at the end of this document.

NOTE

The *Supervisor Planning Guide* is an overarching tool that applies to multiple suites in the *Engaging Interactions* series.



SLIDE 1: MAKING LEARNING MEANINGFUL

Introductions

Begin the training by giving participants background information on yourself. Provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves.

Use an icebreaker that emphasizes making learning meaningful. For example, in a small group ask participants to share a memory they have of learning a new skill. How did they learn the skill? Who taught them? How did they feel after accomplishing the new skill for the first time? Bring the large group back together to highlight common themes throughout various experiences. What made these meaningful experiences that solidified the memory?

Introduce the topic.

Making Learning Meaningful focuses on strategies teachers can use to support children's learning and development. Developing connections between what children learn and what they do fosters children's natural tendency to make sense out of their many different experiences.





SLIDE 2: FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Introduce the NCQTL Framework for Effective Practice.

- The House structure supports school readiness for all children.
- The foundation represents effective and engaging interactions and environments.
- The pillars represent research-based curricula and teaching practices and ongoing child assessment.
- The roof represents highly individualized teaching and learning.
- All components interact with each other and are essential for effective everyday practice with all children.
- This presentation fits into the *foundation* of the House:

Relevance of the NCQTL Framework to participants' everyday work.

- Provides the Head Start community with a visual framework for effective teaching practice in classrooms.
- Guides thinking about all the practices that support school readiness.
- Organizes training and professional development.

Introduce *Engaging Interactions*.

- Interactions are the classroom processes that are important for children's social and academic development.
- When teachers create positive emotional relationships, organize the learning environment, and focus on cognitive and language development, children make greater gains that help them succeed in school and life.
- There are three broad blocks to the foundation: Social and Emotional Support, Well-Organized Classroom, and Instructional Interactions. The *Engaging Interactions* series fits in the Instructional Interactions block. Specifically, making learning meaningful is one example of classroom interactions that support children's later success in school.

NOTE

Classroom processes refer to the way teachers interact with children as well as to how they select and use materials and resources for instructional purposes.



OBJECTIVES

- **Provide a definition** of making learning meaningful for children.
- **Give examples and strategies** of how teachers can make learning meaningful in the classroom.
- **Connect** to the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.
- **Provide suggestions** for teachers on how to make learning meaningful for children.

SLIDE 3: OBJECTIVES

Outline objectives for presentations:

- Provide a definition of making learning meaningful for children.
- Give examples and strategies for how teachers can make learning meaningful in the classroom.
- Connect making learning meaningful to the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework*.
- Provide suggestions for teachers on how to improve their ability to make learning meaningful for children.

WHAT DOES MAKING LEARNING MEANINGFUL LOOK LIKE?

- Links new learning to children's previous experiences.
- **Relates concepts to children's lives.**
- Provides children with hands-on learning opportunities.

SLIDE 4: WHAT DOES MAKING LEARNING MEANINGFUL LOOK LIKE?

Meaningful learning is when activities and classroom interactions support children's understanding of the world around them.

Meaningful learning opportunities:

- Link new learning to children's previous experiences.
- Relate concepts to children's lives.
- Provide children with hands-on learning.

Making learning meaningful is NOT about presenting ideas that are independent of one another or activities and interactions that are too abstract.

EMPHASIZE *

Meaningful activities and classroom interactions support children's understanding of the world around them.



LINK NEW LEARNING TO CHILDREN'S PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

Link children's new knowledge to what they have learned.

"Remember last week when we took a trip to the farm? We were able to see how lots of different vegetables grow. Some grow under the ground and some grow above ground. Today we are going to use some of those same vegetables to make a yummy vegetable soup for our families."



SLIDE 5: LINK NEW LEARNING TO CHILDREN'S PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

Effective interactions that make learning meaningful for children link children's new knowledge to what they already know.

When teachers link learning to children's previous experiences, they assist children in making connections between new and previously learned concepts.

- For example, before a teacher reads a book about following a recipe and making soup together with the children as a cooking project, she reminds them of the previous week's lesson about the different ways in which vegetables grow. "Remember last week when we took a trip to the farm? We were able to see how lots of different vegetables grow. Some grow under the ground and some grow above ground. Today we are going to use some of those same vegetables to make a yummy vegetable soup for our families." As each vegetable is introduced in the recipe, the teacher has conversations with the children about what they have learned about each one.

NOTE

This example could connect to the Early Learning Framework in the areas of Physical Development and Health, Social Studies Knowledge & Skills, Literacy Knowledge & Skills and Science Knowledge & Skills. Other areas could be targeted based on specifics of the lesson.

Another example:

The teacher links a discussion of bees to previous learning the day before about butterflies. Yesterday, the class talked about butterflies as a kind of insect. Today, the teacher links bees to butterflies, asking questions, such as, "How are they the same?" and, "What letter do 'butterfly' and 'bee' start with?"



RELATE CONCEPTS TO CHILDREN'S LIVES

Teach concepts that are a part of children's everyday experiences.



During a unit on recycling children bring in used food boxes from home. Children flatten them down and collect them in a classroom bin. When the classroom bin becomes full, they take a walking field trip to the school's large recycling container.

SLIDE 6: RELATE CONCEPTS TO CHILDREN'S LIVES

Effective interactions that make learning meaningful for children teach concepts that are part of children's everyday experiences.

Another way to make learning meaningful for children is by helping them to relate new knowledge to their own life experiences. When teachers are able to personalize lessons for children by using familiar objects and themes, children are more inclined to understand and maintain their new knowledge.

- For example, when a teacher introduces a lesson about recycling, he asks children to bring in used food boxes from home. After they come in, he gathers them up in a large classroom recycling bin and together as a class they flatten them down during circle time. He also encourages children to add recyclable items from the classroom so that everyone is able to contribute to the recycling bin. When the classroom bin becomes full, they take a walking field trip to dump the bin into the school's large recycling container. The teacher arranges for children to observe when the recycling truck comes to empty the container and brings in additional resources to show how their items from home become recycled into new paper. The class then uses recycled paper in their drawing and writing center.

NOTE

This example could connect to the Early Learning Framework in the areas of Social Studies Knowledge & Skills, Science Knowledge & Skills, Literacy Knowledge & Skills and Mathematics Knowledge & Skills. Other areas could be targeted based on the specifics of the lesson.

Another example:

Children are pretending to cook in the housekeeping center. The teacher talks with the children about what they are cooking and asks, "What kind of foods do you make with your family at home?"



PROVIDE CHILDREN WITH HANDS-ON LEARNING

Bring concepts to life by putting learning into action.



Together the teacher and children transform the dramatic play area into an outdoor fishing scene. The teacher provides boxes for children to create boats, blue paper to cover the floor, child-made fish to “catch,” and sticks and string they can use to make fishing poles.

SLIDE 7: PROVIDE CHILDREN WITH HANDS-ON LEARNING

Effective instruction that makes learning meaningful for children brings concepts to life by putting learning into action.

Another strategy for making learning meaningful for children is to provide children with hands-on opportunities that support the learning of new concepts. When children are able to explore, problem-solve, perform and make things happen with materials related to the targeted concepts, new learning takes root and skills are maintained.

- For example, a teacher is working with the children on a unit focused on fish, due to the annual community fish festival that highlights local traditions. Together the teacher and children transform the dramatic play area into an outdoor fishing scene. The teacher provides boxes for children to create boats, blue paper to cover the floor, child-made fish to “catch,” and sticks and string they can use to make fishing poles.

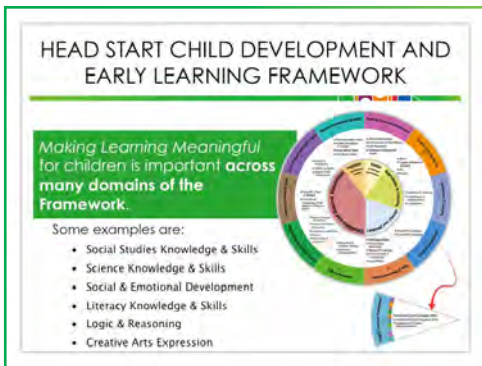
NOTE

This example could connect to the Early Learning Framework in the areas of Social Studies Knowledge & Skills, Science Knowledge & Skills, Literacy Knowledge & Skills, Mathematics Knowledge & Skills, and Creative Arts Expression. Other areas could be targeted based on the specifics of the lesson.

Another example:

After spending time learning about the different types of fruits and vegetables, children are given an opportunity to make fruit salad for lunch.



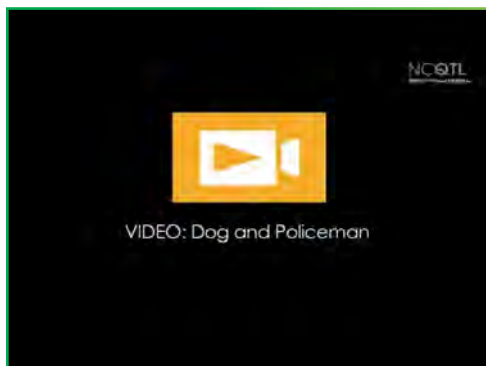


SLIDE 8: HEAD START CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Introduce the HSCDEL.F.

Making Learning Meaningful can be connected to many domains of the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework* including:

- Social Studies Knowledge & Skills
- Science Knowledge & Skills
- Social & Emotional Development
- Literacy Knowledge & Skills
- Logic & Reasoning
- Creative Arts Expression



Length of video: Approximately 41 seconds

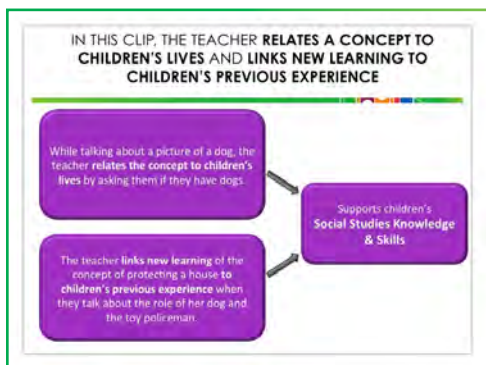
SLIDE 9: VIDEO: DOG AND POLICEMAN

Introduce the video.

Inform participants that they will view a video that shows a teacher talking with children about dogs and a policeman.

Ask participants to look for examples of how the teacher makes learning meaningful.

VIDEO



SLIDE 10: IN THIS CLIP, THE TEACHER RELATES A CONCEPT TO CHILDREN'S LIVES AND LINKS NEW LEARNING TO CHILDREN'S PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

Highlight main points from the video clips related to making learning meaningful for children:

- In this clip, there were many instances of the teacher engaging in instructionally supportive interactions with the children.
- For example, the teacher **relates the concept to children's lives** when she asks them if they have dogs. She also **links new learning** (the concept of protecting a house) **to children's previous experience** when they talked about the similarities between her dog and the toy policeman.
- Both of these interactions support the development of children's Social Studies Knowledge & Skills, particularly their ability to recognize a variety of jobs and the work associated.





SLIDE 11: VIDEO: VOTING

Introduce the video.

Inform participants that they will view a video that shows a teacher talking about voting.

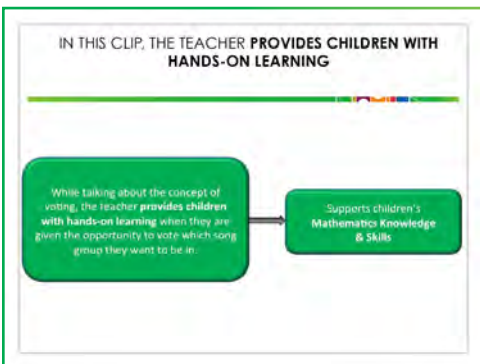
Ask participants to look for examples of how the teacher makes learning meaningful.

VIDEO 

Length of video: Approximately 2 minutes and 43 seconds

Video courtesy of The Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning:

<http://curry.virginia.edu/research/centers/castl>



SLIDE 12: IN THIS CLIP, THE TEACHER PROVIDES CHILDREN WITH HANDS-ON LEARNING

Highlight main points from the video clips related to making learning meaningful for children:

- In this clip, the teacher provides children with hands-on learning.
- For example, while talking about the concept of voting, the teacher provides children with hands-on learning when they were given the opportunity to vote on which song they wanted to sing.
- This interaction supports the development of children's Mathematics Knowledge & Skills, particularly their ability to use a range of strategies, such as counting and estimating to compare quantity in two sets of objects and describe the comparison with terms, such as more, less, greater than, fewer, or equal to (Number Relationships & Operations).



WHEN CAN I MAKE LEARNING MEANINGFUL FOR CHILDREN?

Children's understanding can be promoted **throughout the school day** in many classroom activities.



SLIDE 13: WHEN CAN I MAKE LEARNING MEANINGFUL FOR CHILDREN?

Opportunities where learning can be made meaningful occur throughout the school day in different activities.

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share examples.

Some possible examples:

- During lunch a teacher might encourage children to link shapes of food (e.g., pizza slice, cracker) to shapes they learned about the day before.
- Teachers can help children relate their block constructions to familiar buildings in their neighborhoods by asking questions such as, "Where have you seen a building like this one before?" or "What buildings do you see on your way to school?"
- After a lesson on insects, children go outdoors to look for bugs and draw pictures of them.

NOTE

It is important that teachers think intentionally about finding opportunities to do this at different times of the day, and not just during structured instructional activity.





SLIDE 14: IMPROVING PRACTICE

Three ways to improve instructional interactions in the classrooms:

Videotape – Teachers can videotape and watch their classroom interactions. This can help them to observe moment-to-moment interactions with students and reflect on their practice.

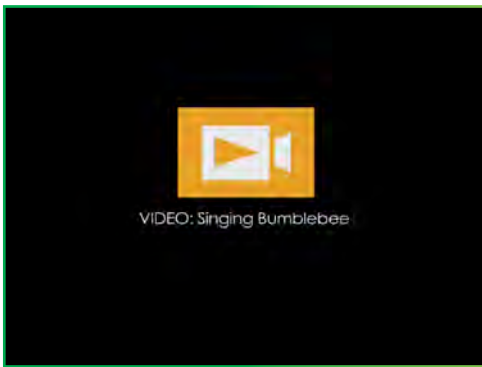
Example: For example, a teacher videotapes her interactions with a group of children looking at picture books during library time. One child is looking at a book about animals and their habitats. The teacher asks open-ended questions about the picture the child is looking at. The teacher notes that the child responded by describing various attributes of the polar bear. However, she realized that she could have asked further questions that would have built on the concept of habitat that she had introduced the previous day during a nature walk at the park nearby. She could have said, “On our walk yesterday we saw birds and squirrels. Remember how we talked about how all animals need food and a place to rest? We also talked about how different animals live in different kinds of places. Where do polar bears live? What do polar bears eat? Could a polar bear live in the desert? Why not?” This would have helped make the book more meaningful by connecting it to the child’s prior experience with animal habitats.

Practice with a peer – It can also be helpful for teachers to “practice with a peer” by either having a peer teacher conduct a live classroom observation, or watch a video together of a practice. Fellow teachers can provide feedback on each other’s behavior and children’s cues and responses. Together, teachers can brainstorm ways that the focus teacher is interacting in the classroom to make improvements and more often make learning meaningful to children’s lives.

Example: For example, a peer teacher might observe a music activity at circle time in which the focus teacher was encouraging children to explore different types of musical instruments. The peer teacher might notice that the focus teacher mostly asked questions that required the children to describe the properties of sound and rhythm. The peer teacher might suggest that the focus teacher also try asking questions that help the children to relate sounds and music to their everyday lives. She could have asked, “What kinds of music do you listen to at home?” “Have you been to a musical performance before?” The teacher could then tie children’s previous experiences together with the instruments in the classroom by discussing how their instruments are alike or different from what the children have seen or heard before. This would have helped make the activity more meaningful by connecting the musical activity to different kinds of music children experience in their own cultures and communities.

Watch a “master teacher” – Another way to improve practice is to view examples of a more skilled teacher’s interactions with children, either live or on video. Observing the master teacher’s strategies can provide ideas for how to improve a teacher’s own instructional interactions.





Length of video: Approximately 1 minute and 5 seconds

Video courtesy of The Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning:

<http://curry.virginia.edu/research/centers/castl>

OPTIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITY: VIDEO: SINGING BUMBLEBEE

The *Video Review of Singing Bumblebee* learning activity can be used to discuss strategies that teachers use to make learning for children meaningful in the classroom.

This video shows an example of a science lesson on bees. The teacher makes the lesson meaningful for the children by relating the lesson to the bees the children had seen at the pavilion the week before.

Refer to the *Video Review of Singing Bumblebee: Facilitator Guide* for specific details.

NOTE

Depending on the number of participants, this activity can be done in the large group or participants can be divided into smaller groups of 3–4.

Directions

Inform participants they will review the video, look for and write down specific examples of strategies that the teacher uses to make learning meaningful for the children.

HANDOUT

Distribute *Video Review of Singing Bumblebee* and review directions.

VIDEO

Explain that the teacher is conducting a lesson on bees and that the children had seen bees the week before at the pavilion.

OPTIONAL SLIDE PPT

Show the optional video slide, *Singing Bumblebee*.

Participants record examples of observed strategies as they watch the *Singing Bumblebee* video.

Strategies

Participants discuss examples of strategies they observed in the video directly in the large group or share back after discussion in the smaller groups.

Connecting strategies to domains

Participants share examples of domains and domain elements from the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework* they observed being supported in the video. Participants discuss examples directly in the large group or share back after discussion in the smaller groups.





OPTIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITY: DISCUSSION OF CLASSROOM SCENARIOS

This learning activity provides an opportunity for participants to practice how they might use strategies that make learning meaningful in their own classrooms.

This activity offers four options: identifying strategies, generating statements/questions, creating a script, and role play. The facilitator may use any number and combination of the four options.

Refer to the *Discussion of Classroom Scenarios: Facilitator Guide* for specific details.

NOTE

If you have a large group, consider dividing participants into several smaller groups for this activity.

HANDOUT

Distribute *Discussion of Classroom Scenarios* and review directions.

- Each group completes the assigned activities depending on the chosen option(s).

DISCUSSION

Have small groups share back with the larger group.

For the role play option

Encourage participants to comment based on their assigned role of teacher, child, or observer.

Possible questions to ask:

- What did you notice the teacher doing?
- How did the children respond?
- What other ways could teachers implement this strategy?





OPTIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITY: PLANNING IN YOUR CLASSROOM

This learning activity provides an opportunity for participants to develop a plan for how they might incorporate strategies that make learning meaningful into planned activities in their own classrooms. Refer to the *Planning in Your Classroom: Facilitator Guide* for specific details.

NOTE

If you have a large group, consider dividing participants into several smaller groups for this activity.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Planning in Your Classroom* learning activity to participants and review directions.

- Each group completes the assigned activity.

DISCUSSION

Have small groups share back with the larger group.

NOTE

The *Planning in Your Classroom* learning activity can also be reviewed and distributed to participants for use in their own classrooms without engaging participants in the learning activity.