



This guide walks you through presenting the ***Interest-Based Learning: Following Children's Lead*** in-service suite. This in-service suite includes PowerPoint slides and supporting materials.

## MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Presenter PowerPoint slides (20)
- Optional Video Discussion Slides (3)
- Projector and audio equipment
- Optional Learning Activities:
  - » *Review of Playdough Video*
  - » *Discussion of Classroom Scenarios*
  - » *Planning to Follow Children's Lead in Your Classroom*
- Tips for Teachers
- Tools for Supervisors
- Helpful Resources
- Flip chart or similar large paper and markers for writing

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- The purpose of this presentation is to describe strategies that demonstrate how teachers can engage children in learning by following children's lead.
- This is one in a series of in-service suites on *Interest-Based Learning*.
- Three main strategies are discussed: Building on children's interests; providing children with choices; and encouraging children to express ideas.
- The presentation includes video clips that illustrate examples of teachers using these strategies.
- As necessary, remind participants that anywhere examples and non-examples are used (e.g., *Tips for Teachers*) they are specific to the concepts being discussed. The non-examples may be appropriate behaviors in other circumstances.
- Optional discussion questions and learning activities offer participants opportunities to discuss and practice using the strategies presented in this in-service suite. Tips on using the optional slides and learning activities are provided at the end of these Presenter Notes.



## SLIDE 1: FOLLOWING CHILDREN'S LEAD

### Introductions:

- Begin the training by giving participants background information about yourself.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves. For example, ask participants to share a classroom activity or routine where they allow children to make choices and express their ideas.

### Introduce the topic:

- *Following Children's Lead* addresses the area of social and emotional support.
- The presentation demonstrates that encouraging children to initiate helps children develop self-esteem and self-confidence.



## SLIDE 2: FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

### Introduce NCQTL:

- National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning
- Framework for Effective Practice Supporting School Readiness for All Children (House Structure):
  - » The visual consists of four components for quality teaching and learning.
  - » All four components interact with each other and are essential for effective everyday practices for all children.
  - » This presentation fits into the foundation of the House.
- Connect NCQTL Framework to participant's everyday work:
  - » A visual way to provide the Head Start community with a framework for effective teaching practices in classrooms.
  - » A way to think about all the practices that support school readiness.
  - » A way to organize training and professional development.
- Introduce Social and Emotional Support:
  - » Research shows that teachers' interactions with children are important for their 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.
  - » *Following Children's Lead* presents strategies that reflect interactions that promote children's social development and learning.



**OBJECTIVES**

- **Provide a definition of *Following Children's Lead*.**
- **Give examples and strategies** for how teachers can follow children's lead.
- **Connect *Following Children's Lead* to the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.**
- **Provide suggestions** for teachers on how to improve their ability to follow children's lead.

## SLIDE 3: OBJECTIVES

Outline objectives for presentation:

- Provide a definition of *Following Children's Lead*.
- Give examples and strategies for how teachers can follow children's lead in the classroom.
- Connect *Following Children's Lead* to the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.
- Provide suggestions for teachers on how to improve their ability to follow children's lead.

**FOLLOWING CHILDREN'S LEAD**

**What does it look like?**

- Teachers being flexible and allowing children to have a voice in the classroom by:
  - Building on children's interests
  - Providing choices
  - Encouraging children to express their ideas

**What does it NOT look like?**

- Teachers being overly rigid and too determined to follow their own plans and interests.

## SLIDE 4: FOLLOWING CHILDREN'S LEAD

Following children's lead requires teachers to be flexible by adjusting their plans to incorporate children's ideas and interests. This means listening carefully to children and being responsive to children's cues about what motivates and interests them.

- For example, a teacher notices that a group of children are interested in the wheels of the tricycles they ride during outdoor play. She decides to read a book about wheels to the class at story time and to add various objects that roll (e.g., balls, dowels, toy vehicles) to the block construction area.

Another example:

- A teacher sets up the dramatic play area as a grocery store so children can practice their expressive language and peer interaction skills. As children buy and sell items, the teacher notices that they make comments on quantities and sizes of the grocery store items, so she offers children a balance and a tape measure that lets them measure and weigh objects.

Flexible and responsive teachers allow children to have a voice in the classroom by:

- Planning activities that allow children to follow their interests in the classroom.
- Building on children's interest, providing children with choices and encouraging children to express their ideas.
- Offering children many chances to lead or initiate activities.

### NOTE

Following children's lead involves thoughtful and careful planning and ongoing observation and reflection on children's behaviors and learning.

### EMPHASIZE

Following children's lead is a meaningful way to promote children's self-confidence.



**THE HEAD START CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING FRAMEWORK**

- **Following Children's Lead can occur throughout many domains of the Head Start Framework.** Some examples are:
  - Social & Emotional Development
  - Approaches to Learning
  - Physical Development & Health
  - Creative Arts Expression

## SLIDE 5: THE HEAD START CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING FRAMEWORK

*Following Children's Lead* can be connected to many domains of the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework including:

- Social & Emotional Development
- Approaches to Learning
- Physical Development & Health
- Creative Arts Expression

**CHILDREN'S INTEREST**

Build on children's interest and incorporate their ideas into activities.

*For Example:* Sophie approaches her teacher with a globe and asks her where California is. The teacher takes this as an opportunity to show her the state they live in, as well as other places the child has visited with her family.

## SLIDE 6: CHILDREN'S INTEREST

One way to follow children's lead is to *build upon children's interest*. When teachers help and encourage children to follow an interest, children tend to become more fully engaged in learning. Building on children's interest supports their curiosity and communicates to children that they are valued and competent learners.

- In the example on the slide, the teacher expands on the child's curiosity of the globe and shows her other states in the country.

Another example:

- During outdoor free play, the teacher sees a few children playing with a worm on the ground. She builds on their interest, asking them various questions about worms and other insects living in the dirt. She also plans on reading *A Diary of a Worm* during story time shortly after recess.

### EMPHASIZE \*

Build on children's interest to increase their curiosity and engagement in learning.

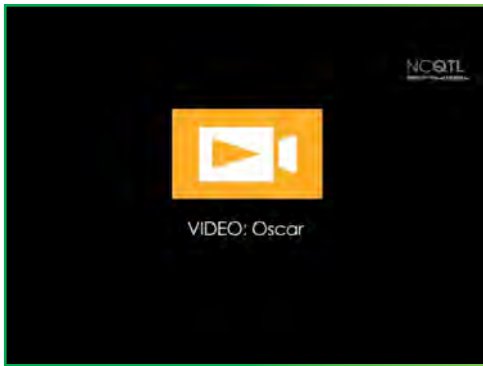
### DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share additional examples.

### NOTE

Teachers build on children's interest by providing resources, learning opportunities and further information that extend children's thinking and learning.





Length of video: Approximately 1 minute and 4 seconds

## SLIDE 7: VIDEO: OSCAR

### Introduce the video.

Inform participants that they will view a video that shows a teacher talking to children during center time.

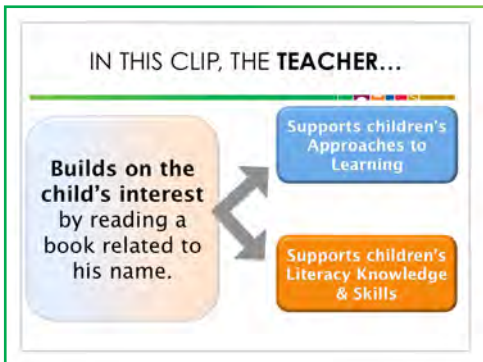
Ask participants to look for examples of how the teacher builds upon children's interests.

VIDEO 

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION 

Have participants share their observations from the video and make connections to their own classroom practices.

Show optional slide *Oscar: What Did You Notice?*



## SLIDE 8: IN THIS CLIP, THE TEACHER...

### Building on children's interest

Highlight main points from the video clips related to building on children's interests:


- In this clip the teacher follows the child's lead by reading a book he was interested in. She follows up with open-ended questions that further engage the child.
- This clip shows practices that support children's learning in the following Head Start Framework domains: Approaches to Learning, particularly, building on the child's eagerness to learn; Literacy Knowledge & Skills, particularly, book appreciation and print concepts.



**PROVIDE CHOICES**

- Provide children with choices.

*For Example:*  
When the teacher plans an activity to use number cards to practice counting, she provides choices in how to do this. Some may practice matching with lily pads, others may put them in order, etc.



**EMPHASIZE** \*

Provide children with choices to encourage autonomy and persistence.

**SLIDE 9:  
PROVIDE CHOICES**

Another way to follow children’s lead is to *provide children with choices*. The teacher may do this to allow more autonomy and/ or to support learning through various activities. Children tend to be more engaged with and committed to an activity they have chosen, making it more likely that they will maintain interest and attention until an activity is completed.

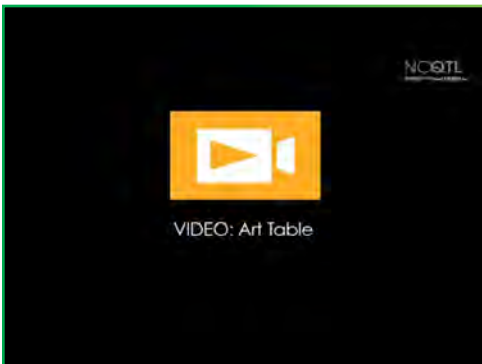
- In the example provided in the slide, the teacher’s goal is to have children practice their math skills. When other students think of different ways to use the number cards, the teacher allows them to choose which way they want to do the activity.

Another example:

- While transitioning from free play, the teacher allows the children to choose any book in the library to read during quiet book time.

**DISCUSSION** 

Ask participants to share additional examples.



*Length of video: Approximately 1 minute*

**SLIDE 10:  
VIDEO: ART TABLE**

**Introduce the video.**

Inform participants that they will view a video that shows a classroom during a small group art activity.

Ask participants to look for examples of how the teacher provides children with choices.

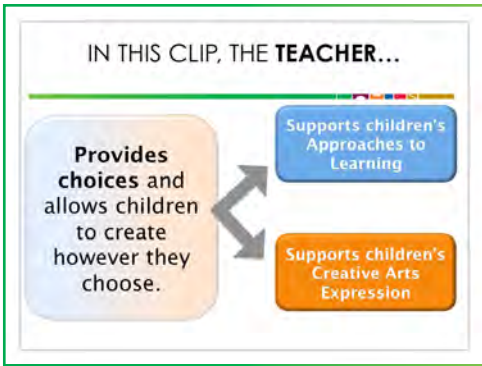
**VIDEO** 

**OPTIONAL DISCUSSION** 

Have participants share their observations from the video and make connections to their own classroom practices.

Show optional slide *Art Table: What did You Notice?*





## SLIDE 11: IN THIS CLIP, THE **TEACHER...**

### Providing children with choices

Highlight main points from the video clips related to providing children with choices:

- In this clip the teacher allows the child to create buildings however they choose. She says, "You can do whatever you'd like," and "You can use your imagination."
- This clip shows practices that support children's learning in the following Head Start Framework domains: Social & Emotional Development (self efficacy), Creative Art Expression (the children use a variety of materials to express themselves).

ENCOURAGE IDEAS

- Encourage children to express their ideas.

*For Example:* During outdoor free-play, James approaches the teacher with a new toy. The teacher says, "Tell me about your toy... show me how you play with it."

## SLIDE 12: ENCOURAGE IDEAS

Another way to follow children's lead is to *encourage children to express their ideas*. In the example provided in the slide, the teacher wants to know what the child thinks the new toy does rather than telling him what the toy does.

Another example:

- During a small group music activity, the teacher shows the children various new instruments; before showing them how they make music, she asks children to talk about how they think they can play them.

### DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share additional examples.

### EMPHASIZE

Encourage children's ideas to support their initiative and eagerness to communicate and learn.





Length of video: Approximately 1 minute and 9 seconds

Video courtesy of The Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning:  
<http://curry.virginia.edu/research/centers/cast/>

## SLIDE 13: VIDEO: CLIMBING AND LEMONADE

### Introduce the video.

Inform participants that they will view a video of a class during outdoor free play.

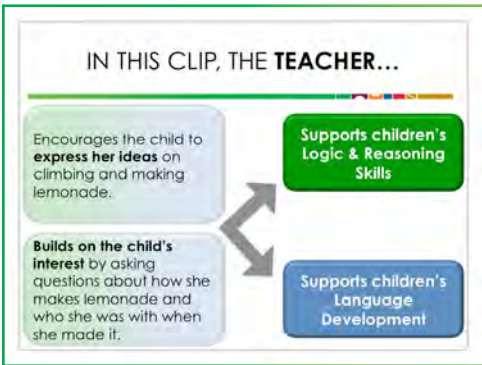
Ask participants to look for examples of how the teacher encourages children’s ideas and builds upon their interests.

VIDEO

### OPTIONAL DISCUSSION

Have participants share their observations from the video and make connections to their own classroom practices.

Show optional slide *Climbing and Lemonade: What Did You Notice?*



## SLIDE 14: IN THIS CLIP, THE TEACHER...

Encouraging children’s ideas and building on children’s interests

Highlight main points from the video clip related to encouraging the child’s ideas and building on her interests.

- In this clip, the teacher encourages the child to talk about how she climbed over the play structure and how she made lemonade.
- This clip shows practices that support children’s learning in the following Head Start Framework domains: Logic & Reasoning, particularly when the teacher asks the child to explain how she problem solved to get down from the wall; Language Development, as the teacher encourages the child to use her expressive language during their conversations.



## SLIDE 15: HOW DO THE FOLLOWING CHILDREN'S LEAD STRATEGIES RELATE TO EACH OTHER?

It is important to keep in mind that these strategies, although different, may be practiced alone or together. They all are a part of following children’s lead.







Length of video: Approximately 2 minutes

## SLIDE 16: VIDEO: TEACHER ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

### Introduce the video.

Inform participants that they will view a video montage of teachers talking about the importance of following children's lead.

VIDEO 

DISCUSSION 

Ask the group to reflect on what they heard in the video and how this applies to their own practice.



## SLIDE 17: WHEN CAN I FOLLOW CHILDREN'S LEAD?

Opportunities where teachers can follow children's lead can occur throughout the school day and in different activities including:

- Centers
- Small group and whole group
- Meals and snack times
- Outdoor Play
- Transitions



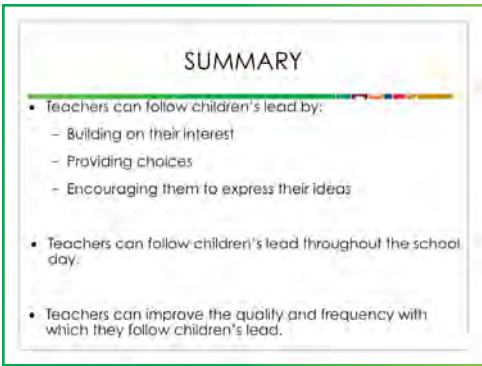
## SLIDE 18: IMPROVING PRACTICE

1. 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:* A teacher videotapes her interactions with a group of children during free play. She notices that there are a few missed opportunities when she could have built upon Tommy's interest in trains or Maraika's interest in cupcakes.

2. View "master teachers:" Another way to improve practice is to view examples of a more skilled teacher's interactions with students, either live or on video. Observing the master teacher's strategies can provide ideas for how to improve a teacher's own practice.





## SLIDE 19: SUMMARY

Review strategies to follow children's lead:

1. Build on children's interest
2. Provide children with choices
3. Encourage children to express their ideas

Following children's lead can occur throughout the school day including:

1. Centers
2. Small group and whole group activities
3. Meals
4. Transitions

Teachers can improve practice by:

1. Videotaping
2. Watching Master Teachers



## SLIDE 20: CLOSING

Provide participants with NCQTL contact information and encourage them to visit our website for additional resources.



## OPTIONAL DISCUSSION SLIDES

The following three slides are designed for use after each of the three videos in this presentation. Discussion questions encourage participants to share their observations from the videos and make connections to their own classroom practices.

**OSCAR**  
**WHAT DID YOU NOTICE?**

- Discussion Questions:
  - While watching the video, how did the teacher **build on the child's interest**?
  - How did the child respond?
  - Can you recall other examples of this from your classroom experience?

### OSCAR: WHAT DID YOU NOTICE?

Recommended placement is after Slide 7.

Show optional slide *Oscar: What Did You Notice?*

Have participants volunteer to share answers to the questions on the slide.

**ART TABLE**  
**WHAT DID YOU NOTICE?**

- Discussion Questions:
  - While watching the video, how did the teacher **provide children with choices**?
  - How did the child respond?
  - Can you recall other examples of this from your classroom experience?

### ART TABLE: WHAT DID YOU NOTICE?

Recommended placement is after Slide 10.

Show optional slide *Art Table: What Did You Notice?*

Have participants volunteer to share answers to the questions on the slide.

**CLIMBING AND LEMONADE**  
**WHAT DID YOU NOTICE?**

- Discussion Questions:
  - While watching the video, how did the teacher **encourage the child to express her ideas**?
  - How did the child respond?
  - Can you recall other examples of this from your classroom experience?

### CLIMBING AND LEMONADE: WHAT DID YOU NOTICE?

Recommended placement is after Slide 13.

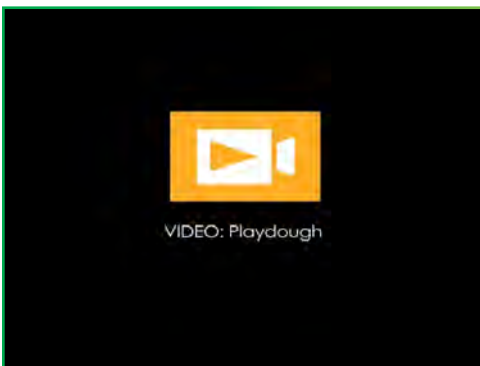
Show optional slide *Climbing and Lemonade: What Did You Notice?*

Have participants volunteer to share answers to the questions on the slide.



## OPTIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The following three learning activities can be done at the end of the presentation. *Review of Playdough Video* and *Discussion of Classroom Scenarios* offer participants an opportunity to review the three strategies discussed in the in-service suite. The *Planning to Follow Children's Lead in Your Classroom* activity is designed for participants to develop a follow up plan for applying the strategies to their own classroom.



Length of video: Approximately 1 minute and 45 seconds

### OPTIONAL

#### LEARNING ACTIVITY: REVIEW OF PLAYDOUGH VIDEO

The *Review of Playdough Video* learning activity can be used to discuss strategies that teachers use to follow children's lead.

This video shows an example of a class during center time.

Refer to *Review of Playdough Video: Facilitator Guide* for specific details.

#### NOTE

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

**Directions:** Inform participants that they will watch the video, looking for and recording specific examples of strategies that illustrate how the teacher followed the children's lead.

#### HANDOUT

Distribute *Review of Playdough Video* and review directions.

#### **Introduce the video.**

Explain that the teacher is conducting a small group activity.

#### **Strategies**

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

#### **Connecting strategies to domains**

Participants share examples of domains and domain elements from the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework that they observe 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 to follow children's lead.

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 *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 as teacher, child, or observer.

Possible questions to ask:

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



## OPTIONAL



### LEARNING ACTIVITY:

#### PLANNING TO FOLLOW CHILDREN'S LEAD IN YOUR CLASSROOM

This learning activity provides an opportunity for participants to develop a plan for how they might follow children's lead in their own classrooms. Refer to *Planning to Follow Children's Lead 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 *Planning to Follow Children's Lead in Your Classroom* to participants and review directions:

- Each group completes the assigned activity.

#### DISCUSSION

Have small groups share back with the larger group.

#### NOTE

The *Planning to Follow Children's Lead in Your Classroom* handout can also be reviewed and distributed to participants as a follow-up activity for use in their own classrooms without engaging participants in the learning activity during the in-service suite.