

What is a Photo Chat?

Purpose

Young children make sense of the world through language. We use language to reason, express emotions, solve problems, and get things done!

Photo chat is a language-building classroom routine. Teachers choose from a collection of engaging images with the intention of sparking conversation. We, at Project Connect, believe a compelling photograph or image is a rich opportunity for your classroom community to chat!

Oracy, or oral language development, blossoms when children have many opportunities to talk and be listened to. Teaching oracy means **putting more intention behind how you guide and elevate your students' talk.**

The Value of Routines

Routines are repeated learning activities or procedures. They are powerful tools in a classroom because children are offered many opportunities to engage in an activity over time. You don't need to accomplish everything every time; tomorrow is another opportunity. Photo chat routines offer a playful, open-ended routine with multiple points of entry. Let's unpack that idea: ***open-ended*** means there is more than one thing to talk about, and ***multiple points of entry*** means that students at all levels of expressive language skills will benefit from the discussion.

Once the practice of noticing and wondering becomes routine in your classroom, you are ready to add more cognitively demanding photo chats to your repertoire. Using a variety of photo chats builds a range of vocabulary and language structures needed to express comparisons and justify reasoning.

We suggest you follow this progression of photo chats:

1. Notice & Wonder
2. Same and Different
3. How Many?
4. Which One Doesn't Belong?

Role of the Teacher

Picking Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/PoioHT57xdGTUfwWA>

We have created an album of photos to get you started. However, the best photos will be ones that connect with your students. This routine is powerful when children see themselves (mirrors) and have opportunities to notice and think about new people and places (windows).

Photos should have a clear focal point but enough nuance to invite a variety of idea.

Setting norms

Routines	Rationale
Which image will you be discussing?	To keep the routine brief and intentional. Use the planning template to consider language building opportunities.
Where will you display image?	<p>Will you be displaying this in the classroom digitally?</p> <p>Establish a community place, such as the rug area, where all children can turn and talk.</p>
When will the Photo chat routine happen?	Establish a time of day such as morning meeting or after recess. Children are ensured multiple opportunities over the course of the week.
How will children know when to start and stop talking?	A signal such as a chime to establish talking and listening norms. This is a routine you can use throughout the day.
How can I ensure all students get a chance to talk?	<p>Establish a talking routine such as “turn & talk”. Not all children feel comfortable talking in the whole group setting.</p> <p>Establish nonverbal response gestures so that all children can show nonverbally when they are ready to share, agree, disagree, or want to build on an idea.</p>
How can we engage all students regardless of their expressive language skills?	Incorporating multiple modalities supports all children's ability to make sense of oral language. Layering gestures with words supports all children but especially benefits English learners.
How will I wrap up the photo chat?	A closing statement which encapsulates the discussion. <i>We noticed so many tiny details on the caterpillar and we are still wondering how will he change?</i>

Supporting Language Development

Teacher Move	Rationale	Example
Wait time	Allow children time to react or respond.	Teacher is observing but not responding with words or actions.
Say what you see using descriptive language	Model precise language to describe what you see. This supports children receptive understanding of language.	<i>"I notice a robin is holding a tiny worm in her beak."</i>
Rephrasing/ Revoicing	To amplify a comment or idea to the benefit of the entire learning community.	<i>"Ivette notices the baby robins have opened their beaks very wide."</i>
TPR Gestures for specific academic vocabulary	Layering gestures with your words supports children's receptive language understanding. Model for children and expect them to use the gesture, too. A high impact strategy especially for English learners.	Ivette notices the baby robins have opened their beaks very wide. <i>Create a beak with you hand – open your "beak" wide.</i> "I notice" gesture "I wonder" gesture
Provoking comment	Pushing for specificity Extend a child's thinking from noticing into wondering.	<i>Carl noticed there is only one worm but 2 baby robins. I wonder what the mama robin will do?</i>
Turn and Talk	Ensures all children get a chance to practice speaking in pairs before whole class. Offers teachers an opportunity to collect data.	Teacher is listening as children talk in pairs.
Building the conversation	Extend and deepen the thinking or reasoning. Support language building.	"Build on" gesture Does anyone want to build on that?

Summing Up

This is the final statement you make at the end of the photo chat routine to anchor the thinking and conversation. Before children leave the photo chat, what part of the conversation will be meaningful to repeat or summarize?

- Consider a Social Emotional observation: *“I can see you are listening to one another. Today, no one repeated what someone else had already shared.”*
- Consider a language building observation: *“After Carlos noticed the kite was torn, we had so many new wonderings to add on. That really helped us build our conversation.”*

Assessing

Photo chat routine provides a context in which to observe and collect evidence of children’s developing language skills and communicative competencies over the course of the school year.