

**Field task: Building Respectful Relationships through**

**“Small Conversations”**

This field task offers an opportunity to grow your skills at the high-leverage practice of *building respectful relationships with students*by engaging in“small conversations” with children in the field. Small conversations are one-on-one interactions between the teacher and a child. During small conversations, teachers establish rapport and build mutual trust with children by asking and answering questions, listening to and taking children seriously, and conveying regard for their ideas. Small conversations can be about the instructional content, such as when a teacher checks in with a child about a problem or a text. They can also be about a topic unrelated to the subject matter, such as a child’s weekend. Typically, small conversations are brief and can occur at many different points throughout the school day.

**Overview of Field Task**

For this field task, you will engage in and record several of these one-on-one small conversations with children. You will then select two of your recordings to analyze. In so doing, you will consider the relative success of your enactment in terms of different features of each conversation, as well as think about how each conversation helped or impeded your efforts to build respectful relationships with children.

This field task has three parts: (1) preparing for your small conversations with children; (2) enacting the small conversations; (3) selecting and transcribing two small conversations and providing brief commentary. Each part is described in detail below, along with instructions for submitting and uploading your work.

## Part 1: Preparing for small conversations.

## The appropriateness and success of different content for small conversations is likely to vary depending on (a) the identity and interests of the child, (b) the context (e.g., the time of day, the relative privacy of the conversation, etc.), and (c) what the child is doing in that moment (e.g., reading, playing at recess, entering the classroom, solving a problem, etc.). By considering in advance how you might begin small conversations in relation to different contexts and purposes and their possible effects, you can develop a beginning repertoire of ways to launch many different kinds of conversations. This will help you become more flexible and responsive with the content of small conversations.

Using the Preparing for Small Conversations Template (Appendix A), brainstorm potential conversation starters for your small conversations. Then, write some notes about when you might use each and how each might be interpreted and experienced by children.

## Part 2: Enacting small conversations. In your classroom this week, circulate during open times (e.g., when children enter the classroom, as they prepare to leave, in transition times, at recess, in the lunchroom), initiating small conversations with children. Using your camera or phone, record as many of these conversations as you can. (The more conversations you engage in and record, the more choices you will have later for analysis and reflection.) As you engage in these small conversations, keep in mind the following:

* Try to have conversations inside different setting and contexts, and among different children.
* Try to use several different conversations starters you developed as part of this assignment. Remember to consider carefully the context and the identity of the child when selecting different conversation starters.
* Each conversation should include three components: the launch, the talking turns, and the closing. (See the table below for details about each component.)

**Components of Small Conversations**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Launch**  *Teacher (or, sometimes, student) “launches” the small conversation.* | **Talking turns**  *Teacher and student engage in two-to-three “talking turns.”* | **Closing**  *Teacher (or, sometimes, student) “exits” the conversation.* |
| The teacher might…   * start with something open-ended but still specific enough for child to respond * consider carefully whether to use content-specific or content-neutral launch * consider carefully the timing and location of conversation * take child’s interests, preferences and experiences into account | The teacher might…   * convey attention and regard (e.g., by paraphrasing or asking questions) * demonstrate listening (e.g., by pausing) * avoid “filling in,” making assumptions, or using questionable reference points * monitor and be strategic about personal disclosures * reference prior small conversations (if applicable) | The teacher might…   * express gratitude or appreciation * use physical cues (e.g., standing up, backing away, waving) * imply the conversation will continue in some capacity at a later time |

**Part 3: Selecting and transcribing small conversations**. Select, transcribe, and upload two small conversations for later analysis and reflection.

### Select two “successful” conversations. Select what you feel are your two most successful examples of small conversations.

### There are many potential directions for a “successful” conversation. However, do note: This is the small conversation on which you will be evaluated by your instructor, so be sure to choose carefully and to make sure that your selection aligns with the criteria and considerations developed in class as well as the “Components of Small Conversations” table above.

* + - You probably want the two successful conversation examples you select to differ, highlighting different positive aspects and components as a way to give your instructor a more comprehensive sense of the strengths of your enactments.

### Transcribe the selected conversations. Transcribe each selected conversation and provide some brief context notes.

### Use the Small Conversations Transcription Template (Appendix B) to transcribe. You’ll see that the template organizes each conversation transcript by “talking turns,” meaning that every row contains a place to transcribe a teacher comment and a student comment. You’ll also notice that the transcript template asks you to include time signatures and to give each conversation a title for easy reference.

* + - Next, using the Context Notes and Commentary Template (Appendix C), provide your instructor with a brief explanation and any necessary context notes around your selection. Be sure to attend closely to the suggested prompts as a way to help you think about the kind of information that might be helpful here.

### Upload the selected small conversations. Upload the [audio or video] of your small conversation to our shared GoReact platform.

**Summary of Required Artifacts**

# You will turn in multiple artifacts as part of this field task:

* Completed Preparing for Small Conversations Template (Appendix A)
* Uploaded [audio/video] recording of the small conversations you selected to our shared platform
* Completed Small Conversations Transcription Template (Appendix B), which will include:
  + Title and overall timestamp for each small conversation
  + Transcript of two successful small conversations
* Completed Context Notes and Commentary on “Successful” Conversations handout (Appendix C)

# Instructor Evaluation

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Preparation** | **Points possible** | **Points received** | **Commentary** |
| * Lists at least ten diverse conversation launches * Includes some notes on when each launch might be used * Describes at least two ideas about how each launch might be interpreted or experienced by children * Uses the template provided | 5 |  |  |
| **Transcription, Commentary, and Uploading** | **Points possible** | **Points received** | **Commentary** |
| Transcript of two “successful” conversations   * Transcripts are accurate * Time-stamps are included * Each conversation is labeled clearly * Uses the template provided   Commentary and Context Notes   * Attends to some or all of the guiding questions * Writing is clear and professional * Uses the template provided   Uploading   * All files uploaded and named correctly | 10 |  |  |
| **Performance** | **Points possible** | **Points received** | **Commentary** |
| Components of Small Conversations   * Includes a launch, 2-3 talking turns, and a closing * Attends to some considerations described in “components” table and related to the work we did in class   Management of “Self”   * Manages the “self” (e.g., voice, body language, etc.) in ways that appear to take children seriously and demonstrate regard and care | 5 |  |  |
| **Additional Comments:**  **Total Points Received: [ ] / 100** | | | |



Appendix A: Preparing for Small Conversations Template

Use the table below to brainstorm ideas for launching small conversations with children, as well as for reflecting on when you might use each conversation starter and how each might be interpreted or experienced by children. In total, you should generate at least ten different conversation starters.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Launch idea** | **When might you use it?** | **What is one way it might be interpreted / experienced by children?** | **What is another way it might be interpreted / experienced by children?** |
| 1. What is the craziest thing one of your teachers has done? | In the beginning of the year, to gauge student experiences with past teachers. | they may think I want to know what they think is crazy. |  |
| 1. If you could create a new school subject, what would it be? | If I notice a particular student constantly bored, I would love to ask them this because they would tell me how to help them get engaged. |  |  |
| 1. Would you rather scream or whisper. | This is an easy quick question with an easy simple answer. It can be asked anytime like walking somewhere, during recess or free time. |  |  |
| 1. If you could do |  |  |  |
| 5. |  |  |  |
| 6. |  |  |  |
| 7. |  |  |  |
| 8. |  |  |  |
| 9. |  |  |  |
| 10. |  |  |  |



Appendix B: Small Conversations Transcription Template

(add rows as needed)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| NAME |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Title (pseudonym, topic) | Length (00:00) |
| Successful conversation #1 |  |  |
| Successful conversation #1 |  |  |

|  |
| --- |
| TRANSCRIPT OF SUCCESSFUL CONVERSATION #1  (include time signatures for each talking turn) |
| T:  S: |
| T:  S: |
| T:  S: |
| T:  S: |

|  |
| --- |
| TRANSCRIPT OF SUCCESSFUL CONVERSATION #2  (include time signatures for each talking turn) |
| T:  S: |
| T:  S: |
| T:  S: |
| T:  S: |



**Appendix C: Context Notes and Commentary Template**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| NAME |  |

|  |
| --- |
| Briefly explain your selections, as a way of providing important context for your instructor. You might, for example, consider writing about some of all of the following:   * Why did you identify these two conversations as “successful”? * How do they compare? * How do they align with the criteria developed in class for successful small conversations and the “Components of Small Conversations” table? * Any important context notes here that it would be helpful for you instructor to know about? |
| **Teacher candidate commentary**: |

**For more information:**

**References**

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McDonald, M., Kazemi, E., & Kavanagh, S. S. (2013). Core practices and pedagogies of teacher education: A call for a common language and collective activity. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *64*(5), 378-386.

[*Teacher Education by Design*](https://tedd.org/the-design)*.* (2014). University of Washington College of Education.