



Special Topic & Mini-Strategy Workshops

Throughout the year, SEAL schools offer workshops for families that focus either on special topics of interest or on strategies that parents can use at home to support learning or can use as volunteers in the classroom. There are two formats that are used: the Special Topic workshop, or the Mini-Strategy workshop.

Special Topic Workshop

The focus of a Special Topic workshop may be determined by parents themselves through discussions with the site administrator, the SEAL Coach/Facilitator or the Family Liaison. More typically, they are topics suggested by the administrator, Coach/Facilitator or Family Liaison and vetted with parents to determine interest. These special topic workshops have included, for example: Raising Bilingual Children, Understanding the new Standards and Assessments, Supporting Your Child as a Reader, (for preschool parents) Selecting a Language Program - what are your goals for your child, what are your choices? The special topic workshops are for parents and are held in the afternoon or evening, or as a workshop/discussion during the school day. They are 1 - 1.5 hours long and include some "Getting to Know You" activity to build community among the parents, and end with some "make and take" item the parents can use at home with their child. The workshops may be designed and led by school staff or teachers, or by other providers (see list in Resource Section of this binder).

Mini-Strategy Workshops

Periodically, throughout the year, short 30 minute "workshops" are offered to parents that focus on a specific language/literacy related strategy they can use at home with their child or in the classroom as a volunteer. Parents come 45 minutes early to pick up their child from school. The workshop is held in a room at the school that is NOT the classroom. The SEAL Coach/Facilitator, a teacher, or Family Liaison may run the session. The general format is:

Activity	Duration
Introductions, purpose and "getting to know you"	5 minutes
The strategy is explained - the purpose, how it is done	5-10 minutes
The strategy is modeled	5 minutes
Everyone gets a chance to practice	10 minutes
Parents then go into their child's classroom and try the strategy with a small group of children	15 minutes
Parents go home with a write-up of the strategy and (if relevant, materials)	

These mini-workshops can be done multi-grade or grade-level specific. And, they can focus on any of a wide number of strategies that promote oral language, academic language, reading or writing. Examples included in this packet are:

For Building Oral Language Skills:

- Mini-strategy workshop on the Five Exchange Conversation
- Mini-strategy workshop on Barrier Games

For Building Reading Skills

- Mini-strategy workshop on interactive read alouds

For Building Writing Skills

- Mini-strategy workshop on Draw and Dictate

Mini-workshops can also be used to create a tool for use at home. These are strategies that would not be used as volunteers in the classroom, but are useful for parents to use at home. The format does not, then, include going into the classroom in the final 15 minutes of the workshop. Examples included here are:

- Mini-workshop on creating a Writing Center at home
- Mini-workshop on Writing our Family Story

Adaptation:

“Open Door” Workshop- teacher provides a 20-30 minute workshop at the beginning or end of the school day around a particular strategy that he/she is teaching the students. The idea is that the teaching would be happening regardless but invites families to come in to observe and participate. Just as in mini-strategy workshops, parents can work with their child in the classroom and/or materials are created for them to take home.

Example: Interactive Reading Mini-Strategy Workshop

Who	What (key points, activity directions)
Opening: facilitator shares some key info (5-10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family/adults reading with children is important, BUT interactive reading with children is what really helps them become strong readers. • It is important to read and share books in the child's native language! • If reading is difficult, narration and description based on pictures is fine • Talking, thinking aloud and engaging children in talking about the book while you are working through the story is important - stopping and asking questions • Use and promote "good reader" strategies as you pause your reading by crafting questions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Prediction ("What do you think will happen next?") – Inference ("I wonder what ___ is feeling? What do you think?") – Connection ("Has anything like that ever happened to you? Tell me about it.") – Recounting ("Let's think back, what just happened?") – Paraphrasing ("In other words, _____") – Summarizing ("In this story _____") • Hand out bookmarks or sheet with prompts
Facilitator Models Interactive Reading (15 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator reads a book aloud, modeling prompts and brainstorming questions to ask ("Hmm, what would be a good inference question here?" write on post-its). Ask group for their input in brainstorm. • Debrief activity: questions, observations, etc.
Participants (10 mins)	Parents have an opportunity to look through books (including in home language) to choose one to take home
Participants (15 mins)	Parents go into classroom and read a book with students

Materials Needed

- A write up on interactive read aloud types of "good reader" questions - or a bookmark with those questions
- An age-appropriate book
- A selection of books that parents can select from to take one home
- Post-its for each parent to take home
- Name tags

TIPS FOR INTERACTIVE READ ALOUDS WITH CHILDREN

1. Invite your child to read with you every day
2. Read with enthusiasm and expression. Change your voice for each character.
3. When you come across interesting or new words your child may not know, pause and give your child a definition of the word or use some gesture that gives them a "context clue" about what it means.
4. Always consider reading a book as a chance to invite the child to talk about what they are hearing and wondering about the story.
5. As you are reading through the story, pause and ask your child questions or give them a chance to talk about the story so far. Ask different kinds of questions.
 - **Prediction** *Looking at the cover the book: "What do you think this book is going to be about?" Later in the story, "What do you think will happen next?"*
 - **Inference** *"I wonder what ____ is feeling? What do you think?"*
 - **Connection** *"Has anything like that ever happened to you? Tell me about it."*
 - **Recounting** *"Let's think back, what just happened?"*
 - **Paraphrasing** *If something might be unclear in the story, or language is used that the child might not understand, rephrase what just happened and say "In other words, _____."*
 - **Summarizing** *At the end of the story, give a quick summary of the main things that happened... "In this story _____."*
 - **Extending** *"If the story kept going, what do you think would happen next?"*
6. It is helpful to read the story yourself before you read it to the child so you can plan where you will pause, you can identify words they may not know, and you can think about the kind of questions you want to ask them as you read through the book.
7. Read the book again and again. The second and third time through, invite the child to retell the story with you. ("Do you remember what _____ did next?").

Example: Barrier Games Mini-Strategy Workshop

Who	What (key points, activity directions)
Welcome: Facilitator	Welcome and some way for participants to get to know each other
Overview: facilitator shares some key info (5-10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrier games are a fun way to promote active listening and good, descriptive oral language. • They are played by two people. A “barrier” is placed between them so that neither can see what the other is doing or what objects the other has. One person describes their object or an action, and the other has to guess what it is or complete the action that is being described. At the end of the match, the barrier is removed and the results are checked for accuracy. • Children need many opportunities to build speaking and listening skills. Barrier games require that children speak audibly and use precise descriptive vocabulary, listen carefully and piece together a mental picture of something based upon another child’s descriptive language. Because children cannot see what each other is doing, pairs of children engaged in a barrier game cannot rely on gestures or similar aides to comprehension. They must express themselves clearly using decontextualized language. Practice in using language precisely and in understanding decontextualized language helps children develop skills they will need for reading. • These skills are called for in the new Common Core standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ask and answer questions, recount or describe key details</i> • <i>Ask and answer questions in order to clarify comprehension or get information</i> • <i>Describe things with relevant details</i> • <i>Speak audibly to express ideas clearly and to provide requested detail or clarification</i>
Facilitator Models (15 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator asks for a volunteer to play the Barrier Game, and models one round. Encourage the "guesser" to ask questions when they want more details.
Participants (10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using materials provided by the Facilitator, parents pair up and try a barrier game.
Participants (15 mins)	Parents go into the classroom and play barrier games with children.
	Parents take home one set of materials for a Barrier Game, including file folders to make their own barriers

Materials Needed

- Name tags
- Sets of materials for up to 10 pairs playing a barrier game
- File folders to create a barrier (parents will take these home)

Be sure that the models and sets of materials used in this workshop show the variety of "things" that can be used in a Barrier Game.

Variation #1: Objects

Each child has a matched collection of small objects (*e.g., a variety of insects for the Insect unit, or a variety of cars and planes of various colors and sizes for the Transportation unit*). The “speaker” selects one of the objects and describes it to the second child, who has to identify which object it is and match it with one from his own pile. The speaker cannot use the NAME of the object, but can only describe what it looks like and what it does. Then they switch roles.

Variation #2: A set of photos

Each child has a matched set of Picture File Cards related to the thematic unit. The first child selects a photo and describes what is in the photo without using the NAME of the object or animal. The second child has to figure out which animal or object is being described and selects the correct photo. Then they switch.

Variation #3: Draw a picture

Each child has a piece of paper and pencil or marking pens. One child draws a picture without the other seeing it. That child then has to describe to the second child has to construct the image or design. The second child, hearing the directions, has to execute the directions. When they are done, they look at the two pictures together to see how close they came to recreating the design/drawing.

Variation #4: Location and Positional Language (prepositional phrases)

Each student has a matching mat with various boxes and triangles drawn on it. They also have a set of matching objects. The first student places the objects on his paper, and then describes to his partner where each object belongs on the paper. The “listener” follows directions and places his objects according to the directions. Then the two remove the barrier and see if their speaking and listening skills created a match!

Example: Draw and Dictate Mini-Strategy Workshop
 (for parents of preschool, TK or Kindergarten children)

Who	What (key points, activity directions)
Welcome: Facilitator (5 mins)	Welcome, Agenda overview Introductions and "getting to know you" activity
Opening: Facilitator shares some key info (5-10 mins)	<p>Key points: Dictation is the process of writing down what someone else has said. With young children, students' oral abilities often surpass their writing abilities. Therefore, it helps them bridge to writing to have an adult record a student's thoughts or ideas.</p> <p>Through the process of dictation, children experience their words turning into text, making a strong sound-text correspondence. It is an exciting and powerful thing for a child to see their words turn into writing, and then having it read back to them. They are becoming an AUTHOR!</p> <p>The Common Core Language Arts Kindergarten writing standards recognize the importance of dictation as an early stage in developing literacy, and call for children to use a combination of drawing and dictating to compose opinion pieces, informational text and narratives. Standards addressed through this game include:</p> <p>Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words both in isolation and in text Use combination of drawing, dictating and writing to compose opinion pieces, informational pieces or narratives Describe people, places, things and events with relevant details, descriptive details and speaking audibly in coherent sentences Add drawings or other visual displays to description to clarify ideas, thoughts and feelings.</p> <p>Dictation is usually done after some activity or after reading a book, so the child has something to draw and talk about. It can also occur in more informal situations where a child is drawing and the parent can just ask the child if they would like to tell about their drawing and have the parent turn it into text. The dictation does not always have to accompany a child's drawing. It may be a child's explanation of what they see in a photograph, what they observe, or what they have experienced</p> <p>It is important to write down exactly what the child says. This is NOT the time to correct their language.</p> <p>Ask for more details. "Tell me more!" "What is this part of the drawing about?"</p> <p>After the child is finished. Have them write their name on the bottom of the page, just like an author. (Or you can write their name).</p>

<p>Examples and practice (15 mins)</p>	<p>The Facilitator shows examples of children's drawings with written dictation, and answers questions parents have about how it was done.</p> <p>Parents pair up. One looks at a photo and tells what they see. The other takes dictation and writes down the words. Then they switch roles.</p> <p>Parents brainstorm topics they can suggest for their children to draw and write about.</p>
<p>Participants (15 mins)</p>	<p>Parents go into classrooms and do Draw and Dictates with students</p>

Materials Needed

- Samples of Draw and dictate provided by classroom teacher
- A set of 10-20 photographs related to the classroom theme (for use in parent practice and for them to take into the classrooms for practice)
- Paper, pens

For parents to take home: paper, pen, crayons or markers set, a few photos related to the theme

Example: Five Exchange Conversation Mini-Strategy Workshop

Who	What (key points, activity directions)
Welcome: Facilitator (5 mins.)	Welcome, Introductions, Getting to Know you activity
Opening: Facilitator shares some key info (5-10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children need to learn the skill of engaging in a conversation. This involves taking turns speaking, active listening, building on what the other person has said, learning to ask questions to get more information and express interest, and being able to sustain focus on a topic through multiple exchanges. The Five-exchange conversation responds to this need. Informal exchanges are powerful opportunities for students to hear the language and to acquire vocabulary, syntax and a wider range of language options for expressing what they want to say. In informal exchanges, the adult can serve as a “language coach,” modeling, encouraging, probing, extending, and amplifying a child’s language – providing opportunities for the child to hear multiple options for what they want to say in correct form. It also serves academic purposes. The Common Core standards call for children to develop skills of participation in collaborative conversations with peers and adults, and to continue a conversation through multiple exchanges. Students need to be able to ask and answer questions to get information or clarify understanding. The standards include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Participate in collaborative conversations and continue a conversation through multiple exchanges; build on other’s talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others</i> <i>Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to gather additional information or clarity</i> <i>Produce complete sentences, speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings and ideas clearly</i>
Facilitator describes the strategy (5 mins)	The strategy is simply to get a child involved in a conversation by asking a question, then repeating back to the child what they said in a somewhat different way and asking a question to get more details. In the adult’s response, use more varied vocabulary so the child hears other ways of saying what they want to say. Continue this through five exchanges. Go over “tips” on the handout.
Facilitator models (3 minutes)	The Facilitator asks for a volunteer to model the strategy. The Facilitator asks a question to get the conversation going, then does the amplification and asking for more details - repeating this through five exchanges. Answer any questions.
Participants (10 mins)	Participants pair up and practice. Then as a group, brainstorm prompts to get conversations going in the classroom and with children.
Participants (15 mins)	In classroom, practice the strategy with several children (individually).

Materials Needed

- “Tips” for Five Exchange Conversations with Children
- A brainstormed list of prompts to get conversations going