



## ADVANCED LEVEL

# LESSON 10

## TOPICS OF CONVERSATION (An overview)

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1. PARENT LETTER
2. LESSON (AN OVERVIEW and DISCUSSION)
3. LESSON PLAN

*"The best gift that I can give myself is to know me  
and to be the best me that I can be."*

### MATERIALS:

- Materials will be provided under each of the three sections in this lesson.

### INTRODUCTION

In the Advanced Level of the *CMC* program, all of the conversation features that the children have learned thus far will be put into practice as they start to engage in more complicated Long Conversations.

The following is a summary of the three sections in the Advanced level of the *CMC* program:

1. **Shared Topics:** In this section, the children will be learning about the art of dialogue. Turn taking skills will be addressed as the children practice sharing topics with their conversation partners. They will have opportunity to initiate, maintain, and close conversations as they practice using their comments, questions, and topic changer words/phrases.
2. **My Topic:** The exercises within this section focus on expanding the child's ability to have a conversation on a greater variety of topics and on increasing the amount of information that he/she may provide on a given topic.
3. **Your Topic:** In this section, the children will practice taking the role of the primary listener within a conversation. As such, they will have the opportunity to practice being an engaged listener through their use of conversational features (i.e. comments, questions) and their nonverbal communication (i.e. eye contact, facial expressions, body gestures, tone of voice).

### DISCUSSION

1. What key phrase would sum up Lesson Ten? It would be to FEEL THE DANCE.

When you think about it, conversations have a lot in common with the art of dancing in pairs. There are partners who move in synchrony to the rhythm of the music. Those who know how to dance well move fluidly with their partners and recognize when to shift through transitions rhythmically. The partners know their roles and are capable of taking the lead or following their partner's lead. When unexpected moments occur, they can adjust quickly to keep in step. They draw on their years of

knowledge and expertise to know what is expected in the dance. When they are in the actual performance, they are living in the moment, enjoying the emotions and movements that are being experienced. Having said that, they are also anticipating what is yet to come so that they can complete their performance successfully.

In lesson 10, we want the children to FEEL THE DANCE of a conversation. To accomplish this, we will provide a variety of experiences that address the act of conversation from different vantage points.

### **COLOR MY CONVERSATION GAME – SHIFTING ROLES**

As the children play the Color My Conversation game, they will be learning about the roles that we play within the context of a conversation. These roles will initially be isolated so that the children can learn what the purpose of each role is and what is expected of them when they are in that role. For example, we often start our conversations with Shared Topics as we begin “the dance.” Turn taking is one of the important features at this point of the conversation. As the conversation progresses, our roles may shift to being that of the primary listener or the primary speaker. As skilled conversationalists, we will know how to make these transitions smoothly, because we will know what is expected of us in each role.

In Color My Conversation, the children will practice their roles in isolation through the use of the game board activities. Once they are demonstrating ease in their roles, opportunities to engage in natural conversations will become the primary focus of the lessons.

### **BUBBLE CONNECTIONS – INTEGRATING PAST + PRESENT + FUTURE**

One of the most powerful tools to help the children gain perspective on the act of conversation is through the implementation of the Bubble Connections strategy. In it, the children are learning about “what to think about” when they engage in conversations with others. In “My Thought Bubbles,” they are learning how to pull past information forward in the form of facts, opinions and stories. They are also learning how to use this information most effectively within the context of a conversation.

In “Your Thought Bubbles,” the children are learning that they can and should engage other individuals on their preferred topics. This is an important social function, because people like to talk about what is important to them. When we teach our children the value of being a good listener, we are gifting them with a powerful social tool that they can use for the rest of their lives! Being an engaged listener is really quite a simple skill to develop. By being an Asker of the Questions and a Comment Maker, we can have great conversations with others, even if we don’t know anything about the topic! It’s fascinating to learn new information from others! When we teach our children to think in this manner, they not only become curious learners, but there is a good chance that they will also start to appreciate and CARE about others in a way that they may not have previously considered.

### **MATCHING AND MANAGING – EMOTIONAL AWARENESS**

Lesson Eight focuses primarily on the topic of emotions. In it, the children will learn some basic tools to know how to regulate themselves within the context of a conversation. The Conversation Coach will continue to weave opportunities to apply the information from Lesson Eight into the activities in Lesson Ten (i.e. group discussions, role-plays).

In Lesson Ten, the Conversation Coach will look for opportunities to draw authentic emotion into lesson activities. One of the ways that this can be done is through the telling of stories. Stories often contain a measure of emotion. For example, if the Conversation Coach and the child are having a conversation about vacations, the adult may share an exciting experience that was enjoyed by their family whilst on a trip. The adult’s goal is for the child to become genuinely engaged in the conversation. If we are good storytellers, our children will become captivated by our story and will have a desire to want to know more. When we see this level of interaction with our students, we know that they are not simply hearing the stories, they are feeling them along with us.

2. Are there any special considerations for children with autism in relation to the *CMC* lessons?

Yes. Lesson Eight focuses on the topic of emotions. Sometimes the exercises can be intense (i.e. making eye contact, practicing facial expressions). For some children, the Conversation Coach may choose to skip Lesson Eight and do some of the board game exercises from Lesson Ten first. Once the child is feeling comfortable with the shifting roles of conversation and is implementing them more naturally in spontaneous conversations, the Conversation Coach can integrate the two lessons together.

3. Can I adjust the rules for the Color My Conversation game?

Absolutely! Do whatever is in the best interest of the child!

4. Have you ever tried teaching Color My Conversation online?

Yes! I had a family living in Central America request my services for their child. I wasn't quite sure how we could do the program, because you can't throw a ball through your computer. We needed to do some adaptations, and in the end, the program implementation was highly successful. Here are some things to consider for online training:

- a. The Conversation Coach will be mentoring the parent on how to develop their coaching skills. This requires time and commitment on the parent's part.
- b. Parent involvement in the treatment sessions is critical so that they see how to implement the lessons mid week and so that they can physically do the Conversation Path activities with the child.
- c. The Conversation Coach can also practice conversations with the child using the Conversation Path. Instead of the floor pads, the wall display can be placed on the table in each setting. Instead of walking the path, the conversation partners will move their finger along the path pieces as the conversation unfolds.

Example: Online Conversation Path



# SHARED TOPICS

## WARM UP ACTIVITY: COMMENT + QUESTION DRILL



### **MATERIAL:**

Comment and Question Drill - Worksheet

In the Intermediate Level of the CMC program, the children had opportunities to practice putting comments and questions together in isolated drills. They will be reviewing this skill in the first activity. The children will be seated at the table. Place the Comment and Question answer sheet in front of the children. Read the sentences from the Comment and Question Sentence sheet. The children can refer to the answer sheet if needed.

***We are going to do a warm up activity called the Comment + Question Drill to help us get ready to play The Color My Conversation Game. I have ten sentences that I am going to read out loud. I would like you to consider an appropriate Comment AND Question that might go with what I say. Let's try one example together.***

# **GAME: THE COLOR MY CONVERSATION GAME**

## **(SHARED TOPIC VERSION)**

- GOALS:** 1) To increase a child's knowledge for and ability to use conversation features (i.e. comments, questions and topic changers) within the context of a Long Conversation.
- 2) To increase a child's knowledge for and ability to take turns within the context of a Long Conversation.

### **MATERIALS:**

- The Color My Conversation Game
- The Conversation Features Sheet
- The Conversation Features Tally Sheet
- Wall Display

### **DIRECTIONS FOR SET-UP:**

1. The players will be seated across the table from each other. The game will be set-up in-between them.
2. Select 2-4 topic cards, and put them on the blue stones of the game board. There are two ways that the game can be played:
  - a. Players can pre-select their own topics for this activity. In this case, they will be responsible for initiating the conversations about them whilst playing the game.
  - b. The Conversation Coach can pre-select the topics. In this case, either of the players can initiate a topic.
3. Initially, the children will play the game with the Conversation Coach. Once they understand the rules, the Conversation Coach will invite two children to play the game together. The coach will then take on the role of the facilitator. The other children can often learn about conversations simply by observing the dialogue that takes place between the two players. However, they, too, have a role to play during this activity. They are the Reporters. Their job is to observe the game being played and to provide feedback to the players once the game is completed. The feedback can be done orally or in written form. Three Praises + One to Think About is a peer evaluation form that can be used. It is in the Supplementary section of this manual. This strategy is useful in helping the observers learn how to give praise, which is specific (i.e. What did the player do well?), and criticism, which is constructive (i.e. What could the player focus on next time?).

The following is an example of the directions when one child plays with the Conversation Coach.

## INSTRUCTIONS:

*We are going to practice having Long Conversations. Instead of walking along the Conversation Path, we are going to play The Color My Conversation Game. The path on the board looks just like the ones you've seen before; it's just been turned into a game. Over here, you'll notice we have three sections for the conversation features (point to the Comment, Question, Topic Changer area).*

*This is where I'm going to keep track of all of the Comments, Questions, and Topic Changers that you make when we play the game. Each time that you use one of these conversation features, I am going to give you a token. At the end of the game, we will add up the tokens that you have in each section.*

*In The Color My Conversation Game, there are no winners or losers. You are playing against yourself. The scores that you make today will be recorded, and the next time you play the game, your goal will be to improve your conversation skills by adjusting how well you are using these conversation features!*

*At the blue part of our conversation path, we have our Topic Cards. (Point to the blue stone and the topic cards. Take a minute to talk about them. For example, "I have a baseball topic card. Maybe I'll ask you about how your team is doing this season. You have a movie card. Maybe we can talk about the latest movies we've seen. I have a picture of bananas. I wonder what we'll talk about when we get to that topic?..." )*

*It is my job to start a conversation about my topics, and it is your job to start a conversation about your topics. Once we are done with a topic, we will turn it face down. When all of our topic cards have been turned over, we will finish the game.*

*Either you or I can start the game. Whoever begins the game (as you say this, point to the Hello and Conversation Starter stones) also finishes it (as you say this, point to the Conversation Stopper and the Goodbye stone). Why don't I begin this first game?*





The following is an example of how the Conversation Coach might initially demonstrate the game to familiarize the children with it:

<b>YELLOW STONE</b>	Point to the Hello stone as you greet the child. <b>Hi Robbie!</b> (Child responds.)
<b>GREEN STONE</b>	Point to the Conversation Starter stone as you ask him a few questions. <b>How's it going with you?</b> (Child responds.) <b>Cool! How is your family doing?</b> (Child responds.) <b>Good to hear!</b>
<b>BLUE STONE</b>	<p>(Point to the Topic Changer section, and say: <b>Hey Robbie?</b> (Child responds.)</p> <p>Either touch or pick up and hold onto the baseball card, or place it in front of you as you point to the Question section and say, <b>I was just wondering – how is your baseball team doing this season?</b> (Child responds.)</p> <p>Point to the Comment section, and say, <b>That's awesome!</b></p> <p>Point to the Question section, and say, <b>When is your final game?</b> (Child responds.)</p> <p>Point to the Comment section, and say, <b>Hmm. I love watching baseball. I used to play it a lot when I was your age!</b></p> <p>Point to the Question section, and say, <b>How do you think your team is going to do?</b> (Child responds.)</p> <p>Continue to either ask a few more questions about baseball or comment on the child's dialogue about it. When there appears to be a natural lull in the conversation, put the baseball topic card face down. Now look at the child expectantly, and gesture for him to pick up one of his topic cards to start a new discussion. If he does not appear to understand what to do, give verbal directions, or go on to one of your other topic cards and try again later.</p> <div data-bbox="483 1073 1523 1247" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>NOTE:</b> Model the use of comments, questions and topic changers throughout this conversation sample. As you are doing this initial example, point to the sections that specifically target these conversational features on the game board.</p> </div>
<b>RED STONE</b>	Once all of the topic cards have been discussed and turned face down, point to the Conversation Stopper as you make a comment to indicate that the conversation is about to end. <b>It's been great to see you, Robbie! I better be on my way!</b> (Child responds.)
<b>YELLOW STONE</b>	<b>Bye for now!</b> (Child responds.)

## HELPFUL HINTS

1. **Wall Display:** It is preferable to play the Color My Conversation Game in close proximity to the wall display. The Conversation Coach should encourage the children to reference it during the game as a visual reminder of the conversation features that they can use. For example: As an alternative to the wall display, The Conversation Features Sheet can also be used for this purpose.

2. **Topic Selection:** Select topics that the child will find easy to talk about during this Shared Topics version.
3. **Conversation Coaches Feedback:** Once the game is completed, tally up the comments, questions and topic changer tokens, and write the totals down on the Conversation Features Tally sheet. Provide feedback to the children in relation to their use of comments, questions, topic changers and turn taking strategies. There will always be fewer topic changer tokens, because the amount of topics will be limited.
4. **Peer Evaluations:** When other children are observing the game, you can give them a job. They will be the “Reporters.” It is their job to watch how the players use their conversation skills and provide feedback from their observations at the end of the game. Explain what the job of a news reporter is and how important their information can be to society. Explain that the feedback that the Reporters are providing for the players is equally important, because it is going to help them improve their conversation skills.
5. Teach the children about what it means to give praise that is specific. Provide examples of praise that is vague (i.e. Well done!) versus specific (i.e. I like how you used your topic changers to switch the topic!). Teach the children about what it means to give criticism that is constructive. Provide examples of criticism that is destructive (i.e. You didn’t use any comments!) versus constructive (i.e. Next time, try to think about some comments you could use!). These evaluation opportunities are so good for teaching the children how to be constructive when interacting with others!
6. **Self Evaluations:** The children will evaluate themselves either orally or in written form. The CONVERSATION SUPERSTAR self evaluation form can be used for this purpose. It can be used for all age levels and can be found in the Supplementary section of the manual.



# MY TOPIC

## SPEAK LOUD AND CLEAR ACTIVITIES



### WARM UP ACTIVITY: BUBBLE CONNECTIONS

#### MATERIALS:

- Bubble Connections - Worksheet
- Topic Cards
- Munchkin Man's Magnificent Manipulables - Worksheet

In this second activity, the children will be seated at the table. You will place a Bubble Connections worksheet in front of each child. The worksheet will have thought bubbles on the top. Inside of each thought bubble are some examples of WH or Special Question words. On the bottom of the sheet there will be a place to put a topic card. If you don't have topic cards, you can draw a picture of a topic into the space provided. For this activity, you will want to select topics that the child may know of but have little information or desire to talk about (i.e. a camera, a beach umbrella, a flower shop, a flag, a sea turtle).

The purpose of this warm up activity is to provide a strategy that children can use to maintain a conversation when the topic is either unfamiliar or of little interest to them.

***Before we play The Color My Conversation Game today, we are going to do a warm up activity called "Bubble Connections." When we have conversations, we all have our FAVORITE topics, right?***

(Children respond.) ***For example, my favorite topics are \_\_\_\_\_.***

***It's fun to talk about things that are important to us, but sometimes we have to talk about things that are important to other people. The Bubble Connections exercise can help us think of things to say on topics that we either don't know about or care about.***

***I am going to do my worksheet with you. Then you can try yours on your own.*** The Conversation Coach will then provide an example. The following shows how this might be done if the Conversation Coach has drawn a sea turtle.

***On my worksheet, I have a topic card with a picture of a sea turtle on it. Hmm! Well, I'm not really interested in sea turtles! I've never really thought about them before! What would I say if I had to have a conversation with someone about sea turtles??? Well, I guess that I could ask myself some questions about them. Maybe that would help me think of what to say.***

(As you are thinking out loud, look at the thought bubbles, and start to ask yourself some questions about the topic. The following is a possible example for the topic of sea turtles and you.)

***Where? Hmm. For the "where" question, I guess that I could ask myself, "Where have I seen sea turtles?" Oh, I know! I saw them when I was on a vacation with my family a few years ago. In fact, I even went swimming with them. It was really cool to watch them swimming under the water right beside me!***

***When? Hmm. When did I see a sea turtle. Well, I saw them on my vacation, but I have also seen some really good television shows about them. There was this one show that I watched. It was really interesting! It was talking about how sea turtles come onto the beach to lay their eggs.***

***Wow, I'd forgotten all about that show until just now!***

***Who? Hmm. That's a tough one. Who? I don't know who has had a sea turtle, but I know that I had a pet turtle when I was little. His name was "Reddie." He lived in my fish tank, and I used to love watching him swim in the water and then climb up on his rocks.***

***What? What do I like about turtles? Well, I think that they are cute.***

***Why? Hmm. I guess I could ask myself why turtles are cute. It's because they look so kind and gentle.***

***Hey, that was fun! I didn't think that I would have anything to say about sea turtles, but when I asked myself some questions, all of a sudden, I had some pretty neat things to say about them. The Bubble Connections strategy really helped me think about things I could say about sea turtles. That's cool!***

***Now, it's your turn. Look at the topic cards on your worksheet, and answer some questions about the topic provided.*** (When the children have completed the worksheets, take a few minutes to discuss what information the children came up with on the topics provided.)

## **HELPFUL HINTS**

Bubble Connections: Bubble Connections are an excellent strategy to use in the Color My Conversation game. They can also be applied to the Conversation Path activities or during carryover assignments. They help children bring past knowledge forward to the present (through discussions). The children can then use this information in the moment or in future conversations. Here's how they can be taught and implemented:

1. In My Topic - Bubble Connections, the children are asking themselves questions on a given topic. They are doing this to pull past information forward to the present. They are searching their memories to see what information that they might have that they could then contribute when having a conversation on a given topic. This is an excellent strategy to help children realize that, when they take a few moments to think about it, they have some great information stored in their brains - information that they can then use to engage on topics that they might not have previously considered.

In Munchkin Man's Magnificent Manipulables, the children learn how to sift through the Bubble Connections information to determine which details might be worth sharing in a conversation. For example, facts can be fun and informative. They are very important when it comes to our schoolwork. However, if they are overused in a conversation, they can become a little boring. Opinions are awesome to share in a conversation but we need to filter through them because they have the ability to hurt or offend others. Stories are sensation. Who doesn't like a good story? For example, consider the following story starters to see if they might peak your interest and desire to know more: *"I had the weirdest thing happen to me on my way to work today!"* or, *"You would not believe who I just met. I'm in shock!"*

Conversational storytelling is a wonderful way to set our conversation partner's heart and mind into high gear. Having said all of this, we still need to keep a social filter on our stories. Possibly our conversation partner doesn't have the time for us to tell it. Possibly, as good as our story might be to us, it may not be of interest to others! A skilled conversationalist has a good social filter that allows him/her to sift through and monitor the use of facts, opinions and stories.

In Color My Conversation, the Conversation Coach can use the My Topic – Bubble Connections and Munchkin Man's Magnificent Manipulables worksheets to help their children gain an understanding of what it means to have a "social filter" and how to use it within the context of a conversation.

2. The following provides an alternative way that social filters can be presented to children using the theme of farm animals, fences, and gates:

Show the children a picture of corralled animals on a farm. Then draw a picture of three farm animals (i.e a cow, a sheep, a chicken) to use in the following illustration:

- a. Explain that many farm animals are fenced in for their own protection. Like farm animals, sometimes our thoughts and words need to be fenced in – especially when we are having conversations. Not everything we think needs to be spoken.
- b. Remind the children that FACTS can be fun and interesting to learn about. They serve an important function; especially when we are in an academic setting. However, in conversations, they can become a little boring so we need to keep a high fence around them. As you are saying this, draw a tall fence and gate in front of the cow.
- c. Remind the children that OPINION's are awesome to share in a conversation. Sometimes they can lead to a lively debate! However, we need to filter through them because they have the ability to hurt or offend others. As you are saying this, draw a medium fence and gate in front of the sheep.
- d. Lastly, remind the children that STORIES are sensational! People love to hear stories in a conversation. However, we still need to filter through them because people might not have the time or the interest in our stories. As you are saying this, draw a small fence and gate in front of the chicken.
- e. Lastly, remind the children that when we keep our social filters (our fences) around our thoughts and words, we become the "Gate Keepers". It is up to us to decide how we will use this information to become the best conversationalists that we can be.

In Color My Conversation, the Conversation Coach may choose to use any or all of these activities and illustrations to help the children develop their social filters. They can be used as a warm-up activity prior to playing the Color My Conversation game. They might also be used on field trips to help the children self-monitor their conversations in a social setting.

# **GAME: THE COLOR MY CONVERSATION GAME**

## **(MY TOPIC VERSION)**

### **GOAL**

The goal of the My Topic version of The Color My Conversation Game is to increase a child's ability to maintain a topic within the context of a Long Conversation; whether or not it is familiar or of interest to the child.

### **MATERIALS:**

- The Color My Conversation Game
- Wall Display

### **DIRECTIONS FOR SET UP**

The My Topic version of the game will be set up as it was for the Shared Topic version with the following differences:

1. In this version, the focus of the activity is on topic maintenance rather than on conversation features (i.e. comments, questions, topic changers). As such, it is likely that the Conversation Coach will not use the tokens, the Conversation Features Sheet or the Conversation Features Tally Sheet.
2. Typically only one topic card is played at a time. The Conversation Coach may initially select common topics but will want to move to less common topics as soon as possible (i.e. alligators, bridges, spicy food).
3. The game should be played near the wall display so that it can be referenced.

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

***We are going to play a slightly different version of The Color My Conversation Game today. Last time, we each had our own topics to initiate. Most of the topics were easy to talk about: things like our pets, our friends, or our favorite hobbies. Today, I am going to try to pick some more difficult topics. We're going to talk about things that we might not normally think about.***

***When we take the time to ask ourselves some questions about a topic, we can often think of things to talk about!***

***Either you or I can start the game. Whoever begins the game also finishes it. Why don't I begin this game?***

### **HELPFUL HINTS**

1. Use the My Topic – Bubble Connections and Munchkin Man's Magnificent Manipulables worksheets as a "brain gymnastic" or warm-up activity before playing the game to help your children think of things to talk about on a given topic. When you first start to play this version of the game, select topics that are common or easy to talk about. As the children learn how to use the strategies provided, move to more random or less common topics. Topics that the child might initially think, "I have nothing to say". And yet, when the strategies are employed, they come to realize that they do have facts, opinions or stories that would be of interest to their conversation partner.
2. Have the child use the self-evaluation form (i.e. CONVERSATION SUPERSTAR) to reflect on how the conversation went once the game is done. If working in a group setting, have the other children provide feedback through the peer evaluation form (i.e. THREE PRAISES + ONE TO THINK ABOUT).

# YOUR TOPIC

## WARM UP ACTIVITY: BUBBLE CONNECTIONS

### MATERIALS:

- Bubble Connections - Worksheet
- Topic Cards
- Munchkin Man's Magnificent Manipulables

In this third activity, the children will be seated at the table. You will place a Bubble Connections worksheet in front of each child. The worksheet will have thought bubbles on the top. Inside of each thought bubble will be a question word. On the bottom of the sheet there will be a place for the children to either write or draw pictures of topics.

The purpose of this warm up activity is to provide a strategy that the child can use to maintain another person's topic whether or not the topic is of interest or familiar to the listener.

***Before we play The Color My Conversation Game today, we are going to do the Bubble Connections activity one more time, but we are going to use it in a slightly different way. I would like you to write down or draw a picture of one of your favorite topics.*** (Children take a few moments to write the word or draw the picture for one of their favorite topics.)

***In this exercise, we are going to learn how to have a conversation with someone else when we don't know anything about the OTHER person's topic OR when we don't necessarily care about it.***

***Sometimes, it's boring to talk about things that we don't CARE about. BUT, if we are going to be good conversationalists, we have to learn to CARE. It doesn't take a lot of work to show others that we care. Sometimes it just takes asking the right questions. I am going to do a demonstration so that you can see how to have a conversation with someone when you don't know anything about his/her topic OR maybe you don't really care.*** (The Conversation Coach will then provide an example. The following shows how this might be done. The Conversation Coach will select one of the child's topics.)

***What is your topic?*** (Child responds.)

***A stamp collection? Hmm. I know nothing about stamp collections. How on earth am I going to have a conversation with you about stamp collections when I don't know anything about them? To tell you the truth, I'm not REALLY that interested in them either!?! BUT, we are learning about how to be a good conversationalist, and THAT means that I need to find a reason to be interested in your topic. So I guess that maybe I can start by asking you some questions.*** (Look at the thought bubbles on the child's sheet, and start to ask him some questions about topic. The following is a possible example for the topic of stamp collections. For example, you might start by pointing to the WHERE bubble and say...)

***Where do you keep your stamp collections?*** (Child responds. Provide appropriate comments, and then point to the WHO bubble and say...)

***Who gave you the idea to start collecting stamps?*** (Child responds. Provide appropriate comments, and then point to the WHEN bubble and say...)

***When did you start collecting stamps?*** (Child responds. Provide appropriate comments, and then point to the WHY bubble and say...)

***Why do you like stamp collecting?*** (Child responds.)

As you are going through this exercise, you may ask some other questions as you model taking an active interest in the child's topic. At the end of the exercise, comment about the fact that you learned something new from your conversation on stamp collections. Ask the child if it made him/her feel good to have you take an interest in his/her hobby.

**Now, it's your turn.** (Have the children get into pairs and practice asking questions about each other's topics of interest. When they are done, ask the "talkers" how it felt to have someone show an interest in their topic. Then ask the "listeners" if they learned something new about the topic or about their conversation partner.)

## **KEEP IT FUN:**

**Bubble Connections and Fictional Characters:** The purpose of this activity is to help the children learn how to use questions (and comments) to keep a conversation going on a conversation partners preferred topic of interest. It is a fun activity that incorporates fiction and imagination into the conversational process.

1. Create a character for yourself (i.e. a professional baseball player). Consider the use of props or costume pieces to make your role more interesting (i.e. a jersey, glove, ball and cap). It is helpful to research your role so that you can add some facts and possibly some true stories related to your character. Doing the research will allow the activity to be more authentic and interesting for both you and the child.
2. Explain your character to the child.
3. Ask the child to use My Topic - Bubble Connections by asking themselves some questions on the topic of baseball and baseball players. As the child is reflecting on the answers to these questions, remind him/her to consider if the information would be considered a fact, an opinion or a story. For example: What facts does the child know about the topic of baseball? What opinions does the child have about the sport? Does the child have any personal stories or know of other people's personal stories related to the topic? Remind the child to use his/her social filter when considering what parts of this information (i.e. facts, opinions, stories) would be worth contributing to an actual conversation.
4. Ask the child to use Your Topic - Bubble Connections by contemplating some questions that could be asked if one were to have a conversation with a professional baseball player. Remind the child that the baseball player likely has some facts, opinions and stories in his/her head. We can use questions to draw the stories out (i.e. What was one of your best experiences as a professional baseball player?) Once this exercise is done, the child and the coach could role play what a real conversation could look like should the child actually get to meet a professional baseball player one day.
5. Once you are done this exercise, you can reverse the roles. The child might decide to be a real or a fictional character. If he/she chooses a real character, the child might also do a little research on their role in preparation for the exercise. Either way, Bubble Connections and Fictional Characters can be a fun and interesting activity to help your children learn how to pull out the stories from their conversation partners. How do we do that? By becoming an Askers of the Questions.



# **GAME: THE COLOR MY CONVERSATION GAME**

## **(YOUR TOPIC VERSION)**

### **GOAL:**

- 1) To increase a child's ability to maintain another person's topic within the context of a Long Conversation, whether it is of interest to the child or not.
- 2) To increase the child's awareness of and ability to demonstrate characteristics of a good listener.  
These include:
  - a. Being an Asker of the Questions
  - b. Being a Good Comment Maker
  - c. Using nonverbal communication effectively through the use of eye contact, facial expressions, body gestures (i.e. no fidgets), and tone of voice.

### **MATERIALS:**

- The Color My Conversation Game
- Wall Display
- Conversation Features Sheet (optional)
- Conversation Features Tally Sheet
- Good Listener Poster

### **DIRECTIONS FOR SET UP**

The Your Topic version of the game will be set up as it was for the Shared Topic version with the following differences:

1. The Conversation Coach may initially play the game with one child so that they can provide a model for what good listening looks like and sounds like. Once the children have a grasp on how to demonstrate good listening skills, the adult may choose to let the children play on their own.
2. The Conversation Coach may choose NOT to use tokens in this version of The Color My Conversation Game. The reason being that there is often the need for more direct teaching/coaching, and the tokens can become a distraction to the learning process. If tokens are used, they will only be used for the person taking the role of the listener.
3. The use of the Conversation Features Sheets and Conversation Features Tally Sheets are optional.
4. The game should be set up near the wall display so that it can be referenced

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

***We are going to play The Color My Conversation Game in a different way today. In this version, only one of the players gets to have the topic cards. It is the OTHER player's job to keep the conversation going by being a good listener. In the Bubble Connections that we did today, we learned that asking questions is a great way to keep a conversation moving forward. That is what you are going to have to do when you play the "listener side" of the game. You are going to have to ask questions AND remember to use your other listening skills (i.e. Body Language, comments, etc).***

***Either you or I can start the game. Whoever begins the game also finishes it. Why don't I begin this first game?***

### **HELPFUL HINTS**

1. Use the Your Topic – Bubble Connections worksheet as a "brain gymnastic" or warm-up activity before playing the game to help your children think of questions that can be asked on a given topic. Remind the child that we can draw the stories out from our conversation partners when we become the Askers of the Questions.

2. Initially select some topics that the child will find easy to ask questions about. As he/she becomes more accustomed to taking the role of a “good listener”, you can play the game with less common topics.
3. Review the Good Listeners poster prior to playing the game.
4. Model good listening skills when you are taking the role of the “engaged listener”.
5. Have the child use the self-evaluation form (i.e. CONVERSATION SUPERSTAR) to reflect on how the conversation went once the game is done. If working in a group setting, have the other children provide feedback through the peer evaluation form (i.e. THREE PRAISES + ONE TO THINK ABOUT).
4. Add the Good Listener poster to your wall.

# **GAME: THE COLOR MY CONVERSATION GAME**

## **(FOR MULTIPLE PLAYERS)**

**GOAL:** To provide a conversational game activity for a large group of participants (i.e. classroom setting).

Specific goals for individuals may include the following:

- 1) To increase a child's knowledge for and ability to take turns in a conversation when there are multiple players.
- 2) To improve a child's ability to take the role of an engaged listener by using comments, questions and nonverbal communication in an effective manner.
- 3) To improve a child's ability to sustain a topic in the role of primary speaker.
- 4) To improve a child's ability to self regulate behavior in a conversational setting. This involves matching their conversation partner when the communication is positive and productive OR adjusting one's own behavior if the conversation partner's communication is not positive or productive.

### **MATERIALS:**

- The Color My Conversation Game

### **DIRECTIONS FOR SET UP**

1. As with the other versions of the CMC game, the children who are not active participants or Players will be the Reporters. Their job will be to provide feedback (i.e. praise and constructive criticism) at the end of the game. The Conversation Coach may or may not choose to use the peer evaluation forms with this version of the game.
2. The players will be seated around the table. The game will be set up in the middle of the table.
3. A stack of topic cards will be scattered face up within the Topics of Conversation section of the game board.
4. Any player can start the game, and any player can complete the game. Once the players are in the Topics of Conversation section, any player can pick up a topic card and start a conversation about it. At times, all players may be engaged in the discussion. At other times, a dialogue may take place between two individuals. As long as the conversation is flowing naturally and all players are having a chance to be engaged in the conversation, the Conversation Coach should sit quietly and only provide feedback as necessary.

## HELPFUL HINTS

The following rules may have been discussed previously in the manual. However, the following is a review of possible rules for the Conversation Coach to consider. They can be applied at any point within the program:

1. **ONE – TWO – THREE - BACK TO ME:** The following describes two scenarios where this rule may be applied:
  - a. There may be some children who like to dominate the conversation by only talking about their own interests. This rule states that a player must ask their conversation partner(s) at least three questions before the conversation can come back to them.
  - b. There may be some children who choose to only ask one question on a topic and then want to switch to a new one (i.e. “Do you like ice cream?”, “Do you like dogs?”). This rule requires the player to ask at least 3 questions on a given topic before moving on to a new one.
2. **MORE THAN TWO – BACK TO YOU:** There may be some children who prefer to not engage in conversation and would rather just give a short answer to other player’s questions. This rule states that you must give at least three pieces of information about a topic when you are asked a question.
3. **THROW THE NUGGET:** This is a term used to describe when we throw out a tidbit of information without giving the details. A skilled conversationalist will “catch the nugget” and go on to ask more information about it.
4. **SURRENDER THE CONVERSATION:** There are moments in a conversation when a person has to stop speaking so that other people can speak. The following describes two scenarios where this rule may be applied:
  - a. When two players are talking at the same time. It is the job of the Conversation Coach to help the children decide who might surrender and how to do so in a gracious manner (i.e. “Oh sorry, you go ahead.”).
  - b. When one player has difficulty with topic closure. It is the job of the Conversation Coach to help the child wrap up their thoughts so that others can engage in the dialogue.

## KEEP IT FUN

1. **CONVERSATION SOCK VARIATION:** If the Conversation Coach would like to add some intrigue and adventure to the CMC game, the use of Conversation Socks can be fun. Here is what you can do:
  - a. Purchase some colorful socks. They should be big enough so that topic cards (or real objects) can fit inside.
  - b. Before the game begins, put a topic card or an object in each sock. There should be one sock per player.
  - c. Place the socks in the Topics of Conversation section of the board.
  - d. Whoever starts the game is also the person who finishes it. The starting player will greet the group (i.e. Hi you guys) and ask a couple of Conversation Starters (i.e. How are you all doing? What have you been up to lately?). When the dialogue slows down, the starting player will then pick up a sock. At this point, all of the other players will do the same. The players will look inside to see what their topic is but they won’t share it with the group. The starting player will be the one to start the Topics of Conversation section. He/she will pull out the topic item and put it onto the blue section of the game board. He/she will then engage a player or players on that topic.

Other players may join in on the conversation as well. Once the topic winds down, the starting player will remove his/her topic from the blue section of the board. At this point, any other player might pull out their item, put it onto the Topics of Conversation section and start a conversation with others on that topic.

- e. Once all of the players have had a chance to initiate their topic, the starting player will move on to the Conversation Stopper and will wrap up the game with a final farewell to the group.
- f. Have the players do a self-evaluation (i.e. CONVERSATION SUPERSTAR) at the end of the game. The other students in the class can provide feedback through the peer evaluation form (i.e. THREE PRAISES + ONE TO THINK ABOUT).

## 2. Role-Plays:

### a. Pre-select the Demonstration Role-Play

Choose role-plays that are appropriate to the age of the children and their level of “need to know.”

### b. Implement the Demonstration Role-Play

- The role-play should be done by the adults and should demonstrate what “not to do” in a conversation.
- Try to practice the role-play before doing it in front of the children so that it can be executed smoothly.
- When you introduce it to the children say, “*Watch this conversation, and tell me what is wrong with it when we’re done.*”

### c. Discuss the Demonstration Role-Play

Once the role-play is finished, ask follow-up questions, and then redo the role-play to see how it could look:

- *What did Person A do wrong in that conversation?*
- *What would Person B think about Person A?*
- *How would you feel if that happened to you?*
- *What could Person A have done differently?*
- *How would that have made Person B feel?*

### d. Consider a Raise of Wisdom Motto

Think of a motto that might match what the children have learned throughout the lesson activities and/or through the individual role-plays. For example: “Good conversationalists know how to catch nuggets.”

### Role-Play (Examples)

The following is a list of some role-plays that could be considered for the Topics of Conversation Lesson. These are only examples. They can be modified as best seen fit for the child’s age and/or the learning environment:

- a) For all children: CHILD is telling another student about his new bike helmet. The other student keeps interrupting the CHILD to talk about his new video game. CHILD looks frustrated.
- b) For all children: CHILD is having a conversation with another student. She asks him about his weekend sleepover at his grandparents’ place. The other child takes a very long time to tell every detail about his story (i.e. too many irrelevant details). CHILD looks bored.
- c) For all children: TEACHER is presenting a new lesson unit, and the child is fidgeting by tapping the desk or playing with an item. TEACHER becomes frustrated.
- d) For all children: The child asks his PARENT how his day was at work. PARENT starts to tell the child. The child becomes enthralled with his video game and appears to be unaware of PARENT’S conversation. PARENT looks frustrated.
- e) For older children: Two students are talking about their weekends. STUDENT is describing a family camping trip and, whilst doing so, throws out some nuggets (i.e. “I think that this was likely our most amazing family vacation ever!”). Rather than catching the nugget and asking for more details, the other student seems disinterested and changes the topic. STUDENT looks confused and disappointed.