Walk & Talk

In this activity, families take a "walking tour" with their child, noticing different objects in the room and using them to spark conversations.

FIRST, begin a discussion:

- Ask parents and caregivers, "What do you think your child means when he looks at or points to something? Why might she be pointing?" (It's a way of showing interest and wanting to share the experience, or maybe the child wants more information about something.)

- Once participants have shared their ideas, note: "It's great to follow your child's lead as a starting place for teaching and learning. It's wonderful when you're in tune with their interests; it helps their overall development."

NEXT, invite parents and caregivers to walk around the room examining their surroundings, allowing children to guide the walk. Tell them they are literally "following" children's interests!

- Encourage adults to ask guiding questions, using the five senses as a framework: "What does that feel like? Is it soft or hard? What color is that? What noise does that animal make?"

- They can also "play narrator" and make comments on what the child is observing: "Oh, I think blue might be your favorite color"; "That is a very thick book!"

- If the child is a baby, suggest that parents hold the child at eye level to the things they are talking about, use pointing to gesture, and put their faces close to their babies' faces, speaking slowly and softly and making eye contact.

LAST, regroup and ask families about other everyday moments:

- "What are some routines in which you might have conversations like this with your child?"

- Point out the importance of simply narrating everyday activities, responding to coos and babbling, and repeating what children have said.

- Say, "Let's brainstorm other ways to use language to explore with your child at home."

- Conclude by saying, "So having a language-rich conversation is like tossing a ball back and forth, responding to each other, and keeping the conversation going for as long as possible, while using many different kinds of words."