

Lesson 6: Shared Writing: A Letter Back to the Principal



CCS Standards

- **SL.K.1:** Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.



Daily Learning Target

- I can participate in conversations with my classmates about our play and our materials. (SL.K.1)

Ongoing Assessment

- Use the Speaking and Listening Checklist in the Assessment Overview and Resources to track students' progress toward SL.K.1.
- During Work Time A, circulate and listen for students to provide details about sharing materials and playing together.

Agenda

1. Opening

- A. Engaging the Learner: Reviewing the “Play Today” Poem (5 minutes)
- B. Shared Reading: Letter from the Principal (5 minutes)

2. Work Time

- A. Structured Discussion and Role Play: Commitments for Playing Together (15 minutes)
- B. Shared Writing: Letter to the Principal (20 minutes)

3. Closing and Assessment

- A. Writing and Drawing: Reflecting on Personal Playing Commitments (15 minutes)

Teaching Notes

Purpose of lesson and alignment to standards:

- During a structured discussion, students think about and share their ideas about commitments for playing together. Then, during shared writing, students contribute to a letter synthesizing ideas about playing together. Structured discussions provide students with highly supported speaking and listening opportunities and help them develop thoughts and ideas for written communication. Shared writing provides students with highly supported writing opportunities and supports the development of concepts of print.
- Lessons 3–5 featured built-out instruction for Goal 1 Conversation Cues. Moving forward, this will appear only as reminders after select questions. Continue using Goal 1 Conversation Cues to promote productive and equitable conversation. Refer to the Lesson 3 Teaching Notes and the Module 1 Appendix for additional information on Conversation Cues.

How this lesson builds on previous work:

- Over the course of this unit, students have built an understanding of how to play together and share materials and have developed their “expertise in play.” Students built this knowledge through experiencing several kinds of texts, exploring classroom materials, participating in peer discussions, and drawing and writing. In this lesson, they synthesize that knowledge by discussing class commitments for playing together and crafting a class letter to the principal about what they have learned.

Down the road:

- In the next lesson, students extend their thinking on class commitments for playing together by picking a personal commitment about which to write and draw.
- Consider inviting the principal to attend the sharing and celebrating portion during the closing of Lesson 7 so students can read the Letter to the Principal to him or her as a class.

In advance:

- Prepare:
 - Playing Commitment sentence strips for Work Time B. Write each playing commitment on a sentence strip (see supporting materials).
 - Commitments for Playing Together anchor chart (see supporting materials).
 - Letter to the Principal (see supporting materials).
- Pictures of students displaying playing commitments from Lessons 2–4. Use those provided in the supporting materials if you were not able to take pictures of your own students.
- Determine what type of student writing materials you will use during the Closing. Whiteboards and whiteboard markers are recommended if students have had experience with these materials before. If not, consider giving them guided exploration time before this lesson.
- Post: Learning targets, Conversations Partners chart, Ways We Take Care brainstorm chart, Think-Pair-Share anchor chart, and Discussion Norms anchor chart.

Technology & Multimedia

Consider using an interactive whiteboard or document camera to display lesson materials.

- Opening A: Record the whole group saying the “Play Today” poem and post it on a teacher webpage or on a portfolio app like Seesaw (<http://web.seesaw.me>) for students to listen to at home with families. Most devices (cell phones, tablets, laptop computers) come equipped with free audio recording apps or software.
- Opening B: Record students as they have their conversations to listen to with students later to discuss strengths and what they could improve on, or to use as models for the group. Most devices (cell phones, tablets, laptop computers) come equipped with free audio recording apps or software.
- Work Time A: Create the Commitments for Playing Together in an online format, for example a Google Doc, to display.
- Work Time A: Show pictures in a slideshow projected for all students to see.
- Work Time B: If students received the letter from the principal as an email, the reply should be an email.

Supporting English Language Learners

Supports guided in part by CA ELD Standard K.I.A.1

Important points in the lesson itself

- The basic design of this lesson supports ELLs by providing rich visual and kinesthetic experiences to support comprehension and participation. If students need additional support, refer back to the photographs and experiences built into the lesson as much as possible.
- This lesson introduces some new language. *Strategy* and *commitment* are abstract ideas that some students may not grasp at first. Reassure students that they are doing excellent work even if they do not fully comprehend the language. Focus them on the content of becoming experts playing together.

Levels of support

For lighter support:

- Before providing sentence frames or additional modeling during Work Time, observe student interaction and allow students to grapple. Provide supportive frames and demonstrations only after students have grappled with the task. Observe the areas in which they struggle to target appropriate support.

For heavier support:

- During Work Time A, model the concept of making a commitment. Display the Teacher Model of My Playing Commitment student response paper referenced in Lesson 7 at the beginning of this lesson. This will provide students with an example of a commitment, and it will also provide a concrete example of the eventual outcome of their work. (Example: “Today we are going to make commitments. They are like promises. Here is a drawing I made of my play commitment. My play commitment is ‘include others.’ So I drew myself at the art center. I drew myself inviting two of my tablemates to join me at the art center. I am saying, ‘Will you please come to the art center with me?’”)

Universal Design for Learning

- **Multiple Means of Representation (MMR):** Throughout this lesson, embed support for unfamiliar vocabulary by providing explanation and visual examples. This will help students make connections and support comprehension.
- **Multiple Means of Action & Expression (MMAE):** In this lesson, students review the “Play Today” poem. Kindergarteners will benefit from a variety of methods for response. Consider inviting students to help generate movements for phrases in the poem, and then incorporate these movements as the class recites the poem.
- **Multiple Means of Engagement (MME):** This lesson invites students to self-reflect on their commitments for playing together. Reinforce the idea that every member of the class community is already doing some things well and is working on other things, highlighting an example of how even you, as the teacher, have to make a commitment even though sometimes it is hard to do so. Example: “Sometimes it is hard for me to listen to everyone because so many kindergarteners need my help. But I am making a commitment to try my best to be patient and listen to everyone.”

Vocabulary

Key:

(L): Lesson-Specific Vocabulary

(T): Text-Specific Vocabulary

New:

- commitment (L)

Review:

- participate (L)

Materials

- ✓ “Play Today” poem (from Lesson 1; one to display)
- ✓ “Learning Target” poem (from Lesson 1; one to display)
- ✓ Letter from the Principal (from Lesson 1; one to display)
- ✓ Document camera (optional)
- ✓ Conversation Partners chart (from Lesson 2)
- ✓ Ways We Take Care brainstorm chart (begun in Lesson 3)
- ✓ Commitments for Playing Together anchor chart (new; teacher-created; see supporting materials)
- ✓ Pictures of students showing commitments (from Lessons 2–4 or from supporting materials; one per pair of students)
- ✓ Think-Pair-Share anchor chart (begun in Lesson 1)
- ✓ Discussion Norms anchor chart (begun in Lesson 2)
- ✓ Letter to the Principal (new; co-created with students during Work Time B; see supporting materials)
- ✓ Commitments for Playing Together sentence strips (new; teacher-created; see supporting materials)
- ✓ Whiteboards and whiteboard markers (recommended; see Teaching Notes)

Opening

A. Engaging the Learner: Reviewing the “Play Today” Poem (5 minutes)

- Gather students whole group.
- Tell students you are going to read the **“Play Today” poem** as a reminder about ways to play together, and you would like them to join in when you begin reading it.
- Start reading the poem, pointing to each word as you say it.
- Using a total participation technique, invite responses from the group:
“What are some strategies this poem helps us remember about playing together?” (We can find new ways to play if something isn’t working; remember the rules.)

- Direct students' attention to the posted learning target and read it aloud:
"I can participate in conversations with my classmates about our play and our materials."
- Draw students' attention to the phrase "our play and our materials." Remind them that they are becoming play experts and have been doing a lot of reading, talking, drawing, and thinking about sharing materials and playing together.
- Invite students to take out and aim their magical bows at the learning target and recite the **"Learning Target" poem** with you.
- Tell students they will have a chance to act out and practice strategies for playing together later in the lesson.

Meeting Students' Needs

- Before reading the "Play Today" poem, activate background knowledge by pre-viewing the question you will ask. Example: "What are some strategies this poem helps us remember about playing together?" (MMR)
- As you read the "Play Today" poem, vary methods for response by generating movements for particular phrases. (MMAE)
- After reading the "Play Today" poem, allow for active participation by inviting student reflection. Example: "Whisper to your shoulder buddy one thing you have learned about sharing materials and playing together so far." (MME)

Opening

B. Shared Reading: Letter from Principal (5 minutes)

- Display the **Letter from the Principal** on the **document camera** and direct students' attention to it.
- Briefly reread the text of the letter and invite students to follow along as you track the print.
- Using a total participation technique, invite response from the group:
"What was the principal asking us to do?" (become play experts, explore our materials, learn about and play with each other)
- Draw students' attention to the phrase "play experts." Using a total participation technique, invite responses from the group:
"What does it mean to be an expert?" (someone who knows a lot about something)
- Briefly remind students that an expert gets information by reading, talking to others, and, most importantly, doing a lot of what he or she is learning about.
- Remind students that the word *strategy* means a plan for accomplishing a goal and that their goal as a class is to play and learn together.
- Using a total participation technique, invite responses from the group:
"What are some ways that we have become play experts? (reading about playing, singing songs about playing, playing together)
What are strategies that we use as play experts?" (include others, share materials, use kind words)

- Remind students of their conversation partners and refer to the posted **Conversation Partners chart** as necessary.
- Invite students to turn to their conversation partner and discuss:
“What is a strategy you have used as a play expert?” (Responses will vary.)
- If productive, cue students to clarify the conversation by confirming what they mean:
“So, do you mean ____?” (Responses will vary.)
- As partners share, listen to a few pairs, especially those students who have yet to demonstrate progress toward SL.K.1.
- Explain to students that, together, they will write a letter back to the principal describing the ways they have become play experts. Tell them the letter will include the strategies they use for playing together and with the class materials.

Meeting Students' Needs

- For ELLs: Discuss the word *strategy*. Model thinking aloud strategies to apply. Example: “If my goal is to use a purple block, and Xin Tao has the block that I need, what is a good *strategy* or plan I can use to play with the purple block? Maybe I can take it? Is that a good strategy? No? Oh, maybe I can trade. Or ask Xin Tao. Those are better *strategies* for playing. Let’s think of some more *strategies*.” (MMR)
- For ELLs: During partner discussion, display pictures from *Llama Llama Time to Share* to remind students of some strategies that they could discuss with their partners. (MMR)
- For ELLs: Pair students with a partner who has more advanced or native language proficiency. The partner with greater language proficiency can serve as a model in the pair, initiating discussions and guiding the Think-Pair-Share process. (MMAE)
- As you discuss the word *expert*, clarify vocabulary by providing examples of other kinds of *experts*. Example: “A painter is an expert at making paintings, and a doctor is an expert at keeping our bodies healthy.” (MMR)
- As you discuss the word *strategy*, support self-monitoring by saying: “Share with your partner one strategy for playing that you think you’ve gotten really good at. Now share one strategy that you are working on getting better at.” (MME)

Work Time

A. Structured Discussion and Role Play: Commitments for Playing Together (15 minutes)

- Remind students that, as a class, they have gathered a lot of information about ways to take care of one another and the materials in the classroom. Briefly review what students brainstormed in Lessons 2–5 using the **Ways We Take Care brainstorm chart**.
- Tell students that you put all of their important ideas together to create a class set of commitments for playing together.
- Display the **Commitments for Playing Together anchor chart**.
- Read the commitments listed on the chart aloud.

- Underline or circle the word *commitment* in the title.
- Using a total participation technique, invite responses from the group:
“After hearing what is listed on this chart, what do you think the word commitment means?” (something that you agree to and promise to always do)
- Explain that once a person agrees to a commitment, it is important to keep that commitment and always follow it.
- Tell students that, as a class, they will have commitments for playing together that will be important to follow so that everyone can work and play together and so that the class materials are taken care of.
- Tell students they are going to talk about one of the commitments from the class list with their conversation partner and have a chance to act out that commitment with their partner.
- Distribute the **pictures of students showing commitments**.
- Tell students they are going to Think-Pair-Share. Remind them that they have been using this protocol throughout the unit. Review and refer students to the **Think-Pair-Share anchor chart** and the **Discussion Norms anchor chart** as necessary.
- Explain that students are going to Think-Pair-Share with their conversation partner about this topic:
“What do you see happening in your picture? Which commitment is shown?”
 - Include others: invite to join; include others’ ideas in play
 - Take care of materials: use correctly; clean up
 - Share: take turns; use one at a time
 - Use kind words: say “please” and “thank you”; say “would you like to use that?”
- Consider providing a sentence frame as necessary. Example: “In the picture, I see students_____. I think they are doing a good job of_____.”
- Circulate and listen as pairs discuss what they see in the pictures. Reinforce discussion norms as necessary, referring to the posted Discussion Norms anchor chart.
- If productive, cue students to expand the conversation by saying more:
“Can you say more about that?” (Responses will vary.)
- After pairs have discussed for 2–3 minutes, refocus whole group.
- Tell students they will now act out the commitment from their picture. Explain that acting out the commitments will make them more of an expert on that commitment and better able to follow it. Encourage students to use the ideas from their conversation about what they see in the pictures to help them act out.
- Model acting out one of the commitments. As you act out the commitment, think aloud the actions you are using.
- Invite students to begin acting out the commitment in their picture with their conversation partner.

Meeting Students’ Needs

- For ELLs: Practice pronouncing the word *commitment* with the class, noting the shape of the mouth and positioning of the tongue. Have students repeat each syllable, noting the stressed vowel: “co-MIT-ment.” (MMR)

- For ELLs: If some beginning students are still unable or too uncomfortable to demonstrate their knowledge through speech, allow them to identify key concepts by pointing to the photographs. Example: "Which picture shows children sharing? Point to the picture of children sharing blocks." (MMAE)
- For ELLs: If students make any errors using gendered pronouns, discuss the error as a class and guide the students to correct it. Example: "I noticed some of you were saying, 'The boy is sharing *her* markers.' If it is a boy, would we say *her* markers or *his* markers?"
- For ELLs: Prompt students to share some kind words in their home languages. Example: "How do you say *please* in Spanish?" (*por favor*) "How do you say *thank you* in Arabic?" (*shukraan*) Call on student volunteers to share. Chorally repeat the translations and the word in English. (MMAE)
- Monitor the kinds of ideas students are sharing about playing commitments. Are they on topic? Note any struggling pairs to support further in the Closing and Lesson 7.
- The A partner should be a more advanced proficiency or native English speaker, unless the A student is a confident, enthusiastic beginning ELL.
- Record a good idea or thought you overhear from an ELL. If the question contains a language error (especially a pervasive error or one that others find stigmatizing), consider asking the class if they can find or correct the error after you record the question. This can help ELLs build their language skills. Avoid mentioning who asked the question.
- As you discuss the word *commitment*, clarify vocabulary by providing examples of other kinds of *commitments*. Example: "When I signed up to play soccer this fall, I made a commitment to play soccer with my team." (MMR)

Work Time

B. Shared Writing: Letter to the Principal (20 minutes)

- Remind students that they have been working to become play experts as the principal asked, and they have a lot of information about playing and sharing to share with the principal. Say: "Now that we have a better understanding of what these commitments look like in a classroom, we can write a letter to the principal."
- Display the **Letter to the Principal** and follow these steps with students:
 1. Read the first part of the letter aloud:
 - "Dear Principal: We've been learning a lot about how to work and play together. We have learned to include others. That means ..."
 2. Ask students to describe their ideas to include in the letter:

"If you have a picture that shows including others, what is it showing?"
 3. Call on one student whose picture shows "include others" to share his or her ideas.
 4. As that student shares his/her ideas, tape the **Commitments for Playing Together sentence strip** that says "include others" to the Letter to the Principal to complete the first

sentence that starts, “We have learned to ...” Scribe that student’s idea to complete the sentence that starts “That means....”

5. Repeat Steps 1–4 for the remaining three commitments.

- Read the letter aloud once it is completed. Invite students to follow along as you track the print.
- Explain that the letter includes a lot of great information about the commitments the class has made for playing together. Give students specific, positive feedback on their ability to combine their information to include in the letter.
- Tell students they will now create drawings of the commitments for the letter to the principal so that the principal can see examples of each commitment.

Meeting Students’ Needs

- For ELLs: If students struggle to put words to their ideas, invite them to mime their thoughts. Remind them of the word or concept they recalled and have them repeat it. Prompt them to repeat the sentence back after scribing it. (MMAE)
- Before reading the Letter to the Principal aloud as a group, provide differentiated mentors by considering strategically seating students who feel more comfortable reading shared writing aloud near students who may not feel as comfortable. (MMAE)
- After you have read the letter as a group, optimize value and authenticity by asking students to reflect: “Is there anything we are missing in this letter? Are there any other important commitments we forgot to include?” (MME)

Closing and Assessment

A. Writing and Drawing: Reflecting on Personal Playing Commitments (15 minutes)

- Acknowledge students’ perseverance in learning about play and invite them to stand up and raise their hands up high in celebration of developing all of their play expertise.
- Tell them they will now think about one commitment from the Commitments for Playing Together anchor chart that they want to personally commit to for the year.
- Remind students that a *commitment* is something we agree with and promise to try to do.
- Briefly review the commitments from the Commitments for Playing Together anchor chart.
- Ask:

“What is one commitment from this list that you want to work extra hard on this year?”
(Responses will vary.)
- Call on a few students to share their thoughts.
- Tell students they will create drawings of these commitments to include in the letter to the principal in the next lesson and that today they will make a practice drawing.
- Distribute the **whiteboards and whiteboard markers**.
- Invite students to create a drawing of their personal play commitment.
- If time permits, consider having students share their drawing of their personal play commitment with a partner using a sentence frame. Example: “I commit to _____.”

Meeting Students' Needs

- Monitor the kinds of ideas students are drawing and writing as they think about their own personal play commitment. Are they on topic? Note any struggling students to support further in Lesson 7.
- For ELLs: As the first few students share their thoughts, write them on the board with thumbnail illustrations. Explain that students can choose to illustrate one of those options as their commitment, or they may write about a different commitment.
- Before students create their drawings, guide visualization by giving explicit prompts for how students might plan their drawings. Example: "First, decide on the commitment. Next, draw a simple picture of yourself in our classroom. Last, add any details to your picture to show how you are following the commitment." (MMR)
- Optimize the relevance of play commitments by mentioning personalized goals. Examples: "I know D'Shaun told me how he is to going to work extra hard to include others by inviting them to join in recess games. And Pshyrah shared that she wants to work on taking care of materials by cleaning up materials and remembering to put them back where they belong." (MME)