

Asking Open-ended Questions of Children during their play activities with materials and peers.

In helping to stimulate children's thinking, and supporting and extending their activities, ask them open-ended questions (instead of only questions with yes-no answers) about their activities and the everyday problems they encounter. Asking these exploratory questions, in addition to talking to children about their activities and making encouraging comments, can help a child grow in the process of play.

Asking questions, at home, or in a classroom when adults have the opportunity, can help children focus on, learn from, create meaning from their experiences. Children will get into practice for asking themselves questions as they approach, plan, carry out and extend their ideas. Ask questions to help them see various possibilities.

Encourage children to solve their problems (with materials and peers) on their own by thinking and trial and error, before you provide any appropriate advice.

To encourage creative thinking, action, and language, ask variations of :

- Will you tell me about what you're doing?
- What do you think about it? - What is your idea?
- Why do you think...? - - How do you know?
- How did you...?
- What do you think made this happen? - What do you think will happen next?
- What do you think will happen if you do this- What else would work like this?
- What can you do about that? - What do you think would work?
- What happened when you...?
- What do you think would happen if? - Can you do it differently?
- Can you do it another way? - How are these alike? How are these different?
- What other shapes/designs can you make using these shapes?
- What do you think comes next (in this pattern)? - How do you know

Specific questions to provoke thinking/language, may include something like, "You're washing the doll; she must have been dirty. How do you think she got dirty?" "Those trains/cars really must be in a hurry. I wonder where they're going?"

Also, the asking of "closed-ended"- right/wrong questions is helpful in guiding children. For instance, "How many blocks are in your tower? How many crackers do you have? Do we have more green apples or more red apples?"

Adults can also use appropriate opportunities to verbalize various concepts and encourage children to verbalize concepts which are inherent in the child's activity, such as color, one to one correspondence, number, shapes and patterns.

by Sam Pesin, MS in Early Childhood Education and Child Development