

FROM CURIOSITY TO CLARITY: ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO EXPLAIN THEIR THINKING



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Encouraging children to explain their thinking is a valuable practice that promotes cognitive development and effective communication skills in the classroom. Here are some strategies to help educators implement this approach effectively:

+ Ask Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions are powerful for prompting children to articulate their thoughts and reasoning. These questions don't have a single correct answer, allowing children to express their ideas freely. Examples of open-ended questions include asking children to explain why they made specific choices or to describe their thought process.

+ Start Small

Beginning with more straightforward questions helps children gain confidence in expressing themselves. By initiating less complex queries, such as asking what they see in a picture or what they did during the day, educators can create a comfortable space for children to share their thoughts.

+ Utilize Mealtime and Transitions

Mealtime and transition periods offer natural opportunities for interaction and questioning. Educators can inquire about food preferences or choices during meals, encouraging children to explain their preferences. In transition moments, observing children's actions and asking questions about their decisions, like why they chose a particular spot in line, can lead to meaningful conversations.

+ Scaffold Responses

Scaffolding involves providing support to help children reach higher levels of understanding and expression. When a child struggles to respond, educators can offer hints, visual cues, or references to assist them. For instance, prompting a child to show their answer on a chart or asking them what's similar to a previous discussion can aid in their response.

+ Celebrate Progress, Not Perfection

Creating an environment where children feel comfortable sharing their thoughts is essential, even if their responses aren't perfect. Emphasize that it's okay not to have all the answers immediately. Celebrate their efforts and willingness to explain their thinking, recognizing that progress is more important than achieving perfection.

+ Balance Guidance and Independence

Striking the right balance between guiding children and allowing them to think independently is key. Educators should give children enough time and space to formulate their responses before offering guidance. Allowing them to develop their thinking skills and express themselves freely fosters their love for learning and exploration.

By incorporating these strategies into the classroom routine, educators can create an environment where children are encouraged to explain their thinking, develop critical thinking skills, and communicate effectively.

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