

THINKING ABOUT THINKING



FORMING AWARENESS OF
THOUGHT IN YOUR CLASSROOM

Making a Difference Conference

- **DAYEC**-Delaware Association for the Education of Young Children
- **DHSA**-Delaware Head Start Association

A conference for Early Childhood Professionals

Introductions

- About me
- About you!

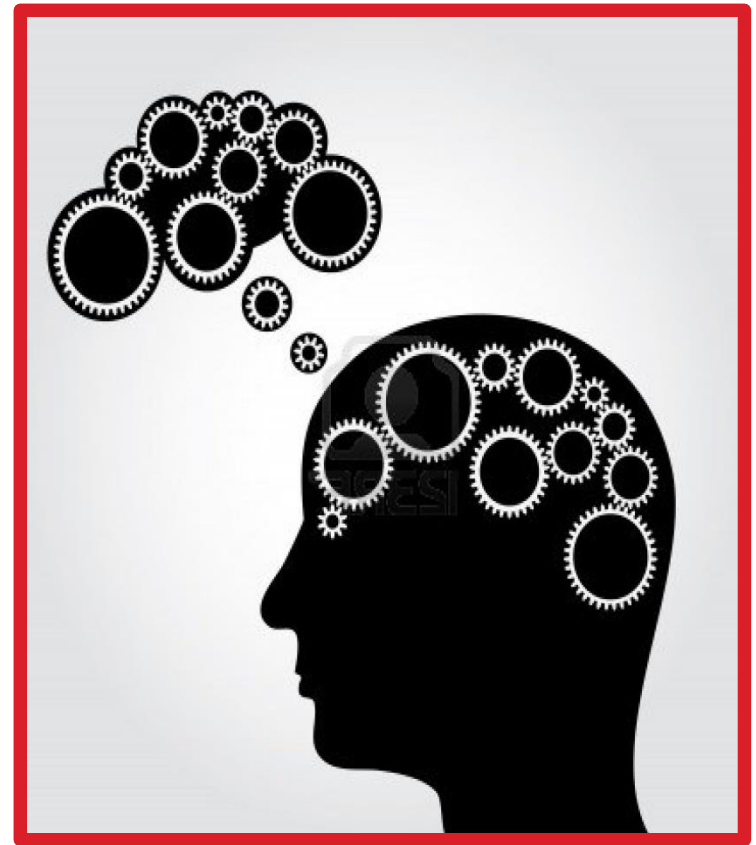


Metacognition

- “Knowledge of one’s own cognitive and affective processes and the ability to monitor and regulate those processes and states.”



**Thinking about
thinking!**



do you ever
think about
what you're
thinking about?

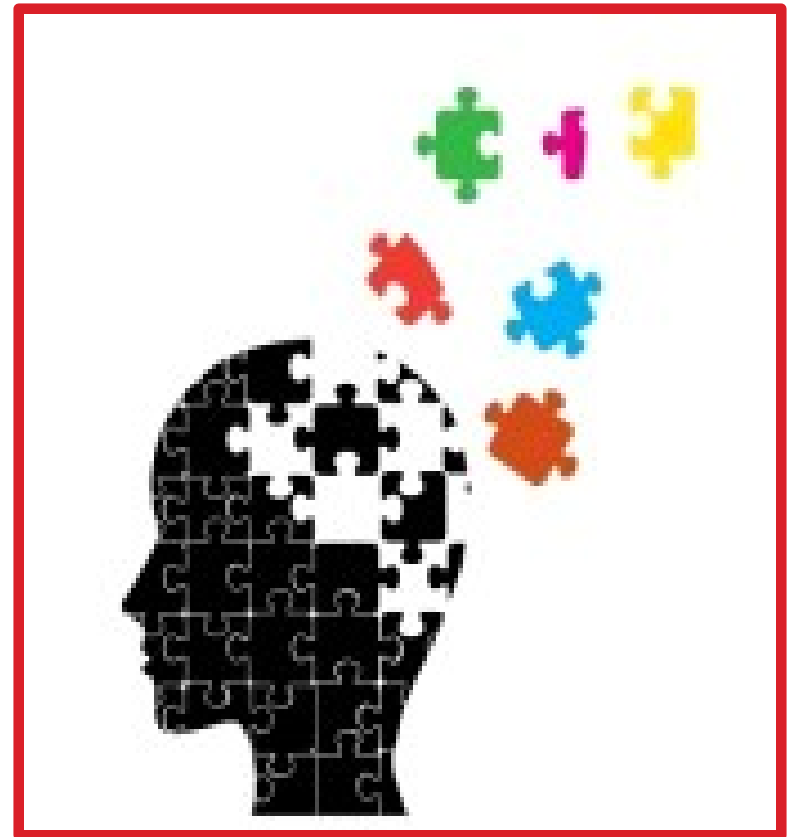


Self-Efficacy

- Analyzing one's own abilities and capabilities, in regards to a *specific* task, using **past knowledge of performance** and **metacognition**

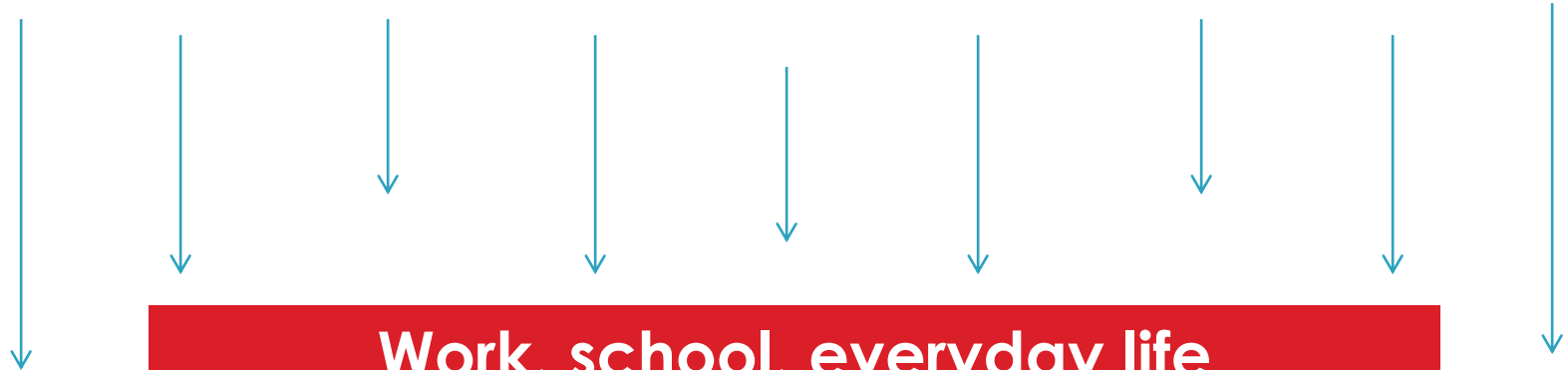


Can I do this?



The Benefits

EARLY CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCE / AWARENESS



Work, school, everyday life

Understand, make decisions, be successful

What Happens Next?



**Positive
Approaches to
Learning**

Effective Writing

Skilled Reading

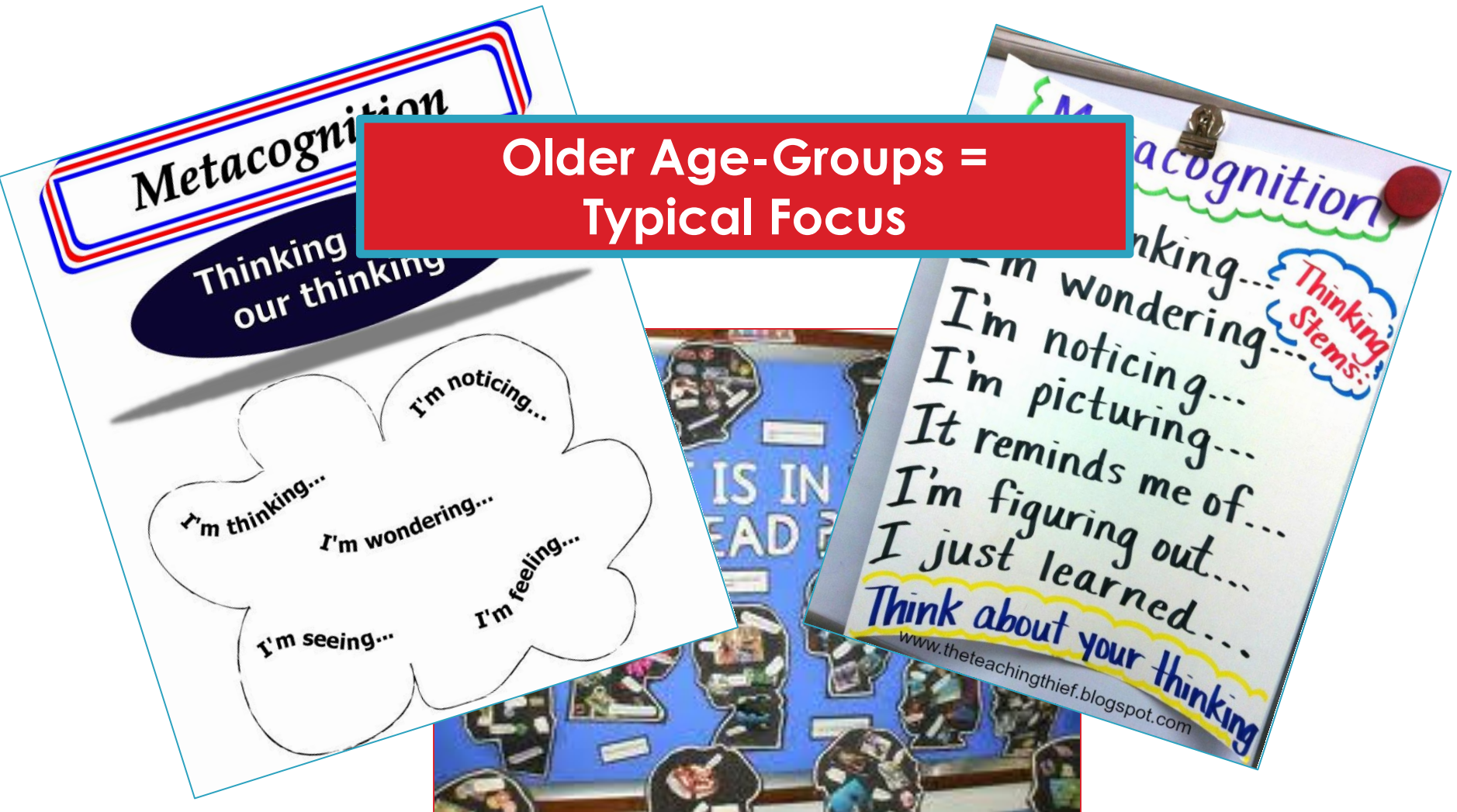
Behavior

Problem Solving

**Mental Health /
Emotional Regulation**

Trending Concepts!

Older Age-Groups =
Typical Focus



Investigating our Expectations

- What do you think a 3-year-old child could consider regarding:
 - ▣ *Her thinking about how she completed a puzzle?*



The Conversation



(3-yr-old)

Me: You've stopped working on your puzzle. Why did you stop?

Girl: I'm thinking about it. I don't know what to do now.

Me: How are you doing that, thinking about your puzzle?

Girl: It's my brain.

Me: Oh, your brain! Where is your brain? Where are you doing that thinking?

Girl: (Pause) It's in my mouth.

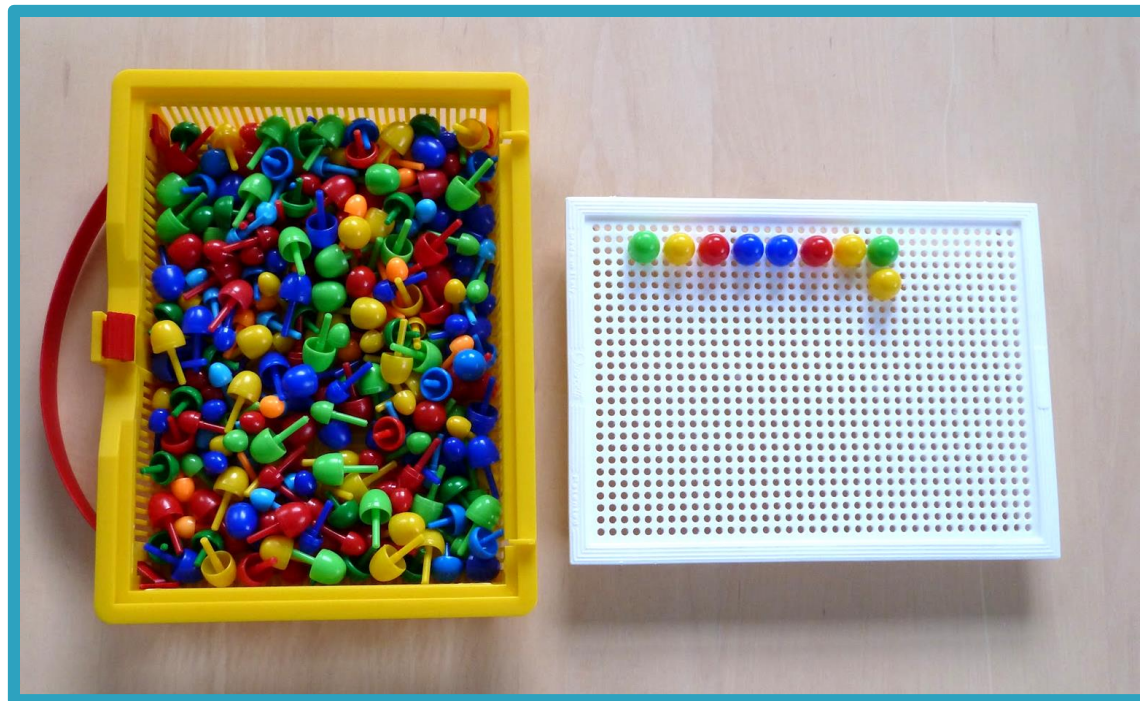
Me: How do you know that it is in your mouth?

Girl: You think about the words before you let them out.

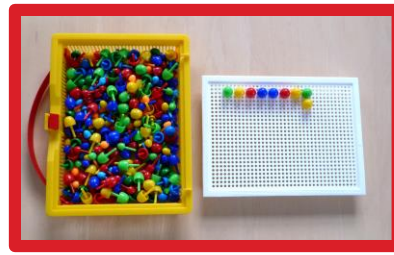
...Is she considering her own thinking? Did our conversation increase her awareness and expression?

Investigating our Expectations

- What do you think a 4-year-old child could consider regarding:
 - ▣ *His brain's focus during a peg-board activity?*



The Conversation



(4-yr-old)

Child Background: Recommended for ADHD evaluation; struggled to stay engaged for extended time. In a 2-week observation: 6 minutes maximum with one activity.

Me: What are you thinking about?

Boy: The pegs.

Me: Why do you think you are thinking about the peg board?

Boy: I'm looking at it.

*The boy decided that you think about what you look at, so he would only look at the pegs. He dramatically put his head down, changing his posture and sitting position, and stayed engaged with the peg board for almost 20 minutes.

...Is he considering his own thinking? Did our conversation increase his awareness and expression?

Let's See How You Think!

ACTIVITY #1: Sit and think for one minute. The whole time, pay attention to what you are thinking about.
Feel free to take notes!

ACTIVITY #2: Converse with a partner for two minutes. Talk about your plans for tomorrow. Think about what you are thinking, how you are focusing your thoughts, etc.

ACTIVITY #3: Converse again with a partner for two minutes. Talk about your week at work. Make sure that you also think about ***THE CHAIR THAT YOU ARE SITTING IN***, at all times. How does it feel? What are you feeling by sitting in it? Etc.

Increasing Awareness

- Imagine if I came in, every single day, and had conversations about these concepts with you.
- ▣ Would you become more aware of your thinking about your thinking?

We can do this for our children!

But... Where is the time?

- We don't have to make these conversations and activities explicit. We can use even the simplest of activities that are *already within our classrooms!*



Partner Activities

Coloring: Instructed

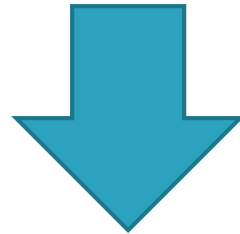
- **Partner #1:**
 - ▣ *Choose which color is which for your partner*
 - ▣ Converse with your partner about his or her thinking in regards to the activity throughout
- **Partner #2:**
 - ▣ Color as instructed!

Free Creation

- **Partner #1:**
 - ▣ Converse with your partner about his or her thinking in regards to the activity throughout
- **Partner #2:**
 - ▣ *Create whatever you would like with your two crayons and your piece of paper*

How Did It Go?

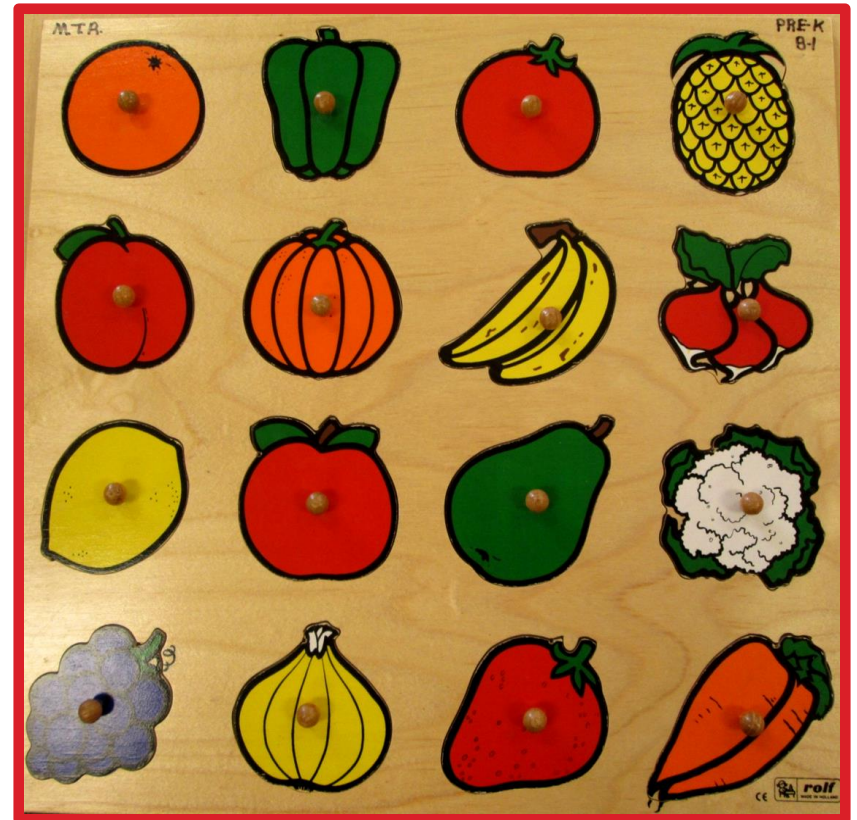
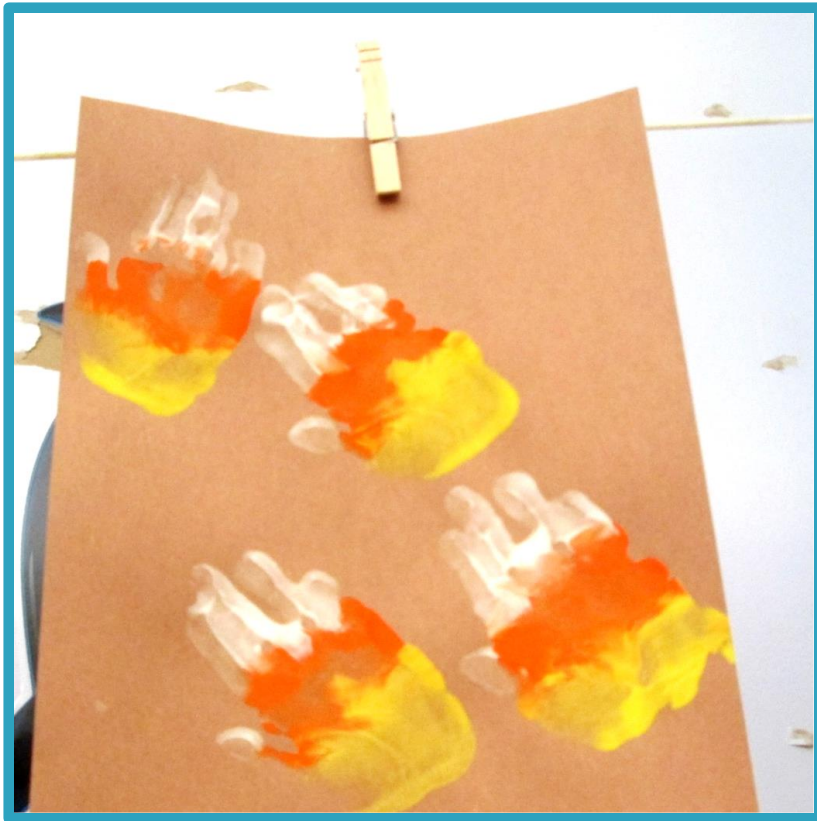
- Which activity was better for increasing your partner's awareness of his or her thinking?



THE ACTIVITY MATTERS!

If you are going to integrate this type of awareness into your classroom, you have to take advantage of the opportunities that you already have established.

Which Requires Deeper Thought?



How to Identify 'Thinking' Activities

- Look for **EVIDENCE** that the child is engaged in thought. This evidence should be an **OBJECTIVE ACTION**. For example, you can tell that a child is thinking if he or she:
 - *Draws a conclusion*
 - *Expresses knowledge*
 - *Makes a decision or choice*
 - *Remembers something*
 - *Says "I think"*



Strategies for Conversation



Research



My research has revolved around finding strategies that help support children in these metacognitive concepts during conversations.

I have discovered **14 strategies** that serve to help increase awareness of metacognition in preschoolers, which I will provide information about at the end.

For now, we're going to go over some general strategies that are easy to remember and easy to use!

Strategies for Conversation

□ **Ask Questions**

- Get the children thinking by asking them questions about their thoughts.
- If they don't respond to the question, try rephrasing it to help make it more accessible to them.
- *Don't stop at just one question! Probe deeper and deeper with follow-up questions to get more detail and more depth.*

Strategies for Conversation

□ ***Make the Child Comfortable***

- Don't rush the children as they consider these difficult concepts. Give them some time to think during your conversations. *It just takes a brief pause!*
- Show the children that you appreciate and respect their answers by showing excitement and admiration for their responses and their effort.

Strategies for Conversation

□ ***Support the Child's Thinking***

- Model your thinking processes for the children, and then ask them to consider their own thinking processes, too. *This gives them a structure to use!*
- Point out child-actions that demonstrate that the children are thinking. *This helps the children to recognize when they use thinking and to be conscious of the effects of their thinking.*

Strategies for Conversation

- ***Use Your Growing Knowledge-Base to Individualize***
- As you learn more and more about each child's thinking, individualize your conversations by building on past ideas that you have addressed.
- Gradually increase the depth of thought analysis, based on what you know each child can do from your past conversations. *This is like probing, but through multiple conversations.*

The Process

- 1) Become more conscious of **your** thinking. Learn where this thinking occurs.
- 2) Find an activity which is **suitable for promoting thought** within your classroom.
- 3) Utilize **questions and other strategies** to converse about thinking during the activity.
- 4) **Make notes**, and **build** upon what you know about each child in your next conversation.



Wait!

What about self-efficacy?

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, or thinking about ability, comes into play whenever a task is first presented to us. We have to decide:

- what we can do, what we can't do
- whether or not we should try to attempt a task or to put effort into it
- what we have to accommodate for and what our strengths are

Self-efficacy awareness combines with metacognition awareness to help build strategies for success. The **same strategies** can be used for conversation—the only difference is finding appropriate activities.

How to Identify Activities

- We are still looking for that **EVIDENCE**, those **OBJECTIVE ACTIONS**, to recognize that a child is considering ability. For example, you can tell that a child is considering his or her ability if he or she:
 - *Attempts or declines a task*
 - *Expresses ability or inability*
 - *States the difficulty or ease of a task*
 - *Mentions something they have or have not done*
 - *Interacts with a new task*

Final Questions, Thoughts

• **ANYTHING!**



Useful References

- Powerful Interactions: How to Connect with Children to Extend Their Learning
Judy Jablon, Amy Dombro, and Charlotte Stetson (2011) Washington, DC: NAEYC
- Enthusiastic and Engaged Learners: Approaches to Learning in the Early Childhood Classroom
Marilou Hyson (2008) New York, NY: Teachers College Press

Final Details

- Course Evaluations
- Course Code