

WAYS TO TALK ABOUT THINKING AND ABILITIES:
14 Strategies that You Can Use

1) OBSERVING

- *Observing* is finding a good time to start a conversation with children about their thinking or about their abilities. Teachers need to decide when these conversations will be successful by watching and listening for an appropriate time to start.
 - *Examples can be found at the top of our model*

2) ENTERING THE THOUGHT STREAM

- *Entering the thought stream* is finding a way to enter into the thoughts of a child without interrupting those thoughts.
 - Imagine entering a stream without forming a ripple in the water. That is the goal. We need to slide into the child's 'stream of thought' and start to draw out the information from the stream. This entering happens again and again—it happens when the teacher first enters into a conversation with a child, and then happens each time that the teacher moves throughout the thought stream.
 - Use *observing* to enter the thought stream successfully

3) REQUESTING INFORMATION: Strategies which cause the child to give information.

- **QUESTIONING**
 - *Questioning* is simply asking a child a new question. The question prompts the child to form a response about a new concept.
 - *Example: How did you know that it was the rabbit?*
- **REPHRASING**
 - *Rephrasing* is asking a question in a different way. This is used when the child isn't answering the original question. Rephrasing helps children think about the same question in a different way.
 - *Example: How did you remember that the rabbit came first?*
- **PROBING**
 - *Probing* is asking questions that go deeper into the original question or go past the original question. These probing questions relate to the original question in terms of content.
 - *Example: What did you use to think about the rabbit?*
- **CLARIFYING**
 - *Clarifying* is asking children to repeat a response or to explain a response if the meaning is unclear. Sometimes, the teacher can't understand the child's words, or sometimes it's hard to tell what the child means. The teacher should not pretend to understand. Instead, they should clarify.
 - *Example: How does that work?*

4) RESPECTING THE CHILD: Strategies which help the child feel comfortable and able to respond.

- **ALLOWING TIME**
 - *Allowing time* is pausing after requesting information to allow the child to think and respond without pressure.

- REPEATING TO PAUSE
 - *Repeating to pause* is saying the child's answer back to them after they respond in order to focus on their response. This can be a question or a statement. Having the teacher repeat the child's response pauses the conversation so that the ideas are really considered closely.
- REPEATING TO SHOW ATTENTION
 - *Repeating to show attention* is saying the child's answer back to them after they respond in order to show that the child is being heard. This can be a question or a statement. It shows the child that the teacher thinks that his or her ideas are worth attention.
- SHOWING APPRECIATION
 - *Showing appreciation* is showing excitement and admiration for the answers that the child provides.
 - "Alright!" "Oh!" and "Wow!" show a positive, thoughtful reaction to the words of the child. "That makes sense!" or "What a thoughtful answer" show the child that his or her responses are worth something.
 - In any form, the teacher is telling the child: "I find what you say to be interesting, thought-provoking, and valuable. I appreciate what you are telling me."

5) PROVIDING INFORMATION: Strategies which give children enough information to continue a meaningful conversation.

- INFORMING
 - *Informing* is directly giving the child factual information about the topic at hand. Sometimes, the child will ask for the information, or other times, the teacher thinks that the information will help the child understand the task.
 - *Example: Today, we're going to read a story. I need you to try to remember the order of the characters in the story.*
- NARRATING
 - *Narrating* is verbally commenting on important actions of the child. This helps the child to really think about what he or she just did.
 - *Example: You just switched the deer and the duck in your order.*
- REFLECTING
 - *Reflecting* is bringing different, past ideas together and talking about them in the current situation. This helps the child remember important earlier ideas.
 - *Example: The first time, we didn't get the order right. But then, you wanted to try again!*
- MODELING
 - *Modeling* is giving the child a structure, or example—through words, thoughts, and actions—which can be used by the child in similar situations. The model should be age-appropriate, so that the child can understand and use the same words, thoughts, and actions. This should happen often.
 - *Example: I don't think that my brain remembers who came next. I wonder how I could help my brain remember.*