Questions to Promote Children’s Thinking in Learning Centers

**BLOCK CENTER**

Children are learning to:

- Develop concepts on shape, size, balance, contrast, one-to-one correspondence, counting, matching, sorting, spatial relationships, grouping, classifying, problem-solving, measurement, leverage, geometric shapes
- Social skills development, collaboration, cooperation, sharing, initiating
- Exploration of materials by heaping them in piles, stacking, lining them up, creating patterns, loading and dumping, carrying them and fitting them back on the shelves
- Play games with their own made up rules
- Make their plan and express their intentions; solving problems that with materials and peers
- Learn about spatial relations, logic and number concepts and they sort and compare objects and people; similarities and differences

**Open-ended questions to ask:**

- Tell me about your structure?
- How did you decide to put all those blocks together?
- What if ...?
- What made you choose...?
- Can you tell me about ...?
- What do you think ...?
- How would you ...?
- What happens when ...?
- Can you tell me how you used those ____? (block, sticks, boxes)
- How did you create that structure?

**ART CENTER**

Children are learning to:

- Be creative and imaginative, while expressing themselves
- Learn concepts such as colors, shapes, lines, properties, textures, numbers, counting, adding and subtracting
- Learn about cause and effect, some problem-solving, sizes, symmetry, design, balance, patterns
- Develop fine motor and eye-hand coordination
- Explore: by stirring, rolling, cutting, twisting, folding, flatten, drip, blot, fit thin things together and take them apart
- Learn to combine and transform materials, fill up surfaces with color, paste, or paper scraps, pieces of old jewelry, fabrics cotton balls, paper, cardboard

**Open-ended questions to ask:**

- How did you make that new color?
- What are some ways you could fill up this paper?
- What do you notice about your paint?
- How could you make these stick together?
- What do you think you could do with these pinecones and acorns?
Questions to Promote Children’s Thinking in Learning Centers

- Is there anything else you would like to add to your painting?
- Tell me about how you created this
- How could you ...?
- How did you get that ...?
- Can you describe ...?
- Tell me about your ...?
- What are your plans for ...?

COMPUTER CENTER

Children are learning to:
- Navigate through software programs designed to enhance development
- Use the names of a variety of computer devices
- Can operate voice/sound recorders and touch screen
- Use software to express their own ideas
- Coordinates sequence of body movements to perform tasks
- Shows control of tasks that require eye-hand coordination
- Shows understanding by following two-step oral directions
- Uses language for different purposes
- Uses letters and symbols to make words or parts of words
- Takes care of and manages classroom materials
- Follows class rules and routines

Open-ended questions to ask:
- How could you write ...?
- How did you get that ...?
- What happens when ...?
- Tell me about your ...?
- What are your plans for ...?
- How did you open the ...?
- What is the first thing ....?

DRAMATIC PLAY

Children are learning to:
- Understand and experience the adult world through imitation
- Express feelings and emotions
- Understand their world better Imitate grown-ups thus experience a sense of power
- Develop their creativity and imagination
- Practice different roles Use abstract thinking when improvising and symbolic use of items
- Explore by stirring, filling, emptying, pouring, shaking, mixing, rolling, zipping, buttoning, folding, snapping, brushing, and by trying-on and removing clothing
- Solve problems as they arise with the materials and with each other
- Make plans and carry them out
- Pretend and imitate they can cook, serve, eat “meals”, care for babies, go shopping, go to work, dress up, have parties; go to weddings, and movies, go to the beauty shop and pretend to put on make-up Work with others, express their feelings and use elaborate language, discuss rules of play and make up their own rules
- Act out familiar roles and re-enact events they have experience

Open-ended questions to ask:
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- What made you choose ...?
- What are your plans for ...?
- Tell me about your ...?
- What happened when ...?
- What can I do to help ...?

SCIENCE/DISCOVERY

Children learn to:
- Ask and answer question
- Regulate their emotions
- Interact with peers
- Push their boundaries
- Make mistakes

Open-ended questions to ask:
- What do you suppose would happen if?
- What will you do next?
- I wonder why?
- Why do you think that?
- How did you figure that out?
- How are ___ and ___ alike?
- Can you think of a way to ____?
- How can we find out about...?
- How does it move?
- What changes do you see?
- What changed the most?
- Why do you think so?

SAND AND WATER

Children learn to:
- Strengthen fine motor skills
- Problem solve
- Cause and effect
- Making careful observations, classifications, comparisons, measurements

Open-ended questions to ask:
- How does that water sound when you pour it?
- Do you pitches hold the same amount of water?
- Which contain holds more sand? Water?
- What did you find out when you put the boat in the water?
- Tell me about what you made
- You really made the water wheel turn fast? What could you do to make it turn slowly?
- Why do you think your mud cakes didn’t hold their shape?
- What makes you think that?

LIBRARY/LITERACY CENTER

- appreciate books
- books are sources of information and can answer our questions
- Pre-reading concepts such as the written word is talk written down, made with symbols and stories are read from right to left, top to bottom, how to sequence; letter recognition; language patterns and development; new concepts and vocabulary
- Explore print materials such as picture books, big books, predictable books, poetry, informational books, newspapers, catalogs, magazines
- Create and write stories, notes, pictures, journals, and books.

Excerpt from Region One Education Service Center and TeachingStrategies The Creative Curriculum for Preschool: Volume 2 – Interest Areas
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- Learn to enjoy books and stories being read or reading themselves, and begin writing and reading words themselves
- Pretend to read by following the pictures, learn to care for books, parts of the books, and share stories with each other

Open-ended questions to ask:

- What do you see happening in this picture?
- What do you think this story will be about? Why?
- What do you think will happen next?
- Have you ever felt like that?
- Tell me about your story …?
- Can you tell me about your writing?
- Can you tell me about your story?
- How did you come up with that story?
- Why did you choose to write about…?
- Can you tell me what letters and words you used?

TOYS AND GAME/MANIPULATIVES

Children are learning to:

- Develop their fine motor muscles and control
- Concentrate and complete a task
- Develop their self-esteem and feeling of control and mastery
- Developing concepts such as patterning, sequencing, matching, order
- Explore materials by emptying and filling different containers; taking apart and putting together other materials, making patterns with all kinds of materials; sorting objects and match; using magnets, magnifying glasses and balance scales Imitate and pretend while using small toys and structures using small blocks or Legos
- Make things out of Legos, Tinker toys, blocks, construction sets, hallow blocks, pegs and pegboard
- Play games and make up own roles, role-play stories read in the classroom
- Sort and compare objects noticing similarities and differences in the characteristics such as color, shapes, design, size

Open-ended questions to ask:

- How did you do that?
- What do you suppose would happen if..?
- What will you do next?
- I wonder…?
- How can we check to see how close your guess is?
- Why do you think that?
- How did you figure that out?
- Do you have any ideas about how we might begin?
- What would you do with this?
- Tell me about …?
- What are your plans for …?
- How did you solve it?
- What can I do to help?
- Can you tell me what shapes you used to create…?
- Can you tell me how you sorted the… (animals, shapes, people)
- How would you see how ____ that is? (tall, short, long, wide)
- What would happen if we ____ to the scale? (add or subtract something)
- Can you tell me how you made that picture using the pattern blocks?
- How did you figure out how many ____ you have?