

# Q & A

## TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS TO UNDERSTAND AND EXTEND YOUNG CHILDREN'S THINKING.

For Parents



Q

**Why do Early Childhood (EC) educators need to be intentional when facilitating children's critical thinking and problem-solving skills?**

When we are intentional, we foster meaningful learning for children and meaningful teaching for ourselves. It also means that we are mindful of the various influences that can support or act as barriers against our efforts to achieve our intention.

- ▶ **Ask children open-ended questions** that start with 'how' and 'why', and allow them to express and clarify their ideas.
- ▶ **Show interest in their conversations** so that children can sense that you value their curiosity.
- ▶ **Establish a thinking routine in children's learning experience.** Ask them what they know, what they want to know and what they have learnt in each activity.

**What techniques and tools can EC educators use?**

Facilitating children's thinking and problem-solving skills involves interacting with children regularly in an environment where they feel safe and supported. Here are examples of what you can do as an EC educator:

- ▶ **Observe and listen to children.** Show them that you are interested in what they are doing and thinking. Keep an open mind and avoid judging their ideas.

**How can documentation help EC educators to be intentional in their teaching approach?**

When you document your efforts in facilitating children's thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as their responses to your efforts, you can revisit these teaching experiences and reflect on what have worked and what have not. This way, you can be more mindful of the various enabling factors and barriers in facilitating children's thinking and problem-solving skills.

Q

**In our day-to-day routines, what can we do to stimulate my child's thinking?**

Parents should refrain from providing answers. Instead, think aloud as you problem-solve with your children. This is a great way to help children 'see' your thought processes. Ask them "What do you think?" Tease out their understanding — and even misunderstanding — to help them make sense of what is happening and take responsibility for their own learning. Be open and avoid judging or making negative comments. Here is an example:

**Child** : *What's this?* [Points to an object]

**Parent** : *What do you think?*

**Child** : *I don't know.* [Starts whining]

**Parent** : *Perhaps, you can tell me what you see* [asks a question about the shape, colour or size] *or what you think it reminds you of.*

**Child** : *I think it is a...*

**Parent** : *What makes you say that?*

Many routine tasks are useful starting points to get children to connect learned concepts with real-life situations. When they apply what they are learning, it strengthens the connections in the brain, and enhances thinking. For instance, shopping for groceries is made more fun if you provide riddles to the items needed. You can even discuss the costing and contents of the items by comparing and contrasting.

Thinking starts when parents regard their children as continually observing, understanding and learning. We should stop treating children as a vessel to fill up with knowledge.

For EC Educators



## ASK THE EXPERTS



👤 **MRS ANG-OH CHUI HWA**, the Principal of Far Eastern Kindergarten, has been in the EC sector for over 25 years. She was appointed as an ECDA Fellow in April 2015. Mrs Ang firmly believes that character, compassion and communication are important cornerstones of children's development.

👤 **DR HANIN BINTE HUSSAIN**, who has teaching experience in both Singapore and New Zealand, is currently a teacher-educator in the Early Childhood and Special Needs Education Academic Group at the National Institute of Education (NIE). In her teaching, she strives to foster learning experiences and outcomes with her students in ways that are meaningful and transformative.