



Improve Your
Questioning
Techniques

How to Ask **Better Questions** and How Can They Support **Children's Learning?**

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Education of Young Children

What Are High-Level Questions and How Do They Support Young Children’s Thinking?

Think about these two questions:

What three things do you know about the way young children learn?

How would you design a collage that shows the most important things about the way young children learn?

What kind of thinking does each of these questions require? For the first—which represents the lowest level of question in Bloom’s Taxonomy, *remember*—you would probably access a list you already have somewhere in your memory, either from information you learned or from your own experience with children. But the second question (the highest level, *create*) requires you to think in a new way—you likely don’t have a ready-made answer and would engage in some higher-level, complex, and creative thinking. Similarly, when you ask young children basic recall questions, such as how many pigs are in the story of *The Three Little Pigs* or what color the wolf is, the answers to those questions don’t require much thinking. If a child can’t answer those questions, you might learn that she doesn’t yet know numbers or colors, or that she wasn’t interested in the story. But if you want to engage children in rich cognitive experiences and understand how they think, you might ask, “How would you describe the wolf?” or “How might the three pigs have built different houses if they were fish?” It can be challenging to develop and ask high-level questions (“If you could come to school any way you wanted, how would you get here? Why?”) instead of lower-level questions (“How did you get to school this morning?”), but it is well worth the effort!

What High-Level Questions Aren’t—and Are

A high-level question is *never* a yes-or-no question (“Do you have a pet?”). It is never a question that has an obvious answer (“How many wheels does that car have?”). Nor is it a question that has only one answer (“How old are you?”). The answers to those kinds



of questions may demonstrate that children understand language, are paying attention, and can count or identify numbers, colors, or shapes, but the questions don't offer opportunities for children to think very deeply.

Creating a solid base of content knowledge is important—children need to remember information before they can understand it; they must understand it before they can apply it. But you want children's learning to be deeper and more complex. Asking questions that invite them to apply what they've learned or evaluate something encourages them to express their unique ideas. Consider the difference in responses given by a group of kindergartners when shown a mug and asked, "What is this?" Most replied that the object was a cup or a mug. But when asked what they liked about the mug, Julia responded, "It has so many blue swirly rings on it, and I love the big handle." And Juan said, "It's like my abuela's cup. She always puts cinnamon tea and honey in it when I visit her in Puerto Rico."

A high-level question is *always* a question that each child will answer in her own way, which indicates that she is using what she knows and what she's learning instead of just recalling rote information. If it is an effective question, a child will be excited to give you lots of details in her answer and is likely to use complex language. For example, when 3½-year-old Kerry was asked to describe her pet, she said that he was "really, really big and his tongue is always dripping and his tail bangs into the coffee table." And when a group of 4-year-olds was asked to describe the most important things about being 4, they came up with a long list of individual accomplishments and privileges, such as "You can stay up late to watch the moon" and "You can somersault and jump up to the sky."

High-level questions encourage children to expand their thinking and perspective on a subject. Fifteen students in a kindergarten class were asked to discuss this question in pairs: "If you could design a car that could go really fast, what would it look like and why?" The students engaged in long discussions, sketched their answers, and debated which of their car prototypes would be the best and why. Sarah said, "It would have jet-propelled giant engines and go faster than the Flash," and Jared said, "My car has wings and flies higher than a helicopter, and it is sparkly black and red with four hundred and twelve lights."

Most importantly, a high-level question is developmentally appropriate for the age and stage of the individual child. Most 3-year-olds are primarily concrete thinkers. This means that their speech and thinking are quite literal, often focusing on what is physically in front of them. Some 3-year-olds might not be able to answer the more complicated questions that older children can. Children begin thinking more abstractly around age 4 (Copple & Bredekamp 2006).

Teachers can address every stage of development, from the very concrete thinkers to the more developed abstract thinkers, by using Bloom's Taxonomy as a guide to engage in focused lines of questioning. For example, observing a group of 4-year-olds pretending that a stick they found outside is a fork or spoon, you might ask, "What kinds of foods would



be easy or difficult to eat with your new kind of utensil?” If you saw a 3-year-old using the same stick to poke holes or make a line in the dirt, you could say, “Tell me about the marks you are making on the ground.” Another approach is to simply make an observation about what you notice in children’s play to start a dialogue. For example, to the 4-year-olds you could say, “I see you created a new utensil!” Or, for the 3-year-old, “I see you making such interesting marks in the dirt with that stick.”

It’s up to you, the one who knows your students best in an educational setting, to decide which questions are appropriate for which children during a particular interaction. Although not all preschoolers and kindergartners will understand some of the higher-level concepts, you can still ask questions that prompt them to think in those ways. For example, instead of “How many carrots are in this bunch?,” you might ask Hannah whether she has enough carrots for the teacher, herself, and a nearby child to have one each, and how she knows the answer. If this is too difficult for the child, you might scaffold the learning by helping Hannah count the carrots and the number of people, and then ask whether there are enough for everybody to have one.

Children develop at different rates and may surprise you with their answers. Sometimes, scaffolding these questions by pairing children up or asking questions in small group or whole group settings can be beneficial for those children who aren’t ready to answer by themselves. Keep in mind that statements like “I wonder . . .” (“I wonder why that happened”) or “Tell me how . . .” (“Tell me how you would change it the next time”) also encourage thinking, even though they don’t have a question mark at the end!

Step Up Your Questioning Techniques

The “Step Up Your Questioning Techniques!” graphic on page 9 is based on Anderson and Krathwohl’s (2000) work and helps you visualize what using high-level questions with young children looks like based on our model. At each successive level, the questions become more difficult and require deeper thinking from children. Remember that children are not necessarily “at” one step or another in their development—rather, their level of thinking shifts as they are exposed to new experiences and concepts, try out ideas, and make adjustments to what they’ve already learned. A 4-year-old may be able to experiment and infer on a topic she has a lot of experience with, but when exploring a topic that’s new to her, she may spend a lot of time gaining basic facts and understanding and applying what she learns.

Keep these things in mind when you ask children questions:

- » **Plan your question, thinking about where your students are developmentally.** Do they have the vocabulary to be able to describe a sunset?
- » **Consider their prior knowledge.** Do they know what a dinosaur is? Have they ever been to a pizza place?
- » **Try starting a question with “I wonder . . .” or “What do you notice . . .”** These kinds of questions open the door for thinking and observing in depth.
- » **Don’t be afraid to use big “juicy” words** like *choreograph*, *gizmo*, *vertical*, *segregation*, *document*, *reflect*, *accessory*, *skyscraper*, and *ornithologist*. The children will figure them out in context and their vocabularies will soar!

Higher-Level Thinking Is Thinking that Makes Your Brain Stronger

Here are some ways you might describe higher-level thinking to preschoolers and kindergartners. Ask them for their own explanations, too!

- “It makes your brain stronger.”
- “It’s like exercise for your mind.”
- “It’s like looking at things with a magnifying glass, or (for tech-savvy preschoolers and kindergartners) zooming in on a photo.”
- “We are taking our ideas from up here (pointing to head) and bringing them to life with _____ (crayons, blocks, playdough, our bodies).”

What Is a Good Listener?

Children know when adults are truly interested in what they have to say. When asked their criteria for judging if someone is a good listener, elementary-age children said that the person

- Makes eye contact appropriately
- Is patient and does not interrupt
- Asks questions in a pleasant tone
- Is responsive both verbally and nonverbally
- Prepares for listening by focusing attention on the speaker (Jalongo 2008)

Step Up Your Questioning Techniques!

1 Remember

"What animal is this?"

Children will

- Identify
- Name
- Count
- Repeat
- Recall

2

Understand

"Tell us about the animal."

Children will

- Describe
- Discuss
- Explain
- Summarize

3

Apply

"Where else have you seen this animal?"

Children will

- Explain why
- Dramatize
- Identify with/relate to

4

Analyze

"How is the animal the same as our pet rabbit?"

Children will

- Recognize change
- Experiment
- Infer
- Compare
- Contrast

5

Evaluate

"What are some reasons why this animal would/wouldn't make a good pet?"

Children will

- Express opinion
- Judge
- Defend/criticize

6

Create

"What kind of animal can you make that no one else has ever seen before?"

Children will

- Make
- Construct
- Design
- Author

- » **Make sure to allow plenty of wait time for them to process what you are saying, think about it, and answer.** Give them at least two to three seconds, but vary this according to the needs of the student. (Count “1 Mississippi” for each second.)
- » **Ask another question or make a comment** after a child answers. Say, “What else can we add to that?” or “Tell me more about that.”
- » **Remember to listen** after you ask a question. Use active listening strategies: make eye contact, encourage children to share their ideas, and restate or summarize what they say.

Dual language learners (DLLs), or children who grow up learning two (or more) languages, may not yet have the vocabulary to answer some questions in English. However, researchers have found that “growing up with two languages enhances cognitive flexibility and the ability to use working memory as children go back and forth between their two languages” (Galinsky & Gardner 2017, 7). As you would with any child, start with simple, lower-level questions and gradually ask more difficult questions when you see the child responding easily. If you or another adult speaks the child’s home language, ask questions in that language, or invite another child to translate. High-level thinking and speaking will develop in the child’s home language before it does in English. See “Working with Children Who Are Dual Language Learners” above for additional tips about supporting DLLs with high-level questions.

Working with Children Who Are Dual Language Learners

- Support the development of a child’s home language and English skills by trying to find an adult, peer, or older child who can speak and ask him questions in his home language.*
- Recognize that sometimes the child may feel shy about responding in English.*
- Use lots of gestures, pictures, labels, and other supports to clarify questions.*
- Allow extra time for the child to process the question.*
- Ask families to help you learn a few questions, such as “What do you think will happen next?” and “How did your strategy work?” in each child’s home language. Use a smartphone or tablet to record the child’s responses. Save the recording and ask for help translating it to track how the child’s responses develop over time.

*Adapted from Nemeth 2012

Using Questions in Classroom Interest Areas



The question was not *how* would I enter [the children's play] but, rather, *what* were the effects of my intervention? When did my words lead the children to think and say more about their problems and possibilities, and when did my words circumvent the issue and silence the actors? When did my answers close the subject?

—Vivian Paley, "On Listening to What the Children Say,"
Harvard Educational Review



Dramatic Play Area

1

The children in Ms. Liggieri’s mixed-age preschool classroom are playing in the interest areas of their choice. In the dramatic play area, 5-year-old Josie dons a red satin kimono embroidered with birds and ties a long piece of blue-sequined fabric around her head. The finishing touch is a striped necktie from the costume basket, which she puts on over the kimono. She then stands in front of a large mixing bowl, stirring intently as she dumps in every piece of pretend food, a collection of smooth river rocks from the science area, several Unifix cubes from the math area, and a handful of pom-poms from the classroom makerspace.

Giuseppe sits at the table next to the bowl with a notepad in front of him, scrawling numbers and letter-like shapes across the page in blue crayon. “You gotta keep mixing!” he excitedly tells Josie.

Ms. Liggieri notices the mixture of toys taken from all over the room in Josie’s bowl. Her first instinct is to ask the children not to jumble so many toys from different areas together, but before speaking, she sits by them and quietly observes their play. She notices that each time Josie adds a new toy to the bowl, Giuseppe makes a mark on the notepad. She quickly realizes that the two have created a highly complex play scenario that involves not only role playing and creative costumes but math and literacy as well.

“What are you making, Josie?” asks Ms. Liggieri.

“It’s soup!” Josie exclaims. “I’m mixing and Giuseppe is doing the recipe. He’s my helper cook, and all our friends are coming over for the party.” She motions to the crib where they have lined up all of the dolls, an aspect of the play that Ms. Liggieri hadn’t noticed.

Instead of asking a simple question like how many people are coming to the party or what color Josie’s kimono is, the teacher decides to follow Josie’s lead and asks how Josie got the idea to make a recipe.

Ms. Liggieri then asks if she can help them prepare for their party. Giuseppe tells her to take care of the babies. Ms. Liggieri engages in play with the pair for 15 minutes, mindful not to disrupt or direct their play, and asks them several open-ended questions about the math and literacy aspects they have incorporated into their party preparations. As she moves toward another group of students, she makes a note to go back to the dramatic play area during cleanup time with the containers for the materials Josie has used. She plans to engage the children in a sorting activity using the labels on the containers as they deconstruct the toy soup they have made for the party.

The world of pretend play is limitless. Young children can become so completely immersed in fantasy scenarios that everything around them falls away as they explore the inner world of their imaginations. The dramatic play area provides a wealth of opportunities for engaging in high-level questioning, especially when you ask questions that help children explore complex human dynamics that are a part of their daily lives. Children often act out things they have seen at home, on television, or in their community, and thoughtful questioning can help you understand what their play is reflecting and why it's important to them. If you witness a child in the dramatic play area spanking a baby doll, for example, your instinct might be to say, "That's not nice. Don't do that!" Instead, take a step back and try to understand why the child is acting this out. Most likely, it is because she has seen someone model this behavior, has experienced it herself, or is just acting out her own frustrations—perhaps toward a new baby sibling—in a safe, pretend scenario. Acknowledging the child's feelings with a comment and question such as "I see you are very angry with the baby. What happened to make you feel that way?" opens the door for the child to discuss her emotions. For children, there are no "bad" imaginary play scenarios—only opportunities for both you and them to gain a deeper understanding of their world and the possibilities it presents.

Getting Started

Before you take the first steps into high-level questioning during pretend play, remember that pretend play *must* be honored as a valuable and legitimate form of expression for children. Just as speaking and writing are forms of communication and expression, pretend play is a language they use to communicate and make sense of the world around them and one of the highest forms of play a child can engage in. When you see children's time in the dramatic play area as a valuable opportunity to better understand children, you can support their high-level thinking and learning.

It is not uncommon to walk into the dramatic play area, sit down, and suddenly feel at a complete loss for what to say. In a situation like this, instead of blurting out "What are you doing?" or "That's such a pretty dress!" often the best solution is to say nothing. Until you feel that you have something to say or ask that will support or expand the children's learning, just listen and observe. Once you think you understand what the play scenario is all about, you can offer brief comments or questions.

When joining in children's pretend play, make sure you do not take over the play; rather, consider how you can extend the learning within the world the children have already created. For example, after you have observed children's play for a few minutes, you could say, "Tell me about what you've created here," or "I wonder why you lined up these chairs like this," to get a better understanding of what their play involves. If you see several children pretending to eat out of bowls with spoons and immediately say, "Oh, are you eating ice cream? Let's make our own ice cream! I'll get some bowls and mixing spoons and all of the ingredients we need," the children's play scenario is no longer their own. You have changed their plans and stopped their exploration into their own imagination by giving them *your* idea about the direction of their play. Instead, ask questions that offer a balance

between extending children’s existing line of play and inspiring new play, such as “It looks like you’re eating something out of that bowl. Can you give me some clues about what’s in there so I can try to guess?”

Supporting Children’s Play and Learning

Children’s pretend play also reflects their developmental levels. A child who has just turned 3 years old and is just beginning to understand abstract thinking might hold up a wooden spoon to her ear and pretend it is a cellphone, while a child who is about to turn 5 years old might spend a full hour immersed in a complex imaginary scenario filled with role playing, colorful dialogue, and self-made props, similar to Josie and Giuseppe’s play in the opening vignette. Some children will move in and out of character to provide instructions to other players. Others will have a harder time integrating their friends into an already-established scenario.

Asking children thoughtful questions or describing something you notice about their imaginary play allows them to think more deeply about the scenario they have created. It also gives them the opportunity to think about the connections they have made as well as make new ones. After observing a child wearing a headscarf as part of a group’s pretend play, you might ask, “Where have you seen this type of headscarf before?” to help the children think about the inspiration behind their play. Or, to encourage math learning, you might ask, “I see there are four plates set up at the table, and you said five baby dolls are coming to your party. How will you make sure each baby has a plate?”



Reigniting Children's Direction and Interest

If activity in the dramatic play area was once robust and high level but seems to have waned, or if you find a child wandering in the area with no real focus, consider the following:

- **Are the materials still interesting?** Consider adding old cameras, cellphones, costume jewelry, or sunglasses to the area. Occasionally rotate some items in and out.
- **Are there enough materials?** There should be enough materials so that three or four children can engage in play with dolls, eat pretend meals, dress up, etc.
- **Is pretend play unfamiliar to this child?** Is she still primarily a concrete thinker? For example, maybe she is not yet able to think about using the collection of bottle caps as part of a soup or making a checkered tablecloth into a fancy party dress.
- **Is the child having difficulty integrating into existing play?** Reflect on the child's prior experiences at home, his language development, and the social dynamics that exist in your classroom.

Providing a place for creative imaginary play is an important function of the dramatic play area. As a reflective practitioner, periodically reassess what materials are available and how children are using them. Then, engage with children in high-level questioning as they explore their roles to understand their world, which helps them build a strong foundation of learning for years to come.

The Picture Book Connection

Lion Lessons, by Jon Agee

Shhhhh! Everybody's Sleeping,
by Julie Markes

Stone Soup, by Marcia Brown

*Tortillas and Lullabies/Tortillas y
Cancioncitas*, by Lynn Reiser

Where the Wild Things Are,
by Maurice Sendak

Expand Children's Thinking and Learning by Asking Questions

1

Remember

(identify, name, count, repeat, recall)

- What color is this vegetable?
- How many dimes are in this cash register?
- What color is that scarf you chose?

2

Understand

(describe, discuss, explain, summarize)

- What did you put in the bowl first? next? last?
- Describe the flowers you put in your flower shop.
- Are you and Dino part of the same family? How are you related?

3

Apply

(explain why, dramatize, identify with/relate to)

- I see you're setting up all of the different hairstyling products and tools in your hair salon. Show me how you will use some of them on your customers' hair.
- Now that you are the grandmother in the family, how can you get the babies to stop crying?
- When have you seen this kind of menu before?

4

Analyze

(recognize change, experiment, infer, compare, contrast)

- How do you think you could turn this piece of fabric that your mom gave us into a piece of clothing for dress-up?
- How can you get the same amount of soup into each of these bowls? How do you think you'll be able to tell if all the bowls have the same amount of soup?
- How can we use this pencil and notebook to help you organize which patients you see first in the animal hospital?

5

Evaluate

(express opinion, judge, defend/criticize)

- Which of these tools do you think is the best choice for making your customers' hair curly in your hair salon? Why?
- Which is your favorite scarf in this basket? Why do you like it so much?
- How do you think Mayumi is feeling since you told her she can't be part of the doctor's office you set up here?

6

Create

(make, construct, design, author)

- Let's use some classroom materials to design something that helps the baby doll sit higher up at the table so you can feed her more easily.
- Everyone seems to be having a hard time remembering where these materials go at cleanup time. What types of labels can we make that would help everyone know where to put materials away?
- I wrote down the story you were telling your patient when she said she was afraid of the dentist. Maybe you can illustrate the story and we can make a book.



Alternating asking questions with listening attentively will help you determine the appropriate time to ask a thoughtful question.

—Rebecca Isbell and Sonia Akiko Yoshizawa, *Nurturing Creativity: An Essential Mindset for Young Children's Learning*

Block Area

2

Rosanne Regan Hansel

Five-year-old Luciana wants to use the unit blocks to build a train station like the one that she passes on the way to school every day. Her teacher, Ms. DaNita, listens to Luciana explain her idea and asks her to say more about it.

Luciana: I'm trying to make it strong like the brick house in *The Three Little Pigs*, so when the trains rumble in, they won't knock the building down.

Ms. DaNita: I noticed that when you first started, your building kept falling down. What will you do this time to make your building stronger, so it doesn't fall down?

Luciana: This time I'll put the long blocks on the bottom and then stack the smaller blocks very carefully on top.

Ms. DaNita: That sounds like a good plan. Would it help if you look at the photos of the buildings we took when we went on our neighborhood walk to see if you can find a picture of the train station?

Luciana: (looking through the binder of photos from the neighborhood walk) Yes, I found it! Look! The train station is kind of square and not as tall as a skyscraper. Oh, and it has cylinder shapes in front of it like these (as she holds up two wooden cylinders).

Ms. DaNita: They are called columns. How many cylinder-shaped columns do you see in the photo?

Luciana: (pointing to the photo as she counts) Six!

Ms. DaNita: Okay! Are you ready to get started?

In the opening vignette, Ms. DaNita models skilled listening as she helps Luciana flesh out her ideas for building a train station. By being fully present during Luciana's play with blocks and responding appreciatively to her efforts by noticing what she is building and asking questions, the teacher shows Luciana that she values her work. Taking this important first step, observing and commenting on children's play, sets the stage for expanding on the ideas children are exploring.

Getting Started

When you ask open-ended questions, you encourage deeper engagement and thinking to help children remember, understand, apply, analyze, and evaluate as they build and create with blocks. To encourage children to discuss what they're doing in more detail, you can describe what you see or simply say, "Tell me more," as Ms. DaNita did. As important as questions are, however, it takes practice to avoid the pitfall of asking too many questions. Ms. DaNita is careful to focus on Luciana's ideas and give Luciana resources to stretch her thinking. Even the lower-level question the teacher asks—"How many cylinder-shaped columns do you see in the photo?"—is designed to encourage Luciana to seek resources that might help her build her structure more successfully.

Supporting Children's Play and Learning

Knowing when and how to ask good questions requires preparation. Developing a list of open-ended questions specifically for block building (such as those suggested in this chapter) and posting them where you can easily refer to them is a good starting point. As you become more skillful and comfortable with asking questions, targeted questions will arise more spontaneously as you observe and interact with children. You can have thoughtful conversations with children while they're building in the block area, when they're drawing their block structures, and during group discussions as they revisit or reflect on their work.

During Building

Keep children safe in the block area by setting up expectations for building behaviors early on and by giving children supports and time to practice the rules. These rules usually include using blocks only for building and deconstructing a child's own construction (Tunks 2009). When children have learned these basic rules for building in the block area and are successfully engaged in creative block play, it is tempting to redirect your attention to other areas of the classroom. Try to resist that temptation! When you take the time to notice what children are building, who they are playing with, what problems they are encountering, what they are discovering about the properties of blocks, and what interests they are expressing, it will help you ask questions that will keep children focused on their building and extend their ideas (Hansel 2017). For example, you might ask:

- » What part of the train station are you adding to here? How do the trains get in and out?
- » What kind of blocks are you using to build the tower?
- » Which blocks are best for building strong walls? How did you find that out?

As Children Are Representing Their Structures

Drawing their structures helps children become careful observers and strengthens their visual-spatial and small motor skills. Put clipboards with unlined paper and markers in

the block area to invite children to draw what they have built or to plan out what they would like to build. Children with language delays or who are dual language learners often communicate what they know through their drawings before they have the ability to verbalize that knowledge. Be sure to encourage them to express what they are thinking. This helps to uncover misconceptions children might have.

Here are some questions you might ask or comments you might make while children draw their structures:

- » What part would you like to draw first? (If children are frustrated when trying to draw their block structures, you might help them break the task into steps by starting with this question.)
- » What shapes did you use in your drawing of your train station? Are those shapes in the train station you built? Where?
- » You said you made a tunnel so the trains can get into the building. Tell me more about that.

During Group Discussions

Knowing how to ask good questions is challenging, but knowing how to nurture children's curiosity and encourage them to confidently ask their own questions during group discussions can be even more challenging! One strategy is to make reflection an important part of the day. When you create a classroom culture where children learn to listen to one another respectfully in a whole group setting, it helps everyone feel safe and valued. For example, when Luciana completes her train station, Ms. DaNita invites her to share



the drawing she made of the train station with her classmates at group time. The teacher models for the children what it means to show respect for Luciana by looking at her, being quiet when she speaks, and asking her thoughtful questions. Ms. DaNita records important questions and observations the children make on chart paper, clarifying the difference between making an observation and asking a question, and then posts them in the block area. She gently reminds some children not to interrupt when Luciana is speaking and explains that it is an important responsibility of group members to appreciate and acknowledge others' contributions and to give everyone a turn to speak. Engaging children in reflection helps them become more aware of their thinking and what they have learned.

Questions you might ask a child who is sharing her ideas:

- » What do you want people to know about your construction?
- » What was the most difficult part about creating your _____?
- » What did you do about it?

Questions that might arise during group discussion and reflection:

- » How did you make the _____?
- » Was that hard for you to make? Why or why not?
- » How could you make your _____ better or different?

When children plan, construct, and represent their experiences with blocks, they progress in many areas of development and learning (Hansel 2015). You can take what children learn to an even higher level when you ask open-ended questions that encourage children to become more deeply engaged, persist a bit longer, think more creatively, solve challenging problems, collaborate with others, communicate what they know, and apply what they learn to new situations—critical skills that will help children thrive in early childhood and beyond.

The Picture Book Connection

Building a House, by Byron Barton

Dreaming Up: A Celebration of Building, by Christy Hale

The Lot at the End of My Block, by Kevin Lewis, illustrated by Reg Cartwright

Roberto: The Insect Architect, by Nina Laden

When I Build With Blocks, by Niki Alling

Expand Children's Thinking and Learning by Asking Questions

1 Remember
(identify, name, count, repeat, recall)

- What shape is your block hotel?
- How many blocks are in your tower?
- Who lives in your building?

2 Understand
(describe, discuss, explain, summarize)

- What patterns did you make with your blocks?
- I noticed you put the heavier blocks on the bottom. Why?
- I see your building is different from the drawing you made while planning it. Why did you change your building?

3 Apply
(explain why, dramatize, identify with/relate to)

- Use your body to show me how the animals get in and out of the barn.
- How were you able to get the shape to stand up that way?
- How did you get the roof to stay on? Show me how.

4 Analyze
(recognize change, experiment, infer, compare, contrast)

- How is your building different from the one Lucas built (from the one in the photos we looked at earlier)?
- What are some other ways to keep the bridge from falling down?
- Which blocks are you going to use for building the castle? Why?

5 Evaluate
(express opinion, judge, defend/criticize)

- Which part of your bridge was the trickiest to build? Why?
- What do you think would happen if we took this block out to make a doorway?
- Which blocks make the most interesting buildings? Why do you think so?

6 Create
(make, construct, design, author)

- How will you create your skyscraper on paper? What will you write so you'll remember it when we put the blocks away?
- You said that it is very hard to figure out where to put the blocks at cleanup time. How can we make it easier?
- You said that the garage you built is too small to hold all the cars. How can you create a garage that is big enough to fit them all?

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