Increasing Teacher Listening & Child Talk

MAGIC 8 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES
THE “MAGIC 8” CLASSROOM PRACTICES

1. Reduce time spent in transition
2. Improving level of instruction
3. Creating a positive climate
4. Increasing teacher listening to children
5. Planning sequential activities
6. Promoting associative and cooperative interactions
7. Fostering high levels of engagement
8. Providing math opportunities

★ 2017-18 Initiative: Focus on Literacy ★
Increased Teacher Listening leads to more opportunities for Child Talk.

Children in classrooms with teachers who listened more had greater gains in **Math, Vocabulary, and Knowledge of Letters & Sight Words.**

Children who were observed talking more frequently had **greater gains in the above-mentioned skills and Self-Regulation.**

These patterns were particularly true for children who entered pre-k with **lower skills than their peers!**
STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING CHILD TALK

ASK AUTHENTIC, OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

ALLOW WAIT TIME FOR RESPONSES

POSITIVELY ACKNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTIONS

EXTEND AND ELABORATE UTTERANCES

ENCOURAGE CONVERSATION AMONG PEERS

PROVIDE SCAFFOLDS FOR CHILDREN WITH LIMITED LANGUAGE SKILLS

DISCUSSION POINT:
Remember what it felt like when someone cared about what you thought when you were a child. How can you create those opportunities for your students?
USE AUTHENTIC OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

- **Ask questions that show children you really care about what they are thinking!**
  - Avoid simple “yes” or “no” questions, or those with only one correct answer.
- **Book Discussion Cards** provided by Creative Curriculum (or other curriculum) give excellent examples of open-ended questions to ask during or after read-alouds.
- **Brainstorm question stems** to post at adult height in different areas of the room
  - This relieves the pressure of having to come up questions on the spot.
- **Strive for Five!**
  - Aim for 5 conversational turns during exchanges with children.

- What do you think about…?
- How can we…?
- I wonder…?
- What would happen if…?
- How can we…?
- What would you do…?
- How did you…?
ALLOW WAIT TIME FOR RESPONSES

It takes *time* for young children to process information and formulate responses!

- Silence while waiting for a response during a group discussion can be overwhelming for teachers *and* children
- Try setting up routines and expectations that encourage children to take time to think about their answers

**DISCUSSION POINT:**
Do you find it challenging to practice wait time? Why?

When I tell you to ‘think big’, I want you to take some time and think about your answer. Then, touch your nose to show me you are ready.

Wasik & Iannone-Campbell (2012), p. 330
POSITIVELY ACKNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTIONS

- Speaking up can feel very risky for children who are shy or less skilled with language.
  - Keep this in mind, and be enthusiastic about their contributions to the exchange!
- Remember the first rule of improvisational comedy!
  “Yes, and…”
- Differentiate your responses to off-topic comments.

For a child who often contributes:
Identify a link between child’s comment and current topic—OR—Ask them to tell more about it later, and bring attention back to topic at hand.
Set aside a time for children to come talk to you.

For a child who rarely contributes:
Encourage participation and find a way to ask more questions

DISCUSSION POINT:
How can you use the “yes, and…” principle in your classroom?
EXTEND & ELABORATE SHORT UTTERANCES

- Follow children’s interest by observing their play before trying to engage in conversation
- Echo what the child says and add on details
- Model correct grammar without directly correcting children
- Particularly useful for ELL children

**CHILD:** The Wolf goed to the other house made of rocks and he blewed it down too!

**TEACHER:** Wow, you think the Wolf went to the house made of stone and blew it down? Hmm…What do you think would happen if he couldn’t blow the house down?

**CHILD:** I drive car.

**TEACHER:** You are driving the car down the road!

**DISCUSSION POINT:** What is one activity or time of the day when you could use “extend and elaborate” strategies with an individual child?
ENCOURAGE CONVERSATION AMONG PEERS

- **Teach children how to actively listen to what others are saying**
  - Keep eyes on the speaker (even if it means turning around)
  - Do not talk while the speaker is talking
- **Highlight and compare children’s responses**
  - “Selah, your idea sounds different from Cameron’s…”
- **Suggest questions for peers to ask each other**
  - “Jayla, why don’t you ask Tyler to tell you what he likes to do when he’s wearing his new shoes.“

**Turn & Talk / Shoulder Partners**
- “Turn to your Shoulder Partner and tell them…”
- Call on a few children to share their friends’ responses

**DISCUSSION POINT:**
What expectations have you established for speaking and listening during group time?

How can we show Charlotte we care about what she’s saying?
PROVIDE SCAFFOLDS FOR CHILDREN WITH LIMITED LANGUAGE SKILLS

- Use picture cards to help children make requests or tell stories
  
  **CHILD:** Points to “snack” card.  **TEACHER:** You want a delicious snack?

- Pair common phrases with sign language or translations from children’s home language
  
  - Children’s families can be excellent resources to help bring multilingual materials into the classroom

- Use predictable phrases or songs to elicit utterances
  
  **TEACHER:** Ready, set…
  
  **CHILD:** /g/
  
  **TEACHER:** That’s right, GO!

**DISCUSSION POINT:**

Do you make a conscious effort to engage children with lower language skills in verbal interactions? How?
HENNY PENNY BOOK DISCUSSION: ROLE PLAY

Creative Curriculum discussion cards provide some wonderful questions for checking children’s comprehension and promoting discussion!

So, let’s practice!

- Each group has a copy of the discussion questions provided for Henny Penny
- One teacher and 3-4 children for each group
- “Children” will choose a role from a hat (don’t tell your group!)
- “Teachers” will ask some of these questions and practice strategies for promoting conversation about the story (feel free to orient “children” to the story elements as needed 😊)
- You can shift roles as time permits
# HENNY PENNY BOOK DISCUSSION: ROLE PLAY

## Child Roles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I REALLY want to tell you about these worms I found one time.</td>
<td>I don’t like this story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher is not listening to me, so I’m going to tell my idea to my neighbor.</td>
<td>I have to go to the bathroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m getting frustrated because my friends keep talking over me.</td>
<td>I have soooo many questions for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m excited about the story, but I have a misconception.</td>
<td>I’m distracted/off-task because I don’t understand the question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I make spontaneous personal experiences or another text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My responses are thoughtful but very hard to hear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I want to answer EVERY question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I need help finding words to express my idea.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SPECIAL THANKS & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We are grateful to the following MNPS Pre-K Instructional Coaches and Multi-Classroom Leaders for their invaluable feedback in developing these materials:

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REFERENCES:


https://my.vanderbilt.edu/mnpspartnership/
INDIVIDUAL IMAGE SOURCES

FREQUENTLY USED IMAGES*

- Lightbulb | myiconfinder.com
- Designed by Vexels.com:
  - Hand drawn magnifying glass
  - Hand drawn bar graph
  - Pie chart hand drawn doodle
  - Hand drawn wall clock
  - Hand drawn cloud bubble
  - Hand drawn open book
  - Cog wheel hand drawn icon

*These graphics are used as icons throughout the series. For example this lightbulb clipart appears beside most “Discussion Point” questions.

ADDITIONAL IMAGE SOURCES

Slide 3: Mouth & ear | clipartpanda.com
Slide 6: Child gear head | DeviantArt.com
Slide 7: Boy raised hand | clipart-library.com
Slide 10: Wooden ladder | clipartextras.com