

What? Why? How?

The Power of Open-Ended Questions



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Which Questions Encourage Back & Forth Conversations?

- 1) What color is the grass?
- 2) Who do you know that likes to eat pizza?
- 3) What do you think is going to happen when you add that block to the top of the stack?
- 4) What did you eat for dinner last night?
- 5) Why do you think ice melts when you put it in the sun?
- 6) What is the name of your dog?
- 7) Where is your coat?
- 8) Why do you think people do not live on the moon?



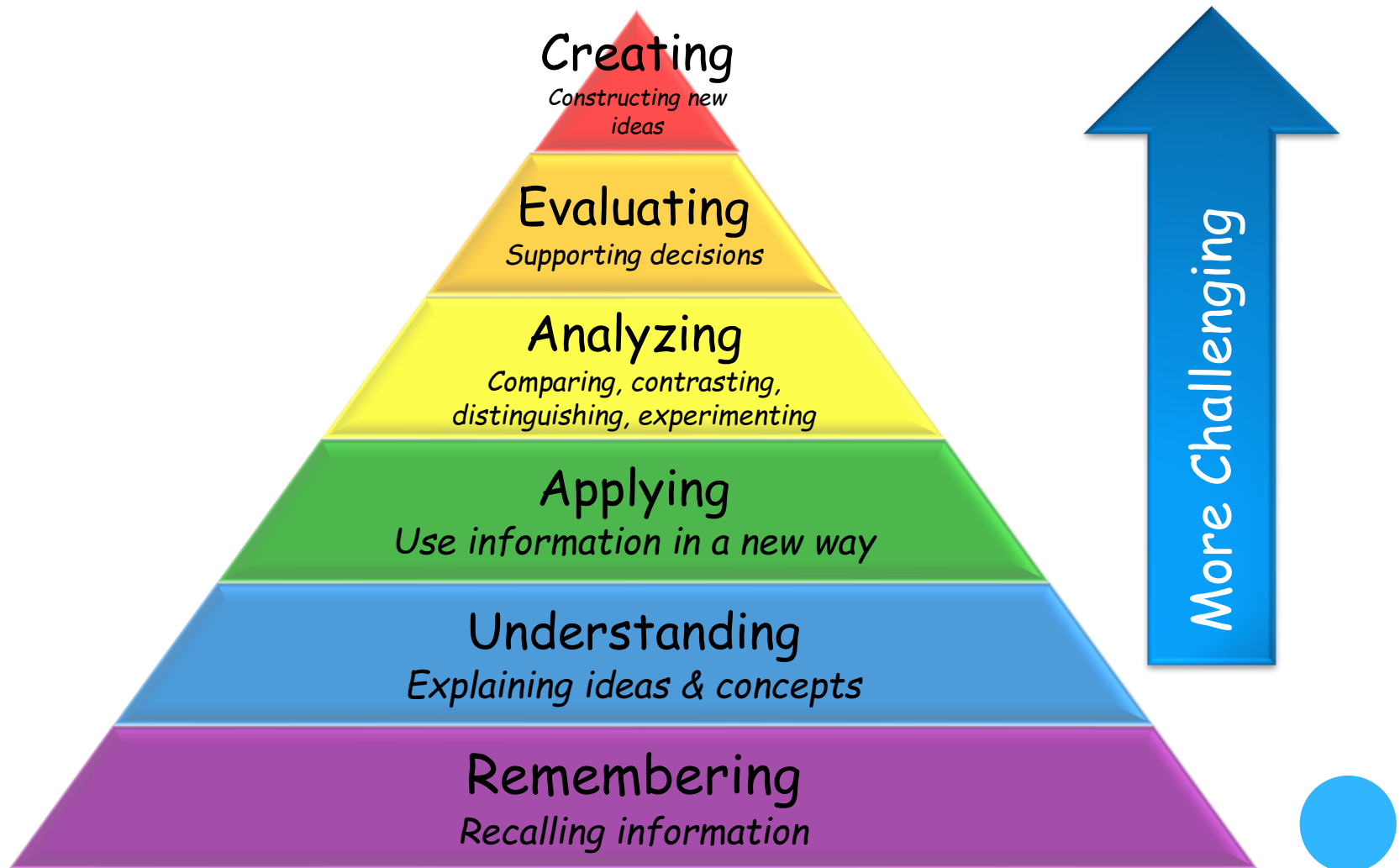
Open-Ended Questions...

- Have many acceptable answers
- Have no known answer
- Emphasize the thinking process and not the answer
- Require higher cognitive skills such as reasoning & judgment



Meacham, S., Vukelich, C., Han, M., & Buell, M. (2014). Preschool teachers' questioning in sociodramatic play. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29(4), 562–573. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.07.001>

Bloom's Taxonomy



Why Are Open-Ended Questions So Powerful?



- Help children think at a higher-level
- Promote language skills & build vocabulary
- Increase teacher-child interactions
- Invite children to share opinions and ideas
- Help children talk about how they feel
- Assist you as you evaluate what children know, what they want to learn and more!

Wasik, B. A., & Hindman, A. H. (2013). Realizing the promise of open-ended questions. *The reading teacher*, 67(4), 302–311. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1218>.

Questioning Tips

- Incorporate questions into daily activities but remember this takes time and thought – practice makes perfect!
- Be truly interested when asking questions – children can tell when you are not!
- Ask the right type of open-ended question to encourage children to cooperate...not compete
- Make sure the questions you ask are truly open-ended and not just your way of trying to get a child to give the “right” answer. True open-ended questions do not have a “right” answer!
- WAIT! Children need time to think and formulate a response to open-ended questions. That is exactly the point!



Asking Questions During Free Play



**Huge benefits for ELL/DLL children
plus those with language delays**

- Encourage children to make predictions
- Invite children to “stretch” their thinking
- Consider cause & effect
- Engage children in comparing and contrasting
- Promote problem-solving
- Challenge children to evaluate and assess
- Invite children to create something new



Can You Spot 3 Open-Ended Questions?



- 1) Why do you think playdough feels squishy?
- 2) What happens when you press the rolling pin on the playdough?
- 3) Do you like playdough?
- 4) What color is the playdough?
- 5) How could you flatten the dough if you did not have a rolling pin?



What open-ended questions could you ask?



You Could Ask...

- How does the magnifier help you learn about the plants?
- How could you use the magnifier in other ways?
- What do you think would happen if those plants did not have enough water?
- Why do you think that?
- What vegetables would you grow if you had a garden? Why did you choose those vegetables?
- How do you think fresh vegetables get from the fields to grocery stores?





What open-ended questions could you ask?



You Could Ask...

- How do the bubbles feel when you pop them?
- What happens when you touch the bubbles?
- Why do you think the bubbles pop when they hit something?
- What would happen if you could blow a bubble as big as your whole body?
- What other items could you use to blow bubbles?
- What do you think it would be like to float through the air inside a bubble?





What open-ended questions could you ask?





What open-ended questions could you ask?



Increase & Improve Adult-Child Interactions



Improve your
scores on
common
Environmental
Rating Scales



Plan Your Questions When You Plan Your Experiences

Exploring Together: Now It's Dry

(all ages, 🗨️ ❤️ 😊 🧐 ? 🌐 🙌)

Materials:

- ❑ Malcolm the Meteorologist puppet
- ❑ Small plastic blocks, water, paper towels

- While fewer people today use the wind (and sun) to dry clothing, it is still possible to do so. During this experience, the children will experiment with making their own wind in order to dry an item (plastic block). As you introduce this concept, be sure to integrate information you may have from families in your group. Do any of the children's families still hang clothing outside to dry? If so, be sure to incorporate this information into the experience.
- Sit with Malcolm on the floor. Put the small plastic blocks, water and paper towels nearby. Chances are good the children will become curious. Invite them to join you and have Malcolm talk with them about how people use wind to help them in their every day lives. This would be an appropriate time for you to integrate information about families that may use wind power to dry clothing. If none of the families in your program do this, Malcolm can share that he uses wind for this purpose. Why do the children think wind helps clothing dry? Have Malcolm explain that the wind helps the water evaporate.
- Next, give the children the opportunity to explore the concept of evaporation through hands-on exploration. Give each child a paper towel and a plastic block. Then, have each child dip his/her plastic block into water and then sit it on his/her paper towel. Challenge the children to use their bodies to make wind to dry the block. Some children may choose to blow in the block while others may choose to wave their hands. Which techniques work best? Have the children compare and contrast.
- Then, repeat this experience if it is a windy day by wetting the blocks and putting them outside to dry. How long does it take? Was it faster than blowing on the blocks?

Questions to Spur Thinking

- *Do any of your families use wind to help dry clothing?*
- *How do you think wind makes drying things faster?*
- *When you go swimming, why do you think you dry faster on a windy, sunny day than a cloudy, damp day?*
- *What worked best for drying the block? Why do you think that?*
- *Did the blocks dry faster inside or outside? Why do you think that is?*

Open-Ended Questions Work with Parents/Guardians, Too

- What was the best part of your child's weekend? Why was that part the best?
- What should I know about your child that will help me plan activities for him/her?
- How can I better support your child as he/she learns to...?
- What activities does your child seem to enjoy the most when at home? Why do you think those are his/her favorite?
- How does your child normally react to new situations?





Now...
What are
your
questions?



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