



Fostering children's thinking skills is important for children's ability to understand bigger ideas in their lives and the world around them. Teachers can effectively foster thinking skills by:

- Using the scientific method to provide tasks where children can observe, predict, and experiment.
- Creating opportunities for children to solve problems.
- Helping children apply knowledge by building on their natural curiosity and drawing upon their everyday experiences.

WHAT STRATEGIES CAN I USE TO FOSTER CHILDREN'S THINKING SKILLS?

Here are some suggested strategies and examples of what this looks like in action. There are many other ways children's thinking skills can be encouraged. Please note that some examples may include more than one strategy.

Create opportunities for children to **solve problems, experiment**, and figure out how things work.

What this looks like in action:	What it is not:
When children are building towers with blocks, the teacher asks, "What do you think will happen if we add more blocks? Why do you think that?" The teacher then asks children to add more blocks and talk about what happens. This allows children to experiment and learn more from the activity.	When children are building towers with blocks, the teacher asks, "How many blocks does this tower have?" (and asks nothing else).

Make learning meaningful and **connected to children's lives**.

What this looks like in action:	What it is not:
When going outside for a spring nature walk, a child notices flowers blooming. The teacher says, "Tell me about what you see coming out of the ground. Why are the flowers coming out now? Why didn't we see them last month? Have you seen flowers like this at home or somewhere else?" This helps children deepen their understanding of their world.	When going outside for a spring nature walk, the teacher says, "Let's count the number of flowers we see," and encourages no other activity on the walk.

Use **how and why** questions that help children think about ideas.

What this looks like in action:	What it is not:
When reading a story, the teacher asks questions, such as: "How do you think that made her feel? Why do you think that?" to help children think more deeply about the book.	When reading a story, the teacher asks children, "What is the name of this animal?" or "What color is the house?" with a focus on the right answer.



Link understanding with something previously learned.

What this looks like in action:	What it is not:
Children are in a center time and playing store, buying and selling various items. The teacher reminds the children about their visit to a store the day before and connects what they saw and did with the current activity.	When children are in center time, the teacher observes their interactions and asks if they are having fun.

Predict what may happen next.

What this looks like in action:	What it is not:
When reading a book, the teacher asks questions, such as: "What do you think will happen next?" to help children with their prediction skills.	When reading a book, the teacher reads the book without asking questions, and does not encourage children to talk.

Brainstorm new ideas, make something in a new way.

What this looks like in action:	What it is not:
When coloring, the teacher asks children to draw pictures of animals that lay eggs. After the children are done with their drawing, the teacher and children sit together and make a list of all the animals they came up with.	When coloring, the teacher tells children to draw dogs that look just like the picture on the board.

Compare and contrast to understand similarities and differences.

What this looks like in action:	What it is not:
When eating lunch, the teacher talks with children about what fruit they see at the table and asks children to compare the shapes and colors.	When eating lunch, the teacher does paperwork while the children eat.

When during the day can I do this?

Children's thinking skills can be promoted throughout the school day in many classroom activities including centers, whole group instruction, meal and snack time, as well as transition. What is important is that teachers think intentionally about finding opportunities to do this at different times during the day, and not just during a structured instructional activity.

NOTE: Please note that the strategies for "What this looks like in action" and "What it is not" are examples specific to those strategies. The behaviors in the nonexamples may be appropriate in other instances depending on children's learning goals.



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