AGE-APPROPRIATE PEDAGOGIES

Language rich and dialogic

Ensuring that learning occurs in environments where rich language is modelled and employed by both children and educators. Meaningful dialogues between children, as well as between children and educators, are created to support thinking, learning, engagement and imagination.

Opportunities and actions

Dialogic talk requires 'opportunities for students to instigate talk in a classroom environment where they feel comfortable to do so.'[1] Teacher behaviours that support language rich and dialogic classroom interactions include:

- demonstrating respect for young learners' communicative attempts through positive verbal feedback, and non-verbal behaviours (smiles, eye contact, nods and gestures)
- recognising and supporting the diversity of communicative skills and styles that young learners possess, for example by:
  - ensuring they have time to process information and respond
  - reinforcing desired classroom communication strategies
  - modelling positive interactional behaviours.
- encouraging individuals to ask questions, share ideas and to make hypotheses
- engaging young learners in sustained talk, drawing on their knowledge and interests as ideas are exchanged.

Expectations

The conditions for rich classroom exchanges are founded on established routines and expectations regarding the social conventions for talk. Some young learners, for example, may be skilled in talking as part of a group and understand the social conventions of turn-taking, listening without interrupting, waiting to speak, and acknowledging the perspectives of others. Considering the diversity of interactional styles young learners bring to the classroom, it is important to discuss expectations and model desired behaviours for speaking and listening. Providing explicit feedback helps young learners to develop the skills necessary for positive social interactions. For example, 'I noticed that you really listened to Amy share her ideas about....' 'The questions that you asked her showed her that you are interested in her ideas.'

Vocabulary

To support language rich and dialogic interactions, it is important to extend and enrich the repertoire of words young learners use as part of everyday talk. Young learners benefit from exposure to new vocabulary, clear explanations of word meanings and demonstrated use of the new word across a variety of learning contexts.

The introduction of new vocabulary crosses all areas of the curriculum with terms that may be specific to subject content e.g. mathematical terms used in measurement, or rarer vocabulary. Words that are considered rarer are often associated with written text rather than spoken words. Encouraging young learners to talk about words, their meanings, and to identify words that share similar meanings can be incorporated into daily routines and specific investigations. For example, a unit of work investigating the lifecycle of a butterfly provides opportunities to draw attention to the language differences between non-fiction and fiction texts.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar	Lifecycles of butterflies
popped	hatched/emerged
cocoon	chrysalis
little caterpillar	larvae
ate	chewed/digested

Questioning

Teacher-led questions serve a multitude of purposes that can enrich learning and encourage deep levels of thinking, reflection and classroom discussion. The challenge is to use questions in ways that are cognitively challenging and invite thoughtful responses. Questions that are too complex tend to shut down discussions, particularly if a young learner feels put on the spot to answer. Conversely, questions that are

1 Edwards-Groves, C., Anstey, M., & Bull, G. (2014). *Classroom talk: Understanding dialogue, pedagogy and practice*, p.12. NSW: Primary English Teachers Association of Australia PETAA

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intended to manage behaviour disguised as a question are frustrating for young learners and can lead to disengagement.

Questions that genuinely encourage young learners to think, wonder, hypothesise and engage in classroom talk are typically open-ended. Examples of open-ended question starters include:

- I wonder how…?
- What might happen if…?
- What might happen next…?
- How do you know…?
- How did you work that out…?
- What's another way we could…?
- Can you tell us more about…?
- What would happen if…?
- I wonder why…?
- How can we show, explain, represent…?
- What else might we need to…?
- Is there another way we could…?
- What do you think…?
- What have you found out…?
- How can you check…?
- Can you explain how you solved that problem…?
- How can we work together to…?
- Why does this…?
- Can you imagine what might…?
- What makes you say that?

When teachers model the language of inquiry, young learners develop the skills to respond to questions that require them to predict, explain, hypothesise, reflect, question, elaborate, imagine and create. Young learners also learn how to ask questions that that challenge, provoke and promote further engagement and learning. Learning to ask and respond to interesting questions is an iterative process that takes time and practise. To create a language rich and dialogic classroom culture where young learners feel able to take a risk, share ideas, think aloud and ponder, consider the messages of your actions and words. Ask yourself:

- Does my class see me as an expert or a learner?
- How do I show young learners that I am interested in their ideas?
- Whose voices are most often heard?
- Whose voices remain silent?

'High quality dialogue is active, meaningful, challenging, collaborative, mediated and reflective.'[2]

2 Nottingham, J., Nottingham J., & Renton, M. (2017). Challenging learning through dialogue. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin