Skill Set 1: Oral Language

Comprehension Development

The ability to understand questions is critical for participation in social interactions and success across all curriculum areas. The ability to answer question of increasing complexity develops alongside news telling ability. Teachers and parents can use questioning to challenge or lessen the demands on a child’s news telling.
Blank, Rose and Berlin (1978) developed a teaching model of questioning that moves children’s understanding from the here and now to reasoning and predicting skills. These questions can act as a systematic support for news telling.

**Blank Level One: Matching Perception. Questions that should be answered by 3 year olds.**

At this level the questions are literal and based on what is in front of the child.
At this level answers tend to be short or non-verbal (i.e. child can respond by pointing).

**Examples:**

What is it?
What part is this called?
Who is this?
Show me...

**Blank Level Two: Selective Analysis Of Perception. Questions that should be answered by 4 year olds.**

The child is required to attend to a specific attribute of what is in front of them (e.g. its colour, shape, and size).

**Examples:**

What size is it?
What colour is it?
What is this part used for?
What does it taste/feel smell like?
What shape is it?
Where did you get it from?
Where do you keep it?
Who gave it to you?
What do you use it for?

**Blank Level Three. Questions that should be answered by 5 year olds.**

The questions become more complex. Children are required to predict, exclude and sequence information.

**Examples:**

How did you make it?
How did you feel?
What happened next?
What else could you have used?

**Blank Level Four. Questions that should be answered by 6 year olds.**

Questions at this level require children to think about what may, might, could or would happen to materials, objects or events, explain how and why, hypothesise and evaluate.

**Examples:**

Why did that happen?
What would you do different next time?
Why couldn’t you do it this way?
What would happen if…?
Why did you use…?
What could you do?

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Supporting The Understanding Of Questions

When asking a child questions it’s important to support and teach them what the question means and how you want them to answer it. If a child has difficulty understanding a question:

1. Repeat the question using visual cues to support (eg: pictures and gestures)
2. Rephrase the question or ask it in a different way
3. Give two alternative for the child to choose between
4. Model the correct answer

Example

**Adult asks:** What colour is it the elephant?
Student doesn’t respond

**Adult asks:** I can see elephant’s ears are pink. What colour is his body?
Child doesn’t answer.

**Adult asks:** Is he grey or orange?
Child responds: orange

**Adult models:** He’s grey. The elephant is grey.