

Parent (Teacher) Toolkit: Asking Questions

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This document is part of the YCISL Parent (Teacher) Toolkit Series which is aimed at empowering parents as teachers to develop youth creativity and leadership skills that support healthy learning.

Mostly, classroom teaching trains students to answer questions. This structure tends to stifle curiosity and active listening skills which are high value assets of innovators and leaders. In the YCISL program, we view “Asking Questions” as a surveying and developmental opportunity.

BASICS: In the English language, we generally form questions using words such as what, when, who, where, which, why, and how. There are a few other sentence forms as well such as “Can you...” and “Did you...” As a study aid, make a list of these words on a sheet of paper or on cards. Practice making sentences using your study aids as prompts. Aim for a quick connection between the prompt word and the rest of the question.

BEGINNER: Help your child listen to something (anything really: a video, you reading a book, a television show, a song, a poem, etc), then have them ask or write down questions to prompt a conversation with you. Notice facial and tonal expressions that show interest, understanding, confidence and curiosity.

INTERMEDIATE: Find something for which a decision needs to be made that affects the family. For example, what television show to watch or what to have for lunch. Then ask your child to form questions that would assist in making the decision. For an analytical approach, you could draw a decision tree showing how multiple decisions are possible, and how the final decision was reached.

ADVANCED: Active listening (hearing, interpreting, understanding, giving feedback, and communication checking sometimes in the form of asking questions) is the key to making informed leadership decisions. Select a job and perform an interview; take turns at being the hiring manager and the job applicant. After the interview, think about how well active listening functioned and whether asking questions helped the flow. What was the outcome of the interview? Would you hire? Would you want the job?