

TIPS ON LEADING A DISCUSSION

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On Wednesdays I have different group of children cycle through my class. I am often amazed how different they respond the same material being presented to each class. Some kids like to join the discussion while other groups will hardly talk. I listed some good ideas to consider when leading a discussion. I hope will be a good resource for you to look back and use when the occasion arises



- Create groups by giving out Jaw Breakers-Red, Blue, Yellow, Turquoise
- Ask “open-ended” Questions (“Why do you think he did that?”) A discussion is not a quiz. Don’t play the “Guess What I’m Thinking” game?
- Remain neutral. Affirm everyone. Don’t agree/disagree with participants. Save your comments for later. Ask more questions, “Is that how everyone feels?”
- Prepare key questions ahead of time. Add “*flow questions*” during the discussion to keep it moving and to go deeper.
- Begin with non-threatening (easy) questions, and move to deeper stuff after kids have opened up.
- Don’t be afraid of silence, give people time to think. It takes eight seconds to digest a question.
- Don’t force kids to talk.
- Use a variety of discussion techniques when helpful:
 - Circular Response (go around the circle)
 - Complete the sentence questions (“If I were Braxton, I would...”).
 - Create small groups or task groups
 - Written, short answer responses to a question, read back to the group.
- Brainstorming:
 - “Fishbowl” (two people in middle talk on topic; when someone wants to enter the conversation, tap on shoulder and exchange places).
 - Don’t be afraid of “heresy.” Don’t try to make everyone agree. Instead, encourage honesty.
 - Feel free to reflect (“You seem to feel strongly about...”). Summarize, contrast, and compare their responses.

