

Use of S.O.U.L. to Support Natural Conversations with Children

As we try to limit our use of close-ended questions with children it is important to recall SOUL: as a way to “put on the brakes” and slow down as we enter into conversations or play with young children.

S: silent

O: observe

U: understand

L: listen

As a teacher **silently** enters children’s space, **observe** the child’s affect (expression, body language) and take special note of what they are doing. Take time to **understand** what you are seeing and hearing. A moment of thoughtful **listening** as you **observe**, will greatly help in **understanding** what is going on, the child’s interest with the routine or materials at hand and will help you enter in a way that is respectful and natural. This slow-down will help guide a teacher to enter a child’s play or form a genuine comment rather than toss out a closed-ended question.

The interaction/conversation is a way to encourage children’s language use, sharing of their perspectives and ideas as well as a way to provide practice for a child to feel like a competent conversational partner.