
Promoting Inquiry Skills with Young Multilingual Learners

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the article, “4 Key Factors for Laying a Foundations for Rich Science Inquiry with Young Multilingual Learners,” from The National Association for the Education of Young Children. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Consider the opportunities available for multilingual learners during inquiry focused activities.
- ◆ Reflect on your current practices and determine strategies to promote inquiry skills for multilingual learners.
- ◆ Plan ways to promote multilingual learners’ inquiry skills during activities at your learning center.

Activity

- ◆ Read the article.
- ◆ Use the questions below to guide your reflection and action plan to support children’s inquiry in the learning environment.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support preschoolers’ inquiry skills.

Provide multiple ways for children to express their observations and thinking, including through demonstration, drawing, and making models using blocks, playdough, and other materials.

Cindy Hosington, Jessica Mercer Young, Jeff Winokur

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the article? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?
- ◆ This article offers factors that affect educator's ability to promote multilingual learners' inquiry skills during science focused activities. Identify a recent science activity that was offered to the children in your learning environment and consider how children showed interest.
 - Were the children observing and exploring using their hands? Were they asking questions and sharing ideas?
- ◆ The article also identifies ways to promote an inclusive science environment for all children. Reflect on your current learning environment
 - How are you attentive and responsive to your multilingual learners? Are you watching nonverbal and verbal cues?
 - Do multilingual learners have opportunities to ask questions? How are you ensuring that you are answering their questions in ways they understand?
 - Do children have opportunities to use materials in the classroom, such as building blocks, clay, drawing materials, to share their understanding, discoveries, or questions?
- ◆ The article points out that language and literacy can be enhanced significantly during science related activities.
 - What are some ways you are continuously introducing and using new words with multilingual learners?
 - Are you reading science-based books to children? Are these books available for children to explore on their own?
 - How do you partner with families to promote science and language connections? How can you work with families to support children to use their home language while building their inquiry skills?
- ◆ The authors encourage educators to partner with other educators to implement steps to support inquiry skills within the learning environment. Develop an action plan to use these partnerships to deepen your support for multilingual learners as they develop inquiry skills.
 - Who would you like to partner with? When and where can you meet to collaborate?
 - What types of activities or language support would you like to try?
 - Identify resources and supports you may need to support multilingual learners. How will you obtain these?
 - Implement your plan, monitor children's progress, and adjust as needed.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about supporting children's inquiry:

- ◆ **Source:** Colorín Colorado
- ◆ **Article:** Opportunities and Challenges for ELLs in the Science Inquiry Classroom (Part 1)
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/opportunities-and-challenges-ells-science-inquiry-classroom-part-1>
- ◆ **Description:** This article presents the challenges for multilingual learners in an inquiry-based learning environment and encourages educators to identify the language opportunities present in an inquiry-based environment.

- ◆ **Source:** NAEYC
- ◆ **Podcast:** Building Language and Scientific Literacy in Young Children
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.readingrockets.org/article/building-language-and-scientific-literacy-young-children>
- ◆ **Description:** This article provides concrete examples of language that can be used in inquiry-based activities to develop concepts and language for multilingual learners.