

# TALKING WITH A CHILD ABOUT THEIR ART

Use open-ended questions to encourage a child to talk about their work *before* you make assumptions about it.

## Spark a conversation about **IDEAS**

*"Tell me about your picture."*

*"What were you thinking about when you made this?"*

## Spark a conversation about **PROCESS**

*"What steps did you take to make this?"*

*"What were your challenges while you were working?"*

## Spark a conversation about **IMAGINATION**

*"What if this shape in your picture could talk. What do you imagine it would say?"*

*"I wonder what it would be like to live in a jungle like the one you drew here."*

## Spark a conversation about **CONTENT**

(concepts, vocabulary, artists)

*"I notice you use a lot of vertical lines, tell me more about that."*

*"You are studying about Monet in school. How did that influence what you did here?"*

## Spark a conversation about **MATERIALS**

*"What tools did you use to make this texture?"*

*"What did you learn about using watercolors on this project?"*

## Spark a conversation about **CURIOSITY**

*"What else do you need to find out to help you on this project?"*

*"Your drawing of snakes makes me curious to learn more about snakes."*

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Resist the urge to ask *What is it?* That phrase suggests that the child has not been successful or that the work must represent an object.

Do offer specific and honest **PRAISE**

*"I like the big mouth on your monster. He looks hungry!"*  
*"This line that zig-zags all over the page really gets my attention. It looks fast."*

Do provide constructive **REDIRECTION AND CRITICISM**

Children need encouragement to stick with a project.

Positive redirection and criticism teaches children:  
to be reflective and critical of their own work  
to persevere through challenges  
to identify what knowledge, skills and tools they may need to continue.

*"I can tell that you felt this flower is special since you spent a lot of time on it. What about these other flowers. Do you have special plans for them too?"*

*"I heard you say that you want this drawing to tell the story of your trip to the beach. I don't see anything that makes me know it's a beach. What could add to this picture that suggests the beach?"*