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?”**