

Home Connection

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Skill: Developmentally Appropriate Conversing

Many students are privy to information or content that they simply do not understand. In many of these situations they have difficulty processing the information or take away information that is damaging to their social and emotional skill sets. It is important to engage children in developmentally appropriate conversations and content.

Here are some strategies to foster developmentally appropriate conversations and exposure to content:

1. Limit their exposure to TikTok, Social Media, News, and Online platforms that have adult content and language. Their exposure to sensitive topics should be guided by parents, not by social media platforms.
2. Screen and monitor what shows and movies they watch.
3. Use children's books to communicate a message. Kids relate well to characters and there is nothing better than a children's book to help communicate an important message or discuss a sensitive topic.
4. Create a safe space for conversation and questions. This could be the dinner table or another place where the child feels comfortable and willing to converse.
5. Use vocabulary, ideas, and relationships that they're familiar with. Recall a recent, similar situation from their lives that they can relate to. Say, "A man stole something. Remember when someone took your lunchbox?"
6. Use basic terms for feelings such as "mad," "sad," "afraid," "happy," and "surprised".
7. Communicate that someone is in charge. Say, "Mommy and Daddy will make sure nothing bad happens to our family." Or, "The police will catch the bad guy."
8. Don't be dismissive, but encourage critical thinking. Ask open-ended questions to get kids to think more deeply about serious topics and find out what they know prior to you having a conversation. Ask, "What did you hear?," "What did it make you think?," and "Why do you think that?" For older kids, you can ask, "Do you think families from other backgrounds would view this the same way as us?" And, "The news media hypes up stories so more people will pay attention. Why do you think this story is getting so much play?"
9. Always stress your values. Values are important and can help guide a child to make the right choices.
10. Do not share your life stresses with your child. They should not know and do not fully understand the stresses that an adult may or may not be handling.

Some websites for strategies:

<https://www.common sense media.org/articles/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-difficult-subjects>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2019/01/14/things-keep-mind-when-talking-kids-about-tough-subjects/>

<https://www.mother.ly/parenting/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-difficult-world-eventsby-age/>