

# New Mexico PreK

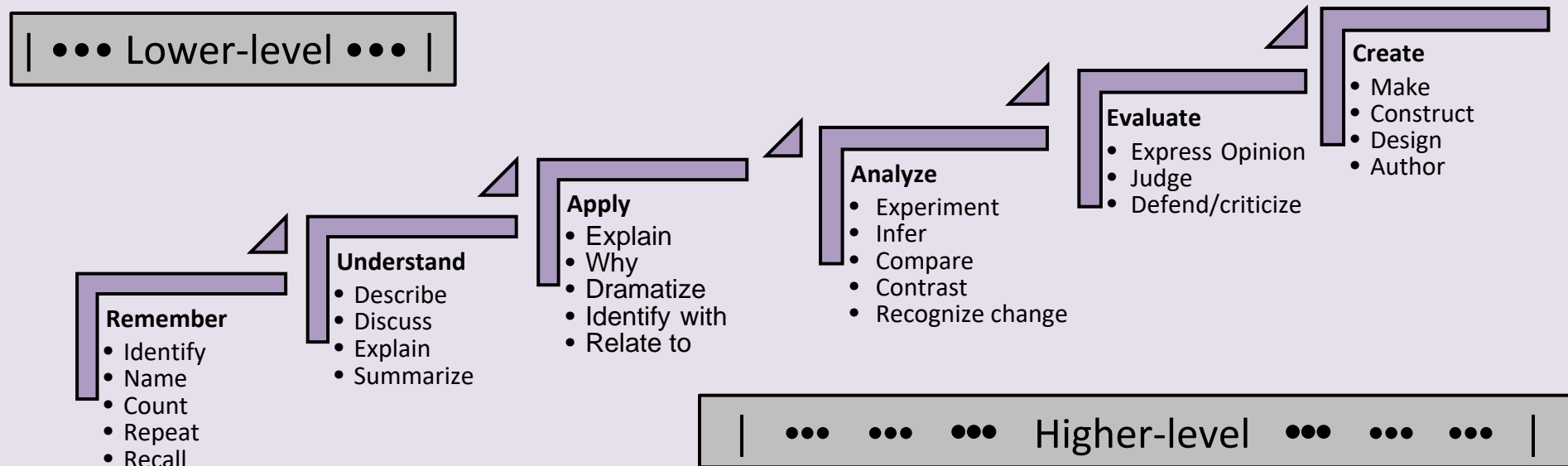
## The Use of Questions in the Classroom

Questions can be used intentionally to enhance children's learning in several ways. The use of questions can facilitate language development as well as the development of creative thinking. They can be used to assess comprehension and understanding.  
(EI 5.3 Vocabulary; 6.1 Conversational Ability; 27.1 Focus)

### Types of Questions

**Low-level Questions**, also called literal questions, generally require a consistent answer that may include labels, descriptions, and actions. Low-level questions help children build a foundation of knowledge from which they can develop more complex understandings (Paulson & Moats, 2018; Strasser & Bresson, 2017).

**High-level Questions**, also called inferential questions, offer opportunities for children to engage in creative thinking. High-level questions require a child to answer in their own way, showing what they understand and encouraging them to expand on their perspective (Paulson & Moats, 2018; Strasser & Bresson, 2017).



#### References:

Paulson, L. H., & Moats, L. C. (2018). *LETRS for early childhood educators* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Boston, MA: Cambium Learning.

Paulson, L. H., & Moats, L. C. (2019). *LETRS for early childhood educators: Facilitator's guide* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Cambium Learning.

PED. (2020). New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines.

Strasser, J. & Bresson, L. (2017). *Big questions for young minds: Extending children's thinking*. Washington DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

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## The Use of Questions in the Classroom

Different types of questions enhance children's development in different ways. Literal questions, also called low-level questions, meet young children's typical understanding of language. In fact, literal questions promote lower-level semantic skills, which research has shown to be a better predictor of children's listening comprehension than high-level questions that promote inferential skills. However, adults should still ask high-level questions (inferential questions) which promote creative thinking, while remembering that they need to scaffold to help young children answer these higher-level questions. When asking questions, research has shown that adults should first ask a lower-level question, then follow it up with a higher-level question (Paulson & Moats, 2019).

### Examples

<b>Level 1</b>	How many boxes are on the shelf?	What are we going to do after snack?
<b>Level 2</b>	I noticed that you put the smaller blocks on the top. Why?	What happened in the middle of the story?
<b>Level 3</b>	How can you make a circle with your whole body with one other person?	How can we act out <i>One Elephant Went Out to Play</i> while we sing it?
<b>Level 4</b>	Which liquid worked better in this experiment?	How does the scarf change when we wave it to different songs?
<b>Level 5</b>	Which part of your artwork are you most proud of? Why?	Which do you think is the strongest tree? Why?
<b>Level 6</b>	How will you design the menu for your new taco shop?	I wonder how you could create this snack from the materials in the art center. Maybe you could try out some of your ideas during center time.

It is important to remember that young children tend to think based on the types of questions that they anticipate receiving from the adult. Children tend to approach learning as a knowledge-based activity if they are presented with an overabundance of literal questions. However, if they are also presented with inferential questions, they will begin to approach learning with creative thinking.

### Modifications

For children who have communication and/or developmental disabilities, consider using:

1. Literal language
2. Visual supports
3. Alternative, augmentative communication systems
4. Accommodations and modifications listed on the IEP.



### References:

Paulson, L. H., & Moats, L. C. (2018). *LETRS for early childhood educators* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Boston, MA: Cambium Learning.

Paulson, L. H., & Moats, L. C. (2019). *LETRS for early childhood educators: Facilitator's guide* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Cambium Learning.

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