The Use of Questioning

The importance of questioning children about their thinking, giving them time to respond, and giving specific feedback on their responses cannot be overemphasized. Both open and closed questions can be used when working with children. Children should become familiar with and expected to be allowed to explain their reasoning about mathematical tasks.

These suggested questions will help to develop children’s mathematical thinking and learning and will keep the focus on reasoning in mathematics:

- Can you tell me how you did that? (or Tell me how you worked that out.)
- Can you explain what you were thinking as you did that?
- Can you do that another way?
- Could you estimate how many you think it will be?
- Is there something you already know that will help you do this? (or What do you know about the situation? How might that help you solve this task?)
- Is that what you thought would happen?
- What did you think of as you worked that out?
- What could we find out?
- What do you want to find out?
- What do you think might happen here?
- What can you tell me about what you have done?
- Why did it make sense to start there? To start with those numbers? To start with that idea?
- How do these [numbers, ideas, etc.] relate to these [numbers, ideas, etc.] in your work?