

Call for Pedagogical Narratives: When Children Ask Unexpected Questions

We invite early childhood educators, site leaders, and other early care and education professionals who work directly with children and families to submit narrative proposals for *Voices of Practitioners*. This year's call centers on what happens **after** children bring us unexpected questions, observations, or challenges—and how those moments reshape our thinking, relationships, and practice.

Children ask profound questions about the world, about fairness, about bodies, families, death, race, belonging, power, and care. Sometimes these questions are spoken clearly. Other times they emerge through gesture, action, silence, repetition, resistance, or play, especially for infants, toddlers, multilingual children who are not yet able to communicate the fullness of their ideas in the language used at school, and children who communicate in non-verbal or unconventional ways. In all cases, these moments invite us into reflection and decision making that can be uncomfortable, generative, or both.

This call asks: What changed or is changing in your practice because of something unexpected a child noticed and asked about, verbally or otherwise?

Our Focus

We are seeking pedagogical narratives grounded in a specific, lived moment with a child or group of children. These narratives should begin with a concrete question, observation, or action initiated by a child and then trace what followed:

- How did this moment interrupt or challenge your assumptions?
- What conversations did it prompt with children, colleagues, families, or administrators?
- What tensions, dilemmas, or uncertainties emerged?
- How did your practice, routines, curriculum, policies, or relationships shift or how are they starting to shift as a result?

We are particularly interested in stories that show how children's questions surface issues adults might avoid, postpone, or oversimplify and how educators grapple with those moments thoughtfully rather than resolving them neatly.

What Counts as a Child’s Unexpected “Question”?

A child’s question does not need to be verbal. We welcome narratives sparked by:

- An infant’s repeated gesture, gaze, or emotional response
- A toddler’s action, resistance, or insistence
- A child’s drawing, play scenario, or bodily expression
- A child’s nonverbal communication of curiosity, confusion, or concern
- A moment of silence, refusal, or disruption that demanded interpretation

In these moments, perhaps you found yourself responding to the unexpected questions from children with "Where did this come from?"; "Why is this happening?"; "How am I supposed to respond?"; or "This seems too important to ignore." If so, you are likely starting in the right place.

These stories about the children’s questions may address issues of equity, identity, power, care, curriculum, discipline, language, disability, culture, or community, although they do not need to be framed around a predetermined topic. The child’s moment should lead your inquiry.

Teacher Research and Pedagogical Narrative

Pedagogical narratives begin with a small, specific moment and expand through reflection, documentation, and inquiry. They do not require certainty or resolution. Instead, they value honesty, complexity, and learning over time.

If your story raises new questions rather than tidy answers, it is well suited to this year’s invitation. As with previous issues, accepted authors will be supported through a developmental editing process designed especially for educators who may be new to publishing. Authors may submit individually or collaboratively.

Proposal Guidelines

Proposals are due April 14, 2026.

Email your proposal to editorial@naeyc.org.

Indicate in the subject line that it is a submission for *Voices of Practitioners*.

Proposals should be 500–750 words and written narratively.

Please include:

1. A key moment or anecdote centered on a child's question, observation, or action.
2. Context about your setting and role. Address the following: location, type of setting, demographics of children, families and teachers, your role (or each of your roles if co-authored) in relation to this story.
3. Reflection and inquiry, describing how the moment led to changes (or is starting to lead to changes) in thinking, conversation, or practice.
4. What shifted or is shifting in you, your classroom, your relationships, or your program?

Final published narratives will be approximately 1,000–1,500 words and may include photographs or documentation with appropriate permissions.