



Not All Queens Wear Crowns

by Melodee Simmons, Preschool Representative

Did you know that the average 4-year-old child knows 5,000 words? If you spend time with preschoolers, you will get to hear them practice using those words, sometimes nonstop.

We have many terms and phrases that we use without thinking about it. Generally, whoever we are talking to will understand our meaning. Children are different. They do not know all the common phrases we have or the terms we use.

I have always tried to remember this when talking with children. I try to explain words or phrases that I think might be new or unfamiliar to them.

Did I ever miss this recently with a class of 4-year-olds!

What Can You Learn from Ants?

Our pre-kindergarten class was doing a unit on ants. They were going to learn about the life cycle: what ants eat, how they work, and where they live. We purchased an ant farm for them to watch.

I went in their classroom to see what they were doing, and they had many questions about the ants. They would look at the ants and then ask me questions. We talked around everything you could imagine about the ants. While I answered questions, I watched one little girl, Nilufer, who kept looking intently at the ants. She would walk around them, looking from all angles. She didn't say anything; she just kept looking at them. I was wondering what she was thinking.

After a few minutes, I told the children I would have to leave but I hoped they would continue to enjoy the ants. As I was leaving, Nilufer called my name and said, “Where’s the queen ant? I don’t see one wearing a crown.” She had heard me telling the children something about the queen ant. She had been intently looking for the ant wearing a crown because “all queens wear crowns.” I then tried to explain that ants don’t wear crowns and why only one ant was called the queen. I’m not sure she totally believed me. She then told me she had a crown at home.

Give the Meanings of New Words

We need to think about what we are saying to children, and we need to help them understand new words and phrases we use. This will expand their vocabulary and can help with their communication skills.

I love talking to children. I just need to remember they don’t always know the words I am using or the way I am using them.

If you have experienced something like this with your class, please share it with our other readers. Send your experience to me at melodee.simmons@yahoo.com.

Melodee Simmons has worked in early childhood education for more than 30 years. She has worked in private and corporate-owned centers in Christian and secular preschools. She currently is the preschool director of Giraffe Kids Learning Center and Development Academy in Houston, Texas. She has received her national director credential. She attends Living Word Church of the Nazarene. You may contact Melodee at melodee.simmons@yahoo.com.