

# MIND in the Making

The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs

## Life Skill That Promotes Executive Function (EF): Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking is the ongoing search for **valid and reliable knowledge to guide beliefs, decisions and actions.**

### Suggestions for Promoting Critical Thinking for Ages 3-5

#### Tip:

As you read *What Can You Do with a Paleta?*, ask your child:

- “What else do you think the children are going to do with their paleta? What would you do? Why?”

Share what you would do and why.

#### Skill:

Asking questions and thinking about answers is a good way to promote Critical Thinking. **Exploring the reasons behind what you do helps your child use and synthesize information.** This back and forth conversation is what researchers call “**serve and return.**” Like a game of ball, one of you says or does something (serves) and the other responds (returns). The importance of these everyday interactions to brain building is a key finding from child development research.

#### Tip:

This book presents a great deal of information about life in the barrio and includes Spanish words interspersed in the English section. Ask your child:

- “What do you know about life in the barrio from reading this book? How do you know that? How is life there different or the same as life where you live?”

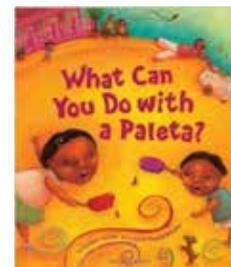
#### Skill:

Asking your child to gather information about the **context** of a story helps your child look at what is around him or her more carefully—how adults and children dress, what they do during the day, what their relationships are like. This process of **careful observation** is an important aspect of Critical Thinking.

### What Can You Do with a Paleta?

By Carmen Tafolla

*What Can You Do With a Paleta?* is the fanciful story of all of the things you can do with an icy-cold pop made from all natural ingredients—you can paint your tongue and scare your brother, you can make new friends or use it to cool off, and “you can lick it and slurp it and...gobble it all down.” A wonderful story of a Mexican tradition.



High-quality books and educational resources from First Book supporting research-based Life Skills from *Mind in the Making* by Ellen Galinsky



Find more books and materials on the First Book Marketplace, a resource available exclusively to educators and programs serving children in need. [www.fbmarketplace.org](http://www.fbmarketplace.org).

You will notice that these tips promote two child development principles: **Serve and Return** and **Executive Function** skills.

**Serve and Return**, like a game of ball, involves a back and forth conversation between you and your child where you listen, then build on and extend what your child says or does to promote learning.

**Executive Function** skills are skills you use to manage your attention, your feelings, your thoughts and your behavior to reach your goals.

They include being able to pay attention, remember information, think flexibly and exercise self control.

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#### Tip:

Ask your child why it might be a hard decision for the girl to choose between strawberry and coconut paleta. Talk about a time when your child and/or you had a hard decision and the steps used to make a decision.

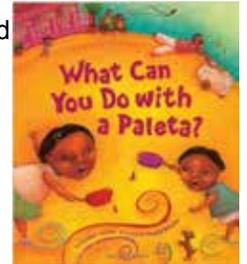
#### Skill:

Calling attention to the **decision-making process** and helping children apply it in their everyday lives promote an understanding of the steps we use to solve problems, all important aspects of **Executive Function** skills.

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