



Guidelines for teachers to elicit detailed and accurate narrative accounts from children[☆]



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ABSTRACT

This paper provides interview strategies for teachers who talk to children about serious events, including bullying, truancy, and suspected maltreatment. With regard to the latter, teachers are among the largest group of professionals reporting child abuse, but also tend to evince low substantiation rates. We review research on *best practice* interviewing, with a focus on its application in school settings. Interview phases are described chronologically, with interview excerpts included for illustrative purposes. Gaps in knowledge about the appropriateness of techniques are highlighted, and recommendations for future research specifically within the school setting are made. It is proposed that teachers receive basic training in best practice interviewing so that, when required, they can confidently ask about difficulties in children's lives while minimizing the potential for contamination of children's responses.

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Maximizing children's informativeness and accuracy when describing their experiences has been the focus of much research in cognitive, developmental, and forensic psychology (e.g., Fivush, 2014; Goodman, Ogle, McWilliams, Narr, & Paz-Alonso, 2014; Lamb, Malloy, Hershkowitz, & La Rooy, 2015; Peterson, 2012). This body of work has yielded valuable knowledge about the importance of open-ended questions to facilitate and augment narrative responses. Open-ended questions are those that do not dictate what information should be provided, and encourage elaborate answers in the respondent's own words (Powell & Snow, 2007a). Guidelines regarding interviewing techniques have arisen from this body of knowledge, and have primarily appeared in the *forensic* rather than education literature (e.g. Lamb, Orbach, Hershkowitz, Esplin, & Horowitz, 2007; Lyon, 2014; Saywitz & Camparo, 2013; Wilson & Powell, 2001; Yuille, Cooper, & Hervé, 2009). Yet, school personnel often need to elicit narrative accounts from children too; about events such as bullying, victimization, property damage, substance use, complaints against staff, uncovering reasons for truancy or other significant behavioral changes, or possible evidence of maltreatment.

Recent research has highlighted the importance of school personnel such as teachers and guidance counselors in understanding the forensic

implications of children's narrative accounts of events (e.g. Snow, Powell, & Sanger, 2012). The extant literature, however, does not provide evidence-based guidance to such professionals as to how to go about eliciting a narrative account from a child in the school setting. This paper aims to be a first step in redressing that gap by presenting best-practice interviewing guidelines from the perspective of their use by teachers and other education professionals.

1. The importance of interview guidelines for teachers

Teachers are in a particularly advantageous position to identify difficulties in the lives of children they instruct (Cerezo & Pons-Salvador, 2004; Schols, de Ruiter, & Öry, 2013), including criminal activities covered under mandated reporting laws, such as child abuse. In countries where school personnel are mandated reporters, they tend to be among the largest groups of professionals to make reports to police and child protective services (Sedlak et al., 2010), but their reports are also associated with low substantiation rates (King & Scott, 2014). There is evidence that they miss identifying some cases as well; for example, Goebbels, Nicholson, Walsh, and De Vries (2008) found that 18% of teachers explicitly indicated that, on at least one occasion, they did not make a report in an ambiguous situation (see also Beck, Ogloff, & Corbishley, 1994; Sedlak et al., 2010), and Teasley and Gill (2015) suggested that student-athletes who are victims of abuse by coaches are particularly unlikely to disclose at all. Schools have responsibilities to ensure that information that is suggestive of child maltreatment is

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carefully managed with respect to the threshold for making a mandatory report, and that they respond appropriately to reports of critical incidents (e.g., Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2014; Mathews, 2014; Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2015).

There are numerous circumstances that do not require reporting to authorities but nevertheless should be elicited through careful questioning, either because such situations may evolve into more serious ones, or simply to avoid contaminating reports with personal biases (Powell, Hughes-Scholes, & Sharman, 2012). For example, teaching staff may need to elicit a child's account of a witnessed accident or assault in the playground to inform safety regulations or disciplinary action. In many jurisdictions it is strongly suggested, if not required, that schools include anti-bullying strategies in their codes of conduct (e.g., Bernard & Milne, 2008; Cerf, Hesse, Gantwek, Martz, & Vermeire, 2010). Teachers tend to underestimate rates of bullying in their schools; overt signs can be absent or hard to detect and children often do not report their victimization (see Sullivan, 2011, for review). Thus, questioning in cases of student behavioral changes may be necessary for detection. It has also been suggested that schools be required to act to identify problems faced by the bully, the victim, or both, and not doing so could leave them criminally liable (e.g., Farbish, 2011).

Unfortunately, teachers, principals, support staff, and administrators are not routinely trained in best-practice approaches for eliciting narrative accounts from children. Until recently, it was not known how teachers approach the questioning of children in response to a known or suspected incident. Brubacher, Powell, Skouteris, and Guadagno (2014) assessed the questions teachers used in a mock interview situation and found that the majority were specific or leading, with only 13% of prompts characterized as open-ended (see Warren & Peterson, 2014, for similar findings when children were questioned by parents).

2. The need to develop training programs for teachers

Everyday narratives tend to be co-constructed as part of a conversation (Kelly & Bailey, 2013; Principe, DiPuppo, & Gammel, 2013). For example, when a past event is recounted, the listener typically asks about aspects that he or she finds most interesting (e.g., upon hearing about a recent wedding you attended, one of your friends wants to know everything that was served for dinner, but another is more interested in what everyone wore). Listeners also interject with their own subjective comments. Particularly in conversations with children, parents and teachers often scaffold children's discourse by providing known information to keep children's accounts flowing e.g., "and then what did we do – we visited the tiger next... what happened with the tiger?" (Nelson & Fivush, 2000; Wang, 2013). Notably, however, the precise accuracy of the information children share about innocuous events is usually not critical, and small errors do not lead to adverse consequences. In fact, children are encouraged to engage in rich fantasy in school activities such as creative writing and drama (Wyse, Jones, Bradford, & Wolpert, 2013).

Everyday conversational discourse is not characterized by communication behaviors that optimize success during an investigative interview (Saywitz & Camparo, 2013; Steele, 2012). Further, children are accustomed to being asked questions by adults who already know the answers (Nelson & Fivush, 2000; Poole & Lamb, 1998), such as teachers, who are also authority figures to children (Tisak, Crane-Ross, Tisak, & Maynard, 2000). Children are most suggestible and most likely to guess when being questioned by people they perceive to be authorities and/or knowledgeable (Waterman, Blades, & Spencer, 2004).

Currently, some teacher education programs include training regarding mandatory reporting laws, identifying behavioral indicators of abuse and victimization, and abuse prevention (Farrell & Walsh, 2010; Goldman & Grimbeek, 2014; Hawkins & McCallum, 2001; Liam, 2007; Mathews, 2011; Rheingold et al., 2015). Given the role of teachers in the lives of children, and the special characteristics of the interview conversation, we propose that teachers should also receive information and

training during pre-service or continuing education regarding appropriate questioning procedures, and the underlying empirical research. It may be possible to deliver this training in an online format. Rheingold, Zajac, and Patton (2012) compared web-based versus face-to-face training for a group of child-care professionals (including teachers) in child abuse prevention. On the whole, participants perceived both formats to be effective. Recently, Brubacher, Powell, Skouteris, and Guadagno (2015) demonstrated that just two to three interactions with an online simulated interview program greatly increased the proportion of open-ended questions used by teachers in a live interview.

3. Guidelines for interviews by teachers and other mandated reporting professionals

We begin by describing the phases of an interview in chronological order and the associated recommendations (see Appendix A for a summary). These guidelines are important for ensuring that the interview format and question types used are selected to maximize the likelihood that the child will disclose quality information about the event in question. While the greatest concerns surrounding inappropriate interviewing techniques pertain to the fragility of preschoolers' reports (Bruck & Ceci, 1999), elementary students, adolescents, and adults are also affected by poor questioning, as are interviewees with cognitive and/or communication impairments (Murfett, Powell, & Snow, 2008). Experts recommend using predominantly open-ended questions regardless of interviewee age or the topic of interviews (Snook, Luther, Quinlan, & Milne, 2012; Vrij, Hope, & Fisher, 2014). As such, guidelines concerning questioning techniques are appropriate for teachers and other professionals who work with verbal children at all educational levels, and who may not know where questions about ambiguous circumstances will lead.

In addition to interview phases, we discuss contextual factors such as the timing and location of the interview, and choice of interviewer (i.e., who among the staff should conduct it). These factors may not be under the interviewer's full control and have received less empirical attention, especially with respect to conducting interviews in schools. We also discuss the applicability of our proposed model and the practical challenges faced by school administrators with regard to implementation and training.

As we describe each phase, we provide examples through the use of excerpts from a fictional interview with nine-year-old Brayden. Brayden has been marked absent on the classroom morning attendance roll for four Wednesdays in a row. His parents have not provided a note explaining the absences, and Brayden insisted to Mr. Lopez, his classroom teacher, that he was at school on these days. The Student Welfare Coordinator, Ms. Smith, is interviewing Brayden regarding the absences.

3.1. Commencing the interview and building rapport

Many interviewing protocols include a phase in which interviewers spend a few minutes building rapport. Rapport is achieved when an interviewee feels comfortable, relaxed, and experiences a kind of connection with the interviewer (Collins, Lincoln, & Frank, 2002). Interviewer behaviors such as an open seating position (i.e., arms open instead of crossed), occasional eye contact, a warm tone of voice, using the interviewee's name, and providing encouraging feedback for effort (e.g., "I can see you're thinking hard") can promote rapport-building (e.g. Collins et al., 2002; Quas, Wallin, Papini, Lench, & Scullin, 2005). It is very important that feedback is provided *only* for effort and not for the content of what children say (Hershkovitz, 2011). Teachers should not convey urgency or impatience (e.g., by looking at the clock) during rapport building or at any point during the interview.

Rapport-building behaviors extend throughout the interview, but the rapport-building phase includes specific verbal techniques for enhancing children's ability and willingness to report narrative detail. Many forensic interview protocols include a Narrative Practice phase.

During this phase, interviewers use open-ended questions to encourage children to provide a narrative account of a subject *unrelated* to the interview topic (Roberts, Brubacher, Powell, & Price, 2011). As children are often unaccustomed to providing in-depth, elaborate information to adults without prompting or interruption, having the opportunity to provide a narrative regarding a neutral topic calibrates them to this style of interaction (Lamb et al., 2007; Powell & Snow, 2007a). It also allows interviewers to demonstrate their own listening skills, build trust and rapport, gain a sense of children's language skills and development, and ease them into an interaction where elaborate responses are encouraged. Research has demonstrated that conducting a practice phase increases the quantity and quality of information children report (Price, Roberts, & Collins, 2013; Roberts, Lamb, & Sternberg, 2004; Sternberg et al., 1997). In school settings, as compared to a forensic interview, a practice phase may be less important for its rapport-building function (as the child may already know and feel comfortable with the teacher), but may be equally or more important for its narrative training components, given that children are unused to this style of communication (Steele, 2012; Walker & Warren, 1995; Wilson & Powell, 2001).

Just a few minutes can be spent on the practice phase. Teachers can ask about an earlier class, or weekend activities. Any event discussed should be pleasant (or neutral) and should be a specific episode with a defined time frame, rather than general questions about what 'usually happens' (Brubacher, Roberts, & Powell, 2011). In the example interview with Brayden, the counselor begins with a brief narrative practice about what he had been doing in class.

Dialog	Strategy
Ms. Smith [S]: Welcome to my office Brayden, please take a seat. <i>Sits down and motions to seat.</i> Now if you haven't met me before, my name is Ms. Smith.	Teacher orients child to room and introduces herself.
Brayden [B]: Hullo. S: What class were you in just now?	Wh- question, used here to generate narrative practice topic.
B: Art. S: Tell me everything that you did in art class today before you came here.	Open-ended question to begin narrative practice.
B: Ah, we got some paints. Mr. Granger said some things about making shadows. I worked on my painting. S: What else happened?	Open-ended question to encourage more information.
B: I got my poster assignment back; I got a "good job" sticker. We worked on our pie graphs. S: Tell me more about working on your pie graph.	Open-ended question to elicit more information about something the child previously mentioned.
B: It's just a pie graph for Math but we get to paint it so they can go on the wall. S: Mmm-hmm.	Minimal encourager to encourage child to continue.
B: We had to do a survey and I did a survey of what pets everybody has. We had to make a table and work out what percent each pet was, then make the percent into a pie graph. I'm painting mine the colors of the different pets. S: Tell me more about that.	Open-ended question to encourage elaborate response.
B: We have five different pets in our class. Dogs, cats, birds, fish and, one boy, he has a snake. S: Mmm-hmm. <i>Nods</i>	Minimal encourager to encourage child to continue.
B: And then when it's finished the class will vote on the best one and the winner gets a surprise.	

3.2. Interview ground rules

Many investigative interview protocols for children include instructions that explain the communicative expectations of the interview because these are so different from everyday conversations (Poole & Lamb, 1998; Powell & Snow, 2007a). The most common ground rules include a statement about interviewer naiveté (i.e., that the interviewer was not there and does not know what has happened), and instructions not to guess, and to alert the interviewer when an error, or misunderstanding, has occurred. These instructions are intended to minimize children's suggestibility when questions contain inaccuracies or ambiguities (Brubacher, Poole, & Dickinson, 2015). Research suggests that using examples when delivering the rules can sometimes be helpful to 4 to 12-year-old children (Brubacher et al., 2015a, 2015b; Dickinson, Brubacher, & Poole, 2015). Children younger than 8, however, may not be able to apply rules about failing to understand, and correcting interviewer mistakes, during a subsequent conversation (Danby, Brubacher, Sharman, & Powell, 2015). In the interview with Brayden, the counselor gives examples of all of the common rules because he is likely to understand and benefit from practicing them. Depending on the child's age and purpose of the interview, the interviewer may decide to omit some rules or simply state them (e.g., "if I make any mistakes, please tell me") without examples. Typically developing adolescents may not require practicing answering example questions but it may still be beneficial to state the rules so that they feel empowered (Brubacher et al., 2015a, 2015b). Most protocols also include a request that a child promises to tell the truth, because promising has been shown to be much more effective in promoting truth-telling than asking children about definitions of truth (see Talwar & Crossman, 2012, for a review).

Dialog	Strategy
S: Sounds like a good way to learn about pie graphs. Brayden, I have a few things to tell you before we start. It's very important that everything we talk about is the truth. Do you promise to tell me the truth when we talk?	Eliciting a promise to tell truth.
B: Um, yes. S: Thank you Brayden. It's also very important not to guess anything. So if I ask you a question and you don't know the answer, you should tell me you don't know. If I asked you what's in my desk drawer here, what would you say?	The <i>don't know</i> ground rule with practice example.
B: Pens? Well, oh- I actually don't know. S: That's right, you don't know, so it's good you told me that. If I ever ask you a question and you don't understand what I mean, you can tell me that too. So, if I said to you, 'Brayden, what's your ocular hue?' what would you say?	The <i>don't understand</i> ground rule with practice example.
B: Um, I don't know. What's occ- occ-- S: Ocular hue means eye color. So if I ask a hard question or use a hard word, you just tell me you don't understand. Finally, I might make a mistake when I ask you something. So if I asked you to tell me more about the sculpture you were just working on in class, what would you say?	The <i>mistake</i> ground rule with practice example.
B: It was a painting, not a sculpture. S: Good, thank you. So if I ever make a mistake, you should correct me. And I could make mistakes because I don't know about many things that happen in your life.	A statement that the teacher is naïve about things that have happened.

Note that during this phase of the interview, Ms. Smith does more talking than Brayden. This phase is the only one where interviewers

lead the interview; in all other phases, Ms. Smith encourages elaborate narrative responses from Brayden.

No research has been conducted with teachers carrying out best-practice interviews, so the effects of the introductory phases on children's reports when delivered by people who are known to the child have not been empirically assessed. Given that children are accustomed to a very different kind of dialog with their teachers, however, it is likely that the practice phase and ground rules will be of particular benefit when teachers conduct interviews. Whiting (2013) found that a practice phase of just 2 min was more beneficial in improving the quality of children's reports about a lab event than no practice at all. Dickinson et al. (2015) found that interviewers could deliver, and children could practice, ground rules in around 2 min with time decreasing as children got older. In sum, less than 5 min can be spent preparing most children for the main interview topic.

3.3. Introducing the topic of concern

The next phase is introducing the interview topic in a manner that sets the child up to provide a narrative account, whilst minimizing the amount of information provided by the interviewer. For all professionals conducting non-forensic interviews with children (i.e., about non-abuse-related topics), there are two possible avenues for raising the topic of concern. If the topic of concern is not a matter of contention, the purpose of the interview should be clearly stated, paired with an invitation for the child to elaborate. For example, 10-year old Kia witnessed her friend have a serious anaphylactic reaction at lunchtime prompting an emergency call. The principal is now trying to find out what happened and tells Kia, "I called you to my office today to talk about what happened to your friend at lunchtime. Please tell me everything that happened at lunch time from the very beginning to the very end." There is no reason that the topic of conversation should be in dispute and it is highly unlikely to be abuse-related, so the topic was raised directly.

Occasionally, however, it may be prudent to elicit the topic of concern non-suggestively, as per the guidelines of investigative interviews. For example, the topic may be contentious if the child being interviewed is suspected of something (e.g., stealing from another child), or if the reason for the conversation was motivated by a secondary report (e.g., a child reported that her classmate is 'sad about what's going on at home').

If the topic of concern is a matter of contention, Powell (2003) recommends that the best way to commence is to ask what the child believes to be the reason for the interview, usually by asking, "Tell me what you have come here to talk to me about today." A slight modification of this question may sometimes be required (e.g., "Tell me what we're here to talk about today"). If the child is naïve or has misconceptions about the purpose of the interview, this is a good opportunity to clear up any misunderstandings (Powell, 2003). For example, if 7-year-old Olivia disclosed to a classmate information that might be indicative of sexual abuse during a recent family holiday and is now being interviewed by the Student Welfare Coordinator, Olivia may not have any idea about the purpose of the interview.

If the child does not know or is confused as to the reason for the interview, the teacher should use a series of open-ended, non-leading questions about related topics that may prompt a response (Lamb et al., 2007; Powell, 2003), especially in circumstances that could lead to a mandated report. In Olivia's example, the teacher will want to strongly avoid introducing information that Olivia herself has not disclosed to the teacher, so asking Olivia to talk about the holiday is an ideal place to start. In the conversation with Brayden, the purpose for the meeting is unambiguous; his recent absences, so Ms. Smith raises it directly.

Dialog	Strategy
S: So Brayden, Mr. Lopez gave me a copy of his attendance roll for the past month. I called you here today to talk about that.	The reason for the interview itself is not in contention, so the topic is directly introduced.
B: Oh.	
S: Tell me about the attendance roll.	Open-ended question.
B: Its-, well, it's what Mr. Lopez uses to say whether we're at school or not.	
S: Mmm-hmm.	Using minimal encourager to allow child to elaborate without introducing new information.
B: Looks down at his knees.	
S: To say whether you're at school or not. Tell me about that.	Using child's own terminology to request elaboration.
B: Um, I've missed some of Mr. Lopez' classes. So he's marked me being away.	

3.4. Eliciting a narrative account of the event or situation

Teachers should take care to keep questions open-ended and simple, avoid complex language, and multiple questions such as "What happened at lunch... what did you eat?" (Korkman, Santtila, Drzewiecki, & Sandnabba, 2008). Elaborate responses should be encouraged with prompts such as "Tell me as much as you can," and "Start at the beginning" (Lamb et al., 2007; Powell, 2003). It is helpful for teachers to pay close attention to the language used by the child, so that any future questions can be phrased using the child's own terminology to avoid confusion (Brubacher, Powell, & Roberts, 2014; Lamb, Hershkowitz, Orbach, & Esplin, 2011).

There are two types of open-ended questions that can be used to facilitate a narrative account. The first, referred to as *breadth* questions (also known as general invitations), are designed to expand the breadth of information interviewees provide. Gently-paced breadth questions such as "What else can you tell me?," "And then what happened?" and "What happened next?" encourage children to continue providing details, or progress into the next part of the narrative (Feltis, Powell, Snow, & Hughes-Scholes, 2010; Lamb et al., 2003).

Depth questions (or cued invitations) direct attention to specific aspects of the narrative and encourage interviewees to provide further elaboration. They invite depth of information about something the interviewee has previously mentioned (e.g., "Tell me more about the part where...[previously-mentioned aspect of the event]"; Feltis et al., 2010; Lamb et al., 2003). They are typically introduced once a child has finished providing a broad overall account of what happened, because directing their attention to specific details too early can disrupt the narrative flow and interfere with memory and concentration. Care must be taken to only use information already provided by the child when asking depth questions, and the child's own terminology should be used where possible.

Teachers can keep the narrative flowing by encouraging the child to keep talking and to expand on important points. Neutral, non-coercive techniques that teachers can employ to indicate that they are listening include the use of head-nodding and minimal encouragers, such as "Mm-hmm," and "Uh-huh," (Hershkowitz, 2002; Powell & Snow, 2007a), and maintaining an attentive demeanor. It is common for children and/or reluctant interviewees to provide a nominal amount of information in response to an initial open-ended question, and then to state "and that's all" (Powell & Snow, 2007b). Teachers should assume that that is "not all" and should gently overlook this statement, persisting instead with open-ended questions about other aspects of the event that the child may be able to describe.

Dialog	Strategy
S: Tell me about Mr. Lopez having marked you away. B: I haven't been away. I've been at school. But Mr. Lopez thinks I haven't come on Wednesdays. S: Mmm-hmm. B: That's all. S: You said Mr. Lopez thinks you haven't come on Wednesdays, tell me about that.	Using child's terminology to prompt narrative response.
B: I have come on Wednesdays. That's when I have music class in the afternoon and I'm learning to play the recorder. This week I played Three Blind Mice, the whole song.	Minimal encourager.
	Overlooked child's statement "that's all" and persisted with a different open-ended question using child's terminology.

When asking questions, it is necessary to allow children adequate time to respond and recount all the information that they can before moving on to the next question (Wilson & Powell, 2001). Children should be allowed the flexibility to report the details that were salient to them, enhancing the likelihood that these details are accurate (Lyon, 2014; Powell & Snow, 2007a).

As the interview progresses, if the child's responses do not seem to yield any relevant information, it may be necessary for the teacher to change the questions and approach the topic from a different angle. Care must be taken when introducing new information. In circumstances that are highly unlikely to require a report to legal authorities, new information can be queried but the interviewing teacher should still check that it is accurate (Powell & Snow, 2007b). For example, when interviewed about the lunchtime allergic reaction, Kia may not realize that the almond candy that was shared can lead to anaphylactic shock and she may omit them from her narrative because she has not considered their importance. If Kia recounted the details of lunchtime, but limited her narrative to the outdoor recess, the interviewing teacher might ask, "And your teacher told me that your class all eats lunch in the classroom before going outside. Did you all eat together in the classroom today?" If Kia responds with an affirmative, the teacher could ask her to report everything that happened in the classroom while the children were eating.

It is important not to pressure children to guess about information they have indicated not knowing. Returning to Olivia's case, if questions regarding her holiday activities did not elicit responses indicative of abuse or unusual events, the teacher may choose to ask her about the people she encountered on the holiday instead, or about things that happened on holiday that she did or did not like. In situations like Olivia's that may require contacting authorities, if broad questions do not elicit a disclosure then teachers should *not* continue to ask questions. At this point, the teacher will have to decide whether or not to file a report, as it is not the responsibility of mandated reporters to investigate abuse (Beck et al., 1994; Hawkins & McCallum, 2001).

Dialog	Strategy
S: What else happens on Wednesdays? B: My mum drops me at school, then I usually first have Phys Ed because that's home room, and then recess, Maths, lunch, music, recess, English, and then I go to the school After Care program. S: Mmm-hmm. B: That's all that happens on Wednesdays. S: You said you have Phys Ed first on Wednesdays. Did you have Phys Ed this Wednesday? B: We-, our class had it. I didn't actually go to Phys Ed this Wednesday.	Trying a different tactic when question did not yield an informative response.
	Minimal encourager.
	Confirming whether prior information is correct to avoid asking a leading question (i.e., "tell me about Phys Ed this Wednesday").

Throughout the interview, the teacher should listen attentively, demonstrate a non-judgmental manner conducive to open disclosure, and avoid revealing personal feelings or opinions, in order to avoid influencing the child's future responses (Lamb et al., 2007; Powell & Snow, 2007a). The use of neutral language during this stage of the interview is critical, as some wording is laden with implicit meaning and implications. For example, "Tell me what happened when somebody smashed the window," is less appropriate than the more neutral "Tell me what happened when the window was broken," as it uses less emphatic language (broken instead of smashed) and does not imply responsibility or culpability (see Ceci, Kulkofsky, Klemfuss, Sweeney, & Bruck, 2007, for discussion). As the child discloses further information, particularly regarding people, places and objects, it is best for interviewers to use the names of these people, places, and objects rather than potentially confusing pronouns such as "he", "she", or "it", particularly if the child's narrative contains several of these elements (Battin, Ceci, & Lust, 2012; Walker & Warren, 1995).

Interviewers must avoid coercive techniques such as peer pressure ("Jason and Celeste have already told me what happened,"), bribery ("You can go back to making masks with the class if you tell me who gave Grayson the peanuts,"), threats ("If you don't tell me what happened I'll have to contact your parents,") and disputing the child's response ("Are you sure someone didn't give Grayson peanuts?") (see for reviews, Bruck & Ceci, 1999; Bull, 2010; Lamb et al., 2015).

Dialog	Strategy
S: You said you didn't actually go to Phys Ed this Wednesday. Tell me what you did instead. B: I don't remember. S: You said your mum dropped you at school. Then what happened?	Remaining neutral and asking open-ended follow-up question.
	Resisting the use of coercive techniques. Instead, approaching the event from a different angle.

During interviews where sensitive information is being discussed, a teacher may feel compelled to offer reassurance, particularly if the child appears fearful or hesitant. However, it is important that interviewers maintain their neutral, non-judgmental approach (Bull, 2010). Reassurance should not be based on assumptions about how the child is feeling, as the child may not necessarily be feeling this way, or may not have even considered that they "should" be feeling this way, and the assumption could then lead to distress or confusion (Powell & Snow, 2007b).

Children may request that their disclosure remain confidential. Depending on the circumstances, however, the teacher cannot make promises of confidentiality. Teachers are mandated by law to report certain events such as suspected child abuse or neglect in a number of countries including, but not limited to, Brazil (Bazon & Faleiros, 2013), Taiwan (Feng, Chen, Wilk, Yang, & Fetzer, 2009), Australia, Canada, and the United States (Mathews & Liam, 2008). A method that the teacher may use to reassure the child is to restate their purely investigative (non-disciplinary) role if necessary ("It's my job to find out exactly what happened"), and to emphasize their neutral, unbiased standing on the matter being discussed ("I wasn't there on your holiday and I don't know what happened").

Dialog	Strategy
B: I went-, I went to the school play rehearsal. S: Tell me about the school play rehearsal. B: I didn't get a part but I'm going to be in the zombie army anyway. I've got the jacket and face paint. We do marching and practice the chant at rehearsal and get to eat biscuits. And I'	Open-ended question.

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Dialog	Strategy
m helping to paint all of the sets during After Care.	
S: Mmm-hmm	Minimal encourager.
B: Ms. Kay said I was the best at the marching and leading the chant.	
S: Mmm-hmm	Minimal encourager.
B: But it's on Wednesday mornings and I have to miss Phys Ed. Please don't tell Mr. Lopez.	
S: I can't promise that Brayden because it's for your safety that Mr. Lopez knows where you are. Why don't you want Mr. Lopez to know?	Reassuring without promising confidentiality. Asking a more specific question but still encouraging narrative.
B: He wants me to try out for the soccer team that he coaches after school, when after care's on. He thinks I'm a good player. But I don't really want to be on the soccer team. I want to paint the sets. But I don't want him to be um... disappointed.	

3.5. Supplementary (more directed) questioning about the initial account

In non-criminal situations, teachers may conclude the interview by asking non-leading, non-coercive, specific questions regarding the information that has been provided if some critical details are missing. We use the term 'specific' to refer to any question-types that specify what information should be provided. These include direct (wh-) questions (who, what, where, etc.), yes/no questions, and other forced-choice questions (e.g., before or after lunch?). With regard to direct questions, the ability to accurately answer "who," "what," and "where" develops earlier than the ability to answer "why," "how," and "when" (Bloom, Merkin, & Wootten, 1982). Abstract questions involving the word "why" require children to examine their own (or others') motivation and reasoning, rather than simply recounting events in sequence (Walker, 1999). The term "how" is among the last of the wh-words to be acquired (Tyack & Ingram, 1977), and "when" questions are especially problematic. As teachers well know, children's grasp of temporal concepts develops late (see Friedman, 2013, for a review). On that note, teachers are in the best position to be familiar with developmentally appropriate vocabulary for their interviewees. We do not extensively discuss child development as it relates to investigative interviewing in this paper, but readers can consult Lamb et al. (2015) for a thorough review.

The use of specific questions is a secondary step only, and must be left until it is clear that the child has finished providing a narrative. Switching from an interviewee-focused to an interviewer-focused approach may disrupt the child's memory processing, and they may no longer feel comfortable doing most of the talking. Teachers should avoid making assumptions when asking supplementary closed or short-answer questions, such as, "Did someone hurt you on your holiday?" in Olivia's case. In fact, in cases that are likely to require a report to authorities, we suggest that teachers refrain from asking closed (yes-no or other multiple choice) questions as much as possible.

Dialog	Strategy
S: Brayden, it's important for you to do the things you like best. Would you like me to talk to Mr. Lopez with you?	
B: Uh-huh. Nods	
S: Okay. We'll see Mr. Lopez at the end of the day today. Brayden, which teacher is leading the school play rehearsal?	A specific question used here so that the dates of the rehearsals can be confirmed and matched up with Brayden's absences. Avoids asking child for temporal and frequency information.
B: Ms. Kay. You can ask her where I've been.	

(continued)

Dialog	Strategy
S: Thank you. I'll take you back to class now. Thank you for talking to me today.	Thanking child and ensuring he returns to class.

4. Interview context

If the interview is not focused on a specific event or a critical incident, but instead on something more general (e.g., why the child has recently been frequently absent, as in Brayden's example, or why the child has started to visit the nurse's office during every Science class), then it will be possible to control the timing and setting of the interview, but that may not always be the case in a school setting. As such, we provide some general guidance about the ideal interview context.

4.1. Timing and setting

From a memory perspective, it is always advantageous to interview someone as soon as possible after an event has taken place, because memory becomes weaker as time passes (e.g., Schacter, 2002). Additionally, conducting an interview soon after an event minimizes the potential of memory contamination from other sources (Roberts, 2002), including discussions about the event with classmates (Principe & Schindewolf, 2012).

Interviews should ideally be conducted at a time of day when the child does not feel tired or hungry (this may differ from child to child or day to day). The interview setting should be one that minimizes the power differential between the child and the teacher (Russell & Dip, 2004). For example, a classroom that already includes child-sized furniture for both teacher and child may make the child feel more comfortable than being interviewed in the principal's office. At the same time, it is important to choose a private location. There is surprisingly little additional guidance regarding the interview setting, but it is generally agreed that it should be relatively distraction free (Saywitz & Camparo, 2013; Steele, 2012).

4.2. Interviewer characteristics

If there is the opportunity to plan, some selection of the interviewer may take place. We advise considering the relationship between the proposed interviewing teacher and the child, the role of the teacher within the school, and individual factors particular to the chosen teacher. Because the empirical literature has focused on investigative interviews conducted by police and child protection workers (who are typically not known to the child), the recommendations here require future research.

It is practical to select a teacher who does not have a strong positive or negative relationship with the child. When sensitive information is shared, the discloser may be concerned about the reactions, judgments, and beliefs of the disclosure recipient (Farber, 2006; Malloy, Brubacher, & Lamb, 2013). If the recipient is someone the child dislikes, distrusts, or expects to be non-supportive, he or she may not feel comfortable disclosing sensitive information (Elliott & Briere, 1994; Malloy et al.; McElvaney, 2015). If the teacher's role within the school is one of responsibility for enacting punishment for misbehavior, the child may feel anxious even if the topic of the interview is not a discipline issue. In the case of children with identified language impairments and/or other neurodevelopmental disorders, it may be more appropriate, if possible, for the interview to be conducted by a speech-language pathologist who is familiar with the child and has been trained in best-practice questioning.

Finally, individual factors may be considered when selecting the teacher, such as the person's listening ability, their understanding of how to pace questions, and experience interacting with children of the

same developmental level as the interviewee (Wilson & Powell, 2001). On the whole, research has demonstrated that supportive interviewer behaviors (e.g., occasional eye contact, warm tone, open posture) confer benefits on children's accounts by reducing arousal, and increasing accuracy and/or amount of information reported (e.g. Quas & Lench, 2007; Quas et al., 2005). Some research has found effects of child and interviewer gender on quality of information reported, but these effects tend to be minimized when interviewers followed best-practice guidelines (Lamb & Garretson, 2003). In summary, when interviewers are supportive, have received adequate training, and have guidelines to follow, individual differences in both interviewer and interviewee are minimized (Lamb et al., 2015).

5. Practical challenges to implementation

At present, the guidelines reviewed here are likely to fulfill two primary purposes: to transfer knowledge across disciplines, demonstrating how forensic interviewing research (and practice) can inform dialog in non-forensic settings; and to initiate discussion among education personnel about current their questioning practices and procedures. Implementing these recommendations would require a multi-pronged approach. School administrators would make decisions about resources allocated to training staff. At the coalface, all teachers (indeed, all professionals working with children) should learn through pre-service or continuing education to adopt simple, effective, non-leading questioning habits for daily use. More elaborate interviews (to elicit information about critical topics like misconduct) might be conducted by just one or two specialized personnel per institution who receive extended training. In these cases, the recording of interviews is a consideration for research and administrative policy. Recording the interview is accepted best practice because it permits examination of the questioning procedure (Smith & Milne, 2011), and is helpful for one's own self- or peer-review (e.g., Stolzenberg & Lyon, in press). This suggestion may be challenging in practice due to issues around storage and privacy, and would require creation of independent guidelines around the recording process beyond the scope of this article.

Just as in the arena of forensic interviewing, practical application of the guidelines presented here would not be seamless. For example, some schools may not have the physical resources to provide a distraction-free interview setting, and it may often be the case that the timing of the interview is not under control. Schools may encounter challenges related to privacy as a result of the recommendation to record interviews. As a result, implementation of interview training into a real-world school setting should be accompanied by evidence-based evaluation of interviewer behavior, organizational constraints, and overall outcomes in a pre-post test design.

6. Knowing your boundaries

Although we have provided a basic guide for teachers who question children, it is important to keep in mind that should a report to authorities need to be filed, the fewer questions children have been asked about their experience, the better. While repeated interviews are not inherently problematic (La Rooy, Katz, Malloy, & Lamb, 2010), they do increase the potential risk of contamination or memory confusions if they contain misinformation (e.g. Roberts, 2002; Warren & Peterson, 2014). Thus, while teachers can be equipped with the best tools, these should not be overused. All personnel must balance information-seeking needs with the risks of inadvertently contaminating the child's account (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010). If a child makes a clear disclosure of abuse (e.g., "My step-brother raped me," "Dad hits me when he drinks too much"), authorities should be contacted and interviews by school personnel should not be conducted (e.g., Hawkins & McCallum, 2001). It is not the responsibility of school personnel to investigate the veracity of such allegations.

7. Conclusion

Given the growing legal liability of schools with respect to providing safe environments, this area will benefit from focused research on ways of maximizing interview success. We have outlined the importance of interview guidelines and the need for training for school staff to use these in situations where they may need to conduct an interview about a serious incident or concern. Children spend a significant portion of their days in school and consequently, teachers are in a particularly ideal position to identify problems children may be facing (at school or otherwise). Teachers have indicated a need for more information about how to respond to children's abuse disclosures (Goldman & Grimbeek, 2014), and have reported uncertainty about making reports to authorities in ambiguous circumstances (Hawkins & McCallum, 2001; Schols et al., 2013). Notwithstanding situations requiring mandated reports, there is ample reason for teachers to develop effective questioning strategies about a variety of events in children's lives.

Regardless of interview topic or child age, we suggest that interviews conducted by teachers follow the same general guidelines as those proposed by experts in forensic interviewing (Lamb et al., 2007; Lyon, 2014; Powell & Snow, 2007a; Saywitz & Camparo, 2013; Yuille et al., 2009). Interviews should commence with rapport building, a brief practice phase, and coverage of ground rules, before children are asked if they know the purpose of the interview (or before the purpose is raised, if it is not in contention). Throughout the interview, we recommend that teachers use open-ended questions and minimal encouragers to maintain the child's narrative response. When possible, we recommend that interviews be conducted in a private, distraction-free environment, by someone who has experience interacting with children of the interviewee's developmental level. These guidelines should be considered a first step in providing information to teachers regarding the appropriateness of best-practice forensic interview guidelines in educational settings. We suggest that such knowledge should be bolstered by including content on effective questioning in the pre-service and continuing education of teachers and other school staff.

Appendix A

Summary of the steps to consider when planning and conducting an interview with a child in the school environment.

Phase/component	Summary guidelines
Selecting the interview setting and most appropriate interviewer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If planning is possible, the interviewer and interview setting should be chosen to optimize the child's ability to freely share information. The ideal setting would be comfortable, private, neutral, and free from distractions. The ideal interviewer would be someone who is experienced interacting with children of the interviewee's developmental level, and who has knowledge of best-practice interviewing guidelines. It is best to select an interviewer who does not have a negative relationship with the child, and is not a figure of high authority within the school, in order to minimize the child's anxiety and possible reluctance to disclose.
Commencing the interview and building rapport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The interview should commence with an introduction, narrative practice phase, and explanation of ground rules. The narrative practice phase prepares the child to do most of the talking and provide a narrative account.
Introducing the topic of concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When introducing the topic, the interviewer can begin by asking the child what (s)he is there to talk about.

(continued on next page)

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Phase/component	Summary guidelines
Eliciting a narrative account of the event or situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the topic is not a matter of contention, it can be raised directly. • If the child does not know the reason for the interview, the interviewer can prompt the child by asking open-ended, non-leading questions about related topics or events. • Simple, clear, neutral language that mirrors the child's own should be used. • Interviewers should avoid introducing information that may contaminate the child's account. • If the introduction of information is necessary, the interviewer must check that it is accurate before proceeding. • Once the child's narrative account is underway, the interviewer should remain attentive and encourage the child to continue by using minimal encouragers such as head nodding and "Mm-hmm." • The interviewer must resist interrupting the child, but can establish breadth and depth of information by asking further open-ended questions. • The interviewer should be as unbiased as possible, and avoid displaying personal opinions or emotional reactions, or making assumptions about how the child is feeling. • Questions should be phrased with an emphasis on detail, and coercive techniques such as threats must be avoided.
Supplementary (more directed) questioning about the initial account	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once as much information as possible has been gleaned, the interviewer may choose to ask specific (direct, yes-no, multiple choice) questions regarding the child's narrative account, but only at the end of the interview once the child has disclosed as much as possible in narrative format, and if the incident is not likely to require a mandated report.
Concluding the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the conclusion of the interview, the teacher can summarize and clarify the information provided by the child, thank them for their time, and see that they return to class safely. • If immediate action is necessary, the teacher can then refer the matter to the appropriate authority.

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