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ABSTRACT

Classroom teachers' engagement in dialogue with their students develops important skills and attitudes. Drawing from a series of inservice teacher education workshops, this paper addresses the following concerns with respect to acquiring and strengthening questioning techniques: (1) "Should all children be asked a variety of question types, or should one try to match the 'levels' with their abilities?" "What are good examples of methods utilizing higher order questioning techniques?" (3) "How often should higher-level thinking questions be asked in a classroom?" (4) "How does one record information and collect data regarding questioning?" (5) "How can a teacher become a good questioner?" (6) "How can questioning be most effective without making the student feel self-conscious about giving wrong answers?" (7) "What should a teacher do after asking 'Are there any questions?' and students do not respond, or when trying to respond to every child who has a hand up?" and (8) "How can teachers get their student teachers to ask more meaningful and critical types of questions?" Based on a review of the literature and on an examination of the available research, the report provides eight questioning strategies. (LL)

EIGHT QUESTIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED ABOUT QUESTIONING

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After conducting workshops on questioning for classroom teachers, it became apparent what types of questions are frequently asked by this population of educators. Teachers are the perpetrators who engage in dialogue with their students in the development of important skills and attitudes. Addressing questions raised during these workshops is the intent and purpose of this paper, which will help other teachers acquire stronger questioning techniques.

1. Should all children be asked a variety of question types, or should we try to match the "levels" with their abilities?

According to Woolfold McCune-Nicolich (1984), teachers should ask questions based on the lesson's objective, student's age, ability, and socioeconomic background while encompassing different types of questions. Ward and Tikunoff (1976) suggest a mixture of higher and lower-level questions which keep the lesson's objectives and the needs of the student as priorities. These researchers recommend this approach for classes of mixed abilities. For students with behavioral or learning

problems, Greenfield (1984) suggests that the teacher adapt techniques for each learner and either decrease or increase the questioning process to accommodate the task being undertaken with the success rate of the learner.

2. What are some good examples of methods utilizing higher-order questioning techniques?

After reviewing the literature, William, et al. (1991) expounds on five techniques that are effective in employing higher-order questioning skills. These are (1) wait-time, which allows students a few seconds to think before responding to the question, (2) open-ended questions, which assist the students in developing intellectual inquiry skills, (3) involving all students, so that a collaborative vision emerges with the teacher making a deliberate attempt to include everyone, (4) student conversations so that students can share their opinions and (5) having students elaborate. Further, educators suggest teachers ask such questions as "What if... How would... Why...?" to promote deeper thinking (Ramsey, et al., 1990, p. 421; Swicegood and Parsons, 1989, p. 4).

3. How often should higher-level thinking questions be asked in a classroom?

Ramsey, et al. (1990) points out that teachers are not asking enough higher-order levels of questions. Their work indicates that the highest percentage of teachers continue to use lower level cognitive skills and, in essence, continue to "require only recitation of memorized material..." (p. 420).

Teachers should use higher-level questions daily and within each lesson they teach. They can begin by reviewing and becoming familiar with the taxonomy, deliberately taking the time to plant several higher-order questions and refraining from answering their own questions.

4. How do you record information/collect data in regards to questioning?

Teachers can use three methods to clinically gather data for analysis of questioning techniques. These are video, audio, and script (Hopkins and Moore, 1993). The most effective way of doing this is either by audio cassette or video recorder, if doing a self-analysis. Record a segment of one of your lessons, script the questions asked, and analyze by calculating whether questions were convergent (one correct answer only) or divergent (many correct answers) in discussing the content. Having a peer do scripting (which is recording verbatim how the teacher asked the question, the student's response and then the teacher's response to the student) also

gives a clearer perspective of skills in questioning. One researcher, Hamblen (1988, p. 199), states "Teachers need to spend time coding and analyzing their own questions, student answers, and student questions" to become effective questioners.

5. How can a teacher become a good questioner?

Classroom teachers can acquire the skillful art of questioning by following several procedures. First, they must have a knowledge base of the questioning techniques. This knowledge may or may not have been acquired in their undergraduate programs. They must take the time to become familiar with the key phrases or terms in the taxonomy. To begin, teachers select six terms or questions as "pet questions" and practice using them in the classrooms. The terms and phrases increase as the teacher becomes familiar with them. Second, teachers must initiate the time for using higher-order questioning within their classes. If they use the motivational aspect of trying to create thinkers instead of parrots (who repeat back the same information), they will succeed in not spoon-feeding their students.

After asking questions teachers many times do not know what to do with the silence which follows. They must learn to facilitate and accommodate creative, thoughtful silence by asking challenging questions,

while recognizing that they are creating more reflective thinkers. Third, they must utilize their own style of teaching creatively, incorporating the procedures outlined in steps one and two above, through intensive planning and practice followed by the self-analysis strategies as suggested in Question #4. Only in this way can teachers become more effective questioners.

6. How can questioning be most effective without making the student feel self-conscious about giving wrong answers?

The first step in this process is establishing trust in the classroom. Even when trust has been established, students sometimes are embarrassed when they give an incorrect answer. Explore students' responses, because many times after listening to their rationale or experiences, students' perceptions may lead them to a more defined answer. Through the exploration process into their thinking, further clarification, as reflected in the answer, may emerge. The key is to give encouragement to the students for their contributions as a means of opening other avenues of inquiry.

7. What should a teacher do after asking "Are there any questions?" and students do not respond; or when faced with

the scenario of trying to respond to every child who has a hand up?

The first answer to the initial question is to use care when opting for this question. Students many times do not want to prolong the discussion if they are not interested in the topic. Create a classroom climate where students will generate many of their own questions as the lesson progresses. Allow time for students to think of a question. This format can vary by having students turn to a neighbor and asking that student a question. The neighbor may then ask the teacher. Another technique is to have students write out a question (individually or in groups) on the higher-order thinking level. These questions can then be used as a review or incorporated into a test. Teaching students the taxonomy with its six different levels, along with key terms, facilitates the development of student-generated questions.

The second part of this question is answered by Ainley (1986, p. 24) who ascertains that calling on students who already know the answer is an unusual classroom activity. He contends that when this happens, both the students and the teachers are not seeking "information", but they are playing the "school game" to determine "whether or not the students know the answers." Lindquest (1988) reminds teachers that there are four types

of questions to use for assessing the students' knowledge base. Besides the (1) oral questions, teachers should use (2) silent questions, (3) student-generated questions, and (4) written questions to develop sharper questioning skills in the classroom.

8. How can teachers get their student teachers to ask more meaningful and critical types of questions?

First, it is imperative that this behavior is modeled and pointed out to student teachers. Have the novice become cognizant of what to observe. Second, have the student teacher become familiar with key verbs used in "Bloom's Taxonomy" or "Guilford's Structure of the Intellect." It is not asking too much to have student teachers write lesson plans with anticipated questions using the key terms while incorporating the different levels of questioning. In this manner, novice teachers must plan, think creatively, and get practice in this skill area. Finally, student teachers can be requested to make a video tape that includes an analysis of appropriate questioning while identifying strengths and areas that need improvement.

Teachers continue to be the catalysts who engage students in enthusiastic learning, and these eight questioning strategies can assist in the enhancement of that learning. Furthermore, stronger pedagogical practices emerge, making for successful and effective teaching.

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