



LEARNING POINT

What are Teacher Questioning Strategies?

Formative assessment involves a continuous process in which teachers and students collect and use evidence of student understanding to move learning forward. Teachers intentionally craft evidence-gathering strategies that are designed to gather information about what the students

Teacher questioning strategies defined

Teacher questioning strategies can be defined as the intentional use of a range of low to high cognitive demand questions. The teacher needs a repertoire of questioning strategies. These strategies include low-level cogni-

ing, provide their reasoning, and/or make connections to other students' ideas. This intentional use of questions helps the teacher to understand where the students are in relation to the learning target to support next steps in their learning.

Applications to practice

Effective questioning strategies facilitate connections to prior knowledge, support a classroom culture that values learning and risk-taking, and promote cognitive development. The next section describes elements of effective questioning strategies that educators can use to elicit evidence of student understanding.

Essential elements of teacher questioning strategies

- **Intentionally plan questions in advance.** Intentionally plan questions prior to the lesson that will elicit and explore student thinking. This may include a list of questions to prompt student thinking at specific points in the lesson or scaffolding questions of increasing cognitive demand to engage students' thinking as they deepen their understanding. Questioning can be used to help students access their prior knowledge as well as to deepen their understandings later in the lesson.

“The shorter the time interval between eliciting the evidence and using it to improve instruction, the bigger the likely impact on learning.”

DYLAN WILIAM

know and can do in relation to the learning targets and success criteria. Questioning is a powerful tool for teachers to elicit and engage student thinking. In addition to other ways to elicit evidence such as observation, classroom talk, and student work, the teacher can employ different questioning strategies to elicit evidence of students' understanding while they are learning.

tive demand questions (to clarify, gather information, or activate prior knowledge) and high-level cognitive demand questions that require students to use information or ideas that they have learned to solve a problem, provide an explanation, or reveal their thinking while working through a problem or idea. The use of a repertoire of such questions also encourages students to reflect on their own think-

- **Engage in dialogue or “assessment conversations.”** Reflect on ways to ask questions and ways to follow up on questions that prompt student thinking, acknowledge individual contributions to learning, and promote classroom dialogue. Questioning strategies often involve a format in which the teacher asks a question, the student responds, and then the teacher evaluates the answer. In higher cognitive demand questioning strategies and assessment conversations, the teacher asks a question, the student responds, and then the teacher may ask for more information in a number of different ways from that student or other students to explore student thinking and promote further learning. For example, the teacher may ask follow-up questions that invite students to:

- clarify their meaning or ideas;
- consider the situation from another perspective;
- reflect on their own metacognitive processes;
- explain their reasoning, thinking, and problem-solving process;
- make connections to previous learning and others’ responses; or
- provide evidence to support their thinking.

- **Use research-based practices for effective questioning.**

- Apply pre-thinking strategies, such as think/pair/share, pre-

TO LEARN MORE

Embedding Formative Assessment: Practical Techniques for K-12 Classrooms

Dylan William, (Solution Tree, 2011).

Formative assessment: What do teachers need to know and do?

Margaret Heritage, Phi Delta Kappan, 89(2), 140-146.

easlinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/Heritage_formative_assessment.pdf

Quality questioning: research-based practice to engage every learner

by Jackie Walsh and Beth Sattes. (Corwin, 2nd Edition, 2017).

Questioning for classroom discussion: Purposeful thinking, engaged listening, deep thinking

by Jackie Walsh and Beth Sattes. (ASCD, 2015).

What do we mean by formative assessment?

ALN Learning Point (Michigan Assessment Consortium, 2016).

tinyurl.com/LP-FormativeAssessment

writing, and brainstorming for cognitively complex questions.

- Allow 3-5 seconds of wait-time after asking a question for students to process and engage with the question.
- Use question stems that involve increasing depth of knowledge (Marzano & Simms, 2012).
- Engage students in the cognitive activity of questioning. Teach students about different types of questions as well as different approaches to write and respond to higher-order thinking questions.
- Focus on students’ ideas rather than having a “right” answer (e.g., Otero, 2006).

Summary

Having a range of different types of questions, including high and low cognitive demand questions, is useful to support teaching and learning at different times. Teacher questioning strategies emphasize the intentional use of these different types of questions to elicit student thinking and promote learning. Questioning and dialogue in the classroom are critical opportunities to explore student thinking and promote an inclusive classroom culture.

References

- LearnEd (2018). 4 Common Types of Tests Teachers Give (And Why). News About Learning.
- Marzano, R. J., & Simms, J. A. (2012). Questioning sequences in the classroom. SolutionTree Press.
- Otero, V. (2006). Moving beyond the “Get it or don’t” conception of formative assessment. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 57(3), 247–255.
- William, D. (2011). *Embedding Formative Assessment: Practical Techniques for K-12 Classrooms*.

“What we are really trying to do as educators is learn – learn what students know so we can celebrate that while also learning where they need extra support.”

LearnED

The Michigan Assessment Consortium’s Assessment Learning Network (ALN) is a professional learning community consisting of members from MI’s professional education organizations; the goal of the ALN is to increase the assessment literacy of all of Michigan’s professional educators.