

AFL - Questioning

How do questions promote learning?

- Good questions stimulate thinking, and often generate more questions to clarify understanding.
- Good questions generate informative responses often revealing not only misconceptions and misunderstanding, but understanding and experience beyond that expected.
- Good questions encourage learners to make links.
- Good questions push learners to the limit of their understanding.
- Good questions from students push teachers to the limits of their understanding too, and challenge them to find better ways of explaining.
- Good questions offer opportunities for learners to hear others' answers to questions, it helps them to reflect on their own understanding.

Questioning can fail because:

- Questioning techniques are inappropriate for the material.
- There may be an unconscious gender bias.
- There may be an unconscious bias towards most able or more demanding students.
- Levels of questions might be targeted to different abilities inappropriately.
- Students don't have enough thinking time.
- Learners don't have any idea as to whether they are the only ones to get it wrong/right.
- Learners fear being seen by their peers to be wrong.
- Questions are too difficult.
- Questions are too easy.

Questioning succeeds when:

- All learners get a chance to answer.
- Learners can see how others are thinking.
- Teachers gain information about thinking and learning.
- Learners have time to consider their answers.
- Learners have time to discuss and follow up on their answers.
- The answers are not always clear-cut.
- Learners feel safe to answer.
- Questions stimulate more questions.
- Questions stimulate thinking.

How is your questioning?

- Do you ever audit your questions?
- How good are the key questions you plan for each lesson?
- How well do the questions you ask relate to the learning objectives?
- Do the questions you ask challenge thinking?
- How often do you ask further questions that really probe understanding?
- How many questions do you ask to which you don't know the answer?
- How often do the learners ask the questions?
- How often do you ask the learners to generate probing questions?
- How do the questions you ask **promote learning**?

Pose, Pause, Bounce and Pounce!

How does it work?

I have listed the four-part approach below with additional information that I hope explains the method.

1. POSE

- Give the context of your approach to the class.
- Insist on hands down before the question is delivered.
- Provide a question or a series of questions, ensuring that you ask the students to remain reflective.

2. PAUSE...

This is the hard part.

- Ask the class to hold the thought; ... think; ... think again...
- If students are captivated and engaged, try holding the silence for a little while longer and...
- Push the boundaries. Keep the reflection for as long as possible.

3. BOUNCE(!)

- Insist the answer to the question comes from student A and possibly student B, directly and fast!
- Of course plan in your mind who you are going to ask, before speaking to the class.
- Name student A to respond
- Possibly don't speak and nip any comments, grunts or noises in the bud! Its magic when you can hear, see and feel a captivated learning audience. We've all seen it.
- Wait for an answer... pause... decipher the support needed if no response is evidently on its way. (Of course, at this stage, you can instigate various strategies for peers to support the questionable student A).
- If student A does manage to answer

4. POUNCE!

- Ask another student B (immediately) after the BOUNCE response, their opinion of student A's answer.
- This can be developed by asking student B and C their opinions to student A's response, irrespective if the answer is correct or not.
- An additional strategy is to bounce the question to a group A...and subsequently, a sub-group B if group A do not deliver a suitable way forward.

- This ensures the teacher is engaging a significant number of students with the question at hand, whilst using this strategy, it also ensures the entire class can be called upon at any given time by just returning to phase 1 or phase 3.
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'Hinge" questions.

- A hinge question is based on the important concept in a lesson that is critical for students to understand before you move on in the lesson.
- The question should fall about midway during the lesson.
- Every student must respond to the question within two minutes.
- You must be able to collect and interpret the responses from all students in 30 seconds

Dilemmas and discussion

Asking questions which stimulate discussion are a great way to promote learning. They lead students to express their thinking, reveal their understanding and to reflect and compare their thinking with others.

They also enable learning and progress to be demonstrated explicitly, as shown in this comment from a recent inspection report.

Lower order questions

Remembering, Understanding

Higher order questions – (These are the kind that will promote learning!)

Applying, Analysing, Evaluating, Creating