

EFFECTIVE QUESTIONS

Effective questions are the key to teaching for understanding. Students cannot be given understanding by the teacher, rather students develop understanding by comparing their previous experiences with what they currently know, feel, and are experiencing. So, fostering engagement through questions is essential in developing student understanding.

Effective questions produce thinking. Learning is the result of thinking. Therefore, questions are one of the most important tools used in teaching and learning.



All information was excerpted from the Well Developed Classroom Blog on ARIS Connect. For more information about effective questions, visit <https://www.arisnyc.org/connect/node/1168271>.

Ideas taken from: 1. Morgan, N. & Saxton, J. (1991). Teaching Questioning and Learning. New York: Routledge. 2. Richhart, R. http://ronritchart.com/Presentations_files/FIU_VT_Language%20%26%20Questioning.pdf

Characteristics of an Effective Question:

Engages our feelings as well as our thoughts

Challenges existing thinking and encourages reflection

Results in an answer that creates change – either in the listener or in the next events

Expresses genuine curiosity; behind every question there must be an intention to find out

Is a vehicle to clarify and make thinking visible

Is supported by tone and non-verbal signals that demonstrate interest

Is part of an on-going dialogue which involves relationships between speakers

Is paced so that listening to the answer is necessary

Has reason, focus, and clarity

Question Purpose

THERE REALLY AREN'T "GOOD" QUESTIONS OR "BAD" QUESTIONS. BUT, THERE ARE questions that accomplish the teacher's purpose. A communicated clear expectation for an answer is as important as the question. Students need to know when the teacher is using questions as part of classroom management and when the questions are part of learning. So, effective questions serve a particular purpose in a well developed classroom and are posed with

Accomplish Specific Goals Or Tasks With Questions

an expectation of a specific type of thinking students will use in their response. Classroom questions can usually be divided into three general purposes, to: elicit information, build understanding, and encourage reflection. Within each purpose, questions can accomplish different goals or tasks. See the table below for examples.

THE PURPOSE OF QUESTIONS

ELICIT INFORMATION

BUILD UNDERSTANDING

ENCOURAGE REFLECTION

EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE QUESTIONS

CONFIRM
Recall & clarify knowledge

What comes next?
Could you summarize?
What do we know now?

DIRECT
Establish expectations

Can everyone see?
Did someone get a different answer? Are you ready?

CONNECT
Elicit prior experience

What sort of ideas come to your mind when ___? What kinds of experiences lead people to act that way?

PROBE
Explore a topic

Why do we remember ___?
What is the best way to tackle this? What will this look like when it is finished?

CONSTRUCT
Build new understanding

How could things change ___? What could this mean to ___?

EXPRESS
Promote learner's own thinking & understanding

Can you put that in a way that ___ would understand?

SEEK
Deepen understanding

What patterns do you see?
Can you compare ___ to ___?
What are your questions now?

CONSIDER
Assess from multiple perspectives

What is the relationship between the parts & the whole?
Who would care about this?
Is this the whole story?

EVALUATE
Challenge to think critically and creatively

Was the goal achieved? How do you know? What changes would make this better?