

TBLM ICT.10#1: Questioning

Overview

Questioning is fundamental to learning. Effective questions not only trigger searches for meaning but also encourage elaborative thinking. Powerful questions have the capacity to transform students from information seekers to information users. In addition to answering questions, students should learn how to pose their own questions.

1. “Why,” “How,” and “Which” Questions

Jamie McKenzie and others identify three powerful questions:

- **“Why” questions** (e.g., “Why do things happen the way they do?”) require analytic and cause-effect thinking. “Why” questions lead to problem solving.
- **“How” questions** (e.g., “How could things be better?”) are asked in order to solve problems. Inventors and reformers ask “how” questions.
- **“Which” questions** (e.g., “Which is best?”) require decision making based on examining clearly stated criteria.

2. Guiding Questions

While different terms may be used to describe guiding questions, their purpose remains the same: to focus an inquiry.

Jamie McKenzie uses the term “essential” rather than “guiding” and offers this comment:

Essential questions reside at the top of Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom). They require students to EVALUATE (make a thoughtful choice between options, with the choice based upon clearly stated criteria), to SYNTHESIZE (invent a new or different version) or to ANALYZE (develop a thorough and complex understanding through skilful questioning). (“Using Essential Questions As the Basis for Student Investigations”
<<http://www.fno.org/sept96/questions.html>>)

Guiding questions are prepared by the teacher and should meet specific criteria. Guiding questions should

- highlight the concepts to be learned (e.g., Learn about the characteristics of a legend.)
- be suitable for investigation (e.g., Students can investigate legends and other genres to discover the characteristics of each.)
- fulfil curricular outcomes (e.g., The English language arts curriculum outlines several specific learning outcomes that focus on understanding genre: 2.2.1, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, and 2.3.5)
- be understood by students (e.g., Questions must be stated simply so students understand what they are expected to learn.)

(continued)

3. Inquiry Questions

Inquiry questions guide an inquiry. They are sometimes also called “foundation” questions or “subsidiary” questions.

Inquiry questions are developed by students, with teacher guidance. They should be broad questions that require elaborate and comprehensive answers.

Example:

- I wonder about _____.
- I want to know what, when, where, who, and why _____.
- Why does _____?
- How is _____ like _____?
- How is _____ different from _____?
- Which _____ is preferred, and why?
- Why not _____?
- What if _____?

4. Interview Questions

Interviewing is an important method of collecting information without requiring students to read, making it especially suitable for younger students.

To begin, ask the four W questions: Who, What, When, and Where. Next, proceed with interpretive questions such as

- Why did you _____?
- How did you _____?
- Which aspects of _____ are most important to you? Explain.
- What would you change, and why would you change it?

References:

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