

Six Ways We Can Build Effective Questioning in Our Classrooms

One of the key ingredients for effective teaching is asking good questions. Thoughtful questioning fosters deeper thinking and activates students' brains. As you review the following ideas, I encourage you to share them in your next professional development session or departmental meeting and discuss them in these ways:

- Which of these strategies do I already use effectively or have adapted to fit my teaching style?
- Consider a topic you're currently teaching and plan a bank of questions to engage your pupils.
- What will I implement over the next two weeks, and how will I assess its effectiveness?
- Can I peer-observe a colleague who is modelling any of these strategies?

1. Plan Your Questions Ahead of Time



Over the years, planning my questions in advance has greatly helped me in the classroom. It allows me to anticipate common student misunderstandings and ensures I can guide them back on track when needed.

Try this:

- Adapt your questions to engage all students.
- Identify which students you'll target for specific questions.
- Revisit key questions throughout the lesson to reinforce learning. Even if you've already addressed a question, ask students to repeat and elaborate on what's been said.

2. Ask a Question & Pause



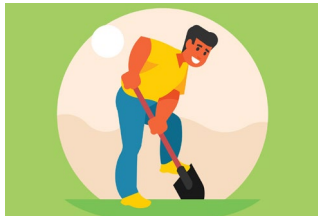
Ask a question and **pause**. Train your students to know you won't accept their first response. Avoid asking for a show of hands.

Research shows that teachers wait less than 3 seconds for an answer—way too short!

Try this:

- Ask a question and wait for a couple of minutes before accepting answers.
- Encourage students to write down their thoughts or discuss them with a partner.
- For deeper questions, allow for longer wait times (5–10 minutes).

3. Dig Deeper

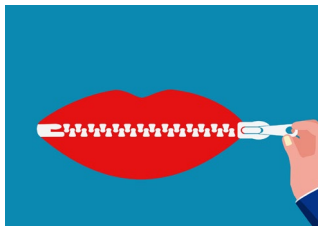


When a student answers, dig deeper by asking follow-up questions and involving other students.

Try this:

- “So what you’re saying is...”
 - “That’s interesting. What else can we add to Mary’s point?”
- Encourage students to build on each other’s responses.

4. Talk Less, Teach More

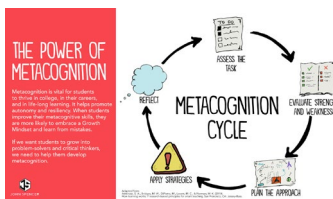


Great questioning shifts the focus from didactic teaching to student-led learning. It encourages students to engage rather than passively absorb information actively.

Try this:

- Use a “Do Now” activity to spark dialogue between students.
- Encourage activities where students ask each other questions or engage in group discussions.

5. Metacognitive Talking Tasks



Ask questions that help students reflect on their learning process and how they arrived at their answers.

Try this:

- Ask students to share the steps they took to arrive at their answer.
- “How did your ideas compare to your neighbour’s?”
- Ask students to write down three questions they still have about the topic.
- Have students list three steps that would help someone else complete the task.

Feedback & Checking for Understanding



Asking good questions helps gauge student understanding and pinpoint learning gaps. Formative feedback throughout the lesson ensures students are on track and supports their progress.

Try this:

- Use questioning strategies to engage students, check for understanding, and adjust your teaching accordingly.
- Ensure you are checking for understanding by asking students to tell you and show you what they've learned. For example, assign a short writing task that allows you to assess their knowledge at the end of the lesson.

- Ask students to analyse a case study, evaluate a scenario, or respond to questions based on their writing.
- Ensure students complete these tasks from memory, without visual aids—this promotes retrieval practice and deeper learning.

These strategies work very well when asking questions because they actively engage students, get their brains switched on, and stimulate thinking effortfully.

Effective Questioning Strategies:

- Think, Pair, Share
- Brain Dumps
- ABC (Agree, Build, Challenge)
- Pose, Pause, Pounce, Bounce
- Activities that involve talking and writing
- Socratic Questioning
- Questions based on Bloom’s Taxonomy

For more great ideas, watch our upcoming handout on Effortful Thinking by Lisa Jane Ashes, and check out Isabella’s recorded webinar on [Truly Effective Classroom Teaching, available in four parts](#). These resources can be utilised in your next CPD session or meeting—even if it’s just a brief clip—to spark engaging discussions with your ECTs or staff.

Written by



Mr. Costa Constantinou

(BA, PGCE, MA)

Director of Education, Writer, Trainer and School Improvement Adviser.

Author of “A School Leader’s Guide to Leading Professional Development”.



VeemaEdu



@VeemaEdu



Veema



cpd@veema.co.uk

Never Stop
Learning

veemaTM
EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION
co.uk