



24 Ways to Embed Effective Questioning & Discussion in Your Classroom

Evidence-informed strategies, with or without technology · Rooted in cognitive and educational research

Rooted in the work of Anderson & Krathwohl, Dillon, Hattie & Zierer, Rowe, Tobin, Lyman, William, Good & Brophy, Alexander, Mercer, Michaels, O'Connor & Resnick, and King

“Classroom talk is the most pervasive but arguably the least examined tool in any teacher’s repertoire.” — Robin Alexander

Pedagogy
First

24 STRATEGIES TO
TRY TODAY

The Quality of Questions

Wait Time & Thinking Space

Participation & Equity

Dialogic Teaching & Discussion

Student-Generated Questions



01

THE QUALITY OF QUESTIONS

Questions That Make Thinking Visible

Anderson and Krathwohl map six levels: remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, creating. These are not a hierarchy of worth. Recall is foundational, not inferior.

TECH question bank or lesson planning tool

INFORMED BY Anderson & Krathwohl



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THE QUALITY OF QUESTIONS

Surface, Deep and Transfer

Hattie and Zierer distinguish surface (what), deep (why) and transfer questions. Each serves a different stage. Reaching transfer before surface is secure sets students up to fail.

TECH discussion prompt or slide display tool

INFORMED BY Hattie & Zierer



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THE QUALITY OF QUESTIONS

Open Questions Demand More

Dillon found genuine open questions, where the teacher does not know the answer, produce the most extended student reasoning. Not every question needs a predetermined destination.

TECH shared whiteboard or discussion board

INFORMED BY Dillon



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THE QUALITY OF QUESTIONS

Plan Questions Before the Lesson

Improvised questions default to recall, not because recall is wrong but because planning stops there. Anderson and Krathwohl works as a planning tool: write questions at every level.

TECH lesson planning or slide preparation tool

INFORMED BY Anderson & Krathwohl



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THE QUALITY OF QUESTIONS

Alternatives to Questions

Dillon found statements and silence elicit richer responses than questions. Try: Tell me more. I had not considered that. Not every probe needs to end with a question mark.

TECH discussion or annotation tool

INFORMED BY Dillon



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WAIT TIME & THINKING SPACE

Wait Time 1: After You Ask

Rowe found most teachers wait under one second before speaking. Extending to three seconds increases the length and complexity of responses. Silence is thinking, not a gap to fill.

TECH timer or countdown display tool

INFORMED BY Rowe



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WAIT TIME & THINKING SPACE

Wait Time 2: After a Student Speaks

Rowe identified a second wait time: the pause after a student responds. Three seconds prompts elaboration and self-correction. Silence after an answer signals that more is expected.

TECH live polling or response capture tool

INFORMED BY Rowe



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WAIT TIME & THINKING SPACE

Write Before You Speak

Ask students to write before any verbal response is taken. Writing prevents the quickest from foreclosing others’ thinking. The pen democratises the room before the voice takes over.

TECH shared doc, whiteboard or response tool

INFORMED BY Tobin; Rowe



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WAIT TIME & THINKING SPACE

Think-Pair-Share

Lyman’s think-pair-share gives every student thinking time before public exposure. Pairs test ideas with a peer first. The result is more considered and more substantive discussion.

TECH partner chat tool or response system

INFORMED BY Lyman



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PARTICIPATION & EQUITY

Hands Down

William shows hand-raising distorts who answers. A small group volunteers repeatedly; the rest disengage. Remove hands and direct to named students. Every student should be asked.

TECH random name picker or classlist tool

INFORMED BY William



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PARTICIPATION & EQUITY

Cold Call Without Threat

Good and Brophy showed differential questioning reinforces attainment gaps. Direct questions are equitable only when the climate supports it. Norms: no wrong attempts, only thinking.

TECH random selector or seating plan tool

INFORMED BY Good & Brophy; William



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PARTICIPATION & EQUITY

Track Who You Ask

Good and Brophy found teachers direct harder questions to higher-attaining students. Track participation across lessons. Patterns invisible in the moment become visible on paper.

TECH participation tracker or tally tool

INFORMED BY Good & Brophy



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PARTICIPATION & EQUITY

Pose, Pause, Pounce, Bounce

William’s PPPB: pose the question, pause, direct to one student, then bounce the answer to another. The bounce keeps all students alert and spreads thinking across the whole room.

TECH display timer; random name tool

INFORMED BY William



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DIALOGIC TEACHING & DISCUSSION

Five Principles of Dialogic Talk

Alexander identifies five qualities of dialogic talk: collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative and purposeful. Most talk meets two or three of these. Audit and start with the gaps.

TECH lesson observation or reflection tool

INFORMED BY Alexander



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DIALOGIC TEACHING & DISCUSSION

Break the IRE Pattern

IRE (Initiation, Response, Evaluation): ask, answer, judge. Alexander shows this pattern limits thinking. Replace evaluation with a follow-up question. What makes you say that?

TECH video reflection or lesson capture tool

INFORMED BY Alexander; Mercer



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DIALOGIC TEACHING & DISCUSSION

Exploratory Talk

Mercer distinguishes disputational, cumulative and exploratory talk. Only exploratory talk, where students challenge ideas with evidence and build on each thinking, improves outcomes.

TECH collaborative doc or discussion tool

INFORMED BY Mercer



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DIALOGIC TEACHING & DISCUSSION

Ground Rules for Talk

Mercer found teaching norms of exploratory talk transforms discussion. Norms co-constructed with the class outperform those displayed or modelled. Make the ground rules together.

TECH shared doc or display tool

INFORMED BY Mercer



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DIALOGIC TEACHING & DISCUSSION

Accountable Talk

Michaels, O’Connor and Resnick hold students to accurate knowledge and rigorous reasoning. Teach moves: I agree because..., The evidence is..., Say more.... Language shapes thinking.

TECH discussion sentence starter display

INFORMED BY Michaels, O’Connor & Resnick



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DIALOGIC TEACHING & DISCUSSION

Build on Student Responses

Alexander’s EEF programme showed gains when teachers extended rather than evaluated. Return an answer: Aisha says X. Does anyone want to add or challenge? Conductor, not judge.

TECH live display or response capture tool

INFORMED BY Alexander



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STUDENT-GENERATED QUESTIONS

Teach Question Stems

King found students trained to generate questions using stems produce richer discussion than those answering only teacher questions. Generating questions demands deeper processing.

TECH question stem cards or display tool

INFORMED BY King



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STUDENT-GENERATED QUESTIONS

Reciprocal Peer Questioning

King’s reciprocal questioning has students generate and pose questions to each other, with neither knowing the answer. This produces genuine enquiry rather than rehearsal. Aim to think.

TECH pair chat or response tool

INFORMED BY King



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STUDENT-GENERATED QUESTIONS

Questions as Evidence of Understanding

A student’s question reveals the depth of their understanding. Ask for one written question before leaving. Why does X cause Y? shows far more than What is X?. Questions are windows.

TECH exit ticket or response tool

INFORMED BY King; William



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STUDENT-GENERATED QUESTIONS

Interthinking Through Questions

Mercer’s interthinking describes shared cognition built through language. Student questions sustain joint enquiry. The goal is thinking in common, not performance for the teacher.

TECH collaborative discussion or writing tool

INFORMED BY Mercer



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STUDENT-GENERATED QUESTIONS

Questions That Drive Enquiry

King found connecting questions to prior knowledge produces the most powerful learning. Ask students to write what they know and want to know. Their questions become the entry point.

TECH shared doc, padlet or survey tool

INFORMED BY King

PEDAGOGY FIRST, TECHNOLOGY SECOND. Always.

Rooted in the work of Anderson & Krathwohl, Dillon, Hattie & Zierer, Rowe, Tobin, Lyman, William, Good & Brophy, Alexander, Mercer, Michaels, O’Connor & Resnick, and King

Want to work together? ictevangelist.com



CREATED BY

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