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# Learning Together

An ongoing guide to grouping students and implementing cooperative learning strategies to maximize student engagement and achieve learning objectives in all program areas

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## From CTE to the II Lab and Beyond: Effective Questioning for Think-Pair-Share

Asking questions is integral to what we do as teachers. And it is the impetus for Think-Pair-Share. But there are many ways to ask questions and some ways are better than others. Thinking about and preparing specific questions to be asked prior to teaching a lesson will often lead to more effective classroom discussions. It is important to use thoughtful questions that encourage students to think critically about the concept being learned. In order to be successful at effectively questioning students, teachers must be aware of the type of questions they are directing to the students and use effective questioning practices.

Differentiating questions for multi-level students in CTE, II labs, ESL, ABE and



Belmont-AFOC CTE instructor Nate Davis and his students discuss automotive emissions questions

ASE classes gives various points of entry for student engagement. When we do this, we are modeling questions we want students to be able to ask on their own.

Dominic Shambra, CTE teacher advisor, shared that key areas of focus in the CTE classroom are often safety, efficiency, speed, and professionalism. However, many of the questions posed to CTE students are transferable to all programs. For example, “How

are you going to do this? What are the processes or steps?” Or, “How can you do this faster? How can you do this more easily?” And, “How would you look at the problem differently next time? How do you know which tool (rule, strategy) will work best?” These kinds of questions overlap the move toward greater meta-cognition and student autonomy that are part of recent educational reform and good teaching.

**Two simple comments we can teach students to say to partners in Think-Pair-Share are:  
“Tell me more.” and “Tell me why.”**

**Comments from Summer School Teachers on Think-Pair-Share:**

“The TPS strategy was quite effective and much better in terms of accountability.”

“I used TPS especially for critical thinking exercises and discussion related to reading and vocabulary assignments.”

“I enjoyed having the students share their thoughts with their peers and the class. I felt that this was a great way for them to share ideas and learn from each other.”

**Suggestions for Effective Questioning**

Below is a list of different types of questions. The questions are listed in order of their recommended usage. *The types of questions at or near the top should be used with more frequency than those at or near the bottom.*

1. Ask students to **seek out the evidence**:
  - What kind of evidence did you find?
  - What makes you think that...?
2. Ask students to **explain**:
  - How would you explain this?
  - What were some of the causes that led to...?
3. Ask questions that **relate concepts, ideas, and opinions**:
  - How does that compare to...?
  - What did other people discover or say about ...?
4. Ask questions that **encourage your students to predict**:
  - What will you do next?
  - What will happen if you...?
  - What could you do to prevent that ?
5. Ask students questions that **encourage them to describe**:
  - What do you see?
  - What did you do?
  - What happened?
  - What did you observe happening?



Maximize...	Minimize...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...asking questions that begin with words like "What if," "Explain," "Analyze," "Create," and "Compare and contrast," etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...asking questions that have a "yes" or "no" response and questions that require merely direct recall of definitions etc.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...the amount of time you wait after you pose a question, i.e. wait-time, in order to allow students to process the question in their minds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...calling on students directly after you pose a question and calling on a student before you even ask the question.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...asking students to elaborate on their answers and asking students "why."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...telling a student their answer is wrong and not asking them to think of why it is wrong.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...opportunities for students to pose questions amongst themselves.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...straight lecture without student interaction.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...providing opportunities that challenge students' original conceptual understandings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...providing opportunities that do not encourage creative and critical thinking.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...encouraging students to work through their decision making process, even if it brings frustration and makes them leave their comfort zone of learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...giving students direct answers to their questions without allowing them to think through the decision making process.</li> </ul>

References:

NDT Resource Center article: “Practicing Effective Questioning. See: [http://www.ndt-ed.org/TeachingResources/ClassroomTips/Effective\\_Questioning.htm](http://www.ndt-ed.org/TeachingResources/ClassroomTips/Effective_Questioning.htm)

In the next issue, we will share more ways to ensure all students participate equally.



**DALEI Objectives for Systemizing Quality Instruction**  
 Long-Range Lesson Planning | Agenda and Objectives | Cooperative Learning Strategies