



PINPOINT



There are only two good reasons to ask questions in class: to cause thinking and to provide information for the teacher about what to do next.

Dylan William

Participation

The *No Hands Up* strategy has revolutionised classrooms. By not allowing any student to *opt out*, teachers are ensuring they don't fall too far behind their peers who do participate. After all, learning arises from participation and attention. Any deliberate non-answering can be addressed by a "OK, I'll get back to you". Students soon learn that there is no escape.



Selecting students at random is a radical change in the classroom contract.

Dylan William

Levels

Questions can be either lower or higher level. Lower ones tend to demand only recitation of facts, while higher ones require more reasoning. Structures to help teachers pitch their questions at different levels can be accessed through Bloom's Taxonomy (make sure it is the current version) or, perhaps more effectively, the SOLO Taxonomy.



A pupil's answer to a question can reveal how the pupil understands the issue, and the teacher can then respond to help develop that understanding.

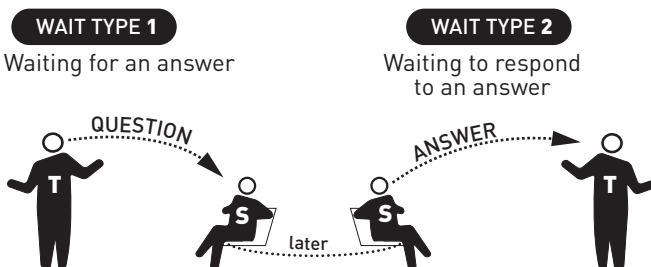
Paul Black

Listening

To get the most from students' answers, teachers need to transcend listening solely for accuracy. Teacher responses such as "almost", "close" or "nearly" reveal the evaluative nature of listening. Instead, use an interpretative approach. Try to find out how the students are thinking. Discover what gaps and misconceptions they have. This tells you what to teach next.

Waiting

There are two types of waiting time: the time between asking and waiting for an answer (type 1) and the time between hearing the answer and responding (type 2). Despite teachers being aware of the research that shows they wait, in both instances, far too little, practice hasn't much changed.



The Pose > Pause > Pounce strategy is useless unless the Pause lasts over 2 or 3 seconds. Students need time to process the question, search their knowledge and present an answer. Snappy quiz-style questioning may be full of pace, but they lack much depth. You end up learning little, which is most of the reason for asking.

In order to gain maximum benefit from students' answers, your listening needs to be advanced. You need mental clarity why you asked the question. A gap, again of 2 to 3 seconds, allows you to ponder. And for the student to see you considering her answer. This models the reflective response you would like promoted.

Frames

Seemingly lower level questions can be transformed simply by reframing how they are posed. Instead of asking a question in a manner that only invites a *Yes* or *No*, ask it such that reasoning has to be provided. Students have to think in order to answer.

ORIGINAL	REFRAMED
Is oxygen a gas?	Why is oxygen a gas?
Is Paris a capital?	Why is Paris a capital?
Is aller an irregular verb?	Why is aller an irregular verb?

Alternatives to questions

A powerful alternative to posing questions is to provide students with strong statements such as "America is most responsible for global warming". Then watch as students ponder the issues, knowing that simply agreeing or disagreeing is insufficient.

REFERENCES

William, D. (2011) *Embedded Formative Assessment*, Solution Tree Press, Bloomington