



Project I⁴ Observation Toolkit



Tools for Questioning in the Classroom 2.A

Overview: Question FORM

Questioning techniques in the classroom are powerful, yet often overlooked. How, when, and why teachers ask questions is an important technique that needs to be planned and practiced. Research indicates that educators have not been provided the knowledge nor skills to be effective “questioners.”

*The purpose of this tool is to help an observer of the classroom to collect evidence about the question form. **Question form** is how the teacher shapes and models effective questioning. The purpose of this tool is to assist you in collecting evidence on the forms of questions teachers are asking. Other tools can help observers and teachers examine question levels, especially those kinds of questions that push mathematical thinking.*

This document includes four steps.

THE FOCUS OF THE FALL 2019 SEMESTER IS STEP TWO, collecting evidence in classrooms.

- **Step One:** This is a refresher for the basics of **question form** that teachers use in classrooms.
- **Step Two:** Observe classrooms and collect evidence. Practice, practice, practice! The template provides a tool for the observer to record the question forms used in the classroom. Use your **selective verbatim** notes to center your observation of the **forms of questions** you hear in the classroom.
- **Step Three:** Use (or add to or modify) the codes provided to name the **forms of questions** from the observation. This will provide you with the evidence necessary for a meaningful, data-driven, conversation with the teacher.
- **Step Four:** Conversation with the teacher using the evidence collected. We provide a guide for the observer to have conversations with the teacher. While we will spend more time on this next semester, teachers will want “feedback” from your observations and we would like you to move from the traditions of “feedback” to evidence-based conversations.



Project I⁴ Observation Toolkit



Step One: What You Need to Know about Form of Questions

How is the teacher forming the question for most effective student access and thinking? The form of the question – including use of question words as well as calling on students equitably -- is critical for student access. Most critical perhaps is getting used to **think (wait) time** and building that into the question form. It takes time in a classroom for the teacher and students to get accustomed to the wait time and then using that time to think before speaking or responding. Secondly, when the teacher calls on a student, effective practice usually means that the teacher states question first and then calls on a student after think time. To be most effective, the teacher and students need to accustom themselves to a different kind of pacing and responding.

Below are two resources: ATTRIBUTES OF EFFECTIVE QUESTION (p. 3 below)with form highlighted and QUESTION TREE (p. 4 below) for ensuring most questions start with a question word.

Question Form Abbreviation	Question form explanation
Y/N ?	Yes/no questions
QW or NQW	Question word (question starts with question word) No question word (question does not start with question word)
FIB ?	Fill in the blank question. Usually teacher starts to make a statement and seems to decide halfway through the question to change to asking and says.... Is what? at end of sentence
SNA	Student name after question
SNB	Student name before question
TT	Adequate Think Time for type of question
NTT	No think time used
Other	Anything else you observe about question form



ATTRIBUTES OF EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

FREQUENCY

- Effective teachers ask many questions
- Student involvement increases student achievement
- Student attention is focused by frequent questions
- Repetition and rehearsal increases student learning

FORM

- Effective teachers plan questions so that they ask one question at a time. They do not ask multiple questions at one time that confuse students
- Use question form with question words
- Declarative teacher statements carefully chosen with a question that follows can be effective if used with think time

EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION

- Questions patterns should call on ALL students equitably
- Lowered student achievement is the result of calling on students who volunteer and accepting call ours
- Direct questions to student by name
- Expectations are communicated

PROMPTING

- Teacher redirection can include moving from higher level question to probing with lower level questions to offer cues to student thinking
- Ask student to redirect question to another student, wait for response and then check for understanding with first student
- Paraphrasing can support student understanding the questions and permits think time
- Teacher communicates expectation and ensures success by prompting same student

WAIT TIME/THINK TIME

- Should be 3-8 seconds, depending on level of question
- Improves equitable distribution and responses from culturally/racially diverse students
- Students give longer and deeper responses
- Used in conjunction with Think-Pair-Share, gives student rehearsal time
- Voluntary participation increases; fewer students fail to respond



USEFUL TEACHER QUESTION “TREE”

WHAT IS?	WHERE IS? WHEN IS ?	WHO IS?	WHICH IS?	WHY IS?	HOW IS?
WHAT DID?	WHERE DID? WHEN DID?	WHO DID?	WHICH DID?	WHY DID?	HOW DID?
WHAT CAN?	WHERE CAN? WHEN CAN?	WHO CAN?	WHICH CAN?	WHY CAN?	HOW CAN?
WHAT WOULD?	WHERE WOULD? WHEN WOULD?	WHO WOULD?	WHICH WOULD?	WHY WOULD?	HOW WOULD?
WHAT WILL?	WHERE WILL? WHEN WOULD?	WHO WILL?	WHICH WILL	WHY WILL?	HOW WILL?
WHAT MIGHT?	WHERE MIGHT? WHEN MIGHT?	WHO MIGHT?	WHICH MIGHT?	WHY MIGHT?	HOW MIGHT?

Adapted from Patricia E. Blosser *Handbook of Effective Questioning Techniques*

Finally, you can review the Zwiers (2007) article on the website. In this research Zwiers names specific kinds of Questioning Forms from classroom observations.

Zwiers, J. (2007), Teacher practices and perspectives for developing academic language. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 17 (1), 93-116.



Project I⁴ Observation Toolkit



Step Two: What You Need to Do in Observation of Question Form

The tool is designed to collect basic information for the teacher to record question forms. Use **selective verbatim by selecting and recording teacher questions**. If teacher addresses question to specific student, name the student and recognize if student name is first or last and if there is think(wait) time or not. Record time if possible. Use as many pages of the same recording as needed. Then in Step Three, you name the question form in last column by using the abbreviations.

Teacher	Observer	Date
Duration of Observation _____	to _____	

TIME	Teacher Questions	Question Form



Step Three: What You Need to Tabulate and Analyze

In the third column of the question form evidence, use these abbreviations in column one below to name the question form. You may have more than one code for a single question as there are many parts to the question form.

Then tabulate number of instances of each question form below.

Question Form Abbreviation	Question form explanation	Number of instances
Y/N ?	Yes/no questions	
QW or NQW	Question word (question starts with question word) No question word (question does not start with question word)	
FIB ?	Fill in the blank question. Usually teacher starts to make a statement and seems to decide halfway through the question to change to asking and says.... Is what? at end of sentence	
SNA SNB	Student name after question Student name before question	
TT NTT	Adequate Think Time for type of question No think time used	
Other	Anything else you observe about question form	

What are statements of factual evidence from the observation?

Use the evidence categories from the data collection and used marks to record to make 5-6 factual statements about the data.

Examples of Evidence

- The teacher asked ___ questions in ___ minutes.
- The teacher used no think time/wait time in any question
- The teacher used think time of ___ seconds.
- In ___ questions in which the teacher called on students, the teacher used the student name at start of question ___ times and used the student name at end of questions ___ times.



Step 4: Having a Conversation with the Teacher

In this section, although you will have ideas about what to do, **engage the teacher in problem solving**. Keep in mind: “Telling people what we think of their performance doesn’t help them thrive and excel and telling people how we think they should improve actually hinders learning” (Buckingham & Goodall, 2019, p. 2).

- 1. Introduction:** *I was in your class for ___ minutes while the lesson was focused on _____. As you know, I was particularly concentrating on the ways you called on students and perhaps used opportunities to have student-to-student dialogue*
- 2. These are the data from that observation: (present factual analysis to teacher).**
- 3. Let’s talk about what you are observing about these data?** *Continue to ask probing questions, but engage the teacher in making a decision about what specific action to take and how s/he will know there is improvement.*
- 4. As a result of this data, what areas of strength do you observe? What is a practice that you want to change?**
- 5. What do you want me to observe and when**



Might be useful to talk to your coach or any person on your ECNIC team about using this tool and having a conversation with the teacher using data!