

WILLIAM F. MCCOMAS

**Questioning Strategies** are those question-asking forms and tools used by teachers to help students review material, to fuel critical thinking, to reduce disruptive behavior, to enhance creativity, to check for understanding, to regulate classroom activities, to determine student grades, to foster discussion, to reduce inattentiveness, and for many other reasons (Blosser, 1991). There are many strategies and techniques associated with questioning including the use of Socratic dialogues, wait time and higher/lower level questioning.

Often times, teachers are so used to asking questions that they fail to analyze why or how they do it. According to Blosser (1991), questions need to do more than determine if a student does or does not understand a particular concept. About 60 percent of teacher questions recall only facts while 20 percent require students to think and another 20 percent are procedural.

Guided questions can generally be divided into 7 categories or less based on Blooms Taxonomy: (1) memory or recall (2) translation or rephrasing using different language or symbols, (3) interpretation or finding relationships, (4) application or solving real-life problems through generalizations, (5) analysis or solving a problem through critical thinking, (6) synthesis or solving a problem using creative thinking, and (7) evaluation or making judgments using standards or rules (Blosser, 1991).

A teacher can determine what type of questions he or she most often asks by determining the number of possible responses, examining whether the question requires students to utilize past information when framing a response, and analyzing specific words or phrases in the question. For example, *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* usually mean the question is closed while terms such as *compare*, *interpret*, *explain*, or *evaluate* may require more than pulling from memorized information. Teachers should watch the length of the question so that it is not too vague or too wordy. One important questioning skill is to ask a variety of questions particularly open questions where the teacher may ask for examples, for clarification of an idea, for a longer and more in-depth explanation. Lastly, teachers should provide students with a silent moment or “wait time” lasting about three to five seconds after asking a question, so students have an opportunity to formulate a response (Blosser, 1991; Elstgeest, 1985; Rowe, 1986) (CB/WM).

Blosser, P. E. (1991). *How to ask the right questions*. Washington, DC: National Science Teachers Association.

Elstgeest, J. (1985). The right question at the right time. From W. Harlen (Ed.), *Primary science: Taking the plunge* (pp. 36-45). Heinemann Educational Books.

Rowe, M. B. (1986, Jan-Feb). Wait time: Slowing down may be a way of speeding up! *Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(1), 43-50.