

How to Help Students Ask (Better) Questions

Syllabus

Course Description:

Young children are naturally curious and often ask questions endlessly. However, as they reach elementary school age, they may become more self-conscious and hesitant to speak up. Concerned about how their peers might perceive them, some students may worry that asking questions makes them appear incompetent or different—especially if others aren't doing the same.

Research shows that a decline in question-asking can hinder learning. When students don't feel comfortable asking questions, they miss opportunities to deepen their understanding and clarify confusion.

In this course, we'll explore how to encourage students to ask more—and better—questions. Using Laurie Keller's *Wake Me Up in 20 Coconuts!* and the Question Formulation Technique (QFT) developed by The Right Question Institute, we will examine strategies to create a classroom culture where inquiry is not only accepted but celebrated.

Prerequisites:

N/A

Contact Hours: 1

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will identify ways to use a picture book to encourage their students to ask questions in the elementary classroom.
- Participants will be able to identify the components of the Question Formulation Technique (QFT) and apply the process with their students to help them formulate more effective questions and deepen their understanding of class content.

Course Structure:

This course consists of three parts:

1. Watch - watch the recorded presentations to learn the information and skills you will need to complete the course.
2. Learn by Doing - Complete this activity to practice the skill(s) presented.

3. Learning Artifact - Complete an activity to apply knowledge or reflect on practice in your setting required for course credit.

Learning Artifact: In this assignment, you will design a learning artifact that demonstrates how the Question Formulation Technique can be used in your classroom to lead to “Next Step” discussions, writing assignments, projects, etc.

1. Identify a “Question Focus” you could use in class and explain how it is linked to a lesson goal.
2. Describe three “Next Step” assignments that could grow from the QFocus by way of your students using the Question Formulation Technique.

Standards:

Ohio Educator Standards

4 Teachers plan and deliver effective instruction that advances the learning of each individual student.

5 Teachers create learning environments that promote high levels of learning and achievement for all students

ISTE Educator Standards

2.1. Learner Teachers

continually improve their practice by learning from and with others and exploring proven and promising practices that leverage technology to improve student learning. Teachers:

2.1.b. Pursue professional interests by creating and actively participating in local and global learning networks.

2.1.c. Stay current with research that supports improved student learning outcomes, including findings from the learning sciences.

2.5. Designer Teachers

design authentic, learner-driven activities and environments that recognize and accommodate learner variability. Teachers:

2.5.a. Use technology to create, adapt and personalize learning experiences that foster independent learning and accommodate learner differences and needs.

2.5.b. Design authentic learning activities that align with content area standards and use digital tools and resources to maximize active, deep learning.

2.5.c. Explore and apply instructional design principles to create innovative digital learning environments that engage and support learning

Resources:

- The Right Question Institute <https://rightquestion.org/>
- The Science Behind Your Preschooler's Endless Questions
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/sg/blog/parenting-beyond-power/202507/the-science-behind-your-preschoolers-endless-questions>
- Dan Rothstein, co-author of *Just Make One Change: Teach Students to Ask Their Own Questions*, **TED Talk** (13:40 mins)
- Implementing the Question Formulation Technique with Our Youngest Students!
<https://rightquestion.org/resources/implementing-question-formulation-technique-youngest-students/>
- Little Wonders: Adapting the QFT for Early Learners
<https://rightquestion.org/resources/little-wonderers-adapting-the-qft-for-early-learners/>
- Book Festival 2014: Laurie Keller
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_U0osiBrFo
- Wake Me Up in 20 Coconuts by Laurie Keller
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnlcczIGByA>
- Question Formulation Technique in 90 Seconds
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04cHyeUVuKg>
- The QFT for Primary Source Learning in a Nevada 4th Grade Classroom
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FhE7BU6huQ>
- Using Closed-Ended Questions in the Classroom
<https://rightquestion.org/resources/using-close-ended-questions-in-the-classroom/>
- The Power of Questions: The QFT in Elementary Social Studies
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYd-HlgA12A>