

6. Dialogic Questioning

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What's the idea?

Dialogic questioning is about focusing closely on one student during questioning to explore a particular concept or set of ideas in depth. There is a hot-seating aspect to this approach whereby you focus on one student.

What does it mean?

While question-spreading is useful to encourage participation, sometimes it is valuable to spend some time engaged in extended teacher-student dialogue with one student. This exchange can be significant for the student involved and for the rest of the group, who get to see exploratory, deep thinking modelled by a peer.

The hot-seating aspect of this process forces one student to think really deeply about the terminology they use, the connections they make and how they frame their idea. The purpose is to deepen, rather than widen, their thinking, with the teacher scaffolding their thought-process.

Hot-seating questions might include:

- 'Talk to us about...'
- 'Explain your thinking?'
- 'How is this shown?'
- 'How does this link to what we've talked about before?'
- 'Why...?'

At the end of a sequence of increasingly challenging questions, the student gives a full, extended response to the original question.

What are the implications for teachers?

Successful dialogues will usually involve reasoning,

hypothesising and thinking aloud. Use mistakes to redirect students' thoughts.

Include suitable time for dialogic questioning in your lesson plan. The sequence needs to last long enough to deepen the original idea, which could take several minutes. Wait time is also important to allow the student to think on the spot and formulate their ideas.

You won't be able to do this with everyone, every lesson – three to five students is ideal. Try including this activity following pair or group discussions, as feedback after presentations, prior to writing or as part of a plenary.

TOP TIP / During pair discussions, it's worth 'tipping-off' a student who you will later ask for feedback in front of the group. Thus way, they will be prepared to engage with your questioning in a meaningful way.

Want to know more?

Alexander, R. (2006) *Towards Dialogic Teaching: Rethinking Classroom Talk*. Dialogos UK Ltd.
Sherrington, T. (2017) *The Learning Rainforest*. John Catt Ltd. Strategy K5 Go Dialogic

