2. Understanding Questions

How can we help students develop understanding about questions and questioning?

The Question is the Answer … Smart questions are essential technology for those who venture on to the Information Highway.

(Jamie McKenzie, 1997)

When we empower students to differentiate between types of questions, they can begin to understand not only how to answer questions but how to create them as well. We want them to think about the purpose of the question and how that affects the construction of the question.

The process of generating questions depends on the ability to identify different cognitive levels of questions (Ciardiello, 1998). This is a complex feat because there are so many types of questions and so many purposes for asking them. It's important to gather lots and lots of question samples and lead students through a process of discovery to help them uncover some patterns for themselves. We build on that experience by introducing and modeling several basic questioning and thinking organizational structures, such as the ReQuest Strategy, deBono's Six Thinking Hats, and Bloom's Taxonomy.

Once students can classify questions they will be able to identify the appropriate action and make an effective plan to source the answers: reading the text independently, making inferences, discussing with peers, or doing some research. The ability to identify the question type and the source of the answer will have a positive affect on reading comprehension of both fiction and non-fiction text types.

The following strategies direct students to consider the question type and look for clues about how and where to seek the answer.

- How can I use Question Hunt?
- How can I help students observe different question types?
- How do I teach open and closed questions?
- How will the ReQuest strategy help students identify question types?
- How can I help students create questions for specific purposes?
- How can coding questions help students look for the answers?
- Q Task Quickies: de Bono's Six Thinking Hats
- What can we learn from famous quotations about questions?

"If one is master of one thing and understands one thing well, one has at the same time insight into and understanding of many things."
Vincent van Gogh

How can I use Question Hunt?

Clarifying the Task
This task can be used for students at varying levels of expertise and experience to build background knowledge about questioning. Don't rush this activity. Allow a sufficient period of time for students to build up a rich collection of questions.

Building Understanding
- Introduce this activity by reading and discussing a story about collecting things, such as *If You Find a Rock* by Peggy Christian. Each of the rocks in this story has a different use or purpose, as well as a different structure, but they are all rocks. So it is with questions.
- Inform students that they are going on a question hunt. Provide students with newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets and ask them to look for and clip questions. Students can keep their question collections in an envelope.
- Give students copies of the I Love Questions organizer (page 34) and ask them to maintain a log of questions they hear or read over a period of time. Let them fill up as many organizers as possible; you will need lots and lots of samples.
- Model the next step in the process. Record a dozen or so of the questions on large strips of paper. Post and read the questions and ask students to look for similarities in the questions. Can they think of ways to sort and organize the questions? Organize and reorganize the questions in as many ways as possible, so students can see that questions have different structures and different purposes.

Demonstrating Understanding
❏ Have students cut their I Love Questions sheets into strips and assemble the questions with the ones clipped form newspapers and magazines.
❏ Group students in partners. Provide the students with a large piece of paper and glue sticks.
❏ Instruct each pair to read their questions, look for similarities and differences, and sort their collective questions into categories. Allow them time to move the question strips around on the page as necessary.
❏ Once students are happy with their organization, ask them to glue strips in place and name their categories.
❏ Share results and collectively build a bank of ideas for organizing questions for structure and/or purpose. Fill the walls and halls with We Love Questions.

Q Tip
Possible criteria for sorting:
- Starter word: *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, *how*, *if*, *should*, *could*, etc.
- Common verb: *is*, *are*, *was*, *were*, *did*, *does*, *can*, *could*, *might*, etc.
- To find out feelings, time, place, events, facts, people, opinion, etc.
- Complexity: simple facts, requires research, decision making, open-ended, etc.

I ♥ Questions

_____

_____

_____

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How can I help students observe different question types?

Clarifying Understanding

Questions do follow some basic rules. Allow students to look for patterns and build their own understanding through analysis of a variety of sample question types and formats.

Building Understanding

- Have students work in groups using the Close-Up Look at Questions organizer (page 36).
- Provide students with text from a novel that has lots of questions in it. Ask one student to read the text aloud.
- Have students look for similarities and differences in the questions and record their findings on the organizer, using the headings Looks Like, Sounds Like, and Uses of Questions.

They should be able to make some general observations like the following:

- Usually begins with *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.
- Can also begin with a verb, such as *is*, *are*, *can*, *will*, *do*, *could*, *might*, etc.
- Always ends with a question mark.
- Can be just one word: Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- Can be open or closed.
- Always makes us think.
- Voice usually rises at the end.

- Select video news clips, interviews, or dramatic productions that overtly model different styles of questions. Have students watch and listen to them, observing body language and listening to voice changes as the people in the clips ask questions. Have students add these observations to their lists.
- Now ask students when and why we use questions. Have students list the uses of questions on their organizer. Share and build a class list.

Demonstrating Understanding

Have students work in their groups to build a web about questions, incorporating everything they know about questions.

Close-Up Look at Questions

Looks Like	Sounds Like

Uses of Questions

How do I teach open and closed questions?

Q Task
Students will classify questions as open or closed.

Clarifying the Task
Helping students discover that there are different kinds of questions with different purposes is the first step to conscientious design of effective questions.

Building Understanding
- Put several items in a box and close the box. Pass it around the class and ask, "What is in the box?"
- Encourage students to use all their senses to guess what might be in the box. Explain to students that, just as the box is closed, so is the question that you asked. The answer to the question can easily be found by opening the box and looking inside. Questions that can easily be answered by looking for facts and figures or by observation are closed questions. These are the kinds of questions teachers ask when they want to know if you can recall information. They are questions that people ask when they need specific information.
- Open the box and show students the items. Ask students the second question: "Which item in the box is the most important?" This is a question that could have many different answers depending on whom you ask. It is an open question because there is no one right or wrong answer.
- Ask students to work in groups to make up lots of questions about the items in the box. Have students classify their questions as open or closed. Which questions are more interesting and why?

Demonstrating Understanding
❏ Provide a chart of five or six questions about a familiar topic.
❏ Using a think-aloud, model for students how you would classify these questions as open or closed. Instruct students to select a dozen or so questions from I Love Questions collection from the Question Hunt Q Task (page 33). Have them classify these questions as open or closed, and record them on the Thinking about Questions organizer (page 38).
❏ Ask students to select one question that they are really curious about and tell why that question is so intriguing for them.

Q Tip
Continue to reinforce this concept with questions in novel studies and content subjects. Occasionally play a quick game with the class when questions are asked: Have the class raise a closed fist if a question is closed and an open palm when questions are open.

Thinking about Questions

Closed	Open

Select one question you are curious about. Explain why you like that question.

How will the ReQuest strategy help students identify question types?

Q Task
Students will understand the ReQuest strategy and identify questions by type.

Clarifying the Task

This task introduces students to another way to classify questions. The ReQuest Procedure (Manzo, 1969) is a structured process of matching need to question type. Using this strategy will help students realize that questions are designed very purposefully based on the intent of the questioner. ReQuest strategy will help students make meaning when they encounter any text.

ReQuest Procedure

On the Line questions: The answers to these questions are found directly in the text (facts already known).

Between the Lines questions: To answer these questions, students select clues from the text. Students need to make some inferences based on information they read. The process of developing questions based on these inferences will also help shape their understanding of the text.

Beyond the Line questions: These questions are usually reflective in nature. The questioner is making connections with the text and other concepts or ideas related to the text. The answers to these questions require thought about the implications of the facts and clues.

Building Understanding

- Select and read aloud a classic picture book or tale, such as "The Hockey Sweater" by Roch Carrier, that the students are already quite familiar with.
- Create On the Line, Between the Lines, and Beyond the Line questions based on the story. Pose these questions to the students and discuss possible answers. Ask the students where or how they would find the answers to these questions.
- Prepare a chart and introduce the three types of questions from the ReQuest Procedure.

Question	Where/how can we find the answer?

- Continue modeling until students seem confident with identifying question types.

Demonstrating Understanding

❏ Select several stories and prepare a set of questions for each story with several examples of all three types of questions.

❏ Put students in groups. Give each group a story to read and a set of questions to analyze.

❏ Have groups trade sets of questions and confirm or challenge the analysis. Circulate within the groups and assist with discussion of challenges.

❏ As a large group confirm where there is consensus. Determine correct types if there are questions for which a consensus could not be reached.

Q Tip
Further resources about the ReQuest strategy:
- *Asking Better Questions* by Norah Morgan and Juliana Saxton (1994)
- http://www.education.tas.gov.au/english/norah.htm#ques

How can I help students create questions for specific purposes?

Q Task
Students will engage in the questioning process using the ReQuest strategy to create questions specific to need.

Clarifying the Task
Students have already been introduced to the ReQuest strategy and have had practice classifying questions using this method. In this task, students will learn to develop their own questions using this process. This is a cross-curricular strategy and can be used with all types of texts; e.g., magazine articles, textbook passages, novels, press releases, etc.

Building Understanding
- Select a short article or story for modeling the task. Prepare the text for projection and provide each student with a copy as well.
- Review the three types of questions: On the Line, Between the Lines, and Beyond the Line.
- Team up students and use the Think, Pair, Share strategy to develop questions. Ask students to individually think of On the Line questions, discuss with their partners, and share one question with the class. Confirm that the question can indeed be answered from the text and chart a few of the questions. There could be endless numbers of On the Line questions, so set a time limit.
- Ask for Between the Lines questions using the same process. Again, when questions are shared, confirm that there is enough information in the text for an inference to be developed. Record several of these questions.
- Finally, ask for Beyond the Line questions. Confirm that the questions shared will extend thinking of the implications about the text. Chart questions.
- Continue modeling with different texts until students are ready to try it on their own.

Demonstrating Understanding
Provide each student with a text and the What's Your Question Line? organizer (page 41). Have students read the text and develop all three types questions.

Q Tip
One benefit of this strategy is the potential to match individual reading abilities with specific texts, enabling all learners to be successful.

What's Your Question Line?

Student name: _____

Title of Text: _____

On the Line ___?___	Between the Lines ¯?¯	Beyond the Line →?

I would like to know more about...

Perhaps I can...

How can coding questions help students look for the answers?

Clarifying the Task

In this task, students will build on their knowledge of categorizing questions (see ReQuest strategy Q Task, page 39). Classifying questions helps students develop the reading comprehension skills of making connections and inferences. Students first learn to identify questions by determining how they would find the answers, and then learn to apply that knowledge and understanding to create questions. Apply this strategy to articles, textbook excerpts, and video.

Building Understanding

Model the process.

- Source a current article or textbook selection that supports a curriculum topic being studied and create several of each type of question on the Question Codes chart.

Question Codes		
Codes	**Description**	**Solution Strategy**
?	On the Line	Skim text
?̲	Between the Lines	Read Text; look for clues; make inferences
➔?	Beyond the Line	Study text; make connections
☁	Background Knowledge	Think about what you and group members already know; discuss to find answer
☑	Research	Check other sources; make inquiries

- Explain the codes and tell how they assist us to source answers to our reading questions. Share the article and questions with students, and ask them to identify the appropriate code for each question. Ask students to provide an explanation for their classification.

Demonstrating Understanding

Provide students with copies of another curriculum-related text and questions. Have students work first individually to identify the correct codes, then in small groups to compare and discuss their findings. Remind students to refer to the Question Codes chart and questions already classified in the modeling sample as they work. Ask each group to select a "reporter" to provide the group's classification and rationale. Randomly ask groups to share as you discuss each question, asking others to share their rationale if there is dissent.

Q Tip

Students can apply this strategy when reading both fiction and non-fiction text. Provide students with sticky notes so they can record and code questions as they read.

- This strategy was inspired by ReQuest Procedure (Manzo, 1969) and Categorizing Questions (Harvey and Goudvis, 2000).
- For additional information see *Strategies That Work* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (2000).
- Another approach to explore is Question Answer Relationship (QAR), developed by T.E. Raphael (1984).To learn more see http://www.justreadnow.com/strategies/qar.htm

de Bono's Six Thinking Hats

Edward de Bono's structured thinking strategy Six Thinking Hats (© 1985) is recognized in education as an effective technique to engage students in critical and creative thinking. Introduce students to this technique of thinking and give them lots of practice using it. Apply Six Thinking Hats to developing questions for specific purposes. (Excellent commercial products are available for school applications; see Edward de Bono's web site http://www.edwdebono.com/)

Six Thinking Hats Summary

White Hat — the neutral hat. White Hat thinking identifies the facts and details of a topic.

Black Hat — the judgmental hat. Black Hat thinking examines the negative aspects of a topic.

Yellow Hat — the optimistic hat. Yellow Hat thinking focuses on the positive and logical aspects of a topic.

Red Hat — the intuitive hat. Red Hat thinking looks at a topic from the point of view of emotions and feelings.

Green Hat — the new ideas hat. Green Hat thinking requires imagination and lateral thinking.

Blue Hat — the metacognition hat. Blue Hat thinking encompasses and reflects on all the other hats looking at the big picture.

Current Events

Post or project a current-event headline and summary for students to read. Instruct students to create six questions about the current event on the Six Thinking Hats organizer (page 44). If you choose to use this strategy as daily bell work, focus on a different hat each day.

Documentary Response

As students view and review a documentary about a curriculum-related issue or event, have them keep track of their questions using the Six Thinking Hats organizer.

Jigsaw

As students prepare to select a focus for research, have them process their ideas by working in Thinking Hat groups, developing questions that meet the criteria for their assigned hat. Jigsaw students in groups of six so each group has a representative of each hat. Instruct students to share questions and select/develop those that would be effective research questions.

Literature Circles

Assign students questioning roles based on the Six Thinking Hats. Each day students take a different Thinking Hat role and develop questions for literature circle discussions.

Six Thinking Hats

Create questions about your topic to represent each type of thinking.

White Hat: facts and details

Black Hat: examines the negative

Yellow Hat: focuses on the positive

Red Hat: emotions and feelings

Green Hat: requires imagination

Blue Hat: focuses on reflection

Based on de Bono (1985)

What can we learn from famous quotations about questions?

Q Task
Students will study question quotations to learn about the value and purpose of questioning.

Clarifying the Task
It is important for students to understand the value and purpose of asking effective questions. There are many famous quotations about questions and questioning. Becoming familiar with these quotations will help students develop personal understanding of the importance of this skill.

Building Understanding
Develop a collection of good question quotes that are appropriate for your students' comprehension abilities. Select one to model this task.

Sample of question quote:

I had six honest serving men
They taught me all I knew:
Their names were Where and What and When
And Why and How and Who.
Rudyard Kipling

Ask students what they think this quotation means. Discuss how this quotation might help them become better questioners. Chart their responses.

Demonstrating Understanding
- ❏ Select and print several quotations on strips of paper.
- ❏ Have students work with a partner. Each pair has a quotation strip to analyze. Ask students to think about this quotation and discuss what it means. Have them talk about how this quotation might help them become better questioners.
- ❏ Ask each group to share their understanding of their quotation. Post the quotation strips around the room or on a bulletin board.
- ❏ Provide each student with the Quotable Question Quotes organizer (page 46). Instruct students to select their favorite quotation from the ones presented and analyze it using the question prompts.

Q Tip
Invite students to bring more question quotations to class as they discover them. Remind students to always credit the author of the quote. Some sources of question quotes to get you started:
Wisdom Quotes: Quotations to Inspire and Challenge
http://www.wisdomquotes.com/cat_questions.html
World of Quotes: Historic Quotes and Proverbs
http://www.worldofquotes.com/topic/Questions/1/
Brainy Quotes
http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/questions.html

??? Quotable Question Quotes ???

What is your favorite question quote?

by_____

What do you think it means?

How will it help you to be a better questioner?

Can you make the quote visual? Try a sketch, word web, or cartoon.