

Guide and Professional Development Ideas for the Video: *Questioning & Discussion*



Background

Questioning and Discussion is one of four videos that were created as a companion to the book, *Supporting Every Young Learner: Maryland's Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy Birth to Age 8*, a publication from the Maryland State Department of Education. The titles of the other three videos are *Student Engagement*, *Teacher Feedback*, and *Using Center Activities to Foster Social Foundations and Inquiry-Based Learning*.

The 13 minute video contains footage of teachers interacting with students in five kindergarten classes and one prekindergarten class. Teacher comments are included with the vignettes to provide an insight into their thinking and teaching practices.

Summary

Video clips provide different scenarios that demonstrate how teacher questioning provides feedback, promotes discussion, and encourages student reflection. Low-level and high-level questions are used to improve student understanding, thinking, and oral expression. Open-ended questions allow student choice and multiple response opportunities that encourage group discussion. Teachers that are intentional in their interactions with students create an environment that encourages communication and collaboration, but with less teacher talk.

Teachers raise the level of learning with questioning and purposeful observation. Viewers of the video will be able to discuss practices that encourage teacher understanding of student knowledge and thinking, provide opportunities for students to explain and reflect on their thinking, and create activities that promote collaboration and discussion.

Audience

Kindergarten, First, and Second Grade Teachers: support effective questioning practices that encourage student thinking, language development, reflection, and collaboration.

Administrators and Supporting Staff: gain a better understanding of the importance of intentional teacher-student interactions with questioning practices that encourage student thinking, reflection, and opportunities for collaborative discussions.

Prekindergarten and Child Care Teachers: view it through the lens of where their children are developmentally and reflect on the relevant practices for their age group. Discuss what they can do with children prior to attending kindergarten (e.g., teacher-student interactions that encourage student thinking, language development and opportunities to work with peers).



Narration Found in the Questioning and Discussion Video

The Maryland State Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Development has published *Supporting Every Young Learner: Maryland's Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy, Birth to Age 8*, commonly referred to as the *Pedagogy Guide*. (subtitle on screen: The *Pedagogy Guide* can be accessed by going to <http://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org>).

The Maryland Early Learning Standards are found in the appendix of the *Pedagogy Guide*. We hope you find this video to be a useful tool as you work with Maryland's children.

Questions are typically categorized as being either low-level or high-level. A skilled teacher is adept in providing a balance between low-level and high-level questions to improve children's understanding and comprehension.

Open-ended questions allow students choice and flexibility in expressing themselves. This type of question provides students with multiple response opportunities and encourages class discussion.

Research suggests that there are benefits to students when a classroom has greater amounts of collaboration as opposed to teachers doing a majority of the communication. Discussions are opportunities for a dialogue to take place. Discussions can be between a student and teacher, or between students.

Often we look at implementing new programs or using data to make changes and improvements. Instead, our focus is on building teacher capacity by examining the interactions between teachers and students. This video looks at questioning and discussion. The titles of the other three videos are Student Engagement, Feedback, and Using Center Activities to Foster Social Foundations and Inquiry-Based Learning. All four videos can help us be more intentional in our interactions with children.

In this video let's observe kindergarten and prekindergarten classes as teachers use questioning and discussion to promote student learning and understanding.

Asking students to explain what they are doing or having them justify their thinking deepens their understanding.

The challenge for teachers is two-fold. First, planning lessons to include different levels of questions and opportunities for discussions. And second, being intentional or purposeful during the many teacher and student interactions that take place throughout the day. This means knowing when is it better to observe and listen, how best to frame a question or statement, and how to encourage student ownership of their learning.

Professional Development Activity for Questioning and Discussion Video

Suggested Activity #1 (audience: kindergarten – grade 2 teachers and PK/preschool*)

1. Ask opening questions: What is the purpose of questioning? Discuss in small groups before sharing in large group. Important purposes or reasons for questioning include:
 - Access prior knowledge
 - Extend student thinking/explanation
 - Foster oral expression
 - Encourage reflection
 - Provide feedback
 - Promote collaboration
 - Clarify or re-voice
 - Scaffold to differentiate learning
 - Assess
2. Sorting activity: In small groups provide sample questions to sort as low-level or high-level. Consider your audience - some people may need practice identifying and sorting different types of questions, others may benefit from developing questions for specific content or lessons.
 - Guiding question: Why is it important to include both low-level and high-level questions? When would you use low-level questions? High-level questions? Refer to the *Pedagogy Guide* (page 159-160, first three paragraphs).
 - Pass out baggies of questions on strips of paper to each table.*
 - Have teachers work in small groups to sort questions as low-level or high-level.
 - Follow up: After sorting the questions, participants can discuss ways to change a low-level question (i.e., factual) to be a high-level or divergent question.
 - Share in a large group. The presenter can highlight some of the commonalities between the types of questions or project a slide focusing on the similarities and differences.
 - Note: Low-level questions also have a purpose (e.g., prior knowledge, assess literal understanding, locate information from a text).
3. Preparation for viewing video
 - Share and discuss note-taking sheet with purposes of questioning (attached).
 - Ask participants to use the note-taking sheet while viewing the video.
4. View the video (13 minutes) – Use closed captions (CC) to view dialogue
 - While viewing the video, pause and rewind after the three scenarios (firefighter, geometric shapes, and airplane) to give teachers time to focus on the questioning techniques being used and complete the note-taking sheet for the given scenarios. Allow participants an opportunity to discuss their thoughts before moving on to the next scenario.
 - Option: You may consider doing this activity in a computer lab so participants can view the video on their own screen and stop/start as needed.
5. Follow-up Discussion
 - What levels of questioning and purposes of questioning are seen in the video?
 - How did teachers use questioning with English learners?

- How can we incorporate questioning in our lessons?
- How can we encourage our students to ask questions? (Example: Question game – “I have a triangle. Who has a square?”)
- Two STEM activities on force and motion (i.e., ramps and boat investigations) were in the video. What STEM Standards of Practice were used in the video? Examples include: collaborate as a STEM team, engage in logical reasoning, engage in inquiry, and interpret and communicate information from STEM

Note: A divergent question is a question with no specific answer, but usually requires high-level thinking that fosters imagination or creativity. It often encourages students to think of alternative responses. Example: What can we make with wooden blocks?

*Suggested Activity for Prekindergarten and Preschool - Discuss how the questioning and discussion practices in the video would be the same or different in prekindergarten or preschool. Which practices would you change to meet the needs of your program?

Suggested Activity #2 (audience: administrators, directors and resource staff)

1. Opening Discussion (can be in small groups)
 - Based on your experience, how does your staff (i.e., PK or K teachers) use questioning and discussion during instruction? What are some of the best practices and pitfalls with questioning?
 - Discuss and identify purposes for teacher questioning.
 - What role does questioning and discussion play in STEM activities and project-based learning?
2. Preparation for Viewing Video
 - Share and discuss note-taking sheet with purposes of questioning (attached).
 - Ask participants to use the note-taking sheet while viewing the video.
3. View the video (13 minutes) – Use closed captions (CC) to view dialogue
 - While viewing the video, pause and rewind after the three scenarios (firefighter, geometric shapes, and airplane) to give participants time to focus on the questioning techniques being used and to complete the note-taking sheet for the three scenarios. Allow participants an opportunity to discuss their thoughts before moving on to the next scenario.
4. Follow-up Discussion Questions
 - What levels of questioning and purposes of questioning are seen in the video?
 - How did teachers use questioning with English learners?
 - Two STEM activities on force and motion (i.e., ramps and boat investigations) were in the video. What STEM Standards of Practice did the teacher questioning support? Examples include: collaborate as a STEM team, engage in inquiry, engage in logical reasoning, and interpret and communicate information from STEM
 - What do teachers need to be effective in questioning and discussion?

- Environment with positive teacher-student relationships that encourages student risk-taking.
- Teachers being more intentional in asking questions and promoting discussion – both in planning and in unplanned moments.
- The relationship between teachers observing students and asking questions (i.e., knowing the importance of both).
- The balance of teacher-directed instruction and student-directed learning and its impact on the quality of questioning and discussion.
- Teachers developing activities that foster student independence.
- Consider how questioning and discussion is listed as a look-for or part of your teacher observation.
- How can this video be used as professional development for your staff?
- Share that there is another professional development activity available for administrators to share with their teachers.

The following pages have a completed note-taking page for presenters and a blank one that can be used with participants attending the professional development.

Thank you to the following people for their contributions in developing the professional development activities: Anne Arundel County Public Schools (Alison Good, Chelsea Massa and Sharon Mattoon), Baltimore City Public Schools (A’Kwaela Morris), Frederick County Public Schools (Michele Baisey), Howard County Public Schools (Laura Brown and Jessica Karbassi), and the Maryland State Department of Education (Laura Hook, Robert Wagner and Monica Waldron). Please contact the Division of Early Childhood Development at MSDE for information.

For Presenter Only - Questioning and Discussion Video Observation Note Taking Sheet

As you view each scenario...

- Check each of the purposes of questioning which are addressed
- Write down examples of questions for each purpose listed (can be listed multiple times)
- Think about when, why, and how questions are used

Purposes of Questioning	3-D Shapes (scenario 1) 2:02-2:25	Firefighter (scenario 2) 3:40-4:31	Airplane (scenario 3) 8:56-9:53
Accessing prior knowledge		"What's that called?"	"Tell me about your airplane?" "What do you think will be under here?" "Have you ever been on an airplane before?" "What do they put down under the seats?"
Extending student thinking/ explanation	"How did it become a rectangle?"		"Tell me about your airplane?" "What do you think will be under here?" "What do they put down under the seats?"
Fostering oral expression	"How did it become a rectangle?"	"Can you ask Emmanuel? Do you know what that is on his head?"	"Tell me about your airplane?" "What do you think will be under here?" "Ask him what he thinks goes down there?" "What do they put down under the seats?"
Encouraging reflection	"How did it become a rectangle?"		"Tell me about your airplane?" "Ask him what he thinks goes down there?"

Providing feedback	“Did you notice when you put the two squares together, this side was longer? Yea but nothing happened here, right? We’re not adding anything to this side.”	“Can you ask Emmanuel? Do you know what that is on his head?”	
Promoting collaboration		“Can you ask Emmanuel? Do you know what that is on his head?”	“Ask him what he thinks is under there?” “What do they put down under the seats?” “Dean knows about this too. What do you know about it, Dean?”
Clarifying or Re-voicing	“Did you notice when you put the two squares together, this side was longer? Yea but nothing happened here, right? We’re not adding anything to this side.”	“It’s a hat, yeah. It’s like a helmet.”	“Dean knows about this too. What do you know about it, Dean?”
Facilitating discussion		“Can you ask Emmanuel? Do you know what that is on his head?”	“What do they put down under the seats?”
Scaffolding to differentiate student learning	“Did you notice when you put the two squares together, this side was longer? Yea but nothing happened here, right? We’re not adding anything to this side.”	“What’s that called?” It’s a hat, yeah. It’s like a helmet.”	“Ask him what he thinks goes down there?” “Dean knows about this too. What do you know about it, Dean?”
Assessment	“How did it become a rectangle?”	“What’s that called?” “Can you ask Emmanuel? Do you know what that is on his head?”	

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Purposes of Questioning	3-D Shapes (2:02-2:25)	Firefighter (3:43-4:31)	Airplane (8:56-9:53)
Accessing prior knowledge			
Extending student thinking/explanation			
Fostering oral expression			
Encouraging Reflection			
Providing feedback			
Promoting Collaboration			
Clarifying or re-voicing			
Facilitating Discussion			
Scaffolding to differentiate learning			
Assessment			