



Effective Questioning Strategies in the Classroom: A Step-by-Step Approach to Engaged Thinking and Learning, K-8

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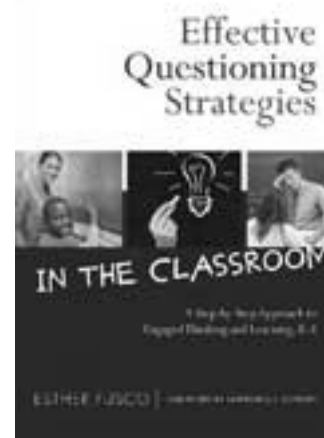
Author: Esther Fusco (2012)

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Teachers working from a communicative paradigm dream about lively discussions in their classroom—a Socratic way of teaching that stimulates students’ mind and brings synergy to the learning environments where everybody, including the teacher, is talking to learn. Building from her years in the classroom and her related research, Fusco asserts that discussion is the best way to entice students to become reflective and responsible thinkers, and it is teachers’ responsibility to provide them with a solid cognitive foundation that supports critical thinking and problem solving skills. But in reality, a wide gap exists between theory and practice, and teachers (especially in U.S. contexts.) are often afraid of losing lesson time for discussion under the pressure of standardized tests. However, as Fusco explains, exploratory discussion not only boosts community atmosphere in the classroom, but discussion also results in superior test outcomes from students taught with effective questioning methods. To that end, *Effective Questioning Strategies* is a practical guide for teachers hoping to leverage questions for cognitive development.

Each chapter of this book is structured with three components: Questions in the Classroom, Teacher Reflection, and Action Items. In Questions in the Classroom, Fusco introduces different techniques for asking questions with specific theoretical models such as Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, and Gardner's Multiple Intelligences. The Teachers' Reflection section contains real teachers' thoughts on their own classroom practice with the suggested questioning techniques. Teachers' testimonials provide readers the feel of real classroom, and open a window to their trials and errors. Action Items at the end of each chapter offer practical guidance for teachers hoping to try out the various questioning techniques.

What I liked the most in this book is the specific examples of classroom interaction showcasing each level of questioning models. Both beginner and experienced teachers can easily follow its steps and modify it to fit in their lessons. Fusco also demonstrates how Gardner's Multiple Intelligences might be incorporated to Bloom's Taxonomy Objectives for differentiated instruction. The author also includes metacognitive questions as a planning tool for teachers that can be used for secondary and post-secondary students as well to help them process for what they read. While successful students are reflective on about their learning, less-unsuccessful ones tend not to. For those less-reflective students, Fusco models some metacognitive questions to create a focus, establish a purpose, and make connections to students themselves. Questions range from "what and why am I doing it?" to "what questions do I have?" This is something I have never done in my class; I want to try it soon.

As an instructor of English as a Foreign Language on a large Southern public university campus, I especially appreciate the book's examples of synthesis and evaluation questions. My students—often from the Middle East—particularly respond well to all activities surrounding dialogue. I always ask students about the title after reading each unit if they think the title was appropriate for the unit. Oftentimes, they want to change it, and the process of discussing why it should be changed demonstrates what they understood. It has been highly positive learning experience for the entire class, and that gives me a chance to assess their understanding. This book is very useful in this context because it contains many different questioning models with specific examples that gradually scaffold students into critical thinking. I am sure that it can be a great help for both experienced and inexperienced teachers when they plan their lessons for every student in their classroom. Although the book's title signals a K-8 context, I have found it exceedingly useful for stimulating deeper thinking in my post-secondary EFL classroom.

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