

Teaching & Learning Newsletter

Bishop Rawstorne

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Questioning and Feedback – Top Ten Strategies

1. Differentiated questioning.

Avoid tennis questions between the teacher and the student, aiming instead for 'basketball questioning' that bounce ideas around the room, forcing students to listen more intently and be active learners.

2. Wait time.

Evidence shows that the depth (between 400 and 800% increase in length of response) & quality of answers greatly improves with this extra waiting time of just a few seconds. 5 seconds is the optimum time.

3. Don't accept "I don't know".

Being prepared with a strategy for students saying 'I don't know' is clearly essential. There are lots of methods: 'phone a friend'; 'I'll come back to you'; 'can anyone give a clue' etc.

4. DIRT time in lessons.

As a rule, students should be spending more time actively responding to their feedback than we spend on giving it.

5. "Now try..... Explain why...."

After feedback we need to make sure that we have students actively responding to their feedback. A nice and simple habit is to use 'Now try...Explain why...'. So simple—low effort and potentially high impact.

6. Wedding cake feedback.

This is a simple analogy to make the layers of assessment clear. The first layer of the wedding cake is self-assessment.. It is the biggest tier – they should spend the most time assessing what they have done first! The second tier, taking slightly less time, is peer-assessment. Finally, the smallest tier is teacher assessment.

7. Question level analysis.

Students need to understand the specific command words in their subject discipline and break down the different types of questions/topics etc.

8. Model answer – 'what is the question?'

Using exemplar models is a fundamental aspect of good teaching practice. There are lots of ways to go about modeling, such as shared writing, using past exam answers etc. One easy method is to show students a ready-made model answer, but then ask them to formulate the question to the model answer (either simple closed questions or full essay questions).

Themes for this Newsletter

- Recognising attitudes that hinder student progress
 - Mentoring AGT Students
- Questioning & Feedback Top Ten Tips
 - Nearpod
 - Literacy Focus

9. Self-assessment.

The process of explaining (or even defining) the assessment criteria with students can help promote deeper learning. This is a handy post on 'pre-flight checklists' to guide self-assessment: <http://improvingteaching.co.uk/2013/08/17/inducing-quality-writing/>.

10. 'Token Questions'.

To stop a barrage of low level questions from students during extended tasks you can allocate them two tokens so that they max out how many questions they can ask.

Communicating Clearly Using Connectives

When communicating in both the written and spoken form, using a variety of connectives improves the logical organisation of ideas. It also provides signposts for the reader, teacher and ultimately the examiner. By encouraging students to build up the range of connective words they use, we help to reinforce the importance of this aspect of literacy. For ease, connectives can be divided into the following eight categories.

Adding: also, as well as, in addition

Sequencing: next, then, finally, meanwhile

Emphasising: especially, above all, significantly

Comparing: equally, similarly, like, equally

Cause and effect: because, therefore, since, as a result

Qualifying: however, although, unless, apart from

Illustrating: for example, such as, for instance

Contrasting: whereas, instead of, alternatively

- "Include these Ingredients": Give students specific connectives which they must use in a piece of work and ask them to highlight them for you
- "Connective Search": When peer assessing each other's work, ask students to look for good use of connectives. Who used connectives well? What difference did it make to their work?
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Recognising attitudes that hinder students progress and combatting them.



We are all aware that a major factor in whether students fulfil their potential is the attitude that each student brings to his or her studies. However, this is not a fixed quantity and teachers can often do much to recognise classic patterns of underachievement and help students to change how they think.

The following descriptions are taken from Andrew Martin's book on "Building Classroom Success—eliminating academic fear and failure". Martin lists a variety of what he calls failure oriented behaviours:

1. **Self-handicapping:** the practice of putting obstacles in the path of one's own success in order to use these obstacles as the excuses for poor performance.
2. **Defensive pessimism:** setting unrealistically low expectations on oneself in order to reduce the likelihood of failure.
3. **Defensive optimism:** setting unrealistically high expectations which guarantee failure but ensure that the failure can be blamed on the target rather than one's own competence. Consequences of this can include not learning properly from mistakes and thus missing chances for genuine improvement.
4. **Overstriving and perfectionism:** these students fear failure intensely and deal with it through intense perfectionism. Although this has a positive side, it can be a serious problem because overstrivers do not deal with poor performance well and can then take more drastic self-protective action.
5. **Success avoidance:** these students fear success and try to avoid it. This could be for social reasons or because they fear that success will lead to more pressure.
6. **Learned helplessness:** these students give up trying completely, having repeatedly suffered failure or poor performance.

Next month we will look at ways to challenge and change these behaviours so that fear and failure can be overcome in order for the students to become "success seekers".

Often, students already hold highly insightful and creative solutions to their problems within themselves. It's just about finding strategies to unlock these.

Nearpod is an iPad app that has many advantages to assist in enhancing teaching. It allows you to create or upload resources which can then be cast onto pupil screens. (iPads or computers).

Some features include:

- Upload resources— it is what is says on the tin: Upload your own PowerPoint, Flipchart, etc.
- Add open ended question— create a question that is open for pupils to write what they think
- Multiple choice questions
- Draw the answer
- Insert hyperlink - students can click on this to go to a video or website of your choice

When using Nearpod you can input all of these features into one Nearpod casting session if you wish, or just a select few.

Examples of how it works:

Students load up Nearpod either from the app or online and type in your casting code. You now have control over what the pupils can see or do. You could start with a short PowerPoint that you can guide them through and then input questions which will pop up on all pupils screens.

During this time you can see everything that each pupil is writing or drawing, and if you see any pupil writing a stand out model answer or making errors you can share these and cast them onto all of the screens; giving pupils chance to assess on their own screen.

Mentoring AGT students

Everyone, at some point in their life, is unsuccessful at something: an exam, an application, an interview. AGT students are just as prone to this as others. However, the longer they go without experiencing failure, the harder it is when it happens. Building resilience and fostering resourceful independence are essential to their wellbeing and their ability to realise their potential.

Mentoring provides a privileged insight into the world of AGT students and can make a world of difference to their well-being and ability to cope – especially with the ever increasing pressures of GCSEs. Often, AGT students greatly value the opportunity to talk privately to someone who understands their learning needs and realises that they, like other students, can find things difficult and need encouragement and understanding. It is rewarding to empower them to discover for themselves simple ways to address their particular needs and resolve any issues.