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Raising the Rigor: Effective Questioning Strategies and Techniques for the Classroom

By Eileen Depka

Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *Raising the Rigor: Effective Questioning Strategies and Techniques for the Classroom* by Eileen Depka. *Raising the Rigor* shares questioning practices K–12 educators should use to help all students acquire higher-order thinking skills for succeeding in the 21st century.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote a healthy school culture.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

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Chapter 1

Using Questioning Strategies in the Classroom

1. What evidence in the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress shows that U.S. academic performance needs to improve?
2. How does the information gained from standardized tests differ from the purpose and end goal of academic measures?
3. According to John Dewey, what is *thinking*? Why is it important to engage in thinking? Why does Dewey promote deep questioning and engagement over memorization and recall?
4. How do lower-level questions differ from richer questions? Provide a few examples of each of these two types of questions that are appropriate for your class's content.
5. Why should teachers include preplanning questions in their approach to a lesson?

Chapter 2

Deconstructing Higher-Order Thinking Skills

1. As teachers introduce students to new content, what three questions should they ask themselves to make sure they engage students in higher-order thinking skills?
2. Why are meaningful tasks frequently associated with real-world problems? What qualities do meaningful tasks characteristically have?
3. Briefly describe the information that is required to complete a template design.
4. What characteristics do students who process information at higher levels display? Why should teachers be aware of these attributes?
5. In your own words, define *taxonomy*. What were the original major categories and intents of Bloom's taxonomy, and how have the format and the purposes for which teachers can use the taxonomy grown over time?

Chapter 3

Developing Effective Assessments

1. According to David Conley, when does deeper learning occur?
2. What evaluative purposes do selected-response questions best serve, and what purposes are they unable to fulfill? What can multiple-choice questions better assess, and how can their purpose be taken to higher levels?
3. List the six steps involved in the assessment design process. What are the definite dozen considerations for assessment design?
4. Of table 3.2's (pages 40–41) tips for getting the most benefit from an assessment, which of the practices do you currently use, and which practices would you consider adding to your routine?
5. Consider classroom and assessment questions that you have recently asked students or that you ask often. How many of these questions would fit in the two lowest levels of Bloom's taxonomy? In what ways do you think you could incorporate higher-level questions?

Chapter 4

Ensuring Student Success With Complex Questions

1. What does *understanding* mean at base, and how do teachers know when students have understanding?
2. List Robert Marzano's four levels at which teachers can ask students questions to prompt deeper thinking. What response pattern can these levels create for students?
3. In your own words, define *essential questions*. Why is this type of questioning helpful to students?
4. Why is maintaining simplicity of vocabulary and sophistication of thought helpful? How can teachers keep instruction simple yet sophisticated?
5. Why do graphic organizers often help students complete complex assignments without lessening the depth of thinking the assignments require? Provide an example of a case in which you provide students with a graphic organizer, or a case in which your students would benefit from having a graphic organizer; describe the graphic organizer.

Chapter 5

Creating Standards-Based Questions and Tasks

1. According to Douglas Reeves, what three criteria can help determine the richest standards?
2. What does breaking standards down into their parts help teachers understand, and what important things does deconstructing standards help teachers do?
3. Take a look at how figure 5.1 (page 65) breaks a standard down into its parts. Using the same template, break down a standard you have used. What does this process tell you about what a student must do to achieve the standard?
4. Using the standard deconstruction you did using figure 5.1, design a rubric (like the one in figure 5.2, page 67) that corresponds to the deconstructed standard.
5. What level of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge framework would you assign to the standard you deconstructed in question 3, and why is this the case?

Chapter 6

Encouraging Traits to Attain College and Career Readiness

1. List the highlighted skills necessary for success in the workplace that will help prepare students for college and career readiness. Why are these skills, which aren't content related, crucial for students to develop?
2. How are good judgment, responsibility, and initiative interrelated? In what ways do you promote good judgment and responsibility in school?
3. Why is it important for teachers to track data of students' college and career readiness and for students to receive feedback on this data?
4. Take a look at table 6.1 (page 80). What can teachers and students review by looking at the results horizontally? What can they review by analyzing the results vertically?
5. List the five steps teachers can follow when having explicit discussions about a lesson and its learning targets. Use these steps to prepare a lesson introduction you would provide to students in your class.

Chapter 7

Encouraging Student Involvement

1. How much of your class time do you lead, and how much time is student led? In what ways do you give students opportunities for engagement and discussion during student-led time?
2. According to John Dewey, why is it important for teachers to believe in their students? What steps do you currently take to establish a climate of respect in your classroom?
3. How can teachers create an atmosphere in which students feel more comfortable getting involved in class discussions? What should teachers avoid, and what should they promote?
4. Why is it important for students to have ample wait time? What options are available for increasing wait time?
5. Why should teachers engage in self-reflection and ask themselves tough questions? How do you currently engage in self-reflection, and how do you think you could more effectively self-reflect?

Chapter 8

Growing Students' Ability to Ask Questions That Matter

1. Why is the ability to question a prerequisite for the ability to think? How do students learn to facilitate and contribute to fruitful discussions?
2. According to Dylan Wiliam, why should teachers provide students with plenty of opportunities to ask questions and confirm their students know the current learning expectations? How do you make these necessities a reality, and how could you better meet these needs?
3. In Socratic circles, what actions do the leader and students take? What is the goal of the Socratic circles structure?
4. Provide an example of a question appropriate to a reading in your class that could be a Socratic circle's opening question. Why does this question fit the requirements of an opening question?
5. Consider the question starters and sentence stems in table 8.2 (page 99). Write your own question starter or sentence stem to fit each level of Bloom's taxonomy.