

CTLT's Spring Semester 2006 Teaching Tip for February 9

Last week's teaching tip talked about the importance of listening. As an obvious follow-up this week, let's talk about asking questions. Since questions are such an integral part of teaching, it is easy to take them for granted. We can benefit from examining the "teaching power" of questions and revisiting the different levels of questions based on Bloom's lower to higher ordering of thinking skills.

First the "teaching power" of questions

Directly related to last's week's discussion, asking questions demonstrates that you are listening.

Asking yourself questions about your teaching is reflection.

Asking questions can help you clarify what you believe to be true, and in doing so, the questioning can help suspend assumptions.

Asking questions demonstrates your respect for other people and their ideas.

Two things to remember-Asking effective questions is much more work than just putting a question mark at the end of a thought, and the tone for your questions should always be inquiry, not interrogation.

Now let's look at different types of teaching questions. The following information is from *Tools for Teaching* by Barbara Gross Davis. This text is part of the Center's resource library and is available to you.

Davis discusses levels and types of questions, and the list below identifies questions that require different levels of thinking, based on Bloom's six cognitive levels:

1. Knowledge skills (identification and recall of information)

"Who, what, when, where, how. . .?"

"Describe. . ."

2. Comprehension skills (organization and selection of facts and ideas)

"Retell. . ." "Explain. . ." "Give some examples of. . ."

3. Application skills (using information in a new context)

"How is. . . an example of. . .?"

"How is. . . related to...?"

"Why is. . . significant?"

4. Analysis skills (separation of a whole into component parts)

"What are the parts or features of. . .?"

"Classify. . . according to. . ."

"Outline/diagram. . ."

"How does. . . compare/contrast with. . .?"

"What evidence can you list for...?"

5. Synthesis skills (combination of ideas to form a new whole)

"What would you predict / infer from. . .?"

"What ideas can you add to. . .?"

"How would you create / design a new. . .?"

"What might happen if you combined. . .?"

"What solutions would you suggest for. . .?"

6. Evaluation skills (development of opinions, judgments, or decisions)

"Do you agree. . .?"

"What do you think about. . .?"

"What is the most important. . .?"

"Place the following in order of priority. . ."

"How would you decide about. . .?"

"What criteria would you use to assess. . .?"

Asking and answering questions are important parts of effective teaching and learning. The types of questions you ask should capture the students' attention, arouse their curiosity, reinforce key points, and encourage active learning.e