



Friday Focus

Carter County Schools

Asking Good Questions

Teachers typically spend between 35 and 50% of their instructional time asking questions. Leven and Long showed that a typical teacher asked between 300-400 questions each day. Yet when they looked at the types of questions asked, what they found was teachers ask only about 5 percent of what they called "higher level" questions—roughly 17 questions daily—which went beyond basic recall. Ironically, during interviews teachers stated that they understood the impact higher level questions make on student understanding. What can educators do to improve the quality of questioning in their classrooms?

Before teaching any lesson, effective teachers create high level questions that will cause students to think critically. When students begin to think critically, they develop confidence and increase success in all content areas. In order for any of us to be ready to meet the challenge of taking students to higher levels, we must take the time to plan ahead. This planning increases

teacher confidence and helps ensure success in the classroom.

In addition to being equipped with high level questions, teachers must practice strategies that make all students accountable during class discussions. The book, *Teach Like a Champion*, suggests several techniques. One of them is "Cold Call." Using this strategy, teachers call on students regardless of whether they have raised their hands. Another technique is "Everybody Writes." For this strategy, set your students up for rigorous engagement by giving them the opportunity to reflect first in writing before discussing. As author Joan Didion says, "I write to know what I think." There are several copies of *Teach Like a Champion* available throughout the district for teachers who would like to investigate more ideas for student engagement during

questioning.

The use of good questioning strategies is positively related to increases in on-task behavior, length of student responses, the number of relevant contributions, the number of student-to-student interactions, student use of complete sentences, speculative thinking, and relevant questions posed by students. When educators realize the importance of good questioning practices, academic achievement can transform from a dream to a reality.



Great Teachers Are Not Random

Whitaker says, "Great teachers have a plan and purpose for everything they do. If things don't work out the way they had envisioned, they reflect on what they could have done differently and adjust their plans accordingly." Very little happens in a great teacher's classroom that is random.

"Great teachers intentionally arrange, rearrange, alter, and adjust the structures that frame their teaching. Their classroom setup, their instructional approaches, their time management—all are carefully planned to promote a productive learning environment. If two students cannot sit by each other peaceably, they no longer sit by each other. If one student tends to be disruptive, the teacher takes steps to minimize that student's impact on others in the room. If a class spirals into rowdiness by the end of the day, the schedule of activities makes room for them to let off steam appropriately."

For a great teacher it is all about taking responsibility for everything that happens in the classroom from student behavior, to instruction, and student learning. Great teachers prepare ahead of time and have the skills and willingness to adjust what they are doing to meet the needs of the students they are teaching. They don't say, "My fourth period is the worst class I have ever had!" or "This is just a low group of students; there is no way they can meet state goals." They take on the responsibility and the challenge of adjusting what they do to ensure ALL students are successful. Furthermore, they care about their individual student's success and the students know that, thus they want to be in their classroom. Preparation and willingness to change are key characteristics of a great teacher. If we all focus on these two characteristics we will become a great school district!

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Upcoming Academy Dates:

2-3 Jan. 17	ECBS Jan. 16
4-5 Jan. 24	WCMS Jan. 23
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