

### Survey Question

### 14. This teacher gives us time to explain our ideas

#### Australian Professional Standard

Professional Knowledge Domain

Standard 3: Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning

Focus areas:

- 3.2 Plan, structure and sequence learning programs
- 3.5 Use effective classroom communication
- 4.1 Support student participation

#### What does this sound like in the classroom?

"We get lots of time for class discussion. We have some 'thinking routines' that we use and we do a lot of small group work so we all get a chance to talk."

#### Why is this important?

This simple practice can enhance students' understanding and critical thinking. By allowing greater explanation time there is an opportunity for students to explore deeper analyses of questions or ideas. As such, students in turn get to reflect upon their classmates' insights and gain greater perspective. In addition, by allowing students time to explain ideas, the teacher builds trust, confidence and a collegial learning atmosphere.

We are social animals in reacting to others, learning from others. We learn from social examples: watching, doing, deliberative instruction and feedback from other people. Similarly, much *information assimilated through personal discovery can be shallow, insecure and incomplete*. (Csibra & Gergely, 2006) When given time to consider others ideas and synthesise them with instruction alongside their own reflections, students can develop a deeper understanding not only of a particular topic but also the process of learning.

Lavery (2008) completed a meta-analysis and found highest effects for organising and transforming, self-consequences, self-instruction/verbalisation and self-evaluation. One of these is allowing students to 'hear themselves think' (self-verbalisation, self-explanation, self-consequences, self-instruction, self-evaluation) – that is, participating in becoming self-teachers. The opportunity for to do this lies in allowing students to 'stretch out' a little and explain their ideas.

[http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1207&context=research\\_conference](http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1207&context=research_conference)

**What strategies have been shown to work in the classroom?**

Research evidence strongly supports teachers' use of explicit teaching practices that include:

- Explaining new ideas, and checking that students understand
- Giving time for asking and answering questions
- Evaluating and confirming whether students understand what they are learning before progressing.

Checking for understanding should occur frequently during a lesson, and involve various tools and strategies. For example, after introducing, explaining and providing examples about a concept, a teacher should check that students understand the concept (Archer, 2011). This involves more than simply asking students if they understand. There are many ways to check for understanding effectively including: having students generate examples and non-examples; asking questions that require deeper processing about the meaning; and, asking students to explain ideas in their own words as part of review at the end of a lesson (Archer, 2011; Fisher & Frey, 2014) Allowing students to perform these tasks is vital to the outcome.

**What three things can I try in my classroom tomorrow?**

1. Are you giving students time to explain their ideas or reasoning? Do they have an opportunity to do this verbally or in written form? Analyse your lesson and identify a section in which you can provide an opportunity for student elaboration.
2. What techniques or formats are you using to share student ideas? Is it a forum shared among the entire class (e.g. Class discussion, a twitter feed) or is it an opportunity for students to share their ideas with individuals (a submitted written piece, work shared with peers)? What techniques or formats will work best for your class?
3. Create a formal or informal debate time in class where students are invited to analyse/extend/rebut points made. Offer avenues for students to extend their thinking or explanation of perspective. This can be simple verbal questions or longer form thought provoking material.

**What opportunities are there for collaboration with my colleagues?**

Ask a colleague to review how fully their students explain their ideas; the time allotted to the practice and the depth of discussion.

Request an opportunity to observe an expert colleague's lesson in order to see how good discussion is encouraged and guided.

Where can I find out more?

#### Video

- Ron Ritchhart, Culture of Thinking videos: Generate, Sort, Connect, Elaborate Thinking Routine
- Chemistry – Color, Symbol Image Thinking Routine

#### Referenced articles, books and other great reads:

- Fisher, D. & Frey, N. (2014) Checking for Understanding: Formative Assessment Techniques for Your Classroom.
- Hattie, J. (2009) Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement. Routledge Press.
- Hollingsworth, J. & Ybarra, S. (2009). Explicit Direct Instruction: The Power of the Well-Crafted, Well-Taught Lesson
- NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC), (2014) What Works Best: Evidence-based practices to help improve NSW student performance. Accessed 16 May 2015.
- Schleicher, A. (2012) Ed., Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Lessons from around the World, OECD Publishing. Accessed April 2015