Question 12: Pivot Resource Pack

Pivot
Transforming teaching practice

Survey Question	12. This teacher asks me to explain my answers - why I think what I think
Australian Professional Standard	Professional Practice Domain Standard 3: Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning Focus areas: • 3.3 Use teaching strategies • 3.5 Use effective classroom communication • 1.3 Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds • 4.1 Support student participation
What does this sound like in the classroom?	"We have to explain ourselves in this class. It's challenging; and it makes us really think about what we say."
Why is this important?	Incorporating this practice in your teaching is important for a number of reasons. It is, firstly, an effective method to check understanding. Secondly, it can be used to extend learning through discussion of meaning or expanding upon a topic. Thirdly, such action increases class interaction, creating a more dynamic learning sphere. In addition it shows that the teacher is taking an interest in students' learning and development. 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 • Reviewing learning and explaining how it relates to other concepts and skills (NSW DEC, 2014) Checking for understanding evaluates if students understand what they have been told before continuing with the lesson (Hattie, 2009). It involves the teacher continually verifying that students are learning what is being taught while it is being taught (Hollingsworth & Ybarra, 2009). Checking for understanding helps teachers identify learning goals, provide students feedback [link to resource pack on feedback] and plan instruction based on what the student has or has not understood (Fisher & Frey, 2014). International testing data shows that practices that involve students

explaining the meaning of a text and being asked questions that challenge them to get a better understanding can increase learning significantly (NSW DEC, 2014). Checking for understanding can also help keep students more engaged in lessons, by making the classroom more interactive (Hollingsworth & Ybarra, 2009).

What strategies have been shown to work in the classroom?

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)

An example approach to check for understanding is TAPPLE (Hollingsworth & Ybarra, 2009):

1. Teach First - explain the concept first
2. Ask a Question - ask specific questions on what you are teaching
3. Pause and Pair-Share - pause after asking a question and before selecting a student to respond to give all students thinking time to prepare an answer. You can also have students discuss the answer in pairs
4. Pick a Non-Volunteer - randomly select three or more non-volunteers to answer check for understanding questions to assess whether the entire class understands
5. Listen to the Response - is the response correct, partially correct or incorrect? What does this mean for what you will teach next
6. Effective Feedback - give feedback based on the student's response

What three things can I try in my classroom tomorrow?

1. Plan which point during your lesson will be the most appropriate time to ask questions or solicit feedback.
2. Prepare questions that will extend students' thinking.
3. Have a 'before and after' question time. Find out what students' opinions are prior to and following new information being delivered.

What opportunities are there for collaboration with my colleagues?

Work with colleagues to develop rubrics that can be distributed at the commencement of a topic or assessment task. The rubric should provide elaborations for students on why higher-order, critical thinking skills are necessary for a deep understanding of a topic. Confer with colleagues about how much time they devote to listening to students' responses. Collate a bank of extension questions for particular topics taught in your subject area – these could be stored as a set of laminated question cards and shared between your teaching teams.

Where can I find out more?

Video

- Ron Ritchhart, Culture of Thinking videos: Generate, Sort, Connect, Elaborate Thinking Routine https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwqxAJpxrnk & Secondary Chemistry – Color, Symbol Image Thinking Routine http://www.ronritchhart.com/COT_Videos.html
- Anita Archer's ***Explicit Instruction*** website, see http://explicitinstruction.org/video-secondary-main/
- TAPPLE Method of Checking for Understanding http://dataworks-ed.com/research-link-page/tapple/
- Teaching Channel: Keep it or Junk it? https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/help-students-analyze-text
- Teaching Channel: Claim, evidence, reasoning. https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/support-claims-with-evidence-getty

Referenced articles, books and other great reads:

- Archer, A. & Hughes, C. (2011) Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching. New York: Guilford Press.
- Fisher, D. & Frey, N. via ASCD (2014) Checking for understanding
- 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.
- TAPPLE (2015) Method of Checking for Understanding.