



WHAT WORKS IN EDUCATION  
THE GEORGE LUCAS EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

## 5 Powerful Questions Teachers Can Ask Students

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Image credit: Veer

My first year teaching a literacy coach came to observe my classroom. After the students left, she commented on how I asked the whole class a question, would wait just a few seconds, and then answer it myself. "It's cute," she added. Um, I don't think she thought it was so cute. I think she was treading lightly on the ever-so shaky ego of a brand-new teacher while still giving me some very necessary feedback.

So that day, I learned about wait/think time. And also, over the years, I learned to ask better and better questions.

Many would agree that for inquiry to be alive and well in a classroom that, amongst other things, the teacher needs to be expert at asking strategic questions not only asking well-designed ones, but ones that will also lead students to questions of their own.

### Keeping It Simple

I also learned over the years that asking straightforward, simply-worded questions can be just as effective as those intricate ones. With that in mind, if you are a new teacher or perhaps not so new but know that question-asking is an area where you'd like to grow, start tomorrow with these five:

#### *#1. What do you think?*

This question interrupts us from telling too much. There is a place for direct instruction where we give students information yet we need to always strive to balance this with plenty of opportunities for students to make sense of and apply that new information using their schemata and understanding.

#### *#2. Why do you think that?*

After students share what they think, this follow-up question pushes them to provide reasoning for their thinking.

#### *#3. How do you know this?*

## 5 Powerful Questions