

SOF Teaching Toolkit

To Avoid:

- Teacher – Student – Teacher talk, that allow all others to stop thinking
- Only raised hands responses, which allow all others to stop thinking
- Teacher talking too much or a few students talking too much
- Strongest students doing all of the thinking
- Students reading texts, without processing and thinking
- Static energy – too much of one learning style favored

To Promote:

- All students thinking for a majority of the period; all students meeting AIM
- Higher level thinking VS recall
- Elaborative & Creative thought
- Opportunities for formative assessment
- Space for Special Education teachers to work with students
- Space for Differentiation
- Varied energy – connect with different learning styles

SOF techniques for asking questions that promote student thinking and give you time to observe student understanding

Turn & Talk – Ask a question and have students discuss it with a partner/table for a minute or so. More students will have ideas to share. Have them consult notebooks, etc. Listen to groups to sense understanding.

Think Time – Ask a question and wait until you have more hands up. Tell them to keep thinking, or to go back to their notes until you sense that a good number are getting it.

Stop & Jot / Take it to the Page – Ask a question that students answer in their notebooks or journals. Have them consult notes, etc. More students will have ideas to share. Can use this with Cornell notes/‘T’ charts. You can make this written conversation at tables.

Pass off – Instead of rallying questions and answers between you and students, call on a student and have him/her call on another to add on, and s/he calls on another, so that more students can participate and you can take a step back and observe.

Exit Cards – At the end of the period, ask a question that captures the main point of the lesson or a key concept. The students answer on index cards/post-its, etc and you collect it as a quick gauge of their current understanding. You can do this at any point in the period, even as the DO NOW, to capture student thinking.

Wipe Off Boards – Ask a question and have students work on the answer individually or together on mini-white boards. You can walk around and look at/listen to their thinking. They can hold up their work at the end and you can scan it.

Popsicle Sticks – To motivate students to keep their minds on during your questions, don’t ask for hands. Instead pull popsicle sticks (or names from grade book) with student names and those students answer. Keep them on their toes this way.

Numbered Heads – To help keep students on task during table work or table discussion. Number the students at each table 1-5 (or however many students there are at the table). When you ask kids to share or answer questions, call on a number. This way, all the ‘two’s’ are responsible for thinking. This helps keep kids focused, as they know that their ‘number’ can get called. The table is responsible for ensuring that all are prepared.

Conferring – While students are working independently, briefly check in with students individually. Have them talk through problems, explain their reasoning, check their understanding of class concepts, etc. Record your observations. Consider what this student needs to work on.

Clipboard/Teacher Notes – Step back & record what you are noticing about student understanding of skills and concepts during class. Switch from running class, to observing your students. Capture your ideas while students are working in groups, during ‘turn and talks’, during class discussions - read their notes, record conferences, etc. Walking around with a clipboard also encourages students to take work time and discussion more seriously.

Habits of Mind/Blooms Taxonomy – Plan your questions ahead of time. Whether you want to ask them orally or on a worksheet, think about the kind of thinking that you want your questions to spark. Spend minimal time on recall questions – just to make sure there is a foundation. If kids are struggling – REMIND THEM OF THE ANSWERS OR TELL THEM TO LOOK IN NOTES. Don’t just keep asking recall questions or start dropping clues – there is no thinking for students here! Spend most class time on higher order questions. Spiral questions from basic to analysis to application. Start concrete and get more abstract.

Techniques to help students think while they read, watch or listen & to give you written evidence of student thinking

Cornell Notes – Students take notes on main ideas of text on the right side of the paper. On the left side margin, they create questions, connections, etc about the notes. They can also record important vocabulary in the left margin. You can stop a movie or your lecture at planned points for students to write in margins.

T charts & Triple T Charts – Similar to Cornell Notes with more space for the left margin. The right side is for quotes from the text or examples of problems. The left side/s can be for analysis, questions, interpretations etc. This can also be called, ‘It says/I say’. The right is from the text & the left is the student’s ideas.

Notes with Focus Questions – Read the text you want students to read ahead of time. Create a focus question that gets at the significance of the reading and the conceptual understanding you want students to work towards with this text. Students record this question in the heading of their notes. All notes students record should help answer this question.

Indicate Stopping Points/‘So Basically’ Statements – Break the reading into digestible chunks. Have students stop five or so times to synthesize the main idea of the chunk by completing a statement that explains what the chunk was mainly about. They can do this again at the end of the text to capture the main idea of the entire text. Use focus question to guide students’ ‘So Basically’ statements.

Techniques for having students discuss and process texts/movies/trips/etc.

Charting – Put questions or prompts on chart paper scattered throughout room or at tables. Students silently respond to the prompts and to one another’s comments. You can stress making connections, suggesting alternatives, etc. Students can pass charts or wander through room. Move to discussion afterwards.

Accountable Talks – A structured discussion to which students come prepared with notes/texts/research. You can move students into a circle, have them clear desks of everything but evidence for talk, have one half of class watch the other, etc. You can pose a focus question, have students generate a bank of discussion questions or contentious statements ahead of time, and assign a facilitator. Remind students of expectations of no interruptions, watching 'mic' time, using evidence from text/class, an effort to be inclusive, disagree with ideas and not people. You can have them practice making connections, using evidence, apply concepts/research/lenses of analysis – whatever you are stressing in class. You assess students in discussion on clipboard/in notebook – you stay out of it! Tell students what you are looking for and how they are being assessed.

Tableaus – A tableau is like a still photo. In small groups, students create a photo scene with poses (perhaps props) that reflect concepts/texts. You can have them portray the 'Significance' or the 'Alternative' of something. You can tap on students and make the 'come alive' & interview them in order to push their thinking. While showing movies, sharing pictures, you can pause and have students come up and 'become' a person/object in the picture to push their thinking.

Foldables/Left Side activities – Students use notes to create a creative 'translation' of their understanding of the information. Some examples include: a comic strip, a dialogue between two historical figures or two parts of a cell; an advertisement; a story/scene that includes vocabulary. These assignments can be homework, or class work.

Jigsaw – If you have a lot of content to cover, but want to avoid lecturing. Students start in a 'Home' table that is mixed ability. They are responsible for teaching what they will learn to everyone at this table. You then shift them to 'Expert' table that are more differentiated and give readings that match students' levels. At this table, they read and prepare notes on the main idea in order to teach their 'Home' tables. Students return to 'Home' tables and teach. You can up the ante with a quiz.

Four Corners – In order to debate, you pose a statement and students go to the side of the room where they most closely align. (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree). Call on students from different corners. Encourage use of evidence.

Spectrum – Students stand on an imaginary or 1-10 spectrum based on how strongly they agree or disagree with a statement. They can discuss from here.

Techniques for differentiating lessons

Flexible Grouping – You can create different tables or partnerships depending on the goals of a lesson or activity. You can group students in order to balance ability, in order to have students work with others on their level, in order to work with others who demonstrate similar interests, etc. For example, if you want students practicing a skill, you may want them to work with other of similar ability and give more challenging work to some. You can also do GUIDED GROUPS (see below) here and plan to teach a small group a more focused lesson. You can post a sign on your door, telling students what seats to go to when they enter.

Tiered Questions/Sheets – With flexible groups, you can give different work/questions based on your assessments. Use the HOM Task Sheet for ideas.

Guided Groups – See 'Flexible Grouping' above.