



## EDUBYTE 10 2020, INTERMEDIATE PHASE

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TO ENSURE THAT EVERY VOICE IS HEARD

Independent evaluations have found that learners at PEP Academy – an afternoon programme for Grade 4-5 learners - improved academically. But as importantly, learners developed confidence, independence and a positive attitude to learning. However, this quote from an evaluation is troubling.

*“Educators struggle to manage the different ability levels of learners in academy classrooms. This has resulted in roughly half the class being under occupied for half the time in any given session.”*

How do we get closer to fully engaging each child in the class, 100% of the time? One way is to encourage each and every child to take part: - to ensure that during any day or any week, every child participates and every voice is heard. In classrooms it is typically the same children whose hands always shoot into the air in response to a question. It is also the same ones who don't respond; because they are shy, or because they lack confidence, or because they can't quickly think of an answer.

#### **Think about how you ask questions in class**

**One estimate:** a teacher will ask **1 000 000 questions** in her career. Most are lower order questions that require recall – not thinking.

**Another estimate:** teachers leave very little time between asking questions and requiring an answer. **About half a second!**

Learners are not given time to think or consider their responses; teacher only engages those with their hands up; many can't answer so switch off; the teacher may have lost half the class but moves on as she must cover the work.

#### An after-school programme as a space to explore different teaching practice

In an after-school programme you have time, and less pressure to deliver on the curriculum. Use this space to explore ways of asking questions that are more **creative**, more **inclusive** and more **fun**.

## Ask higher order questions

Consider what kind of questions you are asking in class? Ask fewer but **better** questions. Try for less recall and higher order or **hot** questions that require learners to **think** or **express an opinion**. Such as:

- What does this tell us about...?
- How can we explain...?
- What would happen if...?

## Here are some tips to involve more children in the lesson, and to ensure that every voice is heard.

### 1. No hands up

Call on anyone to answer and think of creative ways of doing this to make your class more fun and engaging. This makes it difficult for learners to switch off – as they may be called on to respond to a **hot** question! Whatever method you use, remember to give the learner some time to consider the question before responding.

- Keep a tin on your desk with each learner's name written on an ice-cream stick. When you would like a learner to respond to a question, pull out a stick at random and call the child's name.
- Keep a tennis ball – throw the ball to a learner to catch, and that is the learner you are asking to respond!
- Use your creativity to work out your own methods to move away from the hands up approach to asking questions.

### 2. Think, pair, share

Learners often sit in pairs – use this to encourage them to learn in pairs. For example, try this method.

- Ask a higher order question to the whole class.
- Each learner writes down as many answers or suggestions that she can think of on her own (**think**)  
Once learners have had time to think of their own, they share/discuss/compare their ideas with a partner (**pair**)
- Then teacher opens up for contributions from the class (**share**)

### 3. Give me five

Ask questions in a way that allows children of difficult ability levels to respond. This is one way that allows that.

- Ask a higher order question to the whole class
- Ask them to each write down 5 ideas, solutions, options, suggestions in response to the question.
- Less able learners may only be able to write 2-3 options – but this gives them time to engage with the question and consider their responses.
- Ask for responses from the class, remembering to also ask less able learners.
- This method can be combined with think, pair, share.

*This is an open source educational resource drafted by Social Innovations. For more visit [www.socialinnovations.co.za](http://www.socialinnovations.co.za)*