

Question Formulation Technique

This one comes from the book: [Make Just One Change: Teach Students to Ask Their Own Questions](#) by Rothstein and Santana (2011). The suggested procedure from the book is below. The sidebar includes a reflection from a West Middle teacher that tried it out.

Suggested Procedure:

1. Go over the Rules for Producing Questions with the class. (The first time you do this, let the students review the Rules as a small group, 3 to 5, and have them discuss some of the challenges that they may encounter in trying to follow them – don't skip this step the first time...it's important in getting the process off on the right foot) (5 to 7 minutes max – not too lengthy)
 - Rule 1: Ask as many questions as you can. (gives license to ask)
 - Rule 2: Do not stop to discuss, judge, or answer any question. (creates safe space and protection)
 - Rule 3: Write down every question exactly as it is stated. (levels the playing field so all questions and voices are respected)
 - Rule 4: Change any statement into a question. (insists on the discipline of phrasing, asking, and thinking in questions, not statements)
2. Divide the class into groups of 3 to 5 students. (or keep the same groups that reviewed and discussed Rules)
3. Introduce the QFocus(Question Focus): “A stimulus for jumpstarting student questions. It can be a short statement or a visual or verbal aid in any medium or format that can stimulate student thinking that will be expressed through their questions. It is the opposite of using a teacher’s question to prompt student thinking” (Rothstein & Santana, 28).
4. Instruct students to produce questions (give them about 5 to 7 minutes).
5. Monitor students as they work in their small groups: Check to see they are sticking to the rules and get them back on task if needed. Do not give examples or questions to students as you support them – this does not help the process.
6. Provide a definition for closed and open ended questions.
7. Instruct students to review the list of questions they produced and mark them as Closed (C) or Open (O).
8. Discuss advantages and disadvantages of each type and have them rework if a better balance is needed.
9. Instruct students to prioritize questions:
 - a. Have students select three questions from their list based on some criteria, for example:
 - i. Choose the three most important questions.
 - ii. Choose the three questions that most interest you.
 - iii. Choose the three questions that will best help you .
 - b. Have students explain their reasons for choosing the three priority questions. (this is a great opportunity for you to formatively assess their understanding of the process)
10. This could be the end, if the goal is to assess their ability to develop questions or to exhibit curiosity OR it could be where they are now instructed to use their questions to guide their own research.

This went great!

Students created questions independently then collaborated choosing three questions that would give them the most information vital to thriving in their new homeland. We then categorized the questions & students quickly saw that there was an emphasis on Government & Economy. We discussed why this was & they really took to heart the impact Government and Economy have on their everyday life & how it ties to thriving.

Students are now completing an independent piece that follows this activity.

Curiosity is a powerful fuel for learning & with right tools in place students will soar. I saw it with this activity.

Thanks again!

***For more information about QFT read [this entry from the 21st Century Fluency Project](#)**