
Formulating Questions Provocation

The starting point for educators in creating inquiry questions is the curriculum and associated big ideas for a topic. To support students in creating effective questions, provide them with a “provocation” to get them thinking. Examples of provocations include photographs, infographics, texts, quotes, video clips, or artifacts. Provocations can spark ideas and wonderings.

Below is a sample of how students work collaboratively in pairs or small groups to create deep questions based on their thinking about a provocation.

1. Have a discussion about what they see and what they think about regarding the provocation.
2. Each student **individually** creates 3 questions based on his/her curiosities arising from the provocation and shares it with their partner or small group.
3. After each pair or group has developed a list of preliminary questions, have group members collaborate to choose three initial questions to “perfect” into effective inquiry questions using the criteria for an effective question.

What I observe in the picture (what I see):

What I infer in the picture (what I understand/deduce from what I see):

My three questions about the picture:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Criteria for a good question:

- Is an invitation to think (not recall, summarize)
- Comes from genuine curiosity or confusion about the world
- Makes you think about something in a way you never considered before
- Invites both deep thinking and deep feelings, and leads to more questions
- Asks you to think critically, creatively, ethically, and reflectively about essential ideas in a topic

Our top 3 effective inquiry questions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.