

## Questioning our Questioning Techniques

by Ardith Shirley, NBTA Staff Officer - Professional Development

*“Dear Teacher - Please think twice before asking questions when you already know the answer.”*

*Twitter - quote by Student*

Step into an average classroom in any K-12 school and research suggests that almost 80 percent of the talk that takes place in that room will be framed as a question. If indeed this research is sound, it would seem that questioning is a dominant instructional strategy. If indeed questioning is a preferred instructional strategy in our classrooms, it is important to pause and reflect on the quality of questioning that we are employing.

In a recent article in *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, Nathan Bond suggests, “Asking good questions is an important skill that teachers must develop.” Questions can be used for a multitude of purposes within a lesson. They can assess readiness for new learning, create interest and motivation in new learning, check student understanding of material, redirect students from off task behaviour as well as create a heightened awareness in the classroom environment that enhances learning.

### Reading Teacher’s Mind – Regurgitation 101

I am sure we all can remember “Bloom’s Taxonomy” from our B.Ed. training. Although most teachers remember and can refer to it, we often do not have the time to reflect and have conversations with our colleagues on this theory once we become practitioners in our own classrooms. Sadly, if we had the time to reflect, we might find that all too often (recent studies quote 70%) our questions spring from the lowest 2 levels of thinking: knowledge and comprehension. (See Bloom’s chart on the next page for a refresher.)

Allowing this trend to continue unchecked in classrooms leaves students unchallenged in their higher order thinking skills, and results in only a superficial learning of information. It also reinforces to students that they need only figure out what the teacher wants

and regurgitate it as opposed to evaluating and analyzing ideas for themselves.

Another surprising statistic that I came across recently suggests that the K-12 students ask an average of only one question per month in class. If this is true, and questioning is indeed one of our dominant learning strategies, teachers must find ways to encourage students to ask more questions of one another. (Perhaps instead of asking a question yourself, have students work in pairs or triads and come up with three questions to ask you.)

### Time to Think

Another common trend in our classrooms is to have students respond verbally to questions. Combine this with another recent study that suggests on average teachers only allow 0.9 seconds wait time before eliciting that verbal response, and a startling revelation is made – many of our students are being left out! Many of our teachers have found all kinds of creative ways to be more inclusive in their questioning techniques. One simple way is to have students write out a response as opposed to “shouting out” an answer. While this will take more time, this ensures all students are engaged and have a more reasonable amount of think time. This simple technique may inspire more confidence in students and have more of our students willing to be risk-takers and share their answers.

My challenge to all teachers this month, as spring arrives and flowers begin to “bloom”, (sorry couldn’t help the pun!), is to have a look at that familiar taxonomy and really reflect on your questioning techniques. Talk to your students about the higher order thinking skills and ask them to challenge one another to higher thinking as well.

## Council Day 2012

### Mark Your Calendar!

**Council Day 2012, Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup>**

Elementary & Phys. Ed. Specialist Strand – Moncton  
Middle Level & Art Specialist Strand – Fredericton  
High School & Music Specialist Strand – Saint John

### Mark Your Calendar!

**DSS**

**July 3-6, 2012**

**CONTACT**

**August 7-10, 2012**

## ***Bloom's Revised Taxonomy***

Lorin Anderson, a former student of Bloom, revisited the cognitive domain in the learning taxonomy in the mid-nineties and made some changes, with perhaps the two most prominent ones being, 1) changing the names in the six categories from noun to verb forms, and 2) slightly rearranging them (Pohl, 2000).

This new taxonomy reflects a more active form of thinking and is perhaps more accurate:

<b>Original Domain</b>		<b>New Domain</b>
• Evaluation		• Creating
• Synthesis		• Evaluating
• Analysis		• Analyzing
• Application		• Applying
• Comprehension		• Understanding
• Knowledge		• Remembering

## ***May I Recommend?***

"In the face of change and crisis, the resource we need most is our resilience." *The Resilient Leader* by Elle Allison in the January 2012 issue of *EL* is certainly worth a read given all of the recent change announcements in NB Education. In this article, Ms. Allison points out four "resilience risks": 1. Stop Learning. 2. Blame everything on budget. 3. Take on too many initiatives. (Busyness is a great distractor from real issues.) 4. Success goes uncelebrated.

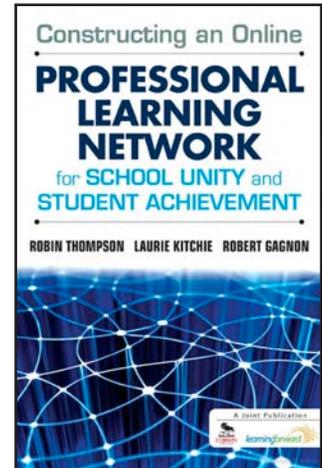
Two of my favourite teachers and authors, Ken O'Connor and Rick Wormeli team up in the November issue of *EL* to write a brilliant article on assessment and grading. "Reporting Student Learning" challenges our traditional thinking on issues like including behavior in academic grades, grading group work, giving zeros, and averaging. (Actually the whole November 2011 issue of *EL* focuses on grading and assessment.) Worth a read!

## ***Book Give-Away!***

This month's winner is Linda Justason of Florenceville Middle School in District 14.

This month we are giving away a copy of *Professional Learning Network*.

In order to have a chance to win, simply drop me an email at the email address below before February 26<sup>th</sup> with the subject line – Book Give-Away.



*Ardith*



## ***Recommended Website:***

[www.readwritethink.org](http://www.readwritethink.org)

## ***Closing Quote:***

***"When you talk, you repeat what you already know; when you listen, you often learn something."***

**– Jared Sparks**