

Learning Activity 47: Working from student questions - Science

Learning Behaviours:

Getting started

Writing and using good questions

Making presentations that show understanding

Teacher: JSD **DATE:** August, 31st **Class:** 8A

Learning Activity Description:

In order to get students thinking and using good questions I briefed the students on a series of topics about light. The students were then asked to write a question for each of the topics that related to light/vision that would help a person to show they had understanding of the topic. The students were given the opportunity to take the questions home to talk it over with their parents (assessed on question contribution). The next day all of the students entered their questions into a database (Q-view, created by Tom Carswell) so that they could all be collected under the topic headings. Each pair was then allocated a topic and given their set of questions. The next step was for each pair to sort through the questions to decide which questions they were going to research. They had to write next to each question whether or not they were going to answer it and they had to give a reason for their decision (assessed on reasoning behind question choice). At the end of this process each pair had a set of questions which they believed would help them to show they had an understanding of how light/vision played a part in their topic. The students then had to produce a written document and make an oral presentation to the class so that some of the questions by their peers could be answered.

Discussion Tool:

The students were asked to complete a questionnaire prior to the task which asked the questions:

Why do we research? What makes a good question? How do you know when you understand something? What do you dislike about oral presentations? What can you do to make oral presentations easier?

We used these questions prior to the task to get students thinking about the questions they had to write, and the way they needed to answer the questions to show understanding.

The students were asked to complete a questionnaire at the end of the task which asked the questions:

Were you happy with your assignment? Why?

Do you think you showed your understanding of your topic well? How?

What was the best thing about one of the other presentations?

What was the hardest thing about this assignment for you?

What did you like/dislike about the assignment? Try and explain why?

Teacher Journal:

On reflection, I don't think the assignment was overly successful. Upon talking to the kids afterwards about what was difficult about the task they highlighted the fact that the questions they all wrote were not of a very high quality. We talked about why this was and most of them said that they didn't know enough about the topic to ask good questions.

Next time we would need to spend a bit of time talking about each topic and generating some initial ideas. I also could choose a better topic to trial this technique with, something the students know more about in the first place. If they have a good understanding of the topic, hopefully it would allow them to improve on their questioning techniques.