

Eliciting and interpreting student thinking

Teachers pose questions that create space for students to share their thinking about specific academic content. They seek to understand student thinking, including novel points of view, new ideas, ways of thinking, or alternative conceptions. Teachers draw out student thinking through carefully chosen questions and tasks and attend closely to what students do and say. They consider and check alternative interpretations of student ideas and methods. Teachers are attentive to how students might hear their questions and to how students communicate their own thinking. Teachers use what they learn about students to guide instructional decisions, and to surface ideas that will benefit other students. By eliciting and interpreting student thinking, the teacher positions students as sense-makers and centers their thinking as valuable.

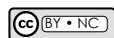
Advancing justice through eliciting and interpreting student thinking

At the heart of eliciting and interpreting student thinking is the fundamental commitment to students and their ideas, to the belief that students are smart, and to the fact that uncovering and supporting their thinking is the goal of teaching. When teachers learn about students' ways of thinking and how they communicate ideas, they signal to students that they are knowledgeable and that their ideas are interesting and valued. However, this practice has risks. Patterns of bias related to race, gender, and other social identities, as well as stereotypes about subject matter competence, can easily misshape teachers' interpretations of students. Skillful eliciting and interpreting can intervene on these biases by enabling teachers to learn about student ideas and challenge false assumptions about students' lack of competence. When teachers understand and appreciate students' thinking, they are better able to support students to contribute in class and to position them as capable among their peers.

Decomposition of eliciting and interpreting student thinking

Formulating and posing questions designed to elicit and probe student thinking, with sensitivity to how students might hear or respond to the questions	Listening to and interpreting student responses	Developing additional questions, prompts, and tasks to probe and unpack what students say
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing general, open-ended questions • Using native language to pose questions, or using translation support (if possible). • Slowing the pace of questioning and use repetition or leveled prompts to allow students time to process language and develop a response. • Using gestures, visuals, or leveled sentence stems as needed to support questioning and student response. • Choosing areas of the student's expressed thinking or work to focus on, and developing appropriate questions. • Developing hypotheses to test about the student's thinking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving the student plenty of time to speak. • Allowing supportive "thinking time" for students to interact with a peer, draw, or write so they can practice language and develop a response. • Paying close attention to what the student says, without unnecessary interruptions • Listening for ideas rather than academic language. • Noticing specific features of the student's thinking: common patterns, strengths, strategies, novel ideas, areas of particular interest or engagement, weaknesses, and errors. • Using knowledge of the student to make sense of responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying elements of the student's thinking that he or she has said little about, and probing further • Identifying particularly interesting or confusing (to the teacher) aspects of the student's thinking and developing corresponding questions or prompts • Focusing on a particularly strategic aspect of the student's thinking to probe further (i.e., a good starting point for the student, something he or she needs to work on or develop more) • Developing additional questions that are attuned to the student's English language learning

Eliciting and interpreting student thinking decomposition – August 2019

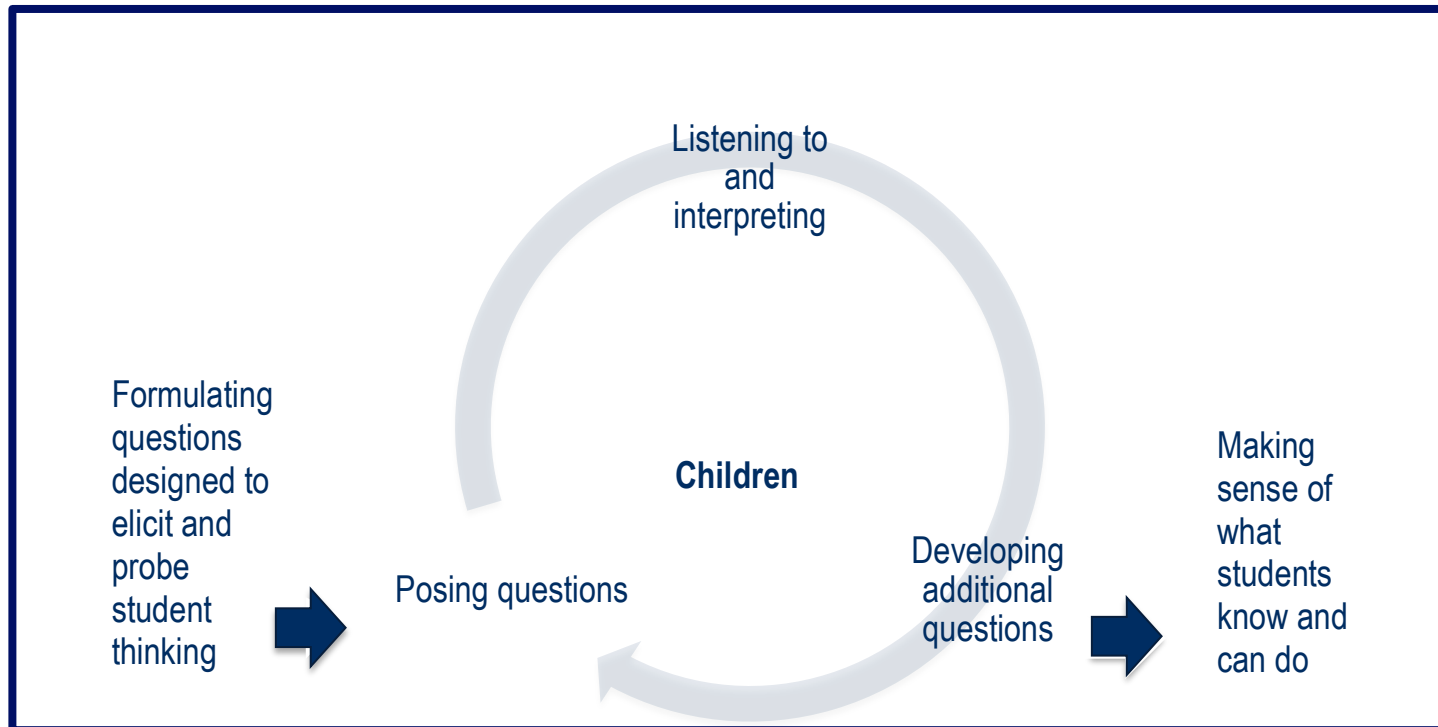


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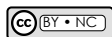
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posing questions that are culturally relevant and draw on the particular experiences and background knowledge of the learner. • Allowing students to communicate in their preferred mode (e.g. drawing, writing, speaking, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposefully connecting the particular background knowledge or experiences of students to content. • Listening for specific evidence of English language development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging emergent bilinguals who take risks to express themselves in English, and do “double the work” as they engage in content discussion. • Questioning and probing emergent bilinguals with the same high expectations for all students, knowing that more planning and support may be needed.
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Visual representation of eliciting and interpreting student thinking



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