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MINI-MANUAL

Instruction: Thinking Prompts



INSTRUCTIONAL
COACHING
GROUP

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For more detailed information regarding the information contained in this mini-manual, refer to:

High Impact Instruction: A Framework for Great Teaching

Chapter 5

By Jim Knight

Also view the High Impact Instruction introduction video:



Instruction: Thinking Prompts

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Thinking Prompts

“How can one learn the truth by thinking? As one learns to see a face better if one draws it.”

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

“Thinking is where intelligent actions begin. We pause long enough to look more carefully at a situation, to see more of its character, to think about why it’s happening, to notice how it’s affecting us and others.”

MARGARET WHEATLEY

KEY CONCEPTS FOR COACHES

WHY USE THINKING PROMPTS?

- 1 They promote dialogue.
- 2 They help students make connections.
- 3 They provide background knowledge.
- 4 They engage students.

Turning Ideas Into Action

STUDENTS

- 1 Allow students to bring their own thinking prompts to promote discussion and dialogue.
- 2 Allow students to lead classroom discussion around thinking prompts.
- 3 Asking students to identify thinking prompts that depict examples and non-examples of concepts can help student with concept acquisition.

TEACHERS

- 1 Become detectives to find interesting thinking prompts. Be on the lookout!
- 2 Awareness of thinking prompts in everyday life opens up opportunities to find appropriate thinking prompts.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

- 1 Be on the lookout for good thinking prompts. Share them with teachers.
- 2 Create a digital bank of thinking prompts that is accessible to teachers.
- 3 Using time-on-task data and formative assessment data, coaches can help teachers determine if thinking prompts are having a positive effect on learning.

PRINCIPALS

- 1 Encourage conversation about thinking prompts.
- 2 Encourage the use of thinking prompts by using them in their own presentations.

What It Looks Like



When people observe the use of thinking prompts, it is important to look for student engagement, student assessment or test results, student talk time versus teacher talk time, and effective questioning. All of these observable behaviors are evident when Thinking Prompts are used intentionally and often.

ATTRIBUTES OF EFFECTIVE THINKING PROMPTS CHECKLIST

AN EFFECTIVE THINKING PROMPT IS...	CHECK
Provocative. People cannot wait to talk about it.	
Complex. There are many different ways to interpret it.	
Personally Relevant. It speaks directly to individuals.	
Positive. It fosters learner-friendly emotions.	
Concise. It's not too long to view or experience.	