

Probing Student Thinking

Questioning is a valuable part of the assessment process because it helps establish what students already know, asks them to use and extend this knowledge, and then to develop new ideas. Questions that have students to use higher-order thinking skills help them use their knowledge to problem solve, to analyze, and to evaluate. These types of questions reveal the most about whether or not a student has truly grasped a concept. This is because a student needs to have a deep understanding of the topic in order to answer this type of question.

Probe students' initial responses to help them clarify ideas, support a point of view, or extend their thinking. It also helps to allow plenty of "wait time" so that students have an opportunity to formulate a thoughtful response. Questioning helps students think and express their ideas and also provides insight into areas needing further study. Good questions will challenge common misconceptions, set up a conflict, or address areas of ambiguity.