

THINKING ASSESSMENT LADDER FOR STUDENT QUESTIONING/WONDERING

Levels of Questioning

What teacher need to do to move students up the ladder

Fully Independent Habit	Understanding value of good questioning. Willing to reveal uncertainties. Rarely accepts things uncritically. Leads others in these skills	Students progress to the highest levels through repeated practice and modeling in order to deepen the habit in themselves, and to help and support others to acquire and develop similar skills and habits	Encourage Self-Coaching
Increasingly Independent Habit	Curious about all manner of things. Unafraid of not knowing. Relish getting below surface of complex high order questions.	Provide opportunities to broader own areas of interest, investigate problems at a deep level	
Increasingly reflective, self-aware, few prompts necessary	Display curiosity about a range of things. Speculate about possibilities. Get below the surface. Willing to play around with things to see what happens	Provide opportunities for open-ended tasks, practicing their own questioning techniques, setting their own challenges, experiencing teamwork.	Coaching
Developing skill that needs prompting and reminding	More willing to ask questions on unfamiliar areas/subjects. Beginning to seek/develop information. Seeking skills. Can use open and closed questions with prompting. Less inclined to accept things at face value.	Provide opportunities to practice uncovering facts and evidence, develop basic research skills. Use various questioning routines.	
Only with teacher support	Beginning to ask higher order questions. May draw simple conclusions. Prefers to work at surface level.	Provide opportunities to use closed and open questions. Needs topics of personal interest. Support experience of certainty and doubts.	Directing
Only with teacher direction	Rarely seem curious. Stick with the familiar. Low level closed questions. Accepts things uncritically.		

Tips for Creating a Ladder for Assessing Students' Thinking

- ◆ Identify a type of thinking you want to try and promote. This might come from one of the 8 thinking moves from the understanding map or from a thinking disposition you are wanting to promote.
- ◆ Start at “the top” of the ladder and identify aspects of a well formed habit. Consider what your chosen type of thinking looks like when students are exhibiting it independently at a high level.
- ◆ Move to “the bottom” of the ladder. Describe what students actually do—not merely what they are lacking. What kinds of behaviors are you seeing when students are struggling with this kind of thinking?
- ◆ Add detail (additional rungs on the ladder) in between the top and the bottom but do not create too many as it may make it harder to differentiate between them.
- ◆ On the teaching side, think of the gradual release of teacher support as students become more independent. This typically moves from directing students efforts, to supporting them, to coaching, to commenting and offering some feedback, to encouraging students' self-coaching.
- ◆ Try out the ladder for a few weeks by focusing on observing a few students during this period to collect evidence and anecdotes.
- ◆ Make modifications to your ladder based on your experience of applying it to practice.
- ◆ Share the Assessment Ladder with students, communicating that development of this type of thinking is one of your instructional goals. Ask students to self-assess and provide evidence for their assessment. Discuss with individual students.