

SOME HELPFUL GUIDELINES FOR ASKING QUESTIONS

- 1. Ask questions that are more open than closed.** Questions with only one right answer or implying a "yes" or "no" response are more closed. These questions are more a test of memory than they are inquiry into subject matter. When tempted to ask a closed question make a statement instead. Then ask open, analytical, probing questions.
- 2. Ask only one question at a time.** More than one question is confusing to the student. Teachers who ask several questions at once usually have not thought carefully or prepared adequately and are "fishing" for the right question.
- 3. Present questions to the whole class.** Instead of putting one student "on the spot" by directing a question to him, offer the question to the whole class. By being aware of a student's readiness it is possible to recognize who wants to answer. A student can be called upon to respond without the teacher speaking a word; through eye contact, gesture with the hand, or nod of the head.
- 4. Provide feedback after a student responds.** The teacher can reinforce students and facilitate further discussion by providing verbal and non-verbal feedback so that they will know the teacher has heard and received the response.
- 5. After an initial question and response, follow up with probing questions.** Probing questions are next questions that follow first questions. Probing questions lead to further inquiry and exploration in depth of a subject. Probing questions can also provide a degree of reinforcement and feedback.
- 6. After asking a question be silent. The best "next step" after asking a question is to be silent.** If the question is clearly stated and if the students have sufficient data with which to answer then they need some time to think. Ten seconds is not too much time. However, ten seconds of silence can feel like an eternity to a teacher who is a little anxious. Leave the burden of the silence on the students. Bite your tongue and relax, usually someone will respond.
- 7. Use an inquiry style rather than an interrogation style.** Inquiry is a style or approach that says to the student, "I'm with you. I'm interested in what you think and say." Interrogation puts persons on the defensive and inhibits their ability to think and express themselves creatively.