

QUESSIE Newsletter April 2017

Dear **QUESSIE** Member

Open ended questions are all the rage....and I understand why. There is no doubt that the skilful use of open ended questions has the potential to:-

- ask the respondent to think and reflect;
- extract respondent opinions and feelings;
- hand control of the conversation to the respondent;
- encourage creativity and “left of centre” problem solving.

Does this mean the end of the closed question?

Most definitely not as it too has its place in quality teaching.

Closed questions have the following characteristics:

- mostly give you facts;
- normally easy to answer and are great confidence boosters;
- are often quick to answer, leading to swift conversations;
- keeps control of the conversation with the questioner.

The Value of Closed-Ended Questions

The teacher raises her hand in a professional development session espousing the value of open ended questioning and asks, “What happens when I ask a child an open-ended question and they just shrug their shoulders?”

It is acknowledged that sometimes it’s hard for children to put complex thoughts into words and closed-ended questions can serve as a good “warm-up” for expressing bigger ideas or a good way to scaffold a child’s thinking around a complex question.

Consider this example:

Teacher: Why do you think the ball floats and the sponge sinks?

Child: I don’t know.

Teacher: Are the sponge and the ball the same?

Child: No.

Teacher: Okay, well if they’re not the same, that means that are ... what?

Child: Not the same?

Teacher: Right, not the same, or different. What do you think is different about them?

Child: The ball is hard and the sponge is soft.

Teacher: Hmm, so I wonder that has something to do with why the ball floats and the sponge sinks. What could we do to find out?

In the example, the teacher uses closed-ended questions to get the child to do some thinking about the topic before the child is ready to consider the more open-ended question about why some materials float and others sink.

Open and closed questioning complement each other in the hands of a skilled practitioner. Have fun using both.

Best wishes

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Reference- thank you to Emily Doyle.