

Using Socratic Questioning to Encourage Curiosity and Critical Thinking and to Enhance Problem Solving Skills

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We question all the time in life. We are all familiar with how many questions children ask as they are learning about their world. Some of these are verbal questions; others involve probing or interacting with our environment to learn how things work. Questioning helps us connect the new information we collect with what we already know. Sometimes we forget this when it comes to teaching. We often spend more time on what we as instructors will do than on what we want our students to learn. We polish our presentations and make sure that all the instructions are clearly spelled out for e.g. a given lab protocol. In effect we are asking our students work with “what we learned”. We are not teaching them “how we learned it” and as a result how they can learn. In this session I will introduce effective ways to use Socratic questioning and engage participants in activities they can use to teach others (e.g. TAs and students), how it can be used to break down and work through problems, and to reinforce critical thinking skills.

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