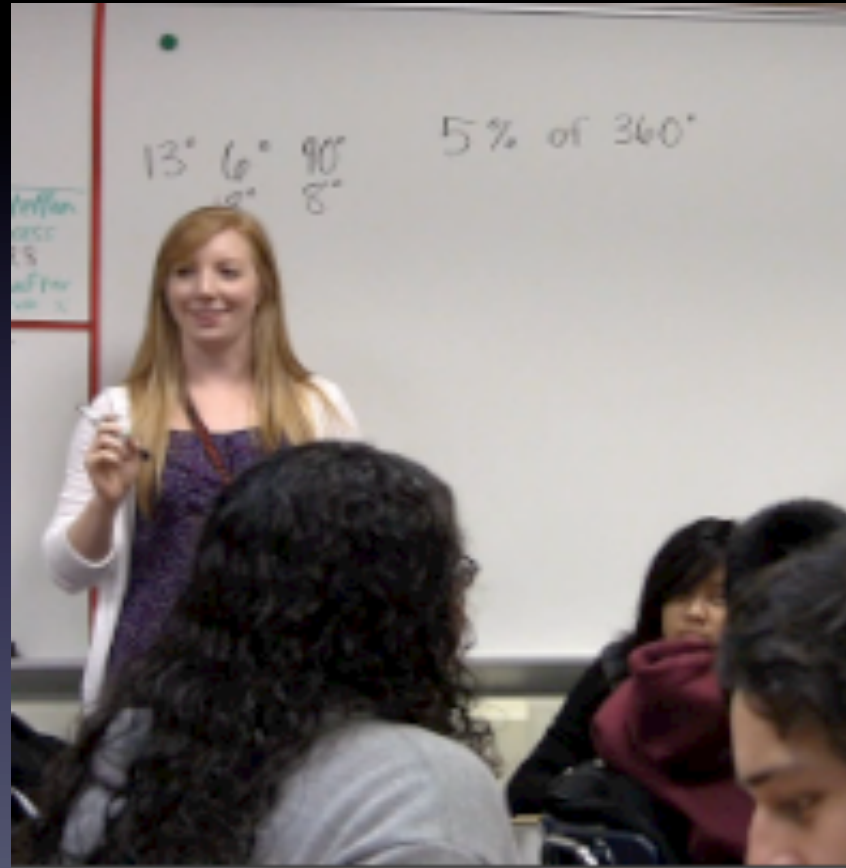


Letting Go: Kindling Authority and Agency through Number Talks



Authentic Questions

Aukerman, 2016

An authentic question (sometimes also called an open-ended or divergent question) is a question or prompt that is posed in order to gain access to other people's thinking or perspective. Such a question is posed out of a need to know and/or deep curiosity without the intention to enforce or reinforce any particular response.

Teacher: Why did you add 4 to both numbers?

“Test” Questions

Aukerman, 2016

A test question (sometimes also called a display question, convergent question or a “what’s-on-my-mind” question) is a question where the speaker already has an idea in mind about what answer or range of answers are acceptable, and is prepared to enforce/reinforce a correct response.

Teacher:

It is not the form of the question, but
the intention behind it and how
students interpret that intention, that
matters.

Number Talks: Pedagogic Shifts for Teachers

(Humphreys, 2016)

From	To
Questioning for what	Questioning for why
Focusing on correct answers	Focusing on why answers make sense
Verifying correctness	Expecting students to justify correctness
Demonstrating how to solve problems	Eliciting student strategies for solving problems
Showing students how to follow procedures	Wanting students to know why their strategies make sense
Being the primary “explainer”	Helping students become primary explainers
Listening “for”	Listening “to”
Asking questions about known information	Asking authentic questions
Following a predetermined lesson path	Following the paths of students’ ideas

The Intervention : Number Talks

- “Bounded” by time with a beginning and end
- Have a predictable and replicable structure
- Plunge teachers into the complexity of centering discussions on students’ thinking
- Offer students repeated opportunities for collaborative inquiry
- The teachers’ cognitive demand is freed up to focus on pedagogy

C. Humphreys, 2016

- *It is not enough to ask the “right” kinds of questions; it is not enough to get students actively engaged with one another and one another’s ideas through a particularly well-crafted activity or lesson structure; it is not enough even to refrain from the initiation-response-evaluation in favor of moves likely to be more dialogic.*
- *What is required is the willingness to let go of authoritative discourse precisely where that seems the most risky...*

- *Auckerman, 2007, pp. 92-93*

Other thoughts...

- Students' agency and authority appear to be necessary conditions for whole class collaborative inquiry
- Agency and authority cannot be “established” solely by the teacher but are a cooperative venture between students and their teacher in the continually evolving culture of the classroom.

C. Humphreys, 2016