

Student Onramp Strategy™: ASKING QUESTIONS

Want-to-Know vs. Need-to-Know Questions

CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

There are two kinds of questions that we ask: *want-to-know* and *need-to-know*. *Want-to-know* questions are generated by our personal curiosity or interest of the moment; they do not necessarily help inform our content understanding of a topic. *Need-to-know questions* are those questions that are essential for clarifying new content. If we do not have answers to these questions, we will not fully understand the topic being discussed (or read). When we read or listen to new information, *need-to-know questions* are the most important questions to ask.

TEACHING POINT

Good readers think about the kinds of questions they are asking. They know that sometimes they need to save their want-to-know questions to ask at another time, and instead ask the need-to-know questions that will help them better understand what they are reading.

ACADEMIC LANGUAGE FRAMES

I am curious about...

When the author said...it made me think about...

When you mentioned...it made me wonder...

When the author wrote...it made me think about...

CONNECTION TO PRIOR INSTRUCTION (1 minute)

This week in class we are going to practice asking questions. Asking the right kinds of questions is important because it helps us make sure we are understanding what we are learning about in class.

TEACHING THE LESSON (14 minutes)

Often when I am reading or listening in a group discussion the first kind of question that comes into my mind is a question that is based on something I really want to know about. I call this a want-to-know question (write Want-To-Know on a poster chart with a t-graph). Most of the time, want-to-know questions are based on my own interest at that moment and they will not necessarily help my learning with whatever topic is being discussed.

I have to tell my brain to think about questions to ask that will really help me understand what I am reading or listening to. I call these questions need-to-know questions (write Need-to-Know on the t-chart). If I do not have the answer to a need-to-know question, I will not fully understand the topic that is being discussed.

Good readers think about the kinds of questions they are asking. They know that sometimes they need to save their want-to-know questions to ask at another time, and instead ask the need-to-know questions that will help them better understand what they are reading.

I'm going to tell you about an experience I had yesterday. As I tell you the story, think about questions to ask. We'll write your questions down on our want-to-know and need-to-know chart.

You may use the sample text, *The Very Big Surprise*, to tell a story to students or create your own story to share. If you create your own text, be sure to intentionally leave out key information to elicit both want-to-know and need-to-know questions.

GUIDED PRACTICE (10 minutes)

Have students ask specific questions about the story you are sharing. Have students ask questions using the Academic Language Frames (you may wish to write these on sentence strips and model for students how to use each frame). As students share their questions, ask the class to determine if the question is a want-to-know question or a need-to-know question. Record each child's question in the correct side of the t-chart.

Periodically, verbally cite examples of student need-to-know questions, *Did you notice how Cindy mentioned...* Also, ask students to explain why their question is a *want-to-know* or *need-to-know* question.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE (20 minutes)

Now you will have the chance to practice asking need-to-know questions as you read a short story on your own.

Select one or more short texts (preferably leveled according to student reading level) for students to practice question-asking. As students read, have them write down questions about the text in their journals.

If you prefer, you can have students create a want-to-know and need-to-know t-chart in their journal and record their questions in each appropriate category.

LESSON WRAP UP (5 minutes)

Have students share examples of their questions and record student responses on the class t-chart. You may wish to briefly examine the t-chart and look at the kinds of questions that were asked. Were there too many want-to-know questions and not enough need-to-know questions? Did students start out asking want-to-know questions and evolve into asking more need-to-know questions to understand the content? Highlight the significant aspect of the chart, *Did you notice how...*

Recap the teaching point of the lesson. ***Good readers think about the kinds of questions they are asking. They know that sometimes they need to save their want-to-know questions to ask at another time, and instead ask the need-to-know questions that will help them better understand what they are reading.***

STUDENT OUTCOMES

The most essential point of this lesson is that students are able to self- and peer-monitor for *want-to-know* questions and focus on asking *need-to-know* questions.

NOTE TO TEACHERS:

As you record student questions during the *Teaching the Lesson* or *Guided Practice* sections of the lesson, you may find yourself getting stuck on whether the child's question is a want-to-know or a need-to-know question. Some questions are clearly one or the other, but other questions are less obvious. If you find that determining which response goes in each category is distracting from the main point of the lesson (having students monitor their questioning), create a third column in between want-to-know and need-to-know columns and label it "Not sure" or something to that effect. This will help ensure that the lesson remains focused on the main teaching point. Remember that categorizing the type of question that is being asked is **not** as important as making sure students' want-to-know questions are diminishing in frequency and students are asking more need-to-know questions.

The Very Big Surprise

This morning I had the shock of my life. It all started when I walked outside to get the newspaper. As I reached down to pick up the paper, I noticed a bulging envelope lying on top of the paper with my name on it. I peered into the envelope and couldn't believe my eyes! I rushed back into the house, grabbed my keys and dashed out the door!