

Formative Assessment Techniques

TO FIND EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

Question Shells

Materials

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Questioning is a good way to determine student thinking. However, there are ways to frame questions that will lead to a more complete understanding of student thought than standard questioning. The “Question Shells” technique provides a framework for asking questions that draw out student understanding.



Illustration provided by Microsoft

Procedure

The teacher determines what questions are important to understanding student thinking during a lesson. Then, as shown in the table below, the teacher reframes the questions to elicit student reasoning.

Adapted from:

Embedded Assessment

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A Sampler of “Question Shells”

Original	Reframed
Is 17 prime?	Why is 17 prime?
Is a square a rectangle?	Why is a square a rectangle?
Is a spider an arthropod?	Why is a spider an arthropod?
Original	Reframed as a Contrast
What is an insect?	Why is an ant an insect and a spider not?
What is a prime number?	Why is 13 prime and 12 not?
Is this a prepositional phrase?	Why is a prepositional phrase not a sentence?