

***NO HANDS UP.....EXCEPT
TO ASK A QUESTION***



2

TLC3 - Improving Questioning & Discussion

Handout 3-2

Some techniques for finding out what students are learning

- **ABCD cards:** Give each student a set of lettered cards (you might want to include Y and N or T and F) and pose multiple choice questions of the whole class. This is most useful when there is more than one correct answer, or when the answers depend on the assumptions the students make – this can lead to good discussions.
- **Basketball discussion:** Use a soft ball to throw to a student to answer a question. The student then passes the ball to another student to see whether the second student agrees with the first. The second student then passes the ball to a third student who comments on why the answer is correct or not. This can continue with questions like How? When? How long? Who else was involved? What else could have happened? depending on the subject.
- **Class vote:** Ask all students to vote on a question you put to the class with two or more possible answers.
- **Entrance ticket:** Hand out a card to each student as they walk into the room and ask them to write the answer to a question posed on the board. Glance through the students' answers to help decide questions to ask the class, discussions, tasks to set, or how to seat students.
- **No hands up – except to ask a question:** Only let students raise their hands if they have a question to ask. Do not let students call out. Use a random method of choosing which student answers a question, e.g. each student's name is on a stick, a small card or on a randomising program on the whiteboard.
- **Mini white boards:** Each student has a white board and is asked to write the short answer to a question posed by the teacher. Students hold their white boards up to show their answers to the teacher, who can then gauge how well students understand the concept, and whether to continue to teach the concept, or if some students should be moved to sit next to someone who understands.
- **Post-it notes on a continuum:** Each student has a post-it note with their name clearly written on it. The teacher draws a horizontal line on the board with, say, opposing statements at each end and asks students to think about where they would stick their post-it on the line to reflect their own view (eg caused entirely by humans versus an entirely natural phenomenon - where would you put Global Warming). Several students are then randomly asked to come to the board and place their post-it notes, explaining why they have placed it in that position. This can also work with a line from zero to one and probabilities of events occurring. The post-its can be used many times over and kept in a corner on the board between lessons. Using 4 colours of notes helps divide the class into four groups, so that 'orange' students can be asked to come to the board and place their notes.
- **Wait watchers:** Because it is hard for teachers to wait for 3 seconds after asking a question to allow students to think, it is occasionally useful to have a student volunteer with a stopwatch checking the teacher's wait time for a whole lesson.
- **Phone-a-friend:** Sometimes when students are chosen randomly to answer a question they really do not know the answer, and may feel awkward and embarrassed, and it may be useful to allow them to 'phone-a-friend', another student in the class who may be able to help them answer the question.

Handout 3-2 contd

- **Some ideas for Early Years:**

1 *Non-verbal signals*. In negotiation with the class, the teacher develops a number of gestures or other signals to promote whole class conversation. For example, the teacher might rub her chin to tell a child to think some more about an answer, a roll of the hand to invite the child to say a little more to extend his answer, rolling two hands around each other to tell the children to “think-pair-share”, holding one hand cupped behind the ear to ask the child to speak louder and so on.

2 *Whole-class vote*. Many teachers routinely ask children to indicate whether they understand something, or are happy to go on to the next item, by asking the children to show thumbs up or thumbs down. The problem is that many children give the teacher the signal they think the teacher wants to see. It is generally more useful to the teacher to make a statement, rather than ask a question, and ask the children to vote on whether they agree with the statement (thumbs up for yes, thumbs down for no). For example, after the class has listened to a story about a domestic disaster, the teacher might say, “It was Eric’s fault that the cakes were burned”. As well as providing evidence of what the children are thinking, knowing what each child thinks allows the teacher to organize the subsequent discussion more effectively.

3 *Plus-minus-interesting*. When the class is discussing a controversial idea, such as a proposal for keeping the classroom tidy, each student is asked to make a comment about the proposed solution by saying something that is good about the proposed solution (+), something that they think is not good (—) or something that is neither bad not good but just interesting. For the youngest children the teacher can log the response in three columns on the board. Older children can come up to the front of their class to write their contribution.

My Reflections

Name:

Date:

I need more help learning about

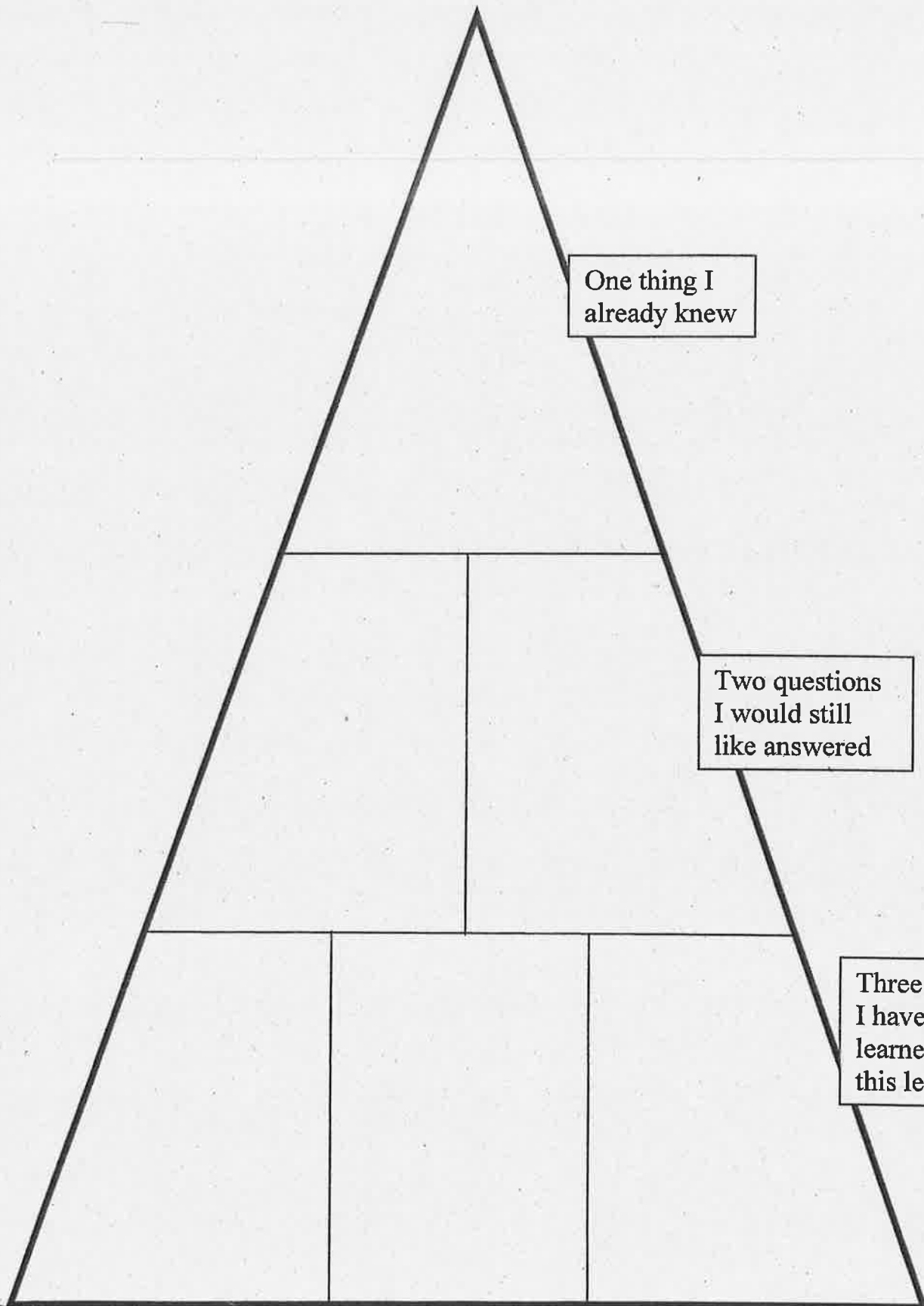
What really made me think was

The teacher could change this lesson for another class
by

My Triangle of Learning

Name:

Date:



Some Ways to Find Out What My Students Learned

- **My Learning Log, My Triangle of Learning and My Reflection sheets:** Students complete three sections of a Learning Log or all sections of a Triangle of Learning or Reflection Sheet explaining what they learned during the lesson etc
- **Exit ticket:** Near the end of the lesson ask the class a question. Give each student an index card to write the answer on. As students leave the room they hand in their exit card. You look through the students' answers when planning the next lesson and decide whether they have understood the concepts well enough for you to progress. Students can write their names on the cards if it will be helpful for you. You do not need to mark the cards. You can keep them or throw them away when you have finished with them.
- **In the real world:** Students write an exit ticket explaining one way that what they learned today could help them in the real world or in another subject.
- **Find the fib:** On the board write three statements, questions or answers about the lesson topic. Two are correct and one is wrong. Ask students to tell you which one is the fib and why.
- **Reflective Learners:** Put up an A3 poster with 4 sections – “What is going well? What can we improve? What are the questions? What are the issues?” and give each student two post-it notes to write on their views for two of the sections.
- **Be the teacher:** Students write what they think the learning intention for the lesson should be for the next time you teach the same lesson or for their next lesson.
- **Student Summary:** One student summarises what the whole class learned during the lesson. You can select this student at the start or end of the lesson randomly (eg by using sticks, name card or other method)
- **Student-created problems:** Students work together in groups to write one good question for the class to answer on mini whiteboards. At the end of the lesson one group asks the other students their question and answers are written and held up on whiteboards. The group then respond to the answers. If there is enough time other groups ask their question.
- **Class basketball:** Students stand and you pass a soft ball to one of them. This student gives one main idea from the lesson. The student then passes the ball to a second student who has to state a different main idea and pass the ball to a third student. Once a student has taken part she sits down and cannot be passed the ball again. This continues until you think that all the main points of the lesson have been given.
- **3-2-1:** Students fill in an exit ticket with 3 things they want to practice, 2 things they would expect to be on a test and 1 thing they enjoyed from the lesson.

My Learning Log

Name: _____ Date: _____

I might have learned more if

I was surprised by

I was particularly interested
in

One thing I learned is

The most useful thing I will
take from this lesson is

I want to find out more
about

I'm not sure about

What I most liked about the
lesson was