

5 What is the teacher's role during discussion?

<p>Make the purpose of the task clear</p>	<p>Explain what the task is and how they should work on it. Also, explain why they should work in this way.</p> <p>'Don't rush, take your time. The answers are not the focus here. It's the <i>reasons</i> for those answers that are important. You don't have to finish, but you do have to be able to explain something to the rest of the class.'</p>
<p>Keep reinforcing the 'ground rules'</p>	<p>Try to ensure that pupils remember the ground rules that were discussed at the beginning. Encourage pupils to develop a responsibility for each other's understanding.</p> <p>'I will pick one of you to explain this to the whole class later – so make sure all of you understand it'.</p>
<p>Listen before intervening</p>	<p>When approaching a group, stand back and listen to the discussion before intervening. It is all too easy to interrupt a group with a predetermined agenda, diverting their attention from the ideas they are discussing. This is not only annoying and disruptive (for the group), it also prevents pupils from concentrating.</p>
<p>Join in, don't judge</p>	<p>Try to join in as an equal member of the group rather than as an authority figure. When teachers adopt judgmental roles, pupils tend to try to 'guess what's in the teacher's head' rather than try to think for themselves: 'Do you want us to say what we think, or what we think you want us to say?'</p>
<p>Ask pupils to describe, explain and interpret</p>	<p>The purpose of an intervention is to increase the depth of reflective thought. Challenge pupils to describe what they are doing (quite easy), to interpret something ('Can you say what that means?') or to explain something ('Can you show us why you say that?').</p>
<p>Do not do the thinking for pupils.</p>	<p>Many pupils are experts at making their teachers do the work! They know that if they 'play dumb' long enough, then the teacher will eventually take over. Try not to fall for this. If a pupil says that he or she cannot explain something, ask another pupil in the group to explain, or ask the pupil to choose some part of the problem that she can explain. Don't let them off the hook! When a pupil asks the teacher a question, don't answer it (at least straight away). Ask someone else in the group to do so.</p>
<p>Don't be afraid of leaving discussions unresolved.</p>	<p>Some teachers like to resolve discussions before they leave the group. When the teacher leads the group to the answer, then leaves, the discussion has ended. Pupils are left with nothing to think about, or they go on to a different problem. It is often better to reawaken interest with a further interesting question that builds on the discussion and then leave the group to discuss it alone. Return some minutes later to find out what has been decided</p>