QUESTIONING SKILL: ASKING PROBING QUESTIONS

The probing techniques outlined below can be used in any situation where student participation is necessary to realize the goals of the lesson. A given technique, of course, may be appropriate in one situation but not in another.

1. The teacher seeks clarification. S/he may ask the student for more clarification or information, by saying:
   a. “What, exactly, do you mean?”
   b. “Please rephrase that statement.”
   c. “Could you elaborate on that point?”
   d. “What do you mean by the term…?”

2. The teacher seeks to increase the student’s critical awareness. S/he wants the student to justify her/his response.
   a. “What are you assuming?”
   b. “What are your reasons for thinking that is so?”
   c. “Is there more to it?”
   d. “How would an opponent of this view respond?”

3. The teacher refocuses the response. If a student has given a satisfactory response, it might seem unnecessary to probe it. However, the teacher could use this opportunity to refocus on a related issue.
   a. “If this is true, what are the implications for…?”
   b. “How does Jonathan’s answer relate to…?”
   c. “Can you relate this to…?”
   d. Let’s analyze that answer/comment.”

4. These techniques have two main characteristics in common:
   a. They are initiated by the teacher immediately after the student has responded.
   b. They require the student to think beyond her/his initial response.