Starters into the Conversation

If we want people to think better, we must essentially let them do all the thinking.

1. Let the student think through the specific issue. Avoid telling him/her what to do or giving advice. Ask questions about thought process.

2. Keep him/her focused on solutions, not problems

3. Challenge him/her to expand their thinking and stretch themselves, instead of clinging to their comfort zone.

4. Focus on what s/he is doing well so you can play to his/her strengths.

5. Make sure there are clear processes behind every conversation. To be turly helpful, a coaching conversation requires permission to ask questions and explore possibilities.

Diagnostic

Diagnostic questions can be used to uncover gaps in understanding or address misconceptions that might not be immediately obvious. These questions help you pinpoint where a student is struggling, whether it's a fundamental concept, an overlooked detail, or a misinterpretation of the material.

GOOD

Why do you think we use this method here?

Could we use a different one?

Why or why not?'

Why do you think this policy was implemented in this scenario?

Could a different approach have worked?

Why or why not?'

How might a change in this variable influence the outcome?'

Ask process-focused questions:

'What steps have you taken so far?'

'What key factors have you considered in analysing this data?'

'How have you structured your essay so far? What evidence have you included to support your argument?'

Ask Open-ended Questions

Open-ended questions encourage students to provide detailed answers, giving you a clearer picture of their understanding.

BAD	GOOD
Do you understand this formula?	Can you explain how this formula works in your own words?
Do you understand this graph?	Can you explain what this graph is showing? How does it relate to the question?
Do you understand the passage?	Can you explain what motivates Macbeth to act the way he does in this passage?
Why did you do that?	What were some of your reasons for making that choice or decision?
Are you still having difficulty with the new ___?	Which part of the new ___ seems to be the most challenging?
What could you have done to get better results?	What other possibilities might there be to get the answer?

Hypothetical

Hypothetical questions encourage students to apply their knowledge to new scenarios, testing their grasp of the material while also boosting their confidence in tackling unfamiliar problems independently.

GOOD

What would happen if we changed this variable?

How would it affect the outcome?

What would happen if a different country experienced this earthquake?

How might it change the outcomes we've discussed?'

'If the witches in Macbeth had not delivered any prophecies, how might Macbeth's choices and his ultimate fate have been different?'

INTENTION OF QUESTION

Clarification	"Explain what you mean by…"
Elaboration	"Tell me more about…"
Prediction	"If you do…, what do you think will happen?"
Application	What will you do with this?" "How will you apply this in another situation?"

Scaffolding

Scaffolding involves breaking down complex ideas into smaller, manageable parts and guiding students through connected questions. This approach helps them gradually build understanding and confidence, allowing them to uncover the solution on their own.

BAD	GOOD

Scaffolding (cont)

What do you notice about this data?	'How do these trends compare to what we studied previously?' → 'What conclusions can you draw from this comparison?'
What does this term mean?	'How is it used in this context?' → 'Why do you think it's important to the argument?'
'What happens in the first step of this process?'	How does that step affect the next stage?' → 'What impact does the overall process have on the outcome?'

Process not the Answer

Understanding how a student arrives at an answer is just as important as whether they get it right.
GOOD
How did you approach this question?
What was your first step?'
How did you decide which factors were most important to discuss when reading this essay question?'
'What was your thought process when analysing this poem? Which lines stood out to you, and why?'

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