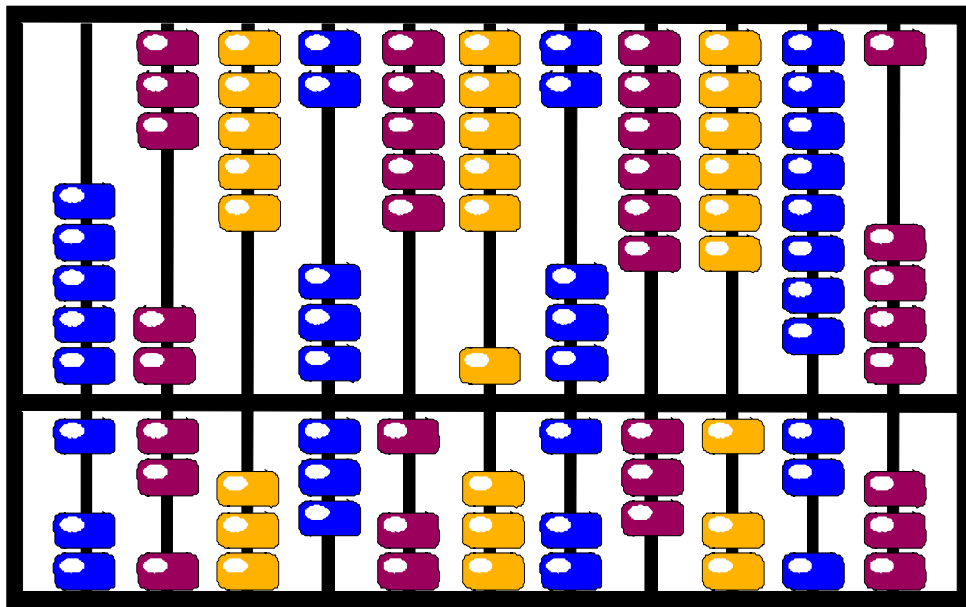


# Figure This!



February 2001

Published By: RDA  
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# Getting to the Point of Involving Parents with Performance Assessments

## Tips for Success with Parents

- ❖ Function as if you are "working for the parents" and therefore "accountable to them."
- ❖ Work to earn the respect and support of the parents - this can no longer just be expected.
- ❖ Work to earn the respect and support of the students - this too can no longer just be expected.
- ❖ Involve parents in efforts establishing curriculum.
- ❖ Involve parents as outside experts to support learning in the classroom.
- ❖ Involve parents as audiences for student performances.
- ❖ Involve parents as members of assessment teams similar to the teams of judges that are used at the Olympics.
- ❖ Engage parents in discussions at open house as to what skills, abilities, and knowledge they depend on for their success. Solicit their support in teaching those along with the established content standards.
- ❖ Avoid phrases that can terrify parents (and other community members also) that want the most for their kids such as, "Less is more." We know what we mean; it's an excellent slogan and rallying call for us, but parents hear something very different than what is meant. To many of them it sounds like their children will be learning less, but it will be called more. Try "Learn More Through Higher Standards."
- ❖ Remember, "The schools worked for us." Focus on building on what's been good, rather than tearing down the only thing parents have known.
- ❖ Focus on basic values of hard work, high standards, honesty, and integrity. They've become what many consider the basic values that have made us great.
- ❖ Be successful in visibly increasing learning with their children - and prove it with measures they understand and value.
- ❖ Engage students in sharing their portfolios and other evidence of high quality performance achievement, and/ or progress.
- ❖ Involve parents rather than informing them whenever the decision will impact on anything the parents want or need. Inform them of changes in the daily schedule, but involve them in changes in the reporting procedures. In the words of Doug Krug and Ed Oakley in their book *Enlightened Leadership*, "Ask- don't tell."
- ❖ When making significant changes in anything important to the parents, even if a parent committee has developed and endorsed the change, maintain the old and the new until the new is working successfully in the eyes of the parents.
- ❖ Listen to parents and their concerns until you have really heard what they're saying and can help them.
- ❖ Utilize best information regarding people and change.
- ❖ Be able to clearly articulate the specific knowledge, skills, and content standards that are being addressed in performances, how they're being addressed, and what the convincing evidence is that proves those essentials are being learned.
- ❖ Eliminate educational jargon from communication with parents. Jargon is essential for enabling precision in communication between experts. It is inappropriate for use with others. If you can't say it in five minutes, or explain it on a sheet of note paper (in plain, everyday "street" language), it probably won't work anyway. Don't try something until you can explain it in simple language and/or express it on a 3x5 card.
- ❖ Every document going to parents needs to be done correctly. Proof read for one another - use spell and grammar checkers.
- ❖ "Keep it simple, smarty" Sometimes we let our level of sophistication get in the way. Ask the parents what their students need to learn, and guarantee that in their language. Don't bombard them with theory and fancy labels.

Source: *The High Performance Toolbox*, 1997

The APS Performance-Based Mathematics Assessment Task Bank, Monthly Tasks and Tip Sheets are now on-line at:

[www.rda.aps.edu](http://www.rda.aps.edu)

# Questioning Tips for Enhancing Student Performances on Performance Tasks

When students are first exposed to performance tasks the work that they show does not always give the teacher a sense of what the students actually understand about the mathematics in the task. The students' past experience with solving problems leads them to believe they should give short right or wrong answers.

However performance tasks require them to draw charts, tables and diagrams; write a detailed explanation; identify a formula or equation; solve the problem in more than one way; and defend their answers. Students have to develop these skills, and that takes time. Teachers have to learn how to develop these skills in their students and that takes time.

An effective teaching tool for getting the most out of a student's performance on a math task is asking students open-ended questions.

## Open-ended questions require students to:

- ✓ Think and reflect about their answers.
- ✓ Be responsible for their understanding of the mathematics.
- ✓ Encourages students to defend and explain both correct and incorrect answers.
- ✓ Explain what they do or do not understand about the mathematics in the problem.

As teachers become more thoughtful in their questioning, students become more thoughtful in their responses. The students start responding to the teacher's expectation of more information and this is reflected in the student's performance on the tasks. Students begin to turn to the mathematics strategies that were discussed in class through the questioning by the teacher. The students automatically start using charts, tables or diagrams to help explain their work; develop more detailed explanations of their work; identify or invent formulas to solve the problem; show multiple ways to solve the problem; and become more confident in defending the strategy they used to solve the problem.

Refining questioning techniques takes time and practice. Here are some open-ended questions that are designed to enhance a student's performance on the performance-based math tasks.

## Prompts for enhancing performance assessments:

- ❖ Explain why you used the procedures you did.
- ❖ Describe the process you used.
- ❖ Explain how you...?
- ❖ Explain why you...?
- ❖ Support your decision/conclusion/recommendation.
- ❖ What conclusions can be drawn from your work? Justify your conclusions.
- ❖ What predictions can be made based on your work/findings? Justify your findings.
- ❖ What recommendations can be made based on your findings? Support your recommendations with a convincing argument.
- ❖ Explain why your findings are what they are.
- ❖ How can what you've done in this situation be used in \_\_\_\_\_ (another similar situation)? Explain how and why.
- ❖ What might happen differently if...?
- ❖ How can you conclude that...?
- ❖ Explain how \_\_\_\_\_ (situation) is similar to \_\_\_\_\_ (a similar situation).
- ❖ Propose an alternative, but rational, procedure for solving a given problem. Which procedure is best and why?
- ❖ Present another problem that could be solved by the process you used. Explain how you would use it and why it is appropriate.
- ❖ How would/might it have turned out differently if...? Support your conclusion?
- ❖ How do you know that...? (... is the best? ... is the worst? ... is the most likely? ... is a sound conclusion? ... is reasonable? ... is true?)

Source: *The High Performance Toolbox*, 1997

# ? Questioning Techniques for Teachers

Good questioning by teachers allows students to tell what they know about the mathematics rather than what they think the teacher wants to hear. There are two stages to good questioning. The first stage allows students to be thoughtful about the question being asked and the second stage allows the teacher to respond thoughtfully to the student's answers.

Here are some tips to help develop good questioning skills. (Van de Walle, 1997)

- ◆ **Allow Thinking Time:** Give students opportunities to do a *Think-Pair-Share*. Students need time to think about, discuss and share their answer to the question being posed. Encourage students who have been the most reluctant to respond to share their answers first, so that their good ideas will not be "taken".
- ◆ **Wait (No Judgments):** An immediate judgment to a response usually stops any further reflection or thinking from the students. After a student answers, respond with a thoughtful nod or say "uh-huh", the student is then encouraged to elaborate on their response.
- ◆ **Record All Answers on the Board:** An accepting yet nonjudgmental response is to record answers on the board without comment. When used consistently, nonevaluative responses indicate to students that time for thinking and reflecting are not over and that their additional thoughts are valued.
- ◆ **Request for Rationale:** Students have come to expect a judgmental response when answering questions. Students are initially shocked when teachers begin to respond to their answers with phrases. (e.g., Why do you think that?, Would you explain your answer to the rest of the class?, Show us with the base 10 blocks how you figured that out?)
- ◆ **Search for Alternative Ideas:** Accept the first response without judgment and then ask for other solutions. Alternative answers can then be discussed by the class. Allow plenty of wait time for the additional responses so students have time to think through the idea. Accept repeat answers.



## An Evening with Dr. Ruth Parker, Ph.D.

**Topic: What Parents Need to Know about Mathematics for Today and the Future**

**When: Monday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2001 6:30pm – 8:45pm**

**Where: TVI Boardroom at Smith Brasher Hall**

**AND**

**When: Tuesday March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2001 6:30pm – 8:45pm**

**Where: Cibola High School Performing Arts Center**

**Please invite parents to attend this very informative lecture.**

- **Admission is free, if you plan to attend please contact Rita Balderas at 848-8716 or Balderas@aps.edu**