

# Teaching Tip Tuesday

## Promoting Student Thinking

### Moving from the Sage-on-the-Stage to the Guide-on-the-Side

Learning is facilitated when students actively construct their understanding by integrating new information with their prior experiences and knowledge. This type of active learning necessitates a shift away from the model of the “sage-on-the-stage” to the model of the professor as the “guide-on-the-side.” The most difficult part of this transition is refraining from simply “telling” students the answers, and instead guiding them to discovery of the answers for themselves. Use of Socratic questions may help you make this transition to guiding your students’ critical thinking as they delve deeper into course content.

### Socratic Questioning

#### Questions about facts

- What information provides the background for this assertion?
- What experiences led to “X” ?
- What relevant information has not been considered?

#### Questions about Assumptions

- What are we assuming is true?
- Why are we assuming this?
- Can we identify alternatives to these assumptions?

#### Questions for Clarification

- What does “X” mean?
- Can you give an example illustrating your point?
- Why do you think that?
- How is this related to our discussion?

#### Questions about the Question

- What questions are being raised?
- Do you agree, or do you see another issue as central?
- Why did they ask this question?
- What else might I ask?

#### Questions about Goals

- What do we need to accomplish?
- What is the purpose of “X”?
- Who is the audience for “X”?

#### Questions about inferences and Consequences

- What is implied by “X”?
- What is the consequence of “X”?
- What will happen if...?
- How does “X” affect...?

#### Questions about Reasons

- Can you give an example of...?
- What is the cause of this?
- Why does this happen?

#### Questions about Perspectives

- Is there another way to look at this?
- Why is this best?
- What experiences lead to this perspective?
- Why is it better/worse than...?

For more about Socratic Questioning, check out:

Paul, R. and Elder, L. (2007). *The Thinker’s Guide to the Art of Socratic Questioning*. Dillon Beach, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking.