



Digital Promise

Accelerating Innovation in Education

Provocative Prompts

Educator inspires deeper student discussion and greater student engagement through the use of thought-provoking prompts.

Key Method

Instructor incorporates a provocative prompt into his or her lesson.

Method Components

The educator leads students to think more deeply about a topic by evoking their reactions to one or more provocative prompts. This can occur individually, in small groups, or in whole-class instruction.

The goal of provocative prompts

Asking and attempting to address important questions is a cornerstone of many effective lessons. The goal of a provocative prompt isn't merely to elicit conversation among students; a good prompt also helps students reexamine their own beliefs and attitudes.

Example provocative prompts:

- What does the text say about certain cultural conventions, assumptions, and ideologies?
- How does the text participate in the construction of cultural assumptions?
- How are categories like "femininity" and "masculinity," or "whiteness" and "blackness," or "civilization" and "nature" represented? What about race or class?
- Is the text's position straightforward and singular, or complex and multiple?
- Does the text match and support the dominant views of its time, or does it criticize or subvert them?
- What might original readers have known that later readers or those from different cultures or groups don't?
- What historical circumstances are present within the text or behind its pages?

Planning

- Instructor selects a prompt to use during the instructional period or allows students to create prompts of their own. The teacher serves as a facilitator, guiding, focusing, and structuring the conversation to allow students to express their own ideas and arrive at their own conclusions.

Suggested implementation

- Instructor presents one or more prompts to students and provides adequate wait time to allow them to select one that is provoking to them. Instructor may also allow students to write their own prompts, as long as student-created prompts are in line with the predetermined learning objective/goal.
- Students respond to their chosen prompts either in small groups or individually (3–5 minutes).
 - **Optional:** Instructor may allow students to remain anonymous, depending on the prompt.
- Responses are shared aloud between partners or with the class as a whole and students are given time to respond to what they have heard. (Suggested strategy—**Think–Pair–Share**)
 - **Optional** (Gallery Walk): Rather than respond aloud, prompts and responses may be posted around the room; students respond to each response using sticky notes.

Supporting Research

- Mintz, Steven. "Leading Scintillating, Stimulating, Substantive Class Discussions." Columbia University Graduate School of Arts & Sciences Teaching Center. Columbia University, <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/tat/pdfs/discussions.pdf>
- McDonald, Joseph P., Mohr, Nancy, Dichter, Alan, & McDonald, Elizabeth C. (2013). "Abbreviated Protocols." *The Power of Protocols*, 3rd ed. (Teachers College Press) http://www.tcpres.com/pdfs/9780807754597_protocols.pdf

Resources

- National School Reform Faculty. "Provocative Prompts for Equity." Harmony Education Center http://www.nsrffharmony.org/system/files/protocols/equity_prompts.pdf
- "Provocative Prompts Protocol." (2013). Engage Transformational Toolbox. Engage Learning! Adapted from *The Power of Protocols* by McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, and McDonald, from *Strategic Planning for America's Schools* by William Cook, and from the Design Thinking Toolkit by IDEO <http://engage2learn.org/toolboxresources/provocative-prompts-protocol.pdf>

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

Following are the items you must submit to earn the micro-credential and the criteria by which they will be evaluated. To earn this micro-credential, you must receive a passing evaluation for Parts 1, 3, and 4 and a "Yes" for Part 2.

Part 1. Overview questions

(200-word limit for each response)

- **Activity Description:** What kind of lesson did you and your students engage in to become more proficient in reacting to provocative prompts? Please describe the learning activities and strategies you used.
 - **Passing:** Activity description is clear with sufficient detail to illustrate what the students did to gain competencies.
- **Activity Evaluation:** How do you know your students increased their proficiency by engaging with the provocative prompt and what evidence did you collect that demonstrates these learning gains?
 - **Passing:** Activity evaluation process and evidence are clear, appropriate, and sufficient to evaluate the competencies.

Part 2. Evidence/artifacts

Please submit work examples from two students (such as links to writing, audio, images, video, or other media) that demonstrate progress toward using provocative prompts.

"Yes"	"Almost"	"Not Yet"
Student work examples show conclusive evidence of interaction with at least one relevant provocative prompt and illustrate how that prompt related to the assigned task and the learning objective.	Student work examples show some evidence of interaction with a provocative prompt and some illustration of how that prompt related to the assigned task and learning objective.	Student work examples include little to no evidence of interaction with a provocative prompt.

Part 3. Student reflections

For the two students whose work examples were included above, submit student-created reflections on their experience with the provocative prompt(s). Use the following questions as a guide (200-word limit for each reflection):

- Did the prompt challenge your established, preconceived notions of the subject material? Why or why not?
- How do you think prompts like the one your teacher used contribute to your overall understanding of the subject/lesson?
 - **Passing:** Student reflections clearly indicate how the provocative prompt affected their understanding of the subject material and clearly show how the activity changed the student's view of the subject matter. The reflections are specific and convincing.

Part 4. Teacher reflection

Provide a reflection on what you learned, using the following questions as a guide (200-word limit):

- What was the impact of engaging your students in the provocative prompt?
- How will experiencing/implementing this activity shape your daily teaching practice in the future?
 - **Passing:** Teacher reflection clearly indicates how the activity affected both the students and the teacher and clearly states how the experience will affect the teacher's future practice.