Creating a Youth-Centered Climate Through Purposeful Questions
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Question Definitions
Closed-ended:
- Convergent
- The answer is often a fact (there is a "right" answer) or one word such as "Yes" or "No"
- Begin with words such as do, did, or have
- Example: "Did you like the leadership workshop?"

Open-ended:
- Divergent
- There is no "right" answer.
- Begin with words such as what or how
- Example: "What did you learn in the leadership workshop?"

4WH Framework
Categories (question stems): Who - What - When - Where - How

4WH	When
Who	**Where**
What	**How**

Dimensions: A single question may address one or more dimensions
Dimension 1: What is or has been (singular perspective)
Dimension 2: What also is or has been (multiple perspectives)
Dimension 3: What could be (future perspective)

Focus: Problem-Solving
Purpose: To cultivate and promote creativity and critical thinking in a collaborative and encouraging environment
Tool: 3-Dimensional 4WH Framework

3-Dimensional 4WH Framework with Sample Questions
Categories (question stems): Who - What - When - Where - How
Dimensions: A single question may address one or more dimensions

3-Dimensional 4WH Dimension 1: What is or has been (singular perspective) Dimension 2: What also is or has been (multiple perspectives) Dimension 3: What could be (future perspective)	**When** ☐ 1. When did you first learn this type of math? ☐ 2. ☐ 3. When will you make a decision?
Who ☐ 1. ☐ 2. Who thinks about this differently than you do? ☐ 3. Who will you talk to about this?	**Where** ☐ 1. Where did you get stuck? ☐ 2. ☐ 3. Where do you want to take this?
What ☐ 1. What strategies have you tried? ☐ 2. What other advice have you been given? ☐ 3.	**How** ☐ 1. How did you figure out the previous problem? ☐ 2. How did your teacher explain it? ☐ 3.

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Sample starting question: "How would you describe this challenge?"

3-Dimensional 4WH Framework
Dimension 1: What is or has been (singular perspective)
Dimension 2: What also is or has been (multiple perspectives)
Dimension 3: What could be (future perspective)

3-Dimensional 4WH	When 1. 2. 3.
Who 1. 2. 3.	Where 1. 2. 3.
What 1. 2. 3.	How 1. 2. 3.

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Definitions, Characteristics, and Benefits of Questions

<u>Closed-ended or convergent:</u>
- Have a right or wrong, or "yes" or "no" answer
- The answer is usually 1-2 words
- Answers may be based on facts
- Examples: Did you like it? Have you been to the park? Do you want to? What is your favorite sport? Where did you grow up?
- Used for purposes such as finding out information, checking understanding, fact-checking, or persuading someone to do something or think a certain way
- Useful to get the conversation started (such as, "Which was your favorite animal at the zoo?" followed by an open-ended question: "Why is the giraffe your favorite animal?")
- The question-asker maintains control of the conversation
- May close people down or terminate a conversation
- May not generate details or depth

<u>Open-ended or divergent:</u>
- Have many possible answers
- Tend to begin with sentence stems what, who, when, where, how, why
- Provide greater opportunity to build relationships
- Go deeper and require more complex thinking
- Do not usually have a right or wrong answer
- Examples: How do you plan to do that? How did you feel when that happened? What will you do next? Why did you take that trip?
- Value the ideas of the responder
- Open up the conversation
- Encourage creativity and problem-solving; facilitate learning
- In response, people may feel vulnerable, respected, challenged, heard, valued, uncomfortable, encouraged, etc. depending on our relationship, the topic, and their readiness to respond
- Express the question-asker's curiosity

Additional Resources on Questions

- *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life* by Marilee Adams
- *Co-Active Coaching* by Henry Kimsey-House, Karen Kimsey-House, Phillip Sandahl, and Laura Whitworth
- *Appreciative Leadership* by Diana Whitney, Amanda Trosten-Bloom, and Kae Rader
- Post from Responsive Classroom focused on crafting open-ended questions as a classroom teacher: https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/article/open-ended-questions
- "How to Use Open-Ended Questions with Children": http://storiesandchildren.com/open-ended-questions/
- Inside Mathematics provides demonstrations and descriptions of Common Core Mathematical Practice Standards in action, including many examples that include open-ended questions: http://www.insidemathematics.org/common-core-resources/mathematical-practice-standards
- This NWEA blogpost highlights benefits of using higher order questions in academic settings: https://www.nwea.org/blog/2013/higher-order-questions-rigor-meeting-common-core-state-standards/
- Challenge Five from *A Guide to Cooperative Communication Skills for Success at Home and at Work* by Dennis Rivers, MA (including exercises to practice creating open-ended questions): http://www.newconversations.net/communication-skills-workbook/asking-questions-more-open-endedly-and-creatively/
- "Leadership: How to Ask the Right Questions" by Greg B. Cohen (which includes four categories of questions: Evaluative, Perspective, Action and Knowledge): http://www.businessweek.com/managing/content/sep2009/ca20090929_639660.htm
- "How to Ask Better Questions" by Judith Ross: https://hbr.org/2009/05/real-leaders-ask.html
- Inquiry Tools, including 4WH questions: http://coro.org/coro-tool-inquiry/