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Case Study: Pre-service Teacher Professional Development

Quest X: Power of Questions in Classrooms

Context:

SEF Team members, who are designers, trainers, and certified teachers, were tasked with planning a training workshop for teacher trainees in May 2025 at Drishti Institute, a private institution offering teacher training. We had previously conducted workshops with these trainees and used previous classroom observations to finalize the strategy.

Why? We had been to several classes of our trainees and had noticed a pattern - Teachers were asking 'yes/no' questions, children were listening and responding to the teacher, but these interactions were not informing the teaching and learning process.

Guide and Strategy Used:

Student Engagement | Tier 2, Strategy 3: Using questioning to build understanding of new content

Guide Sections Used:

Strategy benefits (why does it matter), Strategy description, and Literacy/numeracy lesson plans with strategy integration

Format:

1-day training workshop

Audience:

100+ teacher trainees

Objectives of the training workshop:

1. Trainees will understand the role of effective questioning in enhancing student engagement and promoting deeper learning in the classroom.
2. Trainees will explore a framework to frame effective questions while introducing a new topic in class.
3. Trainees will explore teaching practices that foster a supportive learning environment for effective questioning in the classroom.
4. Trainees will apply the skill of framing open-ended questions to teach new concepts.

Audience: 100 + Pre-service Educators (Students pursuing their D.L.Ed course from a private educational institute).

Design

- Since implementing a decision tree in the form of a conversation would not have been possible for this large a group, classroom observation data was used to pick the strategy
- Considering our audience, we came up with certain requirements for the training session. It would have to be broken down into detailed steps - the purpose of questioning, definitions of effective questions, exemplar lesson plans, and specific steps that trainees can follow to ask effective questions in their classes.
- This was to ensure that trainees retained the information and on clarity on how to integrate the strategy into their lesson plans.

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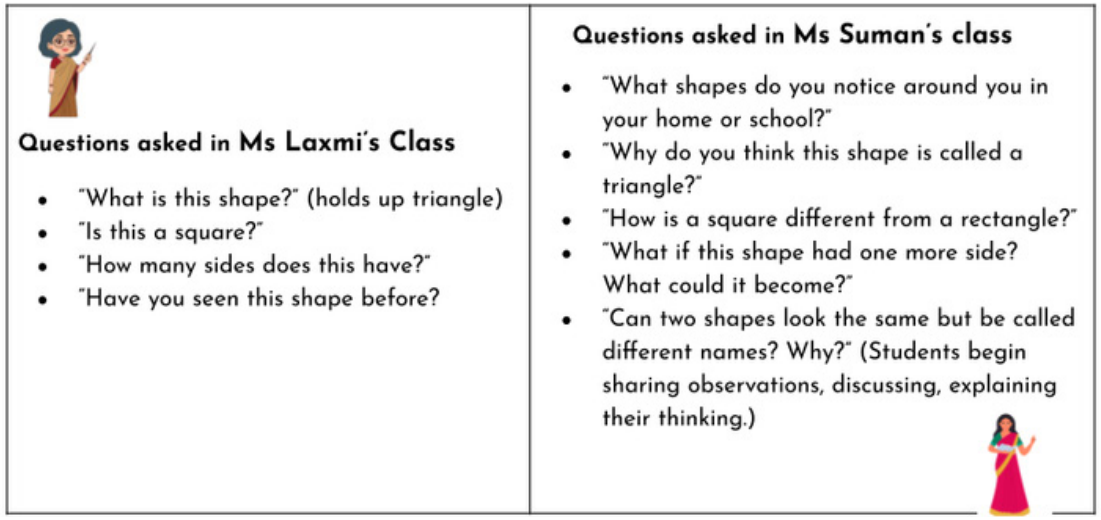
Implementation

Here are some key ways in which we managed to meet all considerations while incorporating the guide:

1



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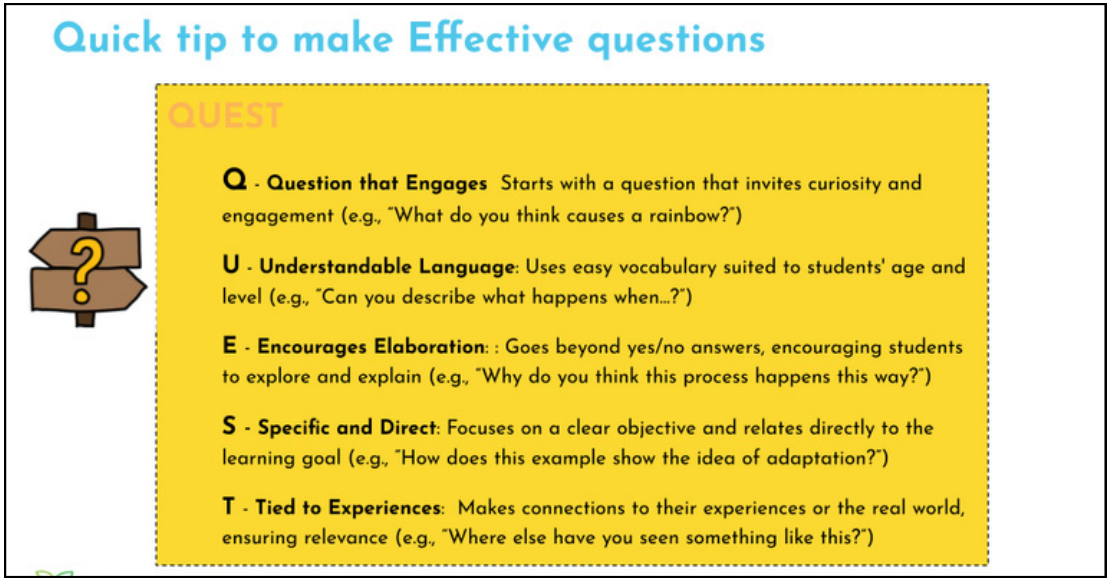

The team invited trainees to participate in a role play to set the context for 2 key skills: asking effective questions and creating a safe culture that promotes questioning in the classroom. The QUEST framework was based on the elements of an effective question in the guide, created to enable retention among trainees. (Fig.1&2)

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Implementation

3

Strategy	Why to Use It	Simple teacher practices
A - Align with purpose	Ensures questions support lesson goals and are not random	**#Teacher Practice** - - Plan ahead , think of different open ended and close ended questions you would like to ask. - Use " Bloom's taxonomy or Open ended questions stems to craft questions.
S - Support a Safe Thinking Culture	Shifts the classroom from answer-getting to idea-building	**# Teacher Practice** - Create opportunities for all students to answer, call students at random -only vocal students should not the opportunities - Normalize mistakes and listen & acknowledge all answers. - Do not make the child free embarrassed or suprised in case of mistakes or while calling them randomly.
K - Keep a balance of open and close ended questions	Engages different levels of thinking and learners	**# Teacher Practice** - Ask open ended questions as a follow up to close ended. - Switch to close ended questions, if students struggle with open ended questions.
I - Include thinking time	Gives all students a chance to to process and formulate their responses	**#Teacher Practice** - Give thinking time of 30-40 seconds before taking answers -. Use strategies like **"wait time"** or **"turn and talk."** to give students time to think and share.
T - Tie to what students already know	Activates prior knowledge and brings relevance	**# Teacher Practice** -Ask questions that connect to everyday life, prior lessons, or local examples. E.g., ***-Where have you seen this before?" or "Does this remind you of something?"Do you see anything like this at home or in your neighbourhood?***

The 'ASK IT' framework based on the pointers in the guide to articulate clear steps to build a culture of questioning. (Fig.3)

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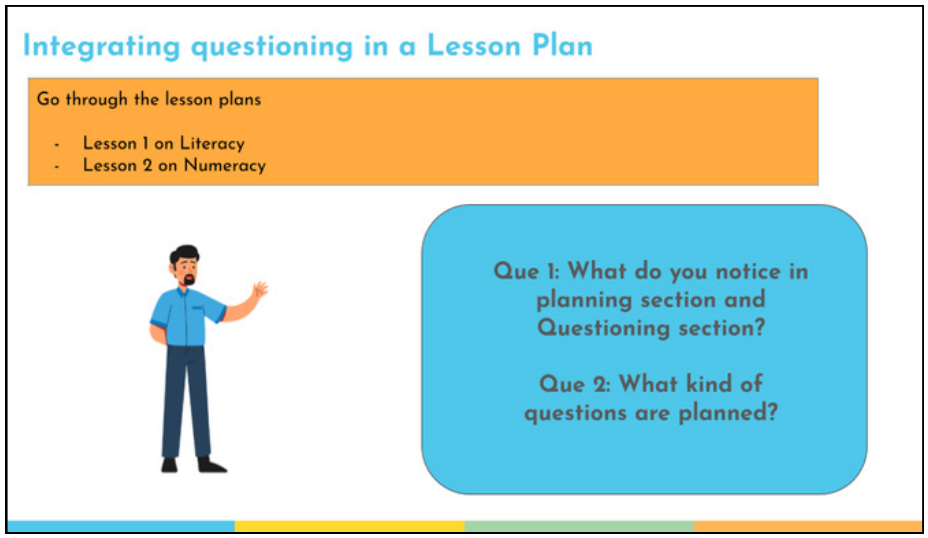

Lastly, the lesson plan from the guide was shown as an exemplar to the trainees, who then engaged with it to understand the kind of questions that can be asked.
(Fig. 5&6)

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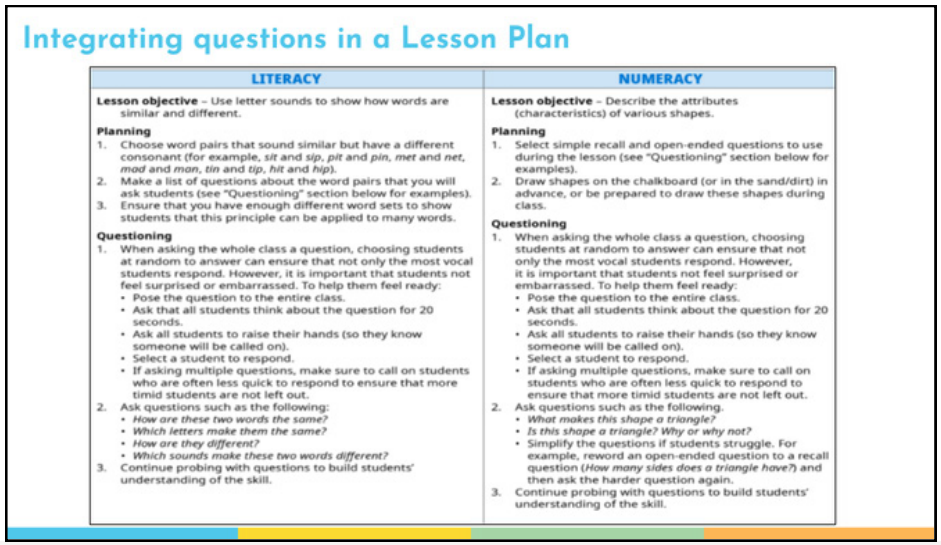

User Experience

The session was highly interactive - participants were engaged throughout. The principal/head of Drishti Institute commented - 'This was an extremely well-designed and engaging session. I can see the improvement in my students within the span of one workshop!'

Further, this turned out to be one of the most effective sessions so far across 3 institutes - participants scored an average of 87.86% on content understanding and 88.61% on confidence to execute.

We look forward to seeing the teacher trainees take the skill of 'questioning to build understanding of new content' to their students!

Additional resources:
Link to adapted Student Engagement Guide