

part of the training. Not only must their meanings, as used in the lesson, be attended to: their varied applications must also receive attention. Exercising scholars on the *application* is far too little attended to in our schools; and yet, this is the most important part of the work—*DRILL*. This part of the drill, to be of interesting and practical value, should be very much extended.—Their meanings in the passage or lesson read, should first be attended to; then, the most marked distinctions in their varied uses; then, their analyzing them—reducing them to their simplest elements, so far as we can; then, showing how the radix, primitive, or base part of words are modified, changed in their meaning, lessened or increased in their significance by prefixes, affixes, or a modifying of the root *itself*; or depart altogether in the history of their uses, from their antecedent uses; and then, fully exercising them on their different applications, making the pupils give both orally, and in writing sentences, their own construction, embodying selected words. And if this exercise were well followed up, its effects on this part of the scholar's education would be much more beneficial, show far more developing power and mastery of words in their multifarious uses, and varied forms, than the dry etymological and mere defining exercise, which I consider as a mere starting point.—This part of the work to be finished by testing the *results* of the whole, by a series of suitable, searching questions.

The third division of the work, to be gone over at a *different* time, should include spelling exercises on slates, recapitulations of lesson, outline exercise, various paraphrasing of words, clauses, sentences, &c., and such other exercises as will fairly test the general results of drill. And, I pray you, never trust to a PUBLIC EXAMINATION to test teaching and training effects. Too often these are mere surface exhibitions, got up for a purpose.—The true testing of progress is that kind of questioning which reaches the very heart of your instructions. There must be in it a *microscopic* as well as *telescopic*, searching and exploring—a digging deep and a searching deep, as well as the expansive exploring of far off starry principles.—School hours, and your labours, have something, and many things, in them too precious to suffer any part of either time or labor to be lost or attended with no good result.

I now proceed to say something more special about questioning.—Questioning serves many purposes. Indeed, the subject of questioning opens up—embraces the whole field of educating, training the mind. Its three leading purposes, as I have already said, are to prepare the student's mind for receiving instruction; then, to intelligently communicating—leading on the pupil by question and answer, to work his own mind to educate itself, gather knowledge, test as he gets, and search for more, and, again, to search out results.—To MASTER the art of questioning, no educator can. But like every other teaching and training qualification, it has its degrees.—The language, style and character of questions should be the educator's daily study. Respecting these I give the following hints:

1. First, study a command of words—words the most suitable for scholars in every step of their education.

2. Secondly, cultivate great simplicity of language.

3. Thirdly, study brevity. Use as many words as are sufficient to make the question clear, and no more.

4. Fourthly, in instructive questioning, tell little in your question. Do not lead them too *directly* to the fact, or thing you wish themselves to find out. But make the way, by which with a little effort on their own part, they may find it out, sufficiently plain.

5. Fifthly, questions should be definite and unmistakable—admitting of but *one* answer.

6. Sixthly, avoid vague, wide, ambiguous questioning—so common among teachers.

7. Seventhly, avoid prompting—giving them words, just leading them to the answer wanted.

8. The next thing I wish you to attend to is, never be satisfied with single words—as, yes, no,—it is; it is not, &c., for answers. From such answers, how can you know that the answer comes from an exercised mind—a mind exercised on the thing demanded by the question? Children can and do often give the word which suffices to answer their teacher's enquiry, and are yet ignorant of the whole statement of which that word forms a part.

9. Again test their answers, to satisfy yourself that they are not mere guesses.

10. Vary the form of the question; and come on them from different points, in trying their knowledge on the same thing.

11. In your advanced classes be not satisfied until you get *entire* sentences for answers. It is worth while often to turn round sharply on inattentive pupils, or who have given mechanical answers, with the question:—"What have we just said?"—"Tell me the question, and how the answer agrees with it."

12. When testing their knowledge—but at the same time giving fair play—a chance correctly to answer—to tell what they really know, proceed as follows: put the questions distinctly, and in a clear, brief way; make the class repeat your question *verbatim, simultaneously*. Then, say—*think*—for a moment—*answer*.—Repeating the question after you simultaneously, enables you to ascertain if they have *all* got hold on the question allowing a moment to think; gives them time to collect and arrange their ideas on the thing demanded. You must deal with your pupils, when under a *testing* examination, *fairly and honestly*, and convince them that you wish to take no advantage of any.

13. Be sure that every one in the class understands both question and answer *well* before another question is put. And when there is any doubt about their understanding well, even correct answers, pass it not, till by repetitions and cross questioning, the doubt is removed. Class questioning has this particular: object in view—that it must act upon the whole class together.

14. Question, till you get them to answer individually as readily and correctly as simultaneously.

15. Encourage *mutual questioning*, by setting the children to question one another in turn on the subject of the lesson. This practice tends greatly to strengthen their minds and their intelligence, and sharpen the intellect.

16. Teach them how to convert portions of their lesson into questions and answers. This exercise has an excellent effect upon their minds. It excites and keeps awake attention, it cultivates in them a habit of research—working their own minds on subjects—and also of rivalry and emulation. This exercise and mutual questioning, persevered in, prepare them more than any other I know for the sifting questions of the teacher.

17. Animation should characterize the whole work of questioning. Question and answer become lively and attractive, when they are *extempore* and illustrated by a quick fancy, a well stored mind, a masterly knowledge of the subject, and a good text-book.

18. Lastly, plan well every part of your questioning work, that no part may be done at hazard or by a chance impulse, and that none be out of place—the whole forming a well connected chain, every link of which is in its right place, properly connected.

There is no plan which tends more to clear the understanding of a subject, to work it into the memory and permanently to remember, as questioning well and skillfully employed. It is better than the ablest lecturing; for it implies something more than listening, something more than mere reading. It exercises thought. When we instruct children by conversing with them on a certain topic, we cannot retain their attention. The words which we use may be the fittest and the best chosen, but we cannot be sure that their minds have been reached, or, even that they are giving heed to what we are saying; but by questioning we can secure the former in some measure, and ascertain the latter beyond any doubt. The thoughts are almost of necessity drawn out and set at work; and if an answer is made with any meaning, it must be the result of some consideration, which is an important step gained. If their answers have not much meaning, it is our duty to turn it to the best account; if wide of the mark, still it is useful, for it may prove that our starting point was not sufficiently low. To ascertain this is very important. It tells us to go back to something simpler and easier, till we find what they are capable of comprehending and answering; for we have no power to instruct till we have thus secured firm footing. The question has been a gauge of ignorance, if not a measure of knowledge, and has served the purpose of a preliminary. And to this preliminary special attention should be paid. Succeed well with it, and it gives every chance to bring the pupil upon the right tract, on which you and he can travel on together to his profit.

The whole sum of what may be said about questioning is comprised in this: "It ought to set scholars a thinking, to promote activity and energy on their part, and to rouse the whole mental faculty into action, instead of blindly cultivating the memory at the expense of the higher intellectual powers. That is the best questioning which best stimulates the learner to action; which gives him a habit of thinking and inquiring for himself. All our questioning should aim at this; and the success of our teaching must ever be measured, not by the amount of information we have imparted, but by the degree in which we have strengthened the judgment and enlarged the capacity of our pupils, and imparted into them that searching and inquiring spirit which is a far surer basis for all future acquisitions than any amount of information whatever.

JOHN BRUCE,
Inspector of Schools,