



Hinge Questions

From *The Formative 5: Everyday Assessment Techniques for Every Math Classroom*, Francis (Skip) Fennell, Beth McCord-Kobett, and Jonathan A. Wray (Corwin, 2017) Used with authors' permission.

From Page 14: The hinge question (Wiliam, 2011) provides a check for understanding/proficiency at a “hinge point” in a lesson. The hinge question is a question that you plan for and use to elicit responses indicating your next step planning-wise and instructionally, with particular implications for the next day’s lesson. Responses to hinge questions directly inform both planning and instruction.

Creating the hinge question is an important part of the planning of the day’s lesson. Our experience has been that teachers need to take the time to create a question that truly assesses the major focus of the day’s lesson. We often consider the hinge question as the lesson’s “deal-breaker” since responses help you to determine your next steps instructionally. We have also found it helpful to actually try out hinge questions with colleagues within a grade-level professional learning community. Such trial opportunities also provide teachers with occasions to consider varied hinge question formats. Most importantly, your ability to engineer the use of the hinge question is critical. Considering how you will engage students, assess responses, provide feedback, and decide instructional next steps attests to both the value and importance of the hinge question.

From page 85: The hinge question provides a check for understanding or proficiency at a particular hinge point in a lesson. Stated differently, the success of a lesson actually hinges on responses to such questions as an indication of whether students understand... Your quick analysis of hinge question responses provides you with in-the-moment signals to guide, monitor, and shift lesson activities as you teach.

The hinge question is the question that you ask that truly provides feedback to guide your next steps, both within your lesson, moving forward, and as you plan for the next day. The hinge question typically occurs toward the end of the lesson, but you could ask hinge point questions at particular points within the lesson where you need to get a sense of what students know...