

Academic Check-In

OVERVIEW: The informal academic check-in used daily as a tool for formative assessment, allows teachers to assess what a student is learning, doing, or thinking at a particular point in the lesson or unit. The one-to-one simple three-question format is intended to help students practice metacognition and gain confidence in their capacities as independent learners. Academic check-ins also help teachers target their academic supports and interventions, resulting in a class culture where high levels of thinking and learning are both expected and supported.

Purpose:

- Determine what students are learning, doing, or thinking related to academic skills and content
- Help students practice important metacognitive skills
- Provide opportunities to address confusion, misunderstandings, or support the correction of errors
- Provide specific positive feedback when a student's thinking is on track

What it looks like: (Teacher first scans room to identify student(s) to check-in with)

1. Inform the class that you will be moving around and checking in with students to hear their smart thinking and questions, which will help you support their learning.
2. Build Rapport: Approach the student for a one-to-one check-in by moving to their side, positioning yourself at the same level as the student, and greeting the student by name.
3. Open Ended Questions: Ask some version of the following three questions:
What are you working on?
Example: Hi, Renee. Where you are in the lab?
Example: Hey Lilah. Describe your thinking for me as you complete this problem.
How is it going?
Example: What are your thoughts and feelings about your essay so far?
Example: How are you doing with solving for x?
What are you going to do next?
Example: Describe for me what you are going to work on next?
Example: Now that you figured that out, what might you do next?
4. If necessary, follow up by addressing any areas of confusion. When appropriate, point to any written cues, procedures, or directions that would support the student being self-directed and figuring things out for themselves.

Opportunities for Implementation:

- While students are completing the Do Now at the start of class
- After your mini-lesson, when students are working independently on an assignment or a project
- When pairs, trios or small groups are working on an assignment, project, or lab
- When students are packing up at the end of class
- When you have handed back a graded assignment, test or a quiz

"If you can both listen ... and accept their answers not as things to just be judged right or wrong but as pieces of information which may reveal what the (student) is thinking, you will have taken a giant step toward becoming a master teacher, rather than merely a disseminator of information." -Easley and Zwoyer 1975: p 25

Example Academic Check-In Scenario:

The Teacher is walking around the room while students work on a close reading of “A Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” The teacher wants to check in with each student at least once a week, and she has identified six students to do informal academic check-ins with today.

The teacher informs the class of her next move to prepare the students and support their focus and attention for the task: “I am going to move about the room and check-in with several of you to hear your smart thinking, and answer any questions you might have.”

First on her list is Myra, so once she sees everyone has made the transition to settle in to work she moves over to Myra’s desk, grabs a chair so she can sit beside Myra and starts the check-in with an **open-ended question**, “What are some strategies you use when doing a close read?”

Myra shares, “I’m re-reading this sentence to try and figure out what King is trying to say. It is really long and has a bunch of names and words I don’t know.”

The teacher nods and **paraphrases**, “So this sentence is confusing and you are re-reading to try and understand the meaning.” She **pauses** and then asks an **open-ended question**, “How is this strategy working for you?”

Myra, “Well I re-read this part a couple of times and it still didn’t make sense so I skipped ahead to the end of the sentence and now I think I understand that he is just giving a bunch of examples of why he feels he should be in fighting in Birmingham.”

The teacher **pauses** and **paraphrases**, “Ahh, so you didn’t let unfamiliar vocabulary hold you back. You went ahead and skimmed to try and get the gist of the whole paragraph.” **(Pause)** The teacher then asks a follow up **open-ended question**, “What might you do next?”

Myra replies, “Well, I’m going to mark up the text the way you showed us to highlight the main point and then read the next paragraph.”

Teacher wraps up check-in, “Sounds like you know exactly what to do. Thanks for sharing your thinking with me.”

