

Teacher Actions for Consolidating Learning in the Early Years

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Effective teaching practices can be influenced by teacher actions. Teacher actions can include how teachers prepare for teaching; approaches for launching a lesson, how teachers promote student-centred learning; and the types of questions they pose that guide students' learning (ACARA, 2021; NCTM, 2014; Rowland et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2020; Sullivan et al., 2020). The authors are engaged in a project funded by the Australian Research Council, Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta and Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (LP 180100611): Exploring Mathematics Sequences of Connected, Cumulative and Challenging tasks (EMC³) that provides early years teachers with sequences of lessons and new approaches to curriculum. In this paper we report on a lesson observation and a case study of a Year 1 teacher (Abby). The results and discussion highlight teacher actions including the types of questions Abby asked and posed when sharing and discussing student's work samples during a geometry lesson

Abby's actions show skilful use of a factual question (typically) having a lower level of cognitive demand, followed by probing questions (typically) having a higher level of cognitive demand, when encouraging students to justify and explain properties of regular and irregular polygons. Abby used different question types and combinations of questions in complementary ways. In other words, the factual question required students to engage in the discussion by choosing a yes or no response, focus their thinking, ready for the following probing questions that supported cognitive activation. We commented that the purpose of asking the factual question appeared to be to engage students, whilst the follow-up probing question served to activate cognition. Cognitive activation occurs when students think more deeply about facts or concepts (NFER, 2015).

References

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