**﻿Fact First Questioning**

**﻿Description:**

Quality questions provide insight into students' ideas and growing knowledge base. *Fact First Questioning* is a higher-order questioning technique ued to draw out student knowledge beyond recall level. It takes a factual "what" question and turns it into a deeper "how" or "why" question because you are stating the fact first and asking students to elaborate.

**﻿How this FACT promotes Student Learning:**

Students, including "high achievers," can memorize, recall, and recant information with very little conceptual understanding. By stating the fact first and asking students to explain or elaborate on it, you enable students to tap into deeper thinking processes that lead to a more enduring understanding of the concepts. Stating the fact first and then allowing for wait time provides an opportunity for students to activate their thinking about the concept before being asked the higher-level question.

**﻿How this FACT informs instruction:**

This FACT helps teachers expand their repertoire of questioning strategies for the purpose of finding out what their students know and understand. A simple change in the way factual questions are asked and responded to can open up the door to providing valuable information to teachers about student understanding of the conceptual ideas related to an important fact. The information helps teachers determine whether students recall important knowledge at a superficial level or have developed deeper conceptual understanding. The information can be used to examine whether terminology and facts are overemphasized at the expense of understanding and adjust instruction accordingly to focus on concepts instead of terminology and facts.

**﻿Design and Administration:**

Any factual question can be thoughtfully turned into a *Fact First Question.* Use the general template: State the fact followed by "Why is X an example of Y?" (Black et al., 2003). For example, instead of asking, "Which essential life process releases energy from food?" turn it around to ask, "Cellular respiration is an example of an essential life process. Why is cellular respiration an essential life process?" Instead of the factual recall answer-cellular respiration-from the first question, the *Fact First Question* produces a much deeper response that involves describing cellular respiration as a process that happens within cells to break down carbohydrates in order to release the energy required for cells to function.

**﻿General implementation attributes:**

Ease of Use: High Time Demand: Low Cognitive Demand: Medium

**﻿Modifications:**

Consider modifying traditional textbook recall questions into *Fact First Questions.* Have older students come up with their own *Fact First Questions* and responses.

**﻿Caveats:**

Use *Fact First Questions* after students have had an opportunity to experience and learn the content. Some "why" questions are not appropriate for younger students in cases when observations are developed before explanations. For example, K-2 students should know the fact that the moon can sometimes be seen in the daytime. This can be observed by students and assimilated into their knowledge about the Earth, moon, and sun system. However, it is beyond the developmental level of primary-age students to respond to *Fact First Question* such as the following: The moon can sometimes be seen in the daytime. Why can the moon sometimes be seen during the day?

**﻿Disciplines this FACT can be used In:**

This FACT can be used in science, math, social studies, language arts, health, foreign language, and performing arts.  
  
  
Keeley, Paige. (2008) *Science Formative Assessment: 75 Practical Strategies for Linking Assessment, Instruction, and Learning.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press