

How to Keep Your Students Engaged? Ask Them Questions!

Below are some sample questions you can ask your class.. You don't need to ask all questions (keep~10 min before planting). Remember to use language that your grade level understands.

- Ask what it takes for plants to grow? **Plants need water, sunlight and nutrients from soil.**
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- Can we plant anything at anytime of the year? **No - different plants require different temperatures, sunlight and water. We are selecting plants that will do well in early fall/winter.**
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- Ask why we need to remove weeds. **Competition for nutrients, sunlight.**
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- Our selected veggies require “full sun” – review compass directions (north, south, east, west – i.e. never eat soggy waffles). **Morning sun is in the east, warm/hot sun is in the west. Place tall plants or trellis “behind” your shorter plants so as not to create shade (unless you desire it – e.g. lettuce might get hot, so shade is good this time of year).**
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- Show an example of what kids will harvest in 50-60 days. E.g. bring in some veggies from the store (it doesn't need to be the exact variety). **Explain the components of the bean if applicable – pod, seed. Isn't it cool that we can eat the seeds?**
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- If you are also planting a root vegetable (e.g. carrots, turnips, radishes), ask the kids which part is underground. **Explain that we eat the roots and sometimes the greens.**
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- Ask class to calculate how many rows are needed given the number of students in the classroom and the desired spacing between the seeds. **Due to space constraints, divide class in half. One half plants beans, the other something else.**
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- Ask why we sometimes place more than one seed in a hole? **Not all seeds may germinate; time saving - easier to thin beds once they've sprouted.**
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- What does “germinate” mean? **Germinate means “to begin to grow or sprout after a period of dormancy.”**
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- Tell students how long it will be before we can observe seedlings (sprouts). Most are in the range of 4-10 days. About how many weeks is that? Tell them how many days it is before harvest 50-60 days. How many months is that?
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- Ask why are vegetables good for us? What vitamins and minerals are in the vegetables you've planted
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- Ask what's the difference between vitamins (**organic**) and minerals (**inorganic**)
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- Observe other beds where similar vegetables have already sprouted. Note how some plants are much smaller than the ones adjacent to them - ask them why this could be. **I suspect it's because some seeds were planted deeper than others and took longer to make it to the surface.**

****FOR 4TH AND 5TH GRADERS:**

Consider introducing your class to the concept of “**companion planting**.” Over the years, farmers have observed that some plants do **better** when planted near other plants. Your veggies have been selected because they should do well together. Note, the International Garden committee may plant additional herbs/flowers to help with pest control. Please see link:

<http://www.swansonnursery.com/blog/companion-planting-vegetable-gardening>