



EduQuencher

DOK IMPLEMENTATION QUICK GUIDE

Design Tasks That Move Students
Beyond Recall and Into **Deeper Thinking**.



WHAT YOU'LL FIND INSIDE



UNDERSTAND
the 4 DOK levels
and what they
really mean.



IDENTIFY
the level of
cognitive demand
in any task.



STRENGTHEN
questions, tasks, and
assessments for
deeper learning.



IMPLEMENT
practical tools
you can use
right away.



IMPROVE
student thinking,
engagement, and
achievement.



WHO IS THIS FOR?

Classroom teachers, instructional coaches, homeschool educators, and school leaders who want to design learning experiences that develop strong, independent thinkers.



WHY IT MATTERS

Deeper thinking builds confidence, prepares students for real-world challenges, and supports success on state assessments and beyond.

“The goal is not just to cover content.
The goal is to cultivate **thinkers**.”



USE THIS GUIDE TO:

- Plan with intention
- Ask better questions
- Elevate cognitive rigor
- Create meaningful evidence of learning



UNDERSTANDING THE 4 DOK LEVELS

The Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Framework helps us design learning experiences that challenge students to **think deeply** and apply their learning in **meaningful** ways.

DOK 1

Recall & Reproduction



Students recall facts and basic information.

Example Task:

List the causes of the American Revolution.

DOK 2

Skills & Concepts



Students use skills and concepts to solve problems or explain ideas.

Example Task:

Compare and contrast the North and South before the Civil War.

DOK 3

Strategic Thinking



Students plan, reasoning, and justify using evidence and multiple steps.

Example Task:

Create a plan to solve a community water shortage.

DOK 4

Extended Thinking



Students investigate, connect ideas over time, and apply learning to real-world issues.

Example Task:

Design and present a solution to reduce plastic pollution in your community.

FROM SHALLOW TO DEEP: THE DOK SHIFT

Moving from lower-level tasks to higher-level thinking.

SHALLOW (Lower DOK)

DEEP (Higher DOK)



What is the capital of France?



Why is the location of the capital important to France's development?



Who was the main character?



How did the main character's decisions impact the theme of the story?



Solve this equation.
 $2x + 4 = 12$



Create a real-world situation that can be represented by this equation. Solve and explain.



List three causes of deforestation.



Evaluate the long-term impacts of deforestation on ecosystems and human life.



Our goal is not to eliminate DOK 1 or 2 tasks. Our goal is to intentionally use all 4 levels to build **deeper, transferable learning**.

DESIGN WITH INTENTION



Start with your learning goal.

What should students know, understand, and be able to do?



Consider the evidence of learning.

What will show you they met the goal?



Match the task to the DOK level that aligns with the goal.



Scaffold intentionally.

Build from foundation (DOK 1-2) to application (DOK 3-4).



COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID



Over-relying on DOK 1 tasks that focus only on recall and memorization.



Using complex words but not requiring complex thinking.



Assigning DOK 4 tasks without the proper scaffolding.



Designing tasks that take too long without clear purpose.

“ The goal is not just to cover content. The goal is to cultivate **thinkers**, who can impact the world. ”



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BUILDING STRONGER TASKS: QUESTIONS THAT DRIVE THINKING

The right question is the heart of a high-quality task. Use these question stems to intentionally design for each DOK level.

DOK 1 Recall & Reproduction	DOK 2 Skills & Concepts	DOK 3 Strategic Thinking	DOK 4 Extended Thinking
 - Who, what, when, where, why? - List, label, identify, define. - How would you describe...? - What is...? Focus: Facts and basic information.	 - How would you classify...? - Compare and contrast... - Explain how...? - What patterns can you find? - What conclusions can you draw? Focus: Connections and application of skills.	 - How would you solve...? - Why do you think...? - What evidence supports...? - What is the impact of...? - How would you develop a plan to...? Focus: Reasoning, planning, and supporting thinking.	 - What would happen if...? - How would you design...? - What alternative solutions exist? - What is your position on... and why? Focus: Investigation, innovation, and real-world application.

A SIMPLE FORMULA FOR TASK DESIGN

Use this formula to make any task stronger.



When these four elements work together, students do more than complete tasks — they grow as thinkers.

LOOK FOR EVIDENCE OF THINKING

High-quality tasks produce high-quality thinking.

Students are demonstrating deeper thinking when they:

- ✓ Use evidence and examples to support ideas.
- ✓ Make connections between concepts and situations.
- ✓ Explain their reasoning and justify their thinking.
- ✓ Consider multiple perspectives or solutions.
- ✓ Reflect on the impact of their ideas.



Ask yourself:

What will students' responses look like if they are truly thinking deeply?



EXAMPLES THAT SHOW THE DIFFERENCE

TOPIC	DOK 1	DOK 2	DOK 3	DOK 4
 Water Cycle	List the steps in the water cycle.	Compare evaporation and condensation.	Design an experiment to show how water evaporates.	Propose solutions to address water shortages in your community.
 Historical Events	Who was Martin Luther King Jr.?	Explain the causes of the Civil Rights Movement.	Analyze the impact of the Civil Rights Movement on today's society.	Develop a plan for promoting equality and justice in your school.
 Literature	Who are the main characters?	Compare the setting in the book and the movie.	What theme is the author developing? Support with evidence.	Rewrite the ending of the story from a different character's perspective.
 Math	Solve $2x + 4 = 12$.	Explain how to solve $2x + 4 = 12$.	Create a real-world problem that can be solved using $2x + 4 = 12$.	Design a different equation with multiple solutions and explain why.

CHECK YOUR TASK QUALITY

Use this quick checklist before you assign.

-  Does the task align with the learning goal?
-  Is the DOK level intentional and appropriate?
-  Will students need to think, not just recall?
-  Will the task produce evidence of meaningful learning?
-  Can this task prepare students for real-world challenges?

“Great tasks don't just teach content.
They build thinkers.”

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ DOK is about the thinking, not the task.
- ✓ Use the right question to drive the right thinking.
- ✓ Move tasks from shallow to deep to build strong, independent learners.
- ✓ Intentional design leads to meaningful impact.

“The goal is not just to cover content.
The goal is to cultivate *thinkers* who can impact the world.”

USE THIS GUIDE TO:

-  Plan with purpose
-  Ask better questions
-  Elevate cognitive rigor
-  Create lasting impact

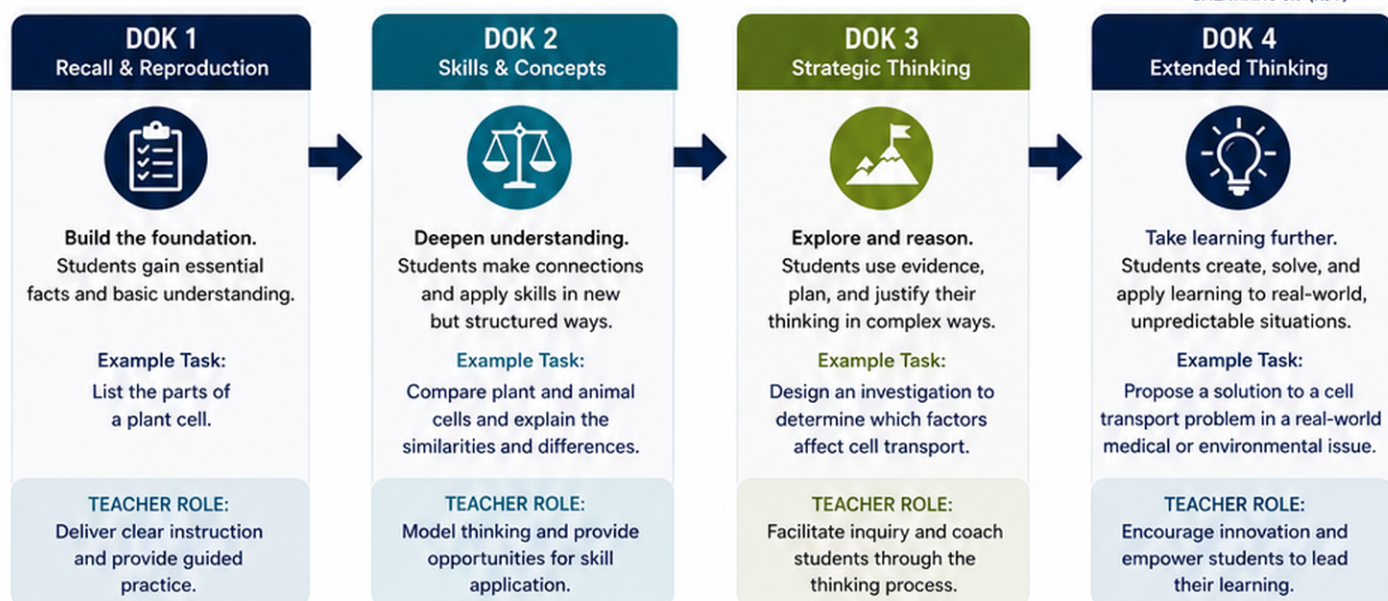


SCAFFOLDING LEARNING: MOVING STUDENTS THROUGH THE DOK LEVELS

Students strengthen their thinking when tasks build from foundational knowledge to complex, real-world application.

“And let us not be weary in well doing:
for in due season we shall reap,
if we faint not.”

– GALATIANS 6:9 (KJV)



SCAFFOLDING STRATEGIES THAT WORK



START SMALL, THEN STRETCH

Begin with DOK 1 or 2 tasks to build confidence, then challenge students with DOK 3 and 4.



BUILD CONNECTIONS

Use visuals, discussions, and real-world examples to help students link ideas across levels.



PROVIDE CHOICES

Offer different pathways or products so students can demonstrate their thinking in meaningful ways.



USE SUPPORT, THEN RELEASE

Model the thinking process, provide scaffolds, then gradually release responsibility.



REFLECT AND REVISE

Ask students to reflect on their thinking and how they can improve their work.

REAL-WORLD CONNECTIONS MATTER

Deeper thinking grows when learning is relevant.



AUTHENTIC CONTEXTS

Use real-world problems that mirror life beyond the classroom.



MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

Encourage students to consider different viewpoints and experiences.



MEANINGFUL PRODUCTS

Let students create something that solves a problem or makes an impact.



SHARE AND REFLECT

Give students opportunities to share their thinking and learn from others.



BEFORE YOU ASSIGN: THE DOK CHECKLIST



Is the purpose of the task clear?



Does the task match the intended DOK level?



What thinking is required to succeed?



What evidence will show students met the goal?



How will this task help students grow?



Remember:

We don't just teach content.
We develop **thinkers** who will change the world.



RECOGNIZE.

See the potential in every learner.



STRENGTHEN.

Build skills that last a lifetime.



DEEPEN.

Challenge thinking. Create impact.

*Make Thinking
the Goal.*

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DOK IN ACTION: TRANSFORMING A LESSON

See how one objective can be taught at different DOK levels.

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”
— PROVERBS 22:6 (ESV)

Objective: Student will understand the causes and effects of the American Revolution.

	DOK 1 Recall & Reproduction	DOK 2 Skills & Concepts	DOK 3 Strategic Thinking	DOK 4 Extended Thinking
OBJECTIVE				
SAMPLE TASK	List three causes of the American Revolution.	Compare the causes of the American Revolution and the French Revolution.	Analyze the most significant cause of the American Revolution and justify your reasoning with evidence.	Create a persuasive argument for or against the idea that the American Revolution was inevitable.
THINKING & LEARNING OUTCOME	Students recall facts and basic information. Focus: Remembering and understanding the basics. 	Students make connections and apply skills. Focus: Analyzing and organizing information. 	Students reason and justify using evidence. Focus: Deep reasoning, planning, and supporting conclusions. 	Students create, evaluate, and apply learning in complex ways. Focus: Extending learning to new, real-world situations. 

TEACHER TIPS FOR MOVING UP THE DOK LADDER



 **TIP:** Don't skip steps! Strong DOK 1 and 2 tasks build the foundation for powerful DOK 3 and 4 thinking.

POWERFUL QUESTION STEMS

DOK LEVEL	STEM EXAMPLES
DOK 1 Recall & Reproduction 	- Who, what, when, where, why? - List, name, define, identify. - What is...?
DOK 2 Skills & Concepts 	- How would you classify...? - Compare and contrast... - Explain how...? - What patterns can you find?
DOK 3 Strategic Thinking 	- How would you solve...? - What evidence supports...? - What is the impact of...? - How would you develop a plan to...?
DOK 4 Extended Thinking 	- What would happen if...? - How would you design...? - What alternative solutions exist? - What is your position on...?

 Frame questions that invite curiosity, challenge assumptions, and require students to think beyond the surface.

KEY STRATEGIES THAT DEEPEN THINKING

 COLLABORATE Use discussion and peer feedback to explore ideas more deeply.	 INVESTIGATE Encourage inquiry and research to uncover deeper understanding.	 CONNECT Help students link learning to other subjects and real-world issues.	 CREATE Provide opportunities for students to build, design, and innovate.	 REFLECT Guide students to evaluate their learning and growth.
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REFLECT AND GROW

Take time to reflect on your task design.

- ✓ Did the task align with my learning goal?
- ✓ What level of thinking did my task require?
- ✓ How can I make this task even stronger for my students?

“Every student has the potential to think deeply. Our job is to design learning that gives them the chance to prove it.”

Our Mission:

We intentionally design learning experiences that develop **critical thinkers**, problem solvers, and world changers.

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ASSESSING FOR UNDERSTANDING AT EVERY LEVEL

Assessment should match the depth of the task. Here are ideas for each DOK level.

DOK 1 Recall & Reproduction	DOK 2 Skills & Concepts	DOK 3 Strategic Thinking	DOK 4 Extended Thinking
 - Quizzes - Vocabulary checks - Fill-in-the-blank - Matching - True/False Goal: Check for foundational understanding.	 - Short answer - Graphic organizers - Concept maps - Sorts and classifications - Comparative worksheets Goal: Assess application and conceptual connections.	 - Performance tasks - Structured essays - Data analysis - Argumentation - Project-based learning Goal: Evaluate reasoning, planning, and use of evidence.	 - Research projects - Real-world problem solving - Debates - Design challenges - Innovation tasks Goal: Measure the ability to create, evaluate, and apply in new ways.

TRANSFORM A LOW-LEVEL TASK INTO A HIGHER-LEVEL TASK

STARTING TASK	ORIGINAL DOK	TRANSFORMED TASK	NEW DOK
 List the parts of a river.	1	→ Create a model showing how human actions impact the river and propose solutions.	3
 Compare two historical events.	2	→ Design a public awareness campaign about one event and justify your message.	4
 Solve the equation $2x + 4 = 12$.	2	→ Create and solve a real-world problem that can be modeled by $2x + 4 = 12$.	3
 Identify the countries in North America.	1	→ Investigate a current issue affecting a North American country and present solutions.	4

 **Remember:** The goal is not to remove lower-level tasks, but to build a balanced experience that leads students higher.

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

 Only asking recall questions.	 Tip: Intentionally plan for all four DOK levels.
 Jumping too quickly to DOK 4.	 Tip: Build a strong foundation with DOK 1 and 2 first.
 Not allowing enough time for deeper thinking.	 Tip: Deep thinking takes time — and it's worth it.
 Using DOK 3 and 4 without support.	 Tip: Provide scaffolds, guidance, and feedback.
 Assessing with low-level questions only.	 Tip: Match assessments to the depth of the task.

THE STUDENT BENEFIT

-  **DEEPER UNDERSTANDING**
Students comprehend concepts more fully.
-  **STRONGER PROBLEM SOLVERS**
Students develop tools to tackle real-world challenges.
-  **GREATER ENGAGEMENT**
Meaningful tasks spark curiosity and motivation.
-  **PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE**
Students gain the skills needed for college, careers, and life.

“ When we challenge students to think deeper, we equip them to **lead, innovate, and make a difference.** **”**

REFLECT, PLAN, AND GROW

Use these prompts to grow in your DOK implementation.



- ✓ What types of tasks do I assign most often?
- ✓ How can I better balance the four DOK levels?
- ✓ How do I provide support for deeper thinking?
- ✓ How do I know students are growing in their thinking?
- ✓ What will I try next to challenge my students?



Start small. Stay consistent. See big results.
Every step up the DOK ladder is a step toward deeper learning.



“ Education is not the filling of a pail, but the *lighting of a fire.* **”**
— W.B. Yeats



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DESIGN WITH PURPOSE: ALIGNING GOALS, TASKS, AND DOK LEVELS

Intentional alignment ensures every task has a purpose and every student has an opportunity to grow.

“Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.”
– PROVERBS 16:3 (NIV)



THE ALIGNMENT PROCESS

1

IDENTIFY THE LEARNING GOAL

Be clear about what students should know, understand, and be able to do.



2

DETERMINE THE DOK TARGET

Decide the highest level of thinking required to meet the goal.



3

DESIGN THE TASK

Create or select a task that matches the DOK level and supports the goal.



4

PLAN SUPPORTS AND SCAFFOLDS

Provide the resources and guidance students need to be successful.



5

ASSESS AND REFLECT

Check for understanding and adjust instruction as needed.



ALIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- ☒ Is my learning goal clear and specific?
- ☒ Does the task require the intended level of thinking?
- ☒ Will this task lead to meaningful understanding or application?
- ☒ Have I provided appropriate support without lowering the cognitive demand?
- ☒ How will I know students have met the goal?
- ☒ What evidence will guide my next steps?



Alignment is the bridge
BETWEEN TEACHING AND TRANSFORMATION.

SAME CONTENT, DIFFERENT THINKING: TASK EXAMPLES

DOK 1

Recall & Reproduction



Topic: The Water Cycle

Question: List the steps in the water cycle.

Thinking: Recall and recognize information.



DOK 2

Skills & Concepts



Topic: The Water Cycle

Question: Explain how evaporation and condensation are related.

Thinking: Make connections and explain ideas.



DOK 3

Strategic Thinking



Topic: The Water Cycle

Question: How might deforestation in a watershed affect the water cycle?

Thinking: Analyze and justify reasoning with evidence.



DOK 4

Extended Thinking



Topic: The Water Cycle

Question: Design a plan for a community to manage water sustainably.

Thinking: Create, evaluate, and apply learning to real-world situations.



CONSIDERATIONS BY GRADE LEVEL



ELEMENTARY

Build foundational knowledge with clear structure. Use concrete examples and visuals to support thinking.



MIDDLE SCHOOL

Deepen understanding through connection and application. Encourage analysis and multiple perspectives.



HIGH SCHOOL

Challenge students with complex, real-world tasks that require evaluation, creation, and independent thinking.

“The goal is not to treat everyone the same, but to help every student grow in thinking.”



REFLECTION FOR EDUCATORS



- ☒ Where do I spend most of my time as a teacher?
- ☒ How often do my students engage in higher-order thinking?
- ☒ What changes can I make to push thinking deeper?
- ☒ Who can I collaborate with to grow together?



Small shifts in task design lead to
BIG GAINS IN STUDENT THINKING.

“Education is not preparation for life; education is *life* itself.”
– John Dewey



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THE DOK TASK UPGRADE LAB

Make the thinking deeper - not the worksheet longer.

1. START WITH YOUR CURRENT TASK

Learning standard or objective:

Current task or assignment:

Current DOK level: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

What must students currently think and do to succeed?

2. AUDIT THE COGNITIVE DEMAND

- ✔ Students make a meaningful decision.
- ✔ Students explain or justify their reasoning.
- ✔ Students connect multiple ideas, sources, or representations.
- ✔ Evidence is required to support the response.
- ✔ More than one defensible answer or approach can exist.
- ✔ Students transfer learning to a new or unfamiliar situation.

0-1: Recall 2-3: Developing 4-5: Strategic 6: Extended potential

Use this as a prompt for professional judgment - not a stand-alone DOK score.

3. CHOOSE ONE OR MORE UPGRADE MOVES

1 DECIDE

Add a meaningful choice or judgment.

2 EVIDENCE

Require data, examples, text, or calculations.

3 CONNECT

Link ideas, sources, subjects, or contexts.

4 CONSTRAIN

Add a real limitation: time, cost, audience, materials.

5 REVISE

Use feedback to reconsider and improve the work.

4. SEE HOW THE TASK CHANGES

SUBJECT	STARTING TASK	UPGRADED TASK
ELA	Identify the theme.	Determine which theme is best supported and defend the interpretation with evidence from multiple parts of the text.
MATH	Solve the equation.	Compare two solution strategies and justify which is more efficient under different conditions.
SCIENCE	List renewable resources.	Recommend the best renewable-energy option for a community using environmental, economic, and geographic evidence.
SOCIAL STUDIES	Name causes of the Civil War.	Evaluate which cause had the greatest long-term influence and defend the conclusion using evidence.

5. REWRITE THE TASK

My upgraded task:

DO NOT ADD MORE WORK. ADD MORE THINKING.

Intended DOK level: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

Evidence of deeper thinking I expect to see:

PLAN A LESSON FOR DEEPER THINKING

Align the goal, task, support, and evidence of learning.

1. CLARIFY THE DESTINATION

Subject/course: _____ Grade level: _____ Lesson/topic: _____

Standard: _____

Student-friendly learning target: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to...

2. DETERMINE THE INTENDED COGNITIVE DEMAND

- 1 Recall or reproduce
- 2 Apply skills and make connections
- 3 Reason, justify, evaluate, or solve
- 4 Investigate, synthesize, design, or transfer over time

Why is this the appropriate destination for the learning goal? _____

3. DESIGN THE LEARNING PROGRESSION

- 1 BUILD
What foundational knowledge or vocabulary must students have?
- 2 CONNECT
What relationships, patterns, comparisons, or applications will students explore?
- 3 REASON
What decision, claim, problem, or conclusion will students develop?
- 4 TRANSFER
How might students apply the learning in a new context?

Not every lesson must reach DOK 4. The learning goal should determine the destination.

4. WRITE THE CORE TASK

The task students will complete: _____

The meaningful decision students must make: _____

Evidence students must use: _____

5. PRESERVE RIGOR WHILE SUPPORTING STUDENTS

- 1 BEFORE
Activate prior knowledge; clarify vocabulary; model the process; examine an example.
- 2 DURING
Use visual supports; ask strategic questions; provide checkpoints; encourage productive collaboration.
- 3 AFTER
Require explanation; use feedback; provide revision time; reflect on learning.

The scaffold I will provide without reducing the intended thinking: _____

6. DEFINE EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

- What will students say, write, create, solve, or demonstrate? _____
- What will distinguish surface completion from genuine understanding? _____
- How will I assess the quality of reasoning? _____

FINAL ALIGNMENT CHECK

- ☐ Task supports the learning target.
- ☐ DOK reflects the complete task.
- ☐ Students must show their thinking.
- ☐ Supports preserve cognitive demand.
- ☐ Assessment measures intended learning.

RIGOR IS CREATED BY PROTECTING THE THINKING.



MAKE DEEPER THINKING A DAILY PRACTICE

Small, intentional changes in task design can transform student learning.

THE 4-WEEK DOK IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGE

WEEK 1

RECOGNIZE

- Review three current assignments.
- Identify the DOK level of each complete task.
- Notice where rigorous verbs hide low-level thinking.

My first observation:

WEEK 2

STRENGTHEN

- Upgrade one existing task.
- Add a decision or require evidence.
- Protect the intended thinking with appropriate support.

The task I will strengthen:

WEEK 3

OBSERVE

- Listen to student explanations.
- Review reasoning - not only final answers.
- Note misconceptions, connections, and strategies.

Evidence I noticed:

WEEK 4

REFINE

- Revise the prompt or scaffold.
- Improve success criteria.
- Plan the next opportunity for deeper thinking.

My next instructional move:

YOU KNOW DEEPER THINKING IS HAPPENING WHEN STUDENTS ARE

- Asking relevant questions.
- Explaining how they reached a conclusion.
- Using evidence rather than guessing.
- Comparing strategies or perspectives.
- Revising ideas after feedback.
- Making connections across concepts.
- Applying learning in unfamiliar situations.
- Defending a decision while considering alternatives.
- Reflecting on how their thinking changed.

FINAL EDUCATOR REFLECTION

- 1 What do my students currently spend the most time doing: recalling, applying, reasoning, or creating?

- 2 Where could one stronger task create the greatest improvement?

- 3 What is one change I will make in my next lesson?

THE GOAL IS NOT TO MAKE LEARNING HARDER.

THE GOAL IS TO MAKE THINKING VISIBLE, PURPOSEFUL, AND TRANSFERABLE.

When goals, tasks, questions, scaffolds, and assessments work together, students move beyond completing schoolwork and begin developing judgment, confidence, and problem-solving capacity.

CONTINUE BUILDING STRONGER LEARNING EXPERIENCES

EduQuencher supports educators, schools, and learning communities with practical professional learning in Depth of Knowledge, questioning and task design, checks for understanding, assessment, and instructional improvement.

BRING DOK TRAINING
TO YOUR TEAM