

THOMPSON SCHOOL DISTRICT

ALL MEANS
EACH AND EVERY

ONE



Thompson Teaching and Learning

Critical Thinking

“Critical thinkers are clear as to the purpose at hand and the question at issue. They question information, conclusions and points of view. They strive to be clear, accurate, precise and relevant. They seek to think beneath the surface to be logical and fair.” Richard Paul and Linda Elder

At Thompson School District, we want our students to be critical thinkers. Teaching and learning of content is the center of all educational programs – the quality of thinking is the key to success. Critical thinking is a mode of thinking that prescribes a set of thinking standards and strategies to reach deeper meaning in any content area, subject or in day-to-day problem solving. Critical thinking skills, insights and values are integral to any curriculum. Beginning in the elementary grades, our professional development approach to teaching critical thinking can be seen throughout the district. Richard Paul and Linda Elder from the Foundation for Critical Thinking say critical thinking is a mode of thinking in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking about any content, subject or problem by skillfully taking charge of the structures and intellectual standards they possess inside of them.

Critical thinking skills:

- ◆ Work hand-in-hand with the concepts of Public Education & Business Coalition (PEBC)
- ◆ Empower kids to take control of their own thinking and learn to advocate for themselves through logic
- ◆ Create an atmosphere where teachers become good critical thinkers – a means to an end – with tools that enable them to assess their own thinking and the thinking of others in dialogue, in text, in writing

Characteristics of critical thinking skills:

- ◆ Self-directed, self-motivated, self-corrective and self-disciplined
- ◆ Promote intellectual traits such as humility, courage, empathy, autonomy, integrity and perseverance
- ◆ Strive to develop a common language around thinking
- ◆ Promote confidence in reason and fair mindedness
- ◆ Create an atmosphere where people are accountable for their own thinking

MATH AND LITERACY ARE THE KEYS THAT OPEN THE DOOR TO THE WORLD AROUND US

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The universal intellectual standards:

- Clarity
- Accuracy
- Precision
- Relevance
- Depth
- Breadth
- Logic
- Significance
- Fairness

Thinking elements

In order for teachers to teach critical thinking, they must have the tools to help them think creatively and respond to and evaluate higher thinking skills. These tools come in the form of thinking strategies used to understand text:

- ◆ Purpose of thinking (goal, objective)
- ◆ Question at issue (problem, issue)
- ◆ Information (data, facts, observations, experience)
- ◆ Interpretation and inference (conclusions, solutions)
- ◆ Concepts (theories, definitions, axioms, laws, models, principles)
- ◆ Assumptions (presuppositions, taking for granted)
- ◆ Implications and consequences

Keys to success

The well-cultivated critical thinker:

- ◆ Raises vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely.
- ◆ Gathers and assesses relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret.
- ◆ Comes to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards.
- ◆ Thinks open mindedly within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing assumptions, implications and practical consequences.
- ◆ Communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems.
- ◆ Thinks it through, thinks in-depth.

You can find more information on critical thinking at www.criticalthinking.org