



Teacher Tip of the Week

Teach Critical Thinking Skills

While many teachers ask good questions and assign challenging projects, students need to know how to initiate more successful thinking, says Professor Cathy Collins of Texas Christian University.

“For the first time in history, American business is demanding employees enter the workplace with the know-how to solve problems,” Collins says. “Our challenge, then, is to teach students how to think without the experience of having been taught how to think ourselves. We have to be willing to learn with them.”

Collins says new methods to access thinking must involve broader, long-term samples of effective thinking in real world settings.

“To thrive in the new century,” Collins says, “we must teach students how to think, create ideas cooperatively, hold several options in mind, select among equally attractive alternatives, and use fair-minded flexibility in groups.”

“We now judge students according to a set of predetermined criteria for content learned,” she notes. “Students also should be measured in their ability to create new ideas and translate them into reality, using real situations to judge their thinking success.”

Educators, she says, can increase the time devoted to high quality thinking by identifying teaching behaviors that encourage students to question, concentrate, imagine, innovate and solve. By repeating these methods, teachers develop students’ abilities to create their own ideas and satisfy curiosities productively.

Although educators’ knowledge of how we think has been limited, new research is being funded in this area.

“While we await results from research, students and teachers working creatively and critically can create both the new methods of advancing thinking and the delivery system by which community

Leaders can use these new ways to think,” she explains.

Teaching strategies that need to be developed include:

- ◆ How to select criteria to judge possible solutions before reaching a conclusion;
- ◆ How to identify critical points in the decision-making process to eliminate problems before they begin;
- ◆ How to increase creativity and innovation; and
- ◆ How to use talents, skills, and potentials of a group interactively.



CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS RESOURCES

Problem Solving Plans Index

These plans reflect general rules for developing skills used in solving problems. In this process the teacher develops a problem, carefully accesses skills needed to solve the problem, and creates conditions and/or parameters that act as guidelines for products or solutions. These same conditions and parameters also serve as evaluation criteria.

<http://www.uwsp.edu/education/lwilson/lessons/problem%20solving/indexprob.htm>

Free Critical Thinking Worksheets

http://www.teach-nology.com/worksheets/critical_thinking/



Ideas to Share

Use a conventional kitchen timer to motivate students who have a hard time finishing assignments.

Set the timer above the amount of time it would normally take to finish the task.

The result is the child has accomplished a goal—he or she has beaten the timer.

This is very rewarding—especially for elementary-aged and challenged children.



Helpful Website for Teachers

<http://www.knowitall.org/>

Knowitall.org is ETV’s educational Web portal, a collection of fun, interactive websites for K-12 students, teachers and parents.



The New Teacher Support Program

Getting Organized in the Midst of Chaos



Here you are, school in full swing; students, parents, and colleagues coming at you from all sides; and you feel as though your life is in total chaos. Oh yes, some of it is planned, but the paperwork, documentation, and requests being thrown your way are not...and you have no idea what to do with it all.

Do you find yourself staring at all those piles of papers on your desk and wishing they would just disappear? If so, perhaps it's time to get organized.

Getting organized isn't easy, especially when you have so very little time. The tips below should help, however. They're not designed to be quick fixes, but rather suggestions that will help you take baby steps toward becoming a bit more organized than you are now.

The first is a timer. When you are faced with a mountain of mail, memos, and forms, set your timer for 10 minutes. (I like the 10-minute limit because it doesn't take up too much time.) Try to organize as much of the mountain as you can manage during those 10 minutes. When the timer goes off, stop working. You won't have accomplished everything dur-

ing that time, but you will have made a start. If you spend 10 minutes a day working like that, before long you'll be on top of that paperwork mountain, boasting about your organized files.

The second piece of advice is to work forward before working back. Once you've set your timer for 10 minutes, start with the mail, memos, and forms you found in your box today. Get those either filed away, thrown-away, or dealt with first. Then, if you have time left, start working at the top of the rest of the pile. That way, the paperwork won't *continue* to pile up on you. You respond to the most recent paperwork in a timely manner and stay current with your mail, communications, and other necessary forms.

Every piece of paper on your desk should have a home, whether that home is a trash can, a 3-ring binder, a file folder, a tray, or a carry-all for return to someone else. I don't know if you are the kind of person who likes to hang on to magazines, but I am. I just love catalogs and all those lovely things I might buy one day. To keep all those tempting catalogs from piling up on me, I pull out from each the order form and the pages I'm interested in. I punch holes in them and place them in a binder. I like the binder because I can tab each catalog, rather than stuffing them haphazardly into a single folder. When I have the time (and money) to order something, I can go to my binder and find what I need. If you do not have a home for it, that kind of mail can pile up on you very easily and become overwhelming.

For those of you without the luxury of your own classroom or office space to work in during planning periods, make a commitment to stay after school for at least thirty minutes each day. Set your timer for 10 minutes and go from there. Even if you're facing a pile of papers to be graded, you can use the 10-minute strategy to at least start working your way through the pile. Also, remember that not everything must be graded with the same intensity. Sometimes a simple check-plus or check-minus will do.

No matter what you're working on, in fact, if you keep working at it 10 minutes at a time, before you know it that pile of paperwork will start shrinking to nothing, and everything will have a home. And what do you do then...when your pile of paperwork is gone, and your timer hasn't gone off? Take what's left of the 10 minutes and start making homes for the other areas in your classroom.

Sure, you can spend 6 or 7 hours in a single day going through your paperwork all at once, but that kind of effort quickly leads to burnout. You'll find you're so tired from the hours of going through paperwork that you let it pile up again. Before you know it, another long day of doing nothing but paperwork looms.

Make no mistake; these tips represent a process, not a quick fix. Just take it one step at a time, 10 minutes a day, and watch those paperwork piles fade away!—*Emma McDonald*



“A MASTER CAN TELL YOU WHAT HE EXPECTS FROM YOU. A TEACHER, THOUGH, AWAKENS YOUR OWN

EXPECTATIONS.”

—PATRICIA NEAL



Meet the Principals: CAROL FERRELL

School: [Carroll Oakland Elementary](#)

How long have you been a principal at this school? [I served as assistant principal for 2 years and this is my first year as principal.](#)

Colleges and universities attended: [MTSU for elementary/special education degree, Tennessee Tech for Master's in supervision and administration, pursuing EdS. From TTU](#)

Special interests and hobbies: [love the beach, reading, and my 2 cats.](#)

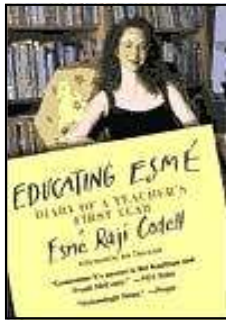
Who or what inspires you each day as you do your job and why?

[Getting hugs from kindergartners goes a long way to brighten my day; also seeing teachers going the extra mile lets me also go the extra mile.](#)

If you had not gone into education, what type of job would you have chosen: [no idea, I wanted to be a teacher from the day I came home from kindergarten at WES.](#)

What is the favorite part of your job? [Helping a teacher with a problem and seeing him/her implement the solution in the classroom.](#)

Suggested Reading for Teachers



Educating Esme: Diary of a Teacher's First Year by Esmé Raji Codell

Esmé Raji Codell has come to teach, and she's not going to let incompetent administrators, abusive parents, gang members, or her own insecurities get in the way. As she puts it, she has "Thirty-one children. Thirty-one chances. Thirty-one futures, our futures. Everything they become, I also become." Codell's portrait of an inner-city elementary school is funny, poignant, and inspiring. Her struggle to maintain individuality in the face of bureaucracy and her defiant stand against mediocrity will reverberate in companies as well as classrooms everywhere.

New Teacher Support Group Participants



MEGAN DILLON
WATERTOWN ELEMENTARY
6TH GRADE
WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

"My father is a teacher in the district next to the one I attended school. Growing up I saw the impact he had in students' lives and was inspired to emulate those qualities. Once I got into the education department at my university I knew it was a perfect fit."—Megan Dillon



ANDREA KUMPF
MT. JULIET ELEMENTARY
FIRST GRADE
WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

"It is my calling. I teach to make a difference. I love the look on a child's face when it first makes sense."—Andrea Kumpf



PAT SUDDARTH

LEAD TEACHER
ADULT HIGH SCHOOL

Each day I expected my students to be seated and ready to work when the bell rang. Everyone who was seated got to put his/her name in a bag for the weekly drawing. On Fridays, I drew out one name to win pencils, pens, sticky pads, homework pass, etc. The name of the weekly winner went into the "grand prize" bag. Once a month, the name of one student was drawn from the grand prize bag. The prize might be a ticket to a ball game, free Coke on Fridays (this was back in the days when vending machines were a novelty in schools), or some other item of similar value. I was amazed by how this really turned into a game, and the students never let me forget to take up the name slips each day! (I paid for this with recycled Coke can money)

Once I began my lesson, I never liked to stop and correct students for talking or not being on task. I developed a system of color coded discipline slips with a specific amount of time written on each one: 30 seconds, one minute, etc. If a student was talking or off task, I would simply walk by his/her desk and lay a slip in front of them. If they continued, another slip was placed in front of them, etc. At the end of class, the student had to remain seated the designated amount of time, and write on the back of the slip what they were doing that earned them the slips. I kept these in a file (parents loved this confession), and the students "dreaded" the slips.



9 Marzano's Nine Essential Instructional Strategies

Number Nine: Cues, Questions, and Advance Organizers

Cues, questions, and advance organizers help students use what they already know about a topic to enhance further learning. Research shows that these tools should be highly analytical, should focus on what is important, and are most effective when presented before a learning experience.

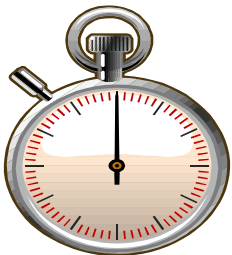
Applications:

- * Pause briefly after asking a question. Doing so will increase the depth of your students' answers.
- * Vary the style of advance organizer used: Tell a story, skim a text, or create a graphic image. There are many ways to expose students to information before they "learn" it.

Time Management Tips for Teachers

Continued from last week...

6. It is very difficult to instruct, support, and assess children's progress all at once. One way to ease this is to keep a blank sheet of adhesive mailing labels on a handy clipboard. When you want to make a short progress note, write the student's name and a quick line or two on a label. Date the comment and stick it on a piece of paper in the student's assessment folder. Your notes will



be in the right place when it comes time for conferences and report cards. You also can attach a class list to your clipboard and mark off students' names as you check in with them so you can remember to interact with everyone.

7. Clean off your desk before you go home each day so that papers don't pile up and clutter both your desk and your attitude. An organized desk is a more efficient one.

Continued next week

Need a Laugh?



It is the policy of the Wilson County School System not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability in its educational programs or employment policies as required by Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Pay Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.