Core Competencies: Thinking



The Thinking competency encompasses the knowledge, skills, and processes we associate with intellectual development. It is through their competency as thinkers that students take subject-specific concepts and content and transform them into new understanding. Thinking competence requires specific thinking skills as well as habits of mind and metacognitive awareness. These are used to process information from a variety of sources, including thoughts and feelings that arise from the subconscious and unconscious mind and from embodied cognition to create new understandings.

The Thinking Core Competency has two interrelated sub-competencies:

Creative thinking involves the generation of ideas and concepts that are novel and innovative in the context in which they are generated, reflection on their value to the individual or others, and the development of chosen ideas and concepts from thought to reality.

People who think creatively are curious and open-minded, have a sense of wonder and joy in learning, demonstrate a willingness to think divergently, and are comfortable with complexity. A creative thinker reflects on existing ideas and concepts; uses imagination, inventiveness, resourcefulness, and flexibility; and is willing to take risks to go beyond existing knowledge.

Critical and reflective thinking encompasses a set of abilities that students use to examine their own thinking and that of others. This involves making judgments based on reasoning, where students consider options, analyze options using specific criteria, and draw conclusions.

People who think critically and reflectively are analytical and investigative, willing to question and challenge their own thoughts, ideas, and assumptions and challenge those of others. They reflect on the information they receive through observation, experience, and other forms of communication to solve problems, design products, understand events, and address issues. A critical thinker uses their ideas, experiences, and reflections to set goals, make judgments, and refine their thinking.

Creative Thinking

1. Creating and innovating

Students get creative ideas that are novel and have value. An idea may be new to the student or their peers, and it may be novel for their age group or the larger community. It may be new to a particular context or absolutely new. The idea or product may have value in a variety of ways and contexts – it may be fun, provide a sense of accomplishment, solve a problem, be a form of self-expression, provoke reflection, or provide a new perspective that influences the way people think or act. It can have a positive impact on the individual, classmates, the community, or the world.

2. Generating and incubating

Students may generate creative ideas through free play, engagement with other's ideas, or consideration of a problem or constraint, and/or because of their interests and passions. New ideas and inspirations can spontaneously arise from the unconscious mind, but students can also develop strategies to facilitate the generation of ideas – learning a lot about something, engaging in a period of reflection, providing time for incubation, and doing relaxing or automatic activities to quiet their conscious mind. The capacity for creative thinking expands as individuals increase their range of ideas and concepts to recombine them into new ideas. The ideas available as raw material for creative thinking depend on previous experiences and learning, as well as students' cultural legacies.

3. Evaluating and developing

Students reflect on their creative ideas in order to decide which ones to develop. They consider whether their idea would ultimately support the well-being of self, community, and the land. They do this with a sense of place and taking into consideration unintended consequences for other living things and our planet. If they decide to develop an idea, they work individually and/or collaboratively to refine it and work to realize it. This may require accessing the knowledge of those who have gone before, building the necessary skills, sustaining perseverance, using failure productively over time, and reflecting on process and results. It may also require the generation of additional creative ideas to come up with solutions to problems along the way.

Six Profiles

PROFILE	DESCRIPTION
Profile One	**I get ideas when I play.** I get ideas when I use my senses to explore. My play ideas are fun for me and make me happy. I make my ideas work or I change what I am doing.

Profile Two	**I can get new ideas or build on or combine other people's ideas to create new things within the constraints of a form, a problem, or materials.** I can get new ideas to create new things or solve straightforward problems. My ideas are fun, entertaining, or useful to me and my peers, and I have a sense of accomplishment. I can use my imagination to get new ideas of my own, or build on other's ideas, or combine other people's ideas in new ways. I can usually make my ideas work within the constraints of a given form, problem, or materials if I keep playing with them.
Profile Three	**I can get new ideas in areas in which I have an interest and build my skills to make them work.** I generate new ideas as I pursue my interests. I deliberately learn a lot about something by doing research, talking to others, or practicing, so that I can generate new ideas about it; the ideas often seem to just pop into my head. I build the skills I need to make my ideas work, and I usually succeed, even if it takes a few tries.
Profile Four	**I can get new ideas or reinterpret others' ideas in novel ways.** I get ideas that are new to my peers. My creative ideas are often a form of self-expression for me. I have deliberate strategies for quieting my conscious mind (e.g., walking away for a while, doing something relaxing, being deliberately playful), so that I can be more creative. I use my experiences with various steps and attempts to direct my future work.
Profile Five	**I can think "outside the box" to get innovative ideas and persevere to develop them.** I can get new ideas that are innovative, may not have been seen before, and have an impact on my peers or in my community. I have interests and passions that I pursue over time. I look for new perspectives, new problems, or new approaches. I am willing to take significant risks in my thinking in order to generate lots of ideas. I am willing to accept ambiguity, setbacks, and failure, and I use them to advance the development of my ideas.

Profile Six	**I can develop a body of creative work over time in an area of interest or passion.** I can get ideas that are groundbreaking or disruptive and can develop them to form a body of work over time that has an impact in my community or beyond. I challenge assumptions as a matter of course and have deliberate strategies (e.g., free writing or sketching, meditation, thinking in metaphors and analogies) for getting new ideas intuitively. I have a strong commitment to a personal aesthetic and values, and the inner motivation to persevere over years if necessary to develop my ideas.

Critical and Reflective Thinking

1. Analyzing and critiquing

Students learn to analyze and make judgments about a work, a position, a process, a performance, or another product or act. They reflect to consider purpose and perspectives, pinpoint evidence, use explicit or implicit criteria, make defensible judgments or assessments, and draw conclusions. Students have opportunities for analysis and critique through engagement in formal tasks, informal tasks, and ongoing activities.

2. Questioning and investigating

Students learn to engage in inquiry when they identify and investigate questions, challenges, key issues, or problematic situations in their studies, lives, and communities and in the media. They develop and refine questions; create and carry out plans; gather, interpret, and synthesize information and evidence; and reflect to draw reasoned conclusions. Critical thinking activities may focus on one part of the process, such as questioning, and reach a simple conclusion, while others may involve more complex inquiry requiring extensive thought and reflection.

3. Designing and developing

Students think critically to develop ideas. Their ideas may lead to the designing of products or methods or the development of performances and representations in response to problems, events, issues, and needs. They work with clear purpose and consider the potential uses or audiences of their work. They explore possibilities, develop and reflect on processes, monitor progress, and adjust procedures in light of criteria and feedback.

4. Reflecting and assessing

Students apply critical, metacognitive, and reflective thinking in given situations, and relate this thinking to other experiences, using this process to identify ways to improve or adapt their approach to learning. They reflect on and assess their experiences, thinking, learning processes, work, and progress in relation to their purposes. Students give, receive, and act on feedback and set goals individually and collaboratively. They determine the extent to which they have met their goals and can set new ones.

Six Profiles

PROFILE	DESCRIPTION
Profile One	**I can explore.** I can explore materials and actions. I can show whether I like something or not.
Profile Two	**I can use evidence to make simple judgments.** I can ask questions, make predictions, and use my senses to gather information. I can explore with a purpose in mind and use what I learn. I can tell or show others something about my thinking. I can contribute to and use simple criteria. I can find some evidence and make judgments. I can reflect on my work and experiences and tell others about something I learned.
Profile Three	**I can ask questions and consider options. I can use my observations, experience, and imagination to draw conclusions and make judgments.** I can ask open-ended questions, explore, and gather information. I experiment purposefully to develop options. I can contribute to and use criteria. I use observation, experience, and imagination to draw conclusions, make judgments, and ask new questions. I can describe my thinking and how it is changing. I can establish goals individually and with others. I can connect my learning with my experiences, efforts, and goals. I give and receive constructive feedback.
Profile Four	**I can gather and combine new evidence with what I already know to develop reasoned conclusions, judgments, or plans.** I can use what I know and observe to identify problems and ask questions. I explore and engage with materials and sources. I can develop or adapt criteria, check information, assess my thinking, and develop reasoned conclusions, judgments, or plans. I consider more than one way to proceed and make choices based on my reasoning and what I am trying to do. I can assess my own efforts and experiences and identify new goals. I give, receive, and act on constructive feedback.

Profile Five	**I can evaluate and use well-chosen evidence to develop interpretations; identify alternatives, perspectives, and implications; and make judgments. I can examine and adjust my thinking.** I can ask questions and offer judgments, conclusions, and interpretations supported by evidence I or others have gathered. I am flexible and open-minded; I can explain more than one perspective and consider implications. I can gather, select, evaluate, and synthesize information. I consider alternative approaches and make strategic choices. I take risks and recognize that I may not be immediately successful. I examine my thinking, seek feedback, reassess my work, and adjust. I represent my learning and my goals and connect these with my previous experiences. I accept constructive feedback and use it to move forward.
Profile Six	**I can examine evidence from various perspectives to analyze and make well-supported judgments about and interpretations of complex issues.** I can determine my own framework and criteria for tasks that involve critical thinking. I can compile evidence and draw reasoned conclusions. I consider perspectives that do not fit with my understandings. I am open-minded and patient, taking the time to explore, discover, and understand. I make choices that will help me create my intended impact on an audience or situation. I can place my work and that of others in a broader context. I can connect the results of my inquiries and analyses with action. I can articulate a keen awareness of my strengths, my aspirations and how my experiences and contexts affect my frameworks and criteria. I can offer detailed analysis, using specific terminology, of my progress, work, and goals.

To view the Connections and Illustrations for the Core Competencies please visit the BC's New Curriculum website.

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