

CRITICAL THINKING

Critical thinking is an increasingly important skill in a complex, ever-changing world. You can challenge children's thinking, help them connect what they know with new explorations and see what they are thinking in the arts-inspired work they create. The arts are a great way to foster critical thinking and learning in school and at home.



The 4 Cs— Essential Skills All Students Need to Succeed

Creativity

Discovering novel ways to think, learn and do

Critical Thinking

Using original ideas to solve problems

Communication

Expressing thoughts and feelings effectively

Collaboration

Working in partnership with others toward a common goal

plus

Arts-Infused Education Advocacy

Championing the integration of the arts across the curriculum and school-wide to build the 4 Cs

What Is **CRITICAL THINKING**?

- Critical thinking means making complex choices and solving problems in innovative ways.
- Critical thinking means bringing together existing knowledge and new understandings, "connecting the dots" and applying knowledge to new contexts.
- Critical thinking involves stretching what a student knows, building on prior understanding and persevering to find new solutions.



4 Cs of CRITICAL THINKING

CHALLENGE

Inspire fresh thinking.

Build on prior knowledge.

Stretch to generate novel and original thoughts.

COMPARE-CONTRAST CHOICES

Observe and gather information.

Analyze the relevance and usefulness of information.

Differentiate among the choices.

CONNECT

Reflect on what is already known and newly discovered.

Bring ideas together.

Synthesize to reassemble and reorganize thoughts for understanding.

CREATE

Evaluate ideas.

Plan ways to create a desired outcome or product.

Persevere, since creating might not come easily or quickly.



Tips for Educators and Parents

Challenge Children to Think Critically

- Pose interesting “why?” and “what if...” questions that help children explore content-rich topics and generate original thoughts.
- Help children activate and build on what they know and connect it to new knowledge.
- Help children to “think like an expert” when they observe, gather and analyze information in common, everyday experiences. What counts as relevant, useful information to a detective, artist, historian, scientist, critic or mathematician?

Practice Critical Thinking Skills

- Model your own enjoyment in coming up with new ideas or solving problems.
- Urge children to make informed judgments and use information carefully by considering the source, credibility, quality and potential bias. Ask them how their understanding changes as they compare and contrast sources.
- Show students how to use arts-inspired tools and visual thinking to bring ideas together in original ways, such as doodling, “back of the napkin” sketches, concept maps, mindscapes, timelines and graphic organizers.

Expect Children to Demonstrate Original Thinking Creatively

- Ask children to “think outside the box” in presenting their ideas.
- Provide colorful art materials, hands-on supplies and engaging technologies for students to express their ideas creatively.
- Teach children to examine and reflect on their own work—and the work of their peers and experts.
- Celebrate perseverance and original solutions.

