

# Creating Thoughtful Classrooms

by Sandra L. Love, Ed.D.

**Of much importance is the culture that is created in today's classrooms. What teachers say and do can foster and find significance in student thinking. Students learn what deep thinking looks like by the actions teachers take. Classroom cultures that support and promote thinking are essential to student success.**



Best practices of teaching and learning reveal that teacher modeling and the Think-Aloud strategy should be present in classrooms if the end result is to develop student understanding. These two strategies are prevalent in thoughtful classrooms. When teachers place their thinking on display, students can observe what quality thinking looks like. Telling students the traits and dispositions needed for effective thinking helps, but making thinking visible and authentic creates a real impact on learning.

What does a thinking culture look like? What can teachers do or say to take an active role and promote dispositions that students also need to exhibit?

## **Ask questions and use language to show curiosity.**

*Did you notice how \_\_\_\_? / I found a book that \_\_\_\_\_. Read this. / Watch this video clip. You won't believe what you see!*

## **Model open-mindedness and willingness to listen to perspectives.**

*Let's look more closely at \_\_\_\_\_. I was thinking \_\_\_\_\_, but now I am not sure. / Good thinking, Amy! That information is interesting. / Mike, you said \_\_\_\_\_. Can you tell me what led you to say that? / What does your point of view ignore? / Is my view the only reasonable one?*

## **Model how to clarify and seek deeper meaning.**

*So are you saying \_\_\_\_? / Is this what you mean? / Give me an example of \_\_\_\_\_. / What is another way to say \_\_\_\_? / What are the implications of \_\_\_\_? / Why is \_\_\_\_ important?*

## **Model reflective thinking.**

*What is likely to happen if we \_\_\_\_? / After the discussion we had, I now wonder \_\_\_\_\_. / I learned \_\_\_\_\_ from researching, but I am still confused about \_\_\_\_\_. / So help me understand. Where is the evidence that leads you to reach that conclusion? / Does my interpretation make sense?*

## **Model healthy skepticism.**

*Listen to this. It says \_\_\_\_\_. Can that be true? How will we find out? I think if I check other sources, then I can be sure. / Jim, you said you heard \_\_\_\_\_ on a documentary last night. That seems unbelievable, doesn't it? What if we gather additional information to verify what you heard? / What is the other side of this story? / What is the logic of this \_\_\_\_? / Does this seem right to you?*

Taking time to actively listen to students and respond in meaningful ways is crucial. Thinking out loud and sharing individual thoughts also incorporate authentic experiences. Miller (2008) recommends teachers place their thinking on display, use purposeful language, and make thinking visible to all. Building a classroom focused on thinking and understanding helps motivate students to become intellectually independent.

Miller, D. (2008). Teaching with intention. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Ritchhart, R. (2002). Intellectual character: What it is, why it matters, and how to get it. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.