

## **CREATING CULTURES OF THINKING: THE EIGHT FORCES WE MUST MASTER TO TRULY TRANSFORM OUR SCHOOLS**

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- Dispositions are the residuals of education: what is left over after all the things practiced and memorized for tests are long forgotten.
- Dispositions are enculturated – that is, learned through immersion in a culture.
- Culture is a group of people enacting a story. To enact a story is to live so as to make the story a reality.
- What ifs to suggest a new story:
  - What if schools were less about preparing students for tests and more about preparing them for a lifetime of learning?
  - What if schools measured success not by what individuals did on exams but by what groups were able to accomplish together?
  - What if schools took the development of students' intellectual character as their highest calling
  - What if understanding and application of skills and knowledge rather than the mere acquisition of knowledge were the goal?
  - What if students were really engaged in their learning rather than merely compliant in the process of school as it is done to them?
  - What if students had more control of their learning?
- In this story, our schools, classrooms, and organizations become places in which a group's collective as well as individuals' thinking is valued, visible, and actively promoted as part of the regular day-to-day experience of all group members.
- Practice alone does not ensure progress and meaningful development. One also needs feedback and coaching on one's practice.
- For a first year teacher beginning his or her career at our school, what message would he or she pick up about what it means to be a teacher here? What kinds of professional conversations would s/he recognize as dominating our time? What would s/he notice about how one develops as a teacher over the course of his or her career if one stays at this school?
- Why would clear expectations for students' behavior and performance inhibit their development as thinkers?
- Five belief sets
  - Focus students on the learning vs. the work
  - Teaching for understanding vs. knowledge
  - Encourage deep vs. surface learning strategies
  - Promote independence vs. dependence
  - Develop a growth vs. a fixed mindset
- It is a shortcoming of the teaching, specifically of a belief set and expectation that teaching for knowledge is our goal as educators.
- In performance assessments, the focus shifts from developing understanding to demonstrating mastery of the content taught. The key to building performance assessments is asking oneself: What will learners do with the information and knowledge? How will I ask them to process it – that

is, to interact, use manipulate or change it? It is the level of processing that is key to developing understanding.

- Fostering student independence is a worthwhile goal in its own right.
- Dweck's Brainology program: <http://www.mindsetworks.com>
- Key language moves that can facilitate the creation of a culture of thinking schools, classrooms, and organizations:
  - The language of thinking
  - The language of community
  - The language of identity
  - The language of initiative
  - The language of mindfulness
  - The language of praise and feedback
  - The language of listening
- Noticing and naming is a much more specific way of employing the language of thinking than just trying to use more thinking language.
- Our use of pronouns and other function words reveals a personal style and is psychologically very revealing of our motives, intent, connection with others, and even mental state. Warmer, more personal language tends to include fewer articles (a, an, the) and more pronouns. In terms of creating a community of learners, the "we" must include the teacher not only as the director of activity but also as a participant in the learning processes of that activity.
- Pennebaker found that in reviewing email exchanges, the person with less power is apt to use the pronoun "I" with greater frequency than the more powerful individual in the relationship.
- Aboutitis: We teach about the subject rather than engaging students as members of it.
- One way to know that we are using the language of initiative and independence, rather than rescuing students and furthering their dependence on us, is to ask ourselves, "Who is doing the thinking?"
- "I think that maybe we have been here before," rather than "We've been here before." Invites others into the conversation to offer their opinion, and thus the group begins to pool information and make sense of the situation.
- Praise is not feedback. This is in part due to the lack of information praise typically conveys. "Good job" hardly gives one much to go on. In the absence of information indicating what was done well and what still needs improvement and then giving guidance in helping the student achieve that improvement is best understood as evaluation rather than feedback.
- Challenge ideas being presented, not in terms of correctness or accuracy, but in the exploratory sense, as in a Socratic dialogue: How do you think that idea would play out in another context? Let's follow that line of thinking; what's the action that might follow from it?" Invite others into the conversation by asking "What do you think about what was just said? How does his idea connect with yours?" These types of questions do not come from preplanned lessons, but emerge from our careful listening to students.
- Practice the language of praise and feedback in writing. Begin your written comments by naming specific things the student has done well. Mention no more than two things that the student might work on as next steps in the process. End your comments with another positive statement on the growth, progress, or effort you have noticed or are looking forward to seeing.
- To become a better listener, try to avoid making assumptions about what others are saying or presuming you understand their intent. Work on asking at least one clarifying question before commenting or moving the discussion further. If nothing else comes to mind, the question "What makes you say that?" is a good way to learn more about the speaker's ideas and their formation.

- Make a list of the various roles you want students to step into in your classroom. Post this list in the room to remind you to use the language of identity as you are framing lessons and activities.
- If someone were to follow you throughout the day, what would your allocation of time say about your priorities and values?
- The most effective method of ensuring more engagement is not through any particular strategy, but through a more radical rethinking of time. How will I enable my students to use their time in class to maximize their learning? This shift in perspective recalibrates our thinking about time, forcing us to move away from prioritizing one's schedule to accomplish all that needs to be done – giving our attention to urgency, demands, and pressures – toward scheduling one's priorities, which for us as teachers should always be student learning.
- Put the big rocks in the “time” jar before adding pebbles, sand and water. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6\\_N\\_uvq41Pg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_N_uvq41Pg)
- Identify your ‘Big rocks.’ What are your top priorities? What are the key practices that for you are “first things” that must receive the highest attention. This is a list of values, principles, and priorities.
- For classrooms to be cultures of thinking for the students, schools must be cultures of thinking for the adults.
- Wait time 1 = Space between question and calling on student. Wait time 2 = Space between student response to question and teacher reaction, comments, or asking another student a question.
- Stress is a counterindicator of a culture of thinking, reflecting that one's purpose and direction are being swamped by the urgency of “to dos.”
- <http://www.designthinkingnetwork.com> Ewan McIntosh's Network of Design Thinking Schools
- If we want to create significant change in results, we cannot just change attitudes and behaviors, methods or techniques; we have to change the basic paradigm out of which they grow. When we try to change the behavior or the method without changing the paradigm, the paradigm eventually overpowers the change. That is why top down efforts to institute new practices so often fail to thrive. Practices cannot be installed, they have to be grown. They emerge naturally out of the paradigms that create them.
- By analyzing models of different strengths, students are able to discern elements of quality and different approaches to achieving that quality that they may combine in creating original work.
- [www.visiblethinkingpz.org](http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org)
- Every child deserves a champion, an adult who will never give up on them who understand the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be. Others have called this being a “warm demander,” someone who demands high standards while knowing students personally and holding them in positive regard.
- New roles empower disenfranchised learners. Establish roles such as summarizer, visualizer, vocab master, connector, questioner, clarifier, or predictor.
- Would you write me a one-minute essay on how the structure of our class today contributed to your learning? By setting up a feedback loop, the teacher lets students know that she cares about their learning and about improving as a teacher.
- Provide sentence starters:
  - Connecting to what blank said
  - I want to agree/disagree with blank, because
  - Piggybacking on blanks idea
  - Blanks' comment is now making me think

- If we follow that idea, then
- Building on blank's comment
- Create roles. Identify a learning situation that your students need to master. Name the particular intellectual hats one needs to wear or stances one needs to take to effectively deal with that situation. Break those roles down into a set of behaviors, actions, or questions that students can use as they assume those roles.
- Create a culture of revision. When work move from draft form to increasingly higher levels of performance, you create a need for feedback and learning from feedback.
- The chief goals of documentation of learning is to inspire through showing quality work; to invite by providing opportunities to reflect on and interact with the documentation; and to inform.
- Documentation has three audiences that it informs: teachers, students and parents.
- A worksheet tells a parent only what the task was and how well the student completed it, nothing of the thought, questions, conversations, or imagination that might have gone into it. Documentation can make that learning come alive and in so doing, provide parents with a new model of how they might interact with their child.
- Documentation serves the collective memory of the group, acting as a thread that pulls all learning together in a celebration and connection. It is a visibility that can help end isolation.
- IdeaPaint – the white board no longer needs to be set in one place, but can be on any wall, floor to ceiling.
- Some schools even incorporate the next new thing into their standard way of operating, announcing a different focus or theme for each school year. Typically change efforts of this sort are merely additive in nature, resulting in the adoption of a few new practices by the most eager and in stealth avoidance by the reluctant. Other times, change efforts are nothing more than an exercise in relabeling what teachers already do, to fit in with new frameworks, thus demonstrating compliance to an outside entity. Rarely do efforts of these types lead to serious transformation – that is, a meaningful or dramatic change in the form of the teaching and learning occurring at the school.