

Can creativity be taught?

Can you teach creativity or is it something you are born with? Are there levels of creativity? Can creativity skills be improved? *Curiosita Teaching* offers you tools, techniques, methods, and strategies that, if practiced and used regularly, can greatly enhance creativity. Davis states, “No amount of training will create a da Vinci or Edison. But it is also true that everyone’s capacity for creative living and creative thinking can be increased” (Davis, 1992, p. 12). One indicator of a highly creative individual is the ability to use the “oppositional” processes of creative and critical thinking simultaneously. It is the individual who can perform this feat rapidly in a seemingly transparent manner who is truly skilled at creative thinking. It is the blending of these two types of thinking processes that leads students toward the production of valued creative products and ideas.

The highly creative abilities of individuals emerge only when schools value creativity and provide students with these types of thinking opportunities within some level of a “product-based” learning environment. Students need to work over an extended period of time within a product-oriented classroom to be able to hone their creative and critical thinking skills in order to create. Establishing the necessary product-based learning environment could begin as simply as requiring all students to create a series of products within a course of instruction. There is a full range of opportunities teachers can choose from as they design the product-based learning environment that supports their teaching style, such as:

- Time-based - individual students are assigned short, medium, and/or long term products,
- Group-based - students are assigned individual, partner, and/or group products, and
- Multiple Intelligences-based - students are assigned products based on their strengths and/or interests.

The more complex levels of project-based learning that are represented through intricately structured working teams are not required to support the initial stages of creative learning. Educators can achieve the same creative teaching outcomes if they choose to stay within the product-based level of organization. Additionally, they may find this to be more practical and effective, as it can easily be implemented in tandem with standards-based instruction as presented in Chapter 6: Integrating Creativity: Lesson Planning and Instructional Design.

These product-based learning opportunities allow students to explore their creativity and demonstrate it through tangible products that can be enjoyed by all. As they do so, you will see levels of creative abilities begin to evolve as you do with any other learning concept introduced into the classroom. We can also teach students to use and apply the sub-skills related to creative thinking and critical thinking as complementary processes in product-based learning environments.

The chart on the next page lists examples of the sub-skills of both critical and creative thinking.

Introduction

Creative and Critical Thinking Sub-Skills	
CRITICAL THINKING	CREATIVE THINKING
Analyze	Generate
Focus	Widen
Objective	Subjective
One Answer	Many Answers
Probability	Possibility
Reasoning	Original, Unique
Yes, but . . .	Yes, and . . .
Vertical Thinking	Lateral Thinking
Convergent Thinking	Divergent Thinking

Figure 1.1 Creative and Critical Thinking Sub-Skills

It is the merging and blending of these thinking processes, influenced by speed of thought and intensity of thought, that result in the demonstrations of the characteristic behaviors of the creative individual. The following list gives you a sense of some of the diverse ways our students may exhibit their creativity:

- Asking provocative, stimulating questions;
- Solving problems in unusual or unique ways;
- Generating unusual or unique ideas;
- Challenging conventional thought;
- Playing with possibilities and alternatives;
- Discussing passions and interests; and
- Being in one's "own world" of thought.