

Introduction to Skillful Thinking

“The teaching of thinking skills is a lot like the weather. Almost everybody talks about it, but few seem able to do much to improve it.”

Barry Beyer, *Developing Minds: A Resource Book for Teaching Thinking*, 3rd ed.,
Arthur L. Costa (ed.), Alexandria, VA: ASCD. 2001)

Skillful thinking doesn't happen by itself!

To maximize student success:

- It must be taught, explained, discussed, and modeled.
- It must be practiced frequently K-12.
- It must be infused into content instruction regularly.

ALL students need to be taught to think skillfully.

It is vital for coping successfully with life.

- Don't differentiate the level of thinking required.
- Instead, differentiate the material to which the skill is being applied.

Example of a tiered assignment with flexible grouping requiring skillful thinking of all:

In the study of a work of fiction or biography, historical narrative, etc.:

Level 1: Compare and contrast 2 characters

Level 2: Compare and contrast the motivations of 2 characters

Level 3: Compare and contrast 2 characters from different stories
(fictional or non-fictional)

Step it up!

- Just one or two extra steps take traditional thinking skills to an entirely new level.
- Ask “so what?”
- Have students evaluate and draw conclusions.

Instructional Strategies That Affect Student Achievement

Classroom Instruction that Works by Robert Marzano, Debra Pickering, and Jane Pollock

Category	Percentile Gain
Identifying similarities and differences	45
Nonlinguistic representations	27

Skillful Compare and Contrast is Rigorous:

- Goes beyond the Venn diagram by asking students to draw conclusions
- Ensures that the differences listed are related by asking “with regard to what?”