Thinking Routines
Establishing Patterns of Thinking in the Classroom

1. What exactly are thinking routines, and how do they differ from strategies or activities?
2. How do teachers work with, make use of, and develop thinking routines over time?
3. What happens for students when they work with thinking routines over time?

But first…
a little background

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Innovating with Intelligence

- Carpe Vitam International (K-12)

Artful Thinking

- 2004-2006, Traverse City Public School District (K-8)
- DOE Arts Education Model Dissemination Grant

Cultures of Thinking

- 2005-2009, Bialik College independent school, Melbourne Australia (K-12)
- Abe and Vera Dorevitch Foundation
- Saginaw Intermediate School District, Saginaw, Michigan; Clover Park School District, Washington; Vanguard High School, New York City, Douglas County School District, Colorado; Melbourne Grammar School, Melbourne, Australia
To develop students’ thinking dispositions and intellectual character while deepening their subject matter understanding.

Dispositions are developed through enculturation in thoughtful settings over time.

How do we influence and shape classroom culture to make thinking a more central aspect of classroom life?

Thinking Routines and Document
Looking into Thought-Full Classrooms

Cultural Forces

- Expectations
- Opportunities
- Environment
- Time
- Routines
- Interactions
- Language
- Modeling
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thinking

use of the mind to form thoughts, to reason, to reflect
routine  n

1. a pattern of behavior adopted for a particular circumstance

2. a rehearsed set of movements or actions that make up a performance
1. **Tools**, used over and over again in the classroom, that support specific thinking moves.

2. **Structures** through which students collectively as well as individually initiate, explore, discuss, document, and manage their thinking.

3. **Patterns of behavior** adopted to help one use the mind to form thoughts, reason, or reflect.
Recall a lesson or activity you’ve taught or lead that you feel really engaged others in developing understanding.

What kinds of thinking did you observe your students engaging in during that activity or lesson?
Thinking Routines
As Tools for Thinking

- Wondering
  What am I curious about here?

- Consider different Viewpoints
  What’s another angle on this?

- Describe what’s there
  What do you see and notice?

- Reason with evidence
  Why do you think so?

- Build Explanations
  What’s really going on here?

- Make connections
  How does this fit?

- Uncovering Complexity
  What lies beneath the surface of this?

- Capture the heart and form conclusions
  What’s at the core or center of this?
Maps & Mapping

3 Words
2 Questions
1 Metaphor/Simile
Maps & Mapping:
An Audio Clip with Visuals
Maps & Mapping

Bridge

3 Words

2 Questions

1 Metaphor/Simile
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A Routine for Distilling the Essence of a Topic
Leave the Identity Issues to Other Folks

Listen to the essay.
What messages or themes stand out for you as particularly important, interesting, or insightful?
Standing in the rain waiting to go up the steps to the balcony of the Grand Theater I gripped Mama's hand and watched the little blond kids enter the lobby downstairs. It was the '50s, I was "colored" and this is what I believed: My place was in the balcony of the downtown theater, the back of the bus and the back steps of the White Dove Barbecue Emporium. When I asked Mama why this was so, she smiled and said, "Baby, people do what they do. What you got to do is be the best that you can be."

We got our first television in the '60s and it brought into my living room the German shepherds, snapping at a young girl's heels. It showed children just like me going to school passing through throngs of screaming, angry folks, chanting words I wasn't allowed to say. I could no longer be "colored." We were Negroes now, marching in the streets for our freedom -- at least, that's what the preacher said. I believed that, even though I was scared, I had to be brave and stand up for my rights.

In the '70s: beat-up jeans, hair like a nappy halo and my clenched fist raised, I stood on the downtown street shouting. Angry young black men in sleek black leather jackets and berets had sent out a call from the distant shores of Oakland, Calif. No more non-violence or standing on the front lines quietly while we were being beaten. Simple courtesies like "please" and "thank you" were over. It was official: Huey, H. Rap, and Eldridge said so. I believed in being black and angry.

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Leave the Identity Issues to Other Folks

By the '80s, fertility gods lined the walls and crammed the display cases of all my friends' houses. People who'd never been closer to Africa than a Tarzan movie were speaking broken Swahili. The '80s made us hyphenated: African-American. Swaddled in elaborately woven costumes of flowing design, bright colors and rich gold I was a pseudo-African, who'd never seen Africa. "It's your heritage," is what everybody said. Now, I believed in the elusive promise of the Motherland.

In the '90s, I was a woman whose skin happened to be brown, chasing the American dream. Everybody said that the dream culminated in stuff. I believed in spending days shopping. Debt? I didn't care about no stinkin' debt. It was the '90s. My 401(k) was in the mid-six figures and I believed in American Express. Then came the crash, and American Express didn't believe in me nearly as much as I believed in it.

Now, it's a brand new millennium and the bling-bling, video generation ain't about me. Everything changed when I turned 50. Along with the wrinkles, softened muscles and weak eyesight came the confidence that allows me to stick to a very small list of beliefs. I'll leave those identity issues to other folks. I believe that I'm free to be whoever I choose to be. I believe in being a good friend, lover and parent so that I can have good friends, lovers and children. I believe in being a woman -- the best that I can be, like my Mama said.
With those big ideas in mind...

Choose a **color** to represent a big idea that stood out for you.

Draw a **symbol** to represent one of those big ideas.

Sketch an **image** to represent a big idea.
CSI: Color, Symbol, Image

Nathan Armstrong, Year 7, Wesley College
**COLOUR**
Anne longs to do whatever she wants when she wants, which she cannot do in hiding. She wants to be able to move around freely. Sky blue represents the outside sky and free will.

**SYMBOL**
Anne can’t go outside and often gets criticized for her own thoughts. ‘Thinking outside the box is unnecessary’ is what her life tends to say. This box represents the box Anne longs to think and be outside of.

**IMAGE**
In this diary entry Anne talks about how much she wants her old life back. She wants her own private life back. This eagle represents the freedom Anne desires.
COLOUR
Anne is unsure of what the future will hold for her and Peter. Black, like a chalkboard, represents all the different possibilities that could be drawn for their future.

SYMBOL
In this diary entry Anne doubts she can keep her longing to reach Peter under control. She must wait until the silence breaks between them and they can act as their true selves.

IMAGE
Through this passage Anne talks about how she and Peter aren’t really as different as they seem on the surface. Just like these apples, they look different but taste similar.
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As Tools for Thinking

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Thinking Routines

As Structures

• A few steps: Easy to learn, and easy to remember
• Named: They can be identified as a common practice.
• Goal Oriented: They are used for the purpose of directing and scaffolding specific types of thinking
  • Individual as well as group practices
  • Useful across a variety of contexts
  • Help to reveal students’ thinking and make more visible
A “Good” Conference

Generate

Sort

Connect

Elaborate

Most Important

or Central

Less Importance

Less Central

Or explain how these things are connected
As Patterns of Behavior

• They are used over and over.
• They become engrained in us both teachers and students.
• Their flexibility emerges.
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Some Key Learnings

As teachers work with thinking routines, their link to the other cultural forces emerges.

• The language of routines often needs to be unpacked for both students and teachers

• Students need lots of models of good thinking and the opportunity to reflect on and critique thinking or their responses may remain superficial.

• In the classroom, it’s not just the routines themselves but the interactions that take place around routines that makes them powerful.

• While thinking routines can vary in their length, students still require time to think and this cannot be rushed.
Some Key Learnings

- Initially thinking routines often start off as activities, but in order to work over time they have to be seen as integrated and purposeful by the students.

- Thinking routines become routines only once the edges are softened and both teachers and students can work flexibly with the routine.

- Over time, we look for students to adopt the language of the routines and take on a more active and present voice, e.g. I’m wondering, I’m thinking.

- Thinking routines help us to hear more student voices.
Some Questions

• Can thinking routines be overused?
• Will students get tired of routines if they are used over and over in different grades?
• How many thinking routines should a teacher have or use in his or her repertoire?
• When thinking routines don’t work, how do you understand what went wrong?
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Messages about Learning

• Learning is doing
• Learning starts with the learner’s own ideas
• Learning involves getting personally involved
• Questions drive learning and are also outcomes of learning
• Learning involves uncovering complexity
• Learning can be a group process and a group outcome
• Learning and thinking can be made visible
Visible Thinking is a flexible and systematic research-based approach to integrating the development of students' thinking content learning across subject matters. An extensive and adaptable collection of practices, Visible Thinking has a dual goal: on the one hand, to cultivate students' thinking skills and dispositions, and, on the other, to deepen content learning. Thinking dispositions, we mean curiosity, concern for truth, understanding, a creative mindset, not just being skilled but alert to thinking and learning opportunities and eager to take them.

Who is it for?
Visible Thinking is for teachers, school leaders and administrators in K-12 schools who want to encourage the development of a culture of thinking in their classrooms and schools.

Key Features and Practices
At the core of Visible Thinking are practices that help thinking visible. Thinking Routines loosely guide learners through processes and encourage active processing. They are easy-to-learn mini-strategies that extend and deepen students' thinking and become part of the fabric of everyday classroom life. Thinking Ideals are easily accessible concepts capturing natural occurring goals, strivings or interests that often propel thinking. Four Ideals -- Understanding, Truth, Fairness, Creativity -- are presented as modules on this site. The associated routines for each ideal and within each module are activities that help deepen students' concepts around the ideal.