

Promoting Creativity to Stimulate Learning

Dr. Dawn White, Technology Coach, GCPS
drdawnedconsult@gmail.com

February 4, 2016
770-778-0225

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30 Ways to Promote Creativity in Your Classroom

Posted on **January 10, 2013** by **Miriam Clifford**

- See more at: <http://www.innovationexcellence.com/blog/2013/01/10/30-ways-to-promote-creativity-in-your-classroom/#sthash.drGKUrDu.dpuf>

1. Embrace creativity as part of learning. Create a classroom that recognizes creativity. You may want to design awards or bulletin boards to showcase different ways of solving a problem, or creative solutions to a real world scenario.

2. Use the most effective strategies. Torrance performed an extensive **meta-analysis** that considered the most effective ways to teach creativity. He found that the most successful approaches used creative arts, media-oriented programs, or relied on the Osborn-Parnes training program. Programs that incorporated cognitive and emotional functioning were the most successful.

3. Think of creativity as a skill. Much like resourcefulness and inventiveness it is less a trait and more a proficiency that can be taught. If we see it this way, our job as educators becomes to find ways to encourage its use and break it down into smaller skill sets. Psychologists tend to think of creativity as Big-C and Little C. Big C drives big societal ideas, like the Civil Rights movement or a new literary style. Little C is more of a working model of creativity that solves everyday problems. Both concepts can be included in our classrooms.

4. Participate in or create a program to develop creative skills. Programs like *Odyssey of the Mind*, *Destination Imagination*, *Future Problem Solving*, and *Thinkquest* bring together students from around the world to design creative solutions and bring them to competition.

5. Use emotional connections. Research suggests that the best creativity instruction ties in the emotions of the learner. In “Community Problem Solving” program students can devise a solution to help their local community, such as helping homeless youth.

6. Use a creativity model. The Osborne-Parnes model is oldest, widely accepted model. It is often used in education and business improvement. Each step involves a divergent thinking pattern to challenge ideas, and then convergent thinking to narrow down exploration. It has six steps.

- Mess-finding.* Identify a goal or objective.
- Fact-finding.* Gathering data.
- Problem-finding.* Clarifying the problem

- *Idea-finding*. Generating ideas
- *Solution-finding*. Strengthening & evaluating ideas
- *Acceptance-finding*. Plan of action for implementing ideas

7. Consider how classroom assignments use divergent and convergent thinking. Standardized tests do a great job of measuring convergent thinking that includes analytical thinking or logical answers with one correct response. Divergent thinking considers how a learner can use different ways to approach a problem. It requires using association and multiplicity of thought. We should design assignments that consider both types of thinking models.

8. Creativity flourishes in a “congenial environment”. Creative thinking needs to be shared and validated by others in a socially supportive atmosphere. Researcher Csikszentmihalyi (1996) coined this term, to explain the importance of reception from others. Others consider how to create [communities](#) that foster social creativity to solve problems.

9. Be aware during discussions. You know that student who often asks the question that goes a bit outside the lecture? Well, engage him. Once a week, intentionally address those questions. Write them down on an assigned space in the board to go back to later. Validate their creativity.

10. See creativity in a positive light. In his [blog](#) in Psychology Today, Eric Jaffe talks about research that suggests see creativity in a negative light. If we are teaching to creativity, we need to embrace it too. Reward students for thinking of problems in varied ways by recognizing their efforts.

11. Try the Incubation Model. E. Paul Torrance designed this model. It involves 3 stages:

1. Heightening Anticipation: Make connections between the classroom and student’s real lives. “Create the desire to know”.
2. Deepen Expectations: Engage the curriculum in new ways. Brainstorm and create opportunities to solve a novel problem.
3. Keep it going: Continue the thinking beyond the lesson or classroom. Find ways to extend learning opportunities at home or even the community.

12. Use a cultural artifact. Research from experimental social psychology finds that artifacts can enhance insight problem solving. Consider using an ordinary object, such as a light bulb used in the study or a historical artifact to have students think about living in a particular time period.

13. Establish expressive freedom. The classroom environment must be a place where students feel safe to share novel ideas. Allow for flexibility and create norms that foster creative approaches.

14. Be familiar with standards. Knowing the standards inside and out helps find creative solutions in approaching a lesson. Teachers can adapt them and work within the current framework. Some topics allow for flexibility and use of creative approaches.

15. Gather outside resources. There are some great resources to read related to creativity. The University of Georgia provides an array of amazing resources related to how to foster creativity in practical ways. It also gives a list of programs and organizations that can help with the process.

- 16. Allow room for mistakes.** Sir Ken Robinson said it best when he said, “If you’re not prepared to be wrong, you’ll never come up with anything original.”
- 17. Allow space for creativity.** Design some classroom space for exploration, such as a thinking table, a drama stage, a drawing table, or a space for groups to discuss ideas.
- 18. Give students time to ask questions.** Organizations such as CCE (Creativity, Culture, Education) suggest teachers incorporate opportunities for students to ask questions. Intentionally design lessons that allow for wondering and exploration.
- 19. Creativity builds confidence.** Students take ownership of their own learning. Think of ways where students might design a project. For instance, for the history requirement, I suggested students of both fifth grade classes create an exhibition of their final projects. The students were so proud of their final work and learned from others presentations. Parents and community members were happy to see students take ownership of their learning.
- 20. Encourage curiosity.** Consider what is important to students. Student interests are a great place to start on what drives their own thinking tank. Find inspiration from their world. Creativity is intrinsic in nature. Try to step into their viewpoint to find what motivates them.
- 21. Structure is essential.** Studies, such as a meta-analysis by Torrance suggest that creativity instruction is best with clear structure. For instance, consider the guidelines of the standard curriculum objectives and add these to the design. For example, reading considers communication, comprehension, listening, writing and reading.
- 22. Observe a working model of creativity.** Visit a creative classroom or watch a video about how a creative classroom works. The “[Case for Creativity in School](#)” is an excellent video that educators can watch to see how creativity might play out in a classroom. This school adopted a school-wide approach to recognize students.
- 23. Consider the work of current experts in the field.** Sir Ken Robinson is an internationally renowned creativity and innovation expert. His work is used to meet global challenges, renovating education, business, and government organizations to implement his strategies. His [books](#) and [TED talks](#) are great places to generate teaching ideas.
- 24. Explore different cultures.** Culture is an excellent vehicle for inspiring creative thinking. In *Thinking Hats & Coloured Turbans* [Dr. Kirpal Singh](#) discusses how cultural contexts are central to creative endeavors. You can discuss how collaboration between cultures, such as in the space program, produces unique, novel ideas.
- 25. Find ways to incorporate and integrate art, music and culture.** A recent report prepared for the European commission considered that creativity is a central force that shapes our culture. With the changing times we live in, the report suggested that society is enriched by cultural-based creativity.
- 26. Use a collaborative creative thinking model to solve classroom problems.** For instance, read a paragraph and then have groups discuss a list of questions. Collaborative problem solving is catching on quickly. In fact, many business schools have implemented creative thinking models into their curriculum.

27. Design multidisciplinary lessons when possible. When teaching geometry, I designed a lesson called, “Geometry through Art”. It included works of Art to show fifth graders their application to everyday geometric concepts. The result was astounding. I never thought that the subject matter would be so successful. I designed an entire unit that focused on how different concepts rely on geometry. I even asked the Art teacher to help reinforce those concepts in class.

28. Tapping into multiple intelligences is key. Creativity requires us to use different parts of our brain. We often bridge connections between seemingly unrelated areas to make new concepts emerge. Allow students to use their strengths to find new ways of approaching a topic or solving a problem. You might be surprised with what they come up with.

29. Understand that creativity is important to students’ future in the job market. Paul Collard for Creative Partnerships discusses how 60% of English students will work in jobs that are not yet created. In today’s market, students must largely be innovative and create their own jobs. Collard suggests teachers focus on teaching particular skills or set of behaviors, rather than preparing students for specific careers.

30. Teach creative skills explicitly. According to Collard, “*Creative skills aren’t just about good ideas, they are about having the skills to make good ideas happen.*” He suggests creative skills should include 5 major areas:

- Imagination
- Being disciplined or self-motivated.
- Resiliency
- Collaboration
- Giving responsibility to students. Have them develop their own projects.

Caine’s Arcade: A Movie that Became a Movement to Foster Creativity Worldwide

<http://cainesarcade.com/>

Caine Monroy, age 9, spent his summer vacation building an elaborate cardboard arcade inside his dad's used auto parts store. No one played the arcades until a filmmaker stopped by the auto shop to purchase door handles for his car.

That encounter has turned into a movement of turning cardboard boxes into inventions. Today, students can participate in the annual Global Cardboard Challenge. <http://cardboardchallenge.com/>

The Imagination Foundation was founded to find, foster and fund creativity and entrepreneurship in children around the world to raise a new generation of innovators and problem solvers who have the tools they need to build the world they imagine.