

Openness to New Ideas

Openness to New Ideas is an appreciation of new ideas that is informed by evidence, logic, and the consideration of alternatives.

Explore these strategies to intentionally support Openness to New Ideas as a Habit of Mind in your classroom.

Choose Habits of Mind

Before an investigation, ask students to think about all the Habits of Mind. Ask them to choose the one, they think will most support their work during the investigation. They can use a sticky note or clothes pin to mark the Habit of Mind they choose. After the investigation, ask students to determine if that was the Habit of Mind they needed most or if they would change their marker. Often students are surprised by which habits they used most in the investigation. Have students discuss their choices.



Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like Anchor Chart

Create an anchor chart with the students. Divide the chart into three parts and lead students to describe what a particular habit of mind looks like, sounds like, and feels like.

Another Way

When students provide an answer or explanation, routinely ask them to show you "another way." What's another way you can get that answer? What's another explanation for the result? What's another way to explain what happened? Thinking of these alternatives strengthens students' critical and creative thinking skills.

Something New: Inside the Classroom

You want students to be willing to try new things and be open to new ideas. To promote this culture in your classroom, challenge your students to try one new thing each week. This could include working with a new partner for an investigation, setting a class or individual goal, or trying a "flipped learning" unit. Let them know that continually trying new things can help them discover new interests and more efficient ways of doing things.

Something New: Outside the Classroom

You want students to be willing to try new things and be open to new ideas. To promote this culture in your classroom, make it a habit to try something new every month. Share your efforts with students, especially any failures. Use the construct, "I tried...I failed...I learned..." to model openness to new ideas, perseverance, and a growth mindset.

Be a Skeptic

A skeptic questions statements and requires evidence in order to confirm an idea. Help students understand that informed skepticism is helpful to develop and refine ideas. Periodically, have them practice being a skeptic. Read students a statement from a newspaper

or magazine. Encourage them to ask questions and to evaluate the evidence that is provided to them in the article. Are they convinced? Do they need more evidence?

This and That

Choose two random objects and have students discuss how a new item could be designed that incorporates both objects. You may want to involve students in determining the objects. For example, flip through the pages of a magazine and have students yell stop and choose an object from the page you're on (maybe a couch and a refrigerator, or a plane and a microwave). Finding connections between two disparate items helps develop creativity and problem-solving skills.

Square Pegging

Practice divergent and abstract thinking to develop students' creative thinking skills. Prepare a bucket of random subjects and predicates. Use a prompt that combines two unrelated ideas in one sentence, such as, "How can a _____, _____?" For example, "How can a rowboat win an election? Have students develop an argument to support their ideas. When students become accustomed to brainstorming solutions abstract ideas, the more prepared they will be to brainstorm solutions when it is required by an investigation.

Chain Letter

Have each student start a "chain letter" with a 1- or 2-sentence summary of a secondary knowledge source. The "letter" is passed to a classmate to add to the knowledge with additional information or a summary from a different source. Continue this through enough rounds until students have enough information make a sound scientific argument.

Brains Grow!

Students love discussing how their brains actually work. Teach students about the concept of brain plasticity, that the brain develops throughout their lives in response to how it is used. It is important for them to understand that what their brains are capable of doing is not fixed at birth and is constantly growing.

Habits of Mind Definitions

Curiosity

A strong desire to know or understand something. Curiosity is the ability to ask questions like “How?” and “Why?” when presented with simple and complex phenomena.

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Creative Thinking

The process of expanding ideas. It is the consideration of new and unusual possibilities. Creative thinking is used to generate large numbers of ideas, different categories of ideas, and ideas that are unique.

Critical Thinking

The process of actively evaluating and interpreting ideas. Creative Thinking and Critical Thinking often work together. Creative thinking originates ideas that are assessed using Critical Thinking.

Perseverance

Sustained intellectual curiosity. Perseverance is remaining focused, seeing a task through to its completion.

Adaptability

Ability to change to fit changed circumstances.

Self-Direction

Active participation and control over one’s behavior, motivation, and thought process. Taking initiative and responsibility for one’s learning.

Integrity

Acting according to a sense of what is right and what is wrong. Integrity helps us do the right thing in a reliable way.