



Thinking Schools South Africa is a non-profit organisation that commits to helping South African schools with on-going support in creating thinking cultures and communities of practice.

Creating a Culture of Thinking

Creating Places Where Thinking is Valued Visible and Actively Promoted

By Dr. Ron Ritchhart

19th - 20th September 2014, Johannesburg

OVERVIEW:

The Cultures of Thinking Project is a global initiative under the direction of Dr. Ron Ritchhart, a Principal Investigator and Senior Research Associate at Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Learning is a product of thinking. If we want our students to learn well and develop understanding, we must create cultures of thinking that actively engage students in thinking on an ongoing basis. However, this isn't always an easy task. Schools and classrooms are not always set up to encourage thinking. Furthermore, by its very nature, thinking is a rather invisible and elusive process. How do we as teachers promote students' thinking, recognize it when it occurs, and make thoughtfulness permeate our classrooms? To create a culture of thinking, educators must work together to create a school environment whose structure and purpose actively encourage a high level of student thinking, both individually as well as collectively, and where the thinking of all group members is regularly promoted, valued, made visible, and pushed further as a part of the ongoing, shared enterprise of the group.

GOALS:

The CoT initiative considers education to be a social and cultural endeavor whose goal is the development of both the individual and the group as effective learners and thinkers able to engage with and adapt to a changing world. Within this context the most important assessment question we can ask ourselves as educators is: Who are our students becoming as thinkers and learners as a result of their time with us?

Since 2000, the Cultures of Thinking Project has worked with hundreds of public, independent, and international schools and museums across North America, Australia, and Europe to help transform schools, classrooms, and museums into places where thinking is valued, visible and actively promoted as part of the regular day-to-day experience of all group members.

During the workshop, we will focus on the practical and concrete ways educators can create a culture of thinking in their schools and classrooms, foster the kinds of thinking opportunities that lead to deep understanding of content, and how to look for evidence of student thinking and understanding. Participants will be introduced to a variety of thinking routines: what they are and how they can be used to create more thoughtful classrooms.

We will explore such questions as:

What is a culture of thinking?

How can the cultural forces that exist in each classroom support and further develop a culture of thinking?

How can educators use thinking routines to structure, scaffold, and support students' thinking?

APPROACH:

The CoT initiative works to achieve its goals by working systemically in schools. This includes the formation of ongoing professional learning communities whose attention is focused on exploring and understanding group culture is shaped by the Eight Cultural Forces: Modeling, Opportunities, Routines, Expectations, Language, Interactions, Time, and Environment. By paying attention to how these eight forces send messages about what learning is, what kind of thinking is valued, and what it means to be smart; educators can reshape schools and classrooms into powerful learning environments in which students can achieve at the highest levels. The Documentation of learning and the integration of Thinking Routines—simple structures to scaffold, support, and direct students thinking—are also core practices.

Potential Audience

This interactive workshop is designed for teachers, administrators and school leaders across grade levels and subject areas who are interested in supporting and developing their students as thinkers and learners

Trainer's Profile:

Ron Ritchhart spent years in the classroom as a teacher before joining Harvard Project Zero where he is now a Senior Research Associate. Over the past 16 years, Ron's research has explored such issues as teaching for understanding, the development of intellectual character, creativity in teaching, and the development of thinking dispositions. He currently directs the worldwide Cultures of Thinking project aimed at supporting teachers in the creation of classrooms where thinking is valued, visible, and actively promoted. Ron's research and writings, particularly his theory of Intellectual Character and his framework for understanding group culture through the Cultural Forces, have informed the work of schools, school systems, and museums throughout the world.

Investment:

USD 450/- Closing date 15th July 2014.

Venue:

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