

Learning for Themselves

Pathways to independence
in the classroom

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Support materials and all
learning task proformas are provided
on the accompanying CD-ROM

Principles of independent learning

All students can learn – but each student will be motivated to learn in different ways.

Each student has unique learning preferences. Students do not all learn in the same way.

When students are given choice, responsibility and ownership, they are more engaged, motivated and productive.

Students learn at different rates. Either rushing or delaying students' progress can reduce engagement and impact negatively on learning outcomes.

When students are given more responsibility for their learning, they are often in a better position to develop essential skills in thinking, research, communication and self-management.

Not all students need to be 'doing the same thing' at the same time. Classrooms are, increasingly, places where small groups and individuals are pursuing a diversity of tasks.

When students feel valued for who they are and what they bring to the learning environment, they are more likely to engage confidently in the learning process.

When students achieve success because they can manage and enjoy the tasks, their confidence to tackle other independent tasks is increased.

When the stress of comparative assessment is reduced, students are more likely to take risks in their learning and feel comfortable to set themselves goals.

The appropriate level of challenge is important for motivation. The teacher's role in determining and monitoring this is important for facilitating learning during independent tasks. (In other words, independent learning is not just a matter of providing great tasks and hoping for the best.)

Teachers have a vital role in nurturing independent learners. Importantly teachers must take responsibility for helping to define content and skills for students to work towards.

Think about it! A focus on thinking

Theorists categorise or organise thinking skills in different ways. The various frameworks presented here use a range of thinking taxonomies, theories, skills and strategies. A wide range of independent learning tasks is included so that students can explore and become aware of different thinking skills. Some learning tasks are clearly designed to cater for a particular framework. Others are a mixture of frameworks or present new strategies for students to try. The tasks also offer strategies to develop students' thinking and assist students to learn about different ways to organise their ideas.

We have chosen three broad headings to categorise thinking skills:

- reflective thinking and metacognition
- creative thinking
- logical and critical thinking.

The table that follows has been developed to assist teachers with planning links among the thinking types, the associated skills and possible activities. These lists are not exhaustive, nor do they indicate that types of thinking should be discrete. Thinking usually involves skills in more than one category. In addition, skills such as synthesising could involve creative or critical thinking. Similarly, strategies can be used for multiple purposes. However, in order to avoid repetition, the skills and strategies have been listed in one category only.

Reflective thinking and metacognition				
Self-questioning	Questioning	Action plans	Making decisions	
Applying ideas to another situation	Recalling	Summarising		
Reviewing and revising	Thinking about others' feelings and perspectives			
Thinking ethically	Thinking empathically			
Possible activities				
De Bono's shoes and hats	Debate	Question dice	Brainstorm (list, describe, name)	
Role-play	Conscience game			
Useful graphic organisers				
Concept map	Cluster web	Spider diagram	Bridge	Comic strip CTG graph



Focus: What is an inventor?

Choose three thinker's key activities. Then choose a way to present your work.

Thinker's keys



What are 10 things you think an inventor would never do?



What if you were an inventor. What would you invent and why?



The answer is inventor. What are the questions?



Choose any product. Make a part Bigger, Add a part and Remove a part. What have you invented?



Think of something that has never been invented. Think about using unusual materials.



What are the commonalities between a toothbrush and a car?



In what ways could you invent something without using the usual tools?

Presentation options

role-play
rap
song
poem
true/false statements

poster
letter
reflective journal entry
newspaper article
interview

listing questions
survey people's ideas
poem

cartoon
labelled diagram
graphic organisers

labelled diagram
make a model
draw or paint

Venn diagram
scales
graphic organiser
data chart

multiple choice quiz questions
flow chart
cause and effect map

