

Overview

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Building a Framework

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Many educators who are convinced that schools should teach thinking are nevertheless unsure about what skills students need. The available published materials are keyed to various arrays of skills which, though similar, are far from identical. Some school systems have revived the well-known taxonomy developed by Benjamin Bloom and others (1956), but—while the taxonomy was a notable achievement and continues to be of value—it does not reflect three decades of research on cognitive processes.

One of those familiar with the recent research is David Perkins (p. 4), professor of psychology at Harvard University and codirector of Harvard's Project Zero; author of *The Mind's Best Work* (1981) and *Knowledge by Design* (1986); and coauthor of *The Teaching of Thinking* (1985), an objective analysis of published thinking skills programs. He also helped write and evaluate the Odyssey materials (1986) for Venezuela's Project Intelligence.

Perkins advises educators to include in their curriculums the mental tactics that hold most promise for multiplying the natural powers of the mind. He calls these tactics "frames" because, like picture frames, they focus our attention and help us view phenomena productively. One such frame is the decision-making process outlined by Charles Wales and Anne Nardi (p. 37).

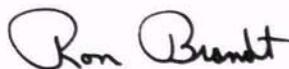
A number of what Perkins calls "frames" have been incorporated by Robert Marzano (p. 20) of the Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL) in Denver into a conceptual framework that several school systems have begun using as the foundation for their K-12 thinking skills programs. Marzano does not claim that his framework is all-inclusive; to the contrary, it consists of only those elements he gleaned from the research literature that teachers found could be readily communicated and successfully incorporated into students' behavior. Daisy Arredondo (p. 28) reports that 30 teachers from the Walla Walla, Washington, schools who

were trained by Marzano are now beginning to train others in their district. They have assigned each of the skills to a particular subject and grade level although, once the skills have been introduced, all teachers are supposed to support their continued use. Because of the McREL program's strong conceptual framework, practical approach, and flexibility, ASCD has decided to publish it next fall in the form of training materials. We recognize the validity and value of other conceptions of thinking and of other published programs, but believe that educators will find the materials useful.

Marzano is also participating in development of another framework, this one originated by ASCD. Under auspices of the Association Collaborative for Teaching Thinking—24 education organizations working together to promote development of students' thinking abilities—an ASCD-supported task group is preparing *Dimensions of Thinking*, an analysis of thinking skills intended for use in planning curriculum and staff development.

Members of the task group¹ have reviewed critiques of the second draft by a number of authorities and practitioners and are at work on a third draft, which will be sent to ASCD comprehensive members and to leaders of other education groups when it is published in the fall.

We recognize that the new framework will have its weaknesses like all the others, but we hope that by publishing it and inviting further refinement, we will be contributing to the goal of improving student thinking.



1. Carolyn Hughes, immediate past president of ASCD; Beau Fly Jones, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory; Robert Marzano, McREL; Barbara Presseisen, Research for Better Schools; Stuart Rankin, Detroit Public Schools; Charles Suhor of the National Council of Teachers of English; Ron Brandt, ASCD.

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