

Toward an Integrating Framework for Teaching Thinking

Teachers in Cherry Creek, Colorado, have selected a variety of programs for teaching thinking, according to the needs of their students and their own interests.

If educators grow weary of hearing about "thinking skills," the emphasis may shift before we achieve significant and lasting changes in classrooms. In the Cherry Creek (Colorado) Schools, the Thinking Skills Committee is searching for ways to ensure that thinking skills will remain an integral aspect of our instructional program.

Our teachers possess a great deal of autonomy in instructional decision making, consistent with our decentralized district organization. They have, therefore, chosen a variety of thinking skills materials and instructional strategies that they feel fit their students, teaching styles, and content areas. Since we have encouraged this eclect-

tic approach, Cherry Creek now has a cadre of teachers experienced in programs such as Philosophy for Children, Tactics for Thinking, and Instrumental Enrichment, and in various models of teaching such as cooperative learning, inquiry, mnemonics, and advanced organizers.

To develop this expertise, the district has planned staff development activities that maximize transfer from workshop to classroom. We give workshop participants opportunities to hear the theory underlying the innovation, view demonstrations, practice new strategies, and receive feedback. To maximize classroom impact, we also provide a coaching component.

The most powerful arrangement we

have discovered for encouraging coaching is the Professional Study Team. Teachers with a common interest form a team that meets regularly (for recertification credit) to reinforce each other, to plan extensions of the ideas they are testing, to schedule classroom observations, and to discuss their successes and failures. As teachers gain expertise in an area, each school gains in-house experts to disseminate successful practices to other teachers.

Now we are proposing that the district adopt a thinking skills framework, modeled after ASCD's *Dimensions of Thinking* (Marzano et al. 1988), to provide a common language for administrators, teachers, students, and parents. We are working toward long-term commitment to applying the framework when writing curriculum, planning assessment, appraising instruction, and scheduling staff development. We want to reinforce the programs already in place and to make a greater effort toward integrating thinking skills throughout the instructional program. □

Reference

- Marzano, Robert, et al. *Dimensions of Thinking: A Framework for Curriculum and Instruction*. Alexandria, Va.: ASCD, 1988.

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With in-house experts available, the school district now seeks a framework to bring cohesion to all.

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