

A "Grow As You Go" Thinking Skills Model

Teachers at Patapsco Middle School, Howard County, Maryland, are using a process model to help them introduce and then integrate thinking skills in all content areas.

Many of us have memories of school as a place where we sat, listened to the teacher, took notes, studied those notes, did our homework, took tests on the content presented, and then pressed on to the next chapter or unit, repeating the cycle. Seldom did we get to interact with the teacher unless we were among the brighter students who were called upon because our hands

shot up first; and even less often, if ever, did we exchange ideas with other students.

What is unfortunate about this "traditional" approach is that it allows little real student involvement beyond the factual recall level. Thinking is not only not encouraged, but frequently not allowed, because it slows down the lesson and puts the teacher behind schedule in covering the curriculum.

Teachers at Patapsco Middle School, Howard County, Maryland, have replaced the traditional approach with the student-centered Inclusion Process (Worsham and Stockton 1986), an explicit instruction model for teaching thinking. In this three-year pilot program, students are made responsible for their own learning, teachers facilitate rather than pontificate, and cooperative learning strategies replace individual competition.

The model provides an eight-step framework that enables schools and school systems to incorporate selected thinking skills into their instructional programs. The framework is divided into two phases: planning (fig. 1) and implementation (fig. 2).

The Patapsco story began in December 1984, when the Maryland State

"Students are made responsible for their own learning, and teachers facilitate rather than pontificate . . ."

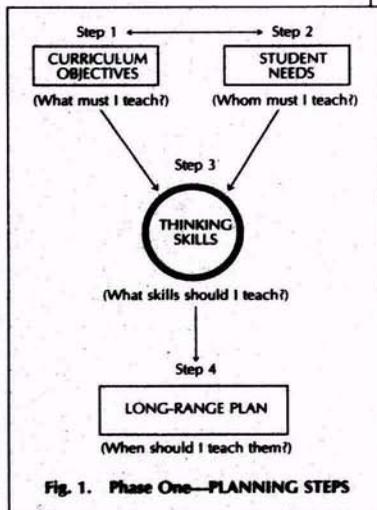
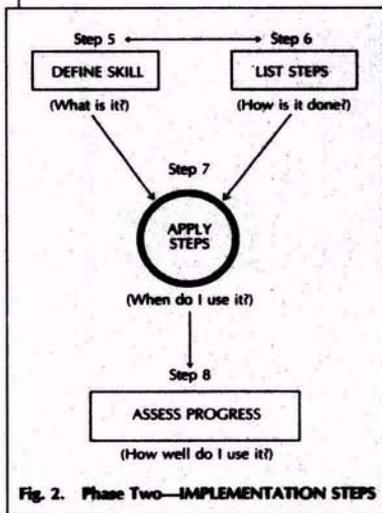


Fig. 1. Phase One—PLANNING STEPS

Department of Education awarded the school the first of its three grants to begin using the Inclusion Process to incorporate thinking skills into language arts, math, science, and social studies. That year the teacher training began at 6th grade level; during the following two years, it continued for



7th and 8th grade teachers. Now most of the other faculty members have been trained.

A series of focus lessons introduces students to the 12 thinking skills. During these lessons students generate definitions and, primarily through inductive reasoning, develop an understanding of how to apply these skills step by step in the content areas.

Students designate a section of their notebooks for "Thinking Skills," where they keep their definitions and steps. They quickly recognize that the thinking skills learned in one class are useful in learning the content in other classes as well.

Teachers structure classroom environments that enable students to ask the right questions, moving from simple comprehension of ideas to the more complex processes required to solve problems. Rather than giving information, the teachers have learned the value of this rule: "Don't tell what you can ask. Don't ask what the student should be asking."

Students find tasks less overwhelming when approached in pairs and small groups. They learn how to generate and arrange their ideas by using visual organizers and how to think

"Teachers have learned the value of this rule: 'Don't tell what you can ask. Don't ask what the student should be asking.'"

before responding by using wait time and think-pair-share strategies (see McTighe and Lyman, this issue, p. 18). They improve their thinking through conscious reflection (metacognition) and practice and discover that writing in logs helps them to make connections between and among their school subjects and their everyday experiences. One 8th grade student summed it up, "Thinking's hard work, and I usually feel great when I'm finished. But I guess I'm never really finished thinking, and that's good too."

The model has been implemented in six other Maryland counties and nine other states. It can be applied in many configurations (K-12) as a framework, allowing each school or school system to tailor the improvement of thinking to its own needs, and perhaps to start new kinds of memories of school. Since it is a process model, not a commercial program, the Inclusion Process is a true "grow as you go" approach. □

Reference

Worsham, A., and A. Stockton. *A Model for Teaching Thinking: The Inclusion Process*. Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa, 1986.

Antoinette Worsham is a Language Arts Supervisor in Howard County, Maryland Public Schools, 10910 Route 108, Ellicott City, MD 21043-6198.

D.E.R.

serves

**Social Studies Teachers
Curriculum Coordinators**

**FILMS AND VIDEOS
FROM AROUND THE WORLD**

With an Incentive Award from the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, D.E.R. has worked with teachers and curriculum supervisors to edit videos for teaching, based on their needs for visual materials to supplement curricula.

**THE FIRST TWO VIDEOTAPES
ARE NOW AVAILABLE
FOR CLASSROOM USE**



**THE IKUNG SAN:
TRADITIONAL LIFE**

26 min., color, sale \$150

YANOMAMO OF THE ORINOCO
29 min., color, sale \$150

- for individualized assistance in preparing special videotapes for your own classroom needs;
- for film selection advice; or
- for a catalogue

please contact

**Documentary Educational
Resources**

101 Morse St.

Watertown, Mass. 02172

(617) 926-0491

Copyright © 1988 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.