

Encouraging Creative Tools & Imagination in Your Classrooms

From Blake Smith, FA Elementary {Visual & Creative Arts Educator}

Find more on my teaching blog:

Awakening the Spirit <https://blogs.ubc.ca/blakesmi/teaching-resources/>

13 creative thinking tools from *Spark of Genius*, Robert & Michèle Root-Berstein 2001

*See p365 Minds-On Resources (I made you a pdf of these)

observing
imaging
abstracting
recognizing patterns
forming patterns
analogizing
body thinking
empathizing
dimensional thinking
modeling
playing
transforming
synthesizing

How to teach imagination:

talk together and write/draw about what it means ~ then do it everyday!

give LOTS of opportunities for using this muscle!!

make time & space to imagine

encourage daydreaming (write/draw them!)

help them find their own uniqueness

reconsider words/labels like "weird"

talk about the importance of creative/critical thinking in today's world

design projects/lessons that encourage them to use L/R brain thinking

study the work of Howard Gardner on multiple intelligences and teach to them~

offer material or makercenters & time to play w creative (safe) materials daily

go outside & explore the senses in new ways!

build forts in your classroom, read under them

wander to notice, to collect, to compare, to listen

design open-themed lessons with lots of student choice

remove structures

discuss barriers & how to bend them or go around another way

teach experimentation in all subjects

show examples of and promote innovation

teach empathy by modeling it

show lots of examples of creative PROCESS & talk it through

practice it yourself OFTEN

look at/for examples: visit art museums in person or virtual tours online
ask students to bring in own observations, examples, questions, mementos
promote the idea of invention, reinvention, being an inventor!
discuss the dangers of perfection or single-direction thinking/learning
teach them "cubist thinking" (Susan Sontag's idea) ~ an idea w 6 sides/ways in
praise all ideas, no matter how unexpected
~ this is how to inspire unique out of box thinking!
think of creativity and imagination as skills you need to teach & learn

How to infuse creativity:

Instill, encourage, and make transparent a classroom culture of **constant innovation, experimentation, discovery, and "creative confidence"** (that we are all creative ~ this is the art of learning, that creativity is "a way of understanding the world" ~ this idea is from the online resource below on Design Thinking, described more under "Design Thinking Defined -> Designer's Mindset") ...**all ideas matter here! Creativity is limitless!**

Let go of the idea there is one or one "right" way to complete a task, answer a question, solve a problem, write/draw/live, be smart or demonstrate understanding. It takes your own creativity to truly see this and is a belief system at heart.

Teach, talk, design, and assess with creativity:
Infuse these tenants into your units & lessons (***core competency: Creative Thinking**).

Ask yourself, as you plan/reflect, in every lesson/project/outcome where the creative room is and make some if you can't find it. If there is only one or two expected routes to the 'answer' or 'outcome' you hope for, try to make room for more. Ask new questions. Change the rules. Let the students come up with projects & goals. Reconsider your objectives. Co-create lessons!

DO your own projects first. Ask yourself if they are: fun, hands-on, actively engaging, inspiring you to think deeply about the topics at hand. Hands-on means we use hands, body, all the senses, we move and **we are not passive sitters we are active doers**. They embody the learning!

Creative individuals can see the art in everything: the poetry of numbers, the color of emotion.

Take walks, make assemblages: look at found object shadow boxes by artist Joseph Cornell.

Idea Hour/Session: Spend an hour or block regularly on generating fresh ideas on any subject! Draw them, perform them, write songs and plays together, play Pictionary. Ask them what they want to learn about.

Dream Time/Session/Day/Week/Month/Season: Spend dedicated time for dreaming. Make vision boards! Imagine the future! Go outside and lay on the ground, watching cloud formations and sharing their biggest dreams.

Study the illustrators behind all the fun picture books you like in SEL ~ ex: make paper collage art inspired by artists like Eric Carle (Hungry Caterpillar)...Make their own books!

Have students compose visuals/lists/posters with creative thinking & learning tools. This way you have a daily reference to point to and it shows them you value it!

Do something creative everyday! Keep a creativity log/journal and reflect on what rises.

Speaking of rising, take them outside in the morning to look at the light. Go again in the afternoon and see how it changes. This is how painters think and learn to see color.

Honor their creative ideas and display all students works!

Collaborate w other teachers and schools, spend time in creative classrooms, go to art music band with your students and pick up an instrument!

Bring music into your classroom. Listen to a variety of genres, artists, cultures. Try doing math to music. Try to find the math in music.

Invite in a live musician. If you play an instrument, bring it in to play! Play quiet instrumental music while they write or read...

Morning meetings could include: dancing, singing, finger painting, puppet shows, pantomime, "meet the artists" and introduce creatives like Pablo Picasso! 😊

Make puppets for puppet shows (like your own Sesame Street!) on any subject.

Teach them how to write poetry and poetic prose. Read poetry to them. Do spoken word poetry instead of or in addition to a writing assignment. Can math be poetic? Can science?

Keep journals. Try out visual journals and DIY bookmaking! Repurpose & reuse old books.

Try out digital storytelling, stop-motion animation and claymation. LOTS of cool art apps!

Collect class recycling for one week/one month (clean/safe) and create upcycle art!

Paint a class mural! Make a paper city of recycled paper! Draw silhouettes of each other.

Mix up the layout: re organize your room by color, change the lighting, soften the seating, make it student-learner centered not teacher centered, create new centers, ask them to help.

Make quick fun lists as ways to get ideas flowing – 50 ways to take a walk, 25 inventions for a better tomorrow, 10 new colors, 5 meaningful gestures to communicate care...save these lists

Big project idea:
*Co-create an Imagination Station &/or Maker Lab aka
MakerSpace with your students/grade level/school*

Some Resources for *Creative Tools & Imagination* in the Classroom:

*See my teaching blog, link on top of p1

*See pdf from Sparks of Genius & book covers from my creativity resource collection

Maker Labs & research the maker movement / **Makerspaces** in education (and DIY Do It Yourself) <https://www.makerspaces.com/makerspace-ideas/> and how to start one: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/meaningful_making_en.pdf

Design Thinking <https://www.ideou.com/pages/design-thinking>

Lego Education <https://education.lego.com/en-us>

NY Times Lesson Plans <https://www.nytimes.com/section/learning/lesson-plans>

LiveTiles <https://www.livetiles.nyc/3-fun-design-thinking-starter-projects-classroom>

Google Arts & Culture: look up Google Expeditions & Google Places ~ see this article: <https://edtechmagazine.com/k12/article/2016/10/3-ways-google-arts-culture-can-enrich-your-lessons>

Play around w "transformational techniques" from art and apply them in any subject area. Can teach them one by one or choose a few that will assist your teaching & their learning: ex's are magnification, juxtaposition, metamorphosis, fragmentation, etc. (there are close to 20+ and they can be combined). See here for some examples and search online: <https://www.slideshare.net/dsgran/transformation-operational-techniques>

(Ask me I have TONS MORE! ☺)

Email me if you have more questions or want help:

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