Developing Minds

A Resource Book for Teaching Thinking

3RD EDITION

Foreword

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Who can say when and how it began? Long before our own day, educators sought to teach their students to think. Philosopher John Dewey first published his analysis titled *How We Think* in 1910, and a substantial movement devoted to critical thinking flourished in the 1960s. For me, though, the current thinking skills movement began in 1981, when I edited an issue of ASCD's *Educational Leadership* magazine called "Teaching Thinking Skills." Something was in the wind. I wasn't entirely sure what, but it was very exciting.

Cognitive psychology had displaced behaviorism, with its limited approach to mental activity. Mathematics and science educators were stressing problem solving. Critical thinking was making a comeback, especially on college campuses. Several instructional programs had been developed to improve students' thinking, which some equated with intelligence. A major factor helping to consolidate these efforts was a project that had been launched in Venezuela in 1978, led by national minister Luis Machado, to make all that country's citizens more intelligent (Perkins, 1995). Project Intelligence, as it was called, not only was using existing programs, such as Edward de Bono's CoRT thinking program, but also had commissioned the creation of a second generation curriculum, later to be published in the United States as Odyssey.

In the early 1980s most experts claimed (and some still do) that intelligence is unalterable. People are born with a certain level of intellectual ability, the IQ tests seemed to show, and you can't do much about it. At that time researchers such as Howard Gardner and Robert Sternberg were just beginning to explore expanded definitions of intellectual ability, and though true believers were convinced, the evidence was pretty skimpy that—using the title of a book published in 1976—*Intelligence Can Be Taught* (Whimbey, A., & Whimbey, L. S.).

One of the authors in that early issue of *Educational Leadership* was Arthur Costa, then a professor at California State University, Sacramento, and a member of ASCD's Executive Council. In his article, Art neatly dodged the question of whether schools could change measured intelligence. Instead, he focused on intelligent behavior, which surely they could influence. Art Costa continued to play key roles in the development of ASCD's program. In the summer of 1983, he and I organized an institute on thinking skills, introducing participants to programs such as Reuven Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment. The following year we held an invitational conference at the Wingspread center in Racine, Wisconsin, to plan a more comprehensive set of activities. The conference produced several recommendations, including a suggestion that ASCD publish a "resource book." I wasn't sure what such a book would be, but I invited Art to serve as editor, and he generously agreed. The result was the first edition of *Developing Minds*, which at the time was the largest book ASCD had published and which also has become one of the most successful and influential.

Basic Issues

The thinking skills movement examined in this volume has been bedeviled by at least three questions. The first is "What skills are you talking about?" The next, quite naturally, is "Can such skills be taught?" When that question is answered by citing examples of apparent success, usually achieved under relatively controlled conditions, the third question becomes "Should (can) thinking be taught not as a separate curriculum but in regular classes in conjunction with teaching subject matter?"

Before briefly discussing these questions, I will address the many possible meanings of "teaching thinking." Arthur Costa and I sometimes divide the field into three categories: teaching for thinking, teaching about thinking, and teaching of thinking. Even these categories mean different things to different people.

Here is what I mean by them. Teaching of thinking is what program developers like Matthew Lipman, creator of the Philosophy for Children program, have learned to do, using teach-