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Introduction

Most educators agree that the development of thinking skills among children who will be living their lives in the 21st Century is of critical importance. Knowledge is exploding. So are problems. The ability to bring information into some kind of creative, logical focus is becoming more and more vital. This means that we must produce better thinkers.

But how? How do you teach a child to think? It seems there are as many answers to that question, from our late 20th Century perspective, as there are dedicated and thoughtful people exploring it. That is well and good, for this kind of attention from a variety of viewpoints signals an important beginning.

This book will not add anything to the *theory* of the teaching of thinking skills. That is not its purpose. This book is simply a recognition of one fundamental idea: If you want to teach a child to think, you must first convince that child that thinking is fun and worthwhile.

The central thrust of this book, therefore, is motivational. It is designed to make clear to your students that you, the teacher, hold the process of thinking in high esteem, and that you want to pass along this valuable process to your students.

It is our belief that all children can be taught to think more imaginatively, flexibly and analytically. Obviously, some children are more adept at the process than others, just as some children are more natural artists or athletes. But *all* children, we feel, come with impressive thinking potential as part of their standard equipment, to borrow a phrase from the car makers. All too often, unfortunately, this potential is not realized. It is not our business to examine the complicated reasons why some children turn off and others turn on to the joy of thinking. It is, however, our business to try to “hook” them before the powerful anti-thinking forces in our contemporary society get too strong a grip.

If you are using a Multiple Intelligences approach to teaching and learning you’ll find that the focus in these activities is mostly on visual/spatial and linguistic intelligences. Therefore, the activities can be used with children’s strength areas or to help students improve their visual/spatial and linguistic intelligences.

This book, which we call “Brain Stations,” is an effort to encourage children to have good experiences in the discipline of thinking. We want them to get the idea at an early age that thinking is fun, that (though it might not be up there with recess) it is important and rewarding. That is why we have chosen the learning centre format. To place one child in front of an activity which you, the teacher, have taken time to make, tells that child that he or she is being asked to do something of value.

Now, a word about the nuts and bolts of this book.

You will notice that we have taken pains to vary the texture of the activities in this book. You’ll find everything from abstractions to art, from manipulative problems to creative writing. You can contribute to this interest by making the centres yourself. Why? Because youngsters get tired of the sameness of worksheets, and the look-alike quality of commercially prepared graphics. Your hand, your personality, your touch, is more persuasive than you think. Use these things! In other words, have some fun preparing these centres. So what if your lettering is a little shaky and your art is not Rembrandt? Do it! Children will recognize, and respond to, your efforts.

Another note: Since you will be asking children to go individually to a centre to “think” about something, you must try to give them (despite your busy timetable) some response. In every case, you’ll notice that children are required to hand something in to you. Give them some feedback. Furthermore, when you get some sparks that really light things up (and you will), make a fuss about it. Commend the child and share the accomplishment with the class.

If you are using a Multiple Intelligences approach to teaching and learning you’ll find that the focus in these activities can be used with children’s strength areas or to help students improve their visual/spatial and linguistic intelligences.

So here they are . . . 50 “Brain Stations” . . . 50 thinking centres which will motivate and challenge your students. . . 50 stops along an exciting thinking track. All aboard!

If You Think of...

About this centre...

Emphasis here is on flexible thinking. The idea that the same symbol can represent different things depending on the context is not an easy premise, but once children make the connection, they'll be off and running.

Materials needed...

Nine index cards, cardboard.

Directions to students...

Number your page 1-14, and answer these questions.

If you think of...

1. Number 3 as a nail, what could Number 8 be?
2. Number 4 as a net, what could Number 2 be?
3. Number 1 as snow, what could Number 3 be?
4. Number 7 as a head, what could Number 6 be?
5. Number 1 as eyes, what could Number 9 be?
6. Number 2 as an ant, what could Number 7 be?
7. Number 8 as a lamp, what could Number 2 be?
8. Number 2 as a car, what could Number 5 be?
9. Number 7 as the sun, what could Number 2 be?
10. Number 1 as parents, what could Number 2 be?
11. Number 9 as cows, what could Number 4 be?
12. Number 2 as ice-cream, what could number 3 be?
13. Number 6 as string, what could Number 2 be?
14. Number 5 as a tree, what could Number 9 be?

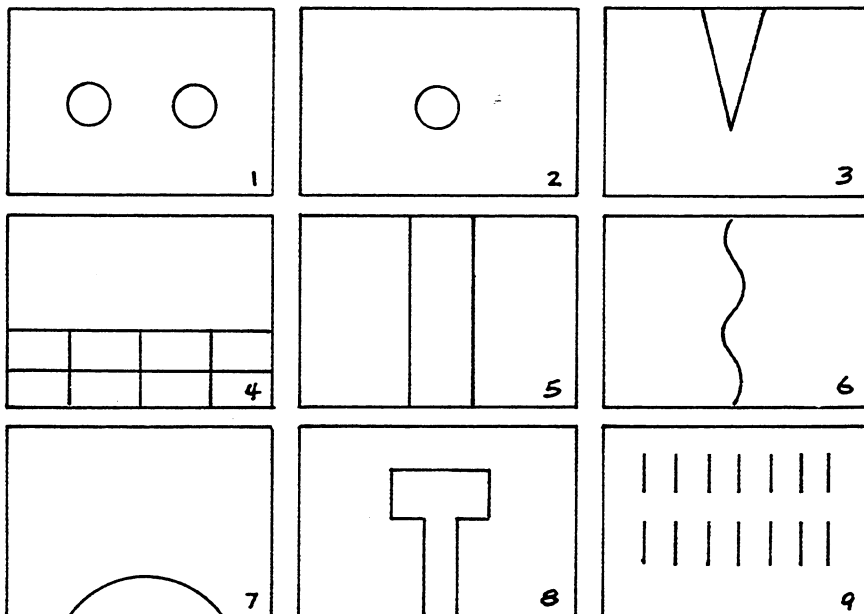
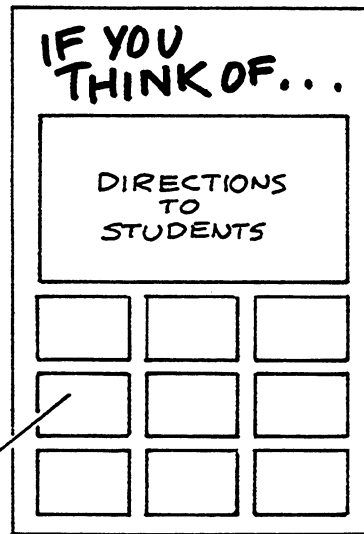
Comment...

Be flexible yourself when you evaluate the answers. For example, if a child thinks the "hair" in Question 4 looks like a profile, why argue?

Suggested answers...

1. hammer; 2. ball; 3. icicle; 4. hair; 5. eyelashes; 6. anthill; 7. light bulb; 8. road; 9. moon; 10. child;
11. fence; 12. cone; 13. balloon; 14. leaves.

COPY THE DRAWINGS
BELOW ONTO INDEX
CARDS AND GLUE THEM
TO A PIECE OF CARDBOARD.



What You Use

About this centre...

This activity is fun because it is much more open-ended than it appears at first glance. For example, the fact that the idea of sharpness (Number 1) can relate to objects as diverse as a knife and pencil should be interesting to children. A class discussion after they have finished with the centre would probably be worthwhile, therefore. Stress that clothing, toy or food answers are not acceptable, and that no answer may be used twice. Why? Simply to make the assignment more challenging!

Materials needed...

Cardboard.

Directions to students...

Today, you will be thinking about things you use. You cannot use food, clothes, or toys as your answers, so you'll have to think hard! Do the work on your own paper.

Name one thing you use that...

1. needs to be sharp.
2. folds.
3. has numbers.
4. you use only once.
5. you can see through.
6. is straight.
7. you squeeze.
8. holds water.
9. has a handle.
10. makes a noise.
11. has a knob.
12. is white.
13. can be hung up.
14. is metal.
15. has buttons (or keys) you press.
16. is sticky.
17. you can tie.
18. you travel in.
19. will bend.
20. fits into something else.
21. has one or more holes.
22. has four legs.
23. fits in your pocket.
24. goes around.