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# Spinning Heads with Thinking

## Foreword

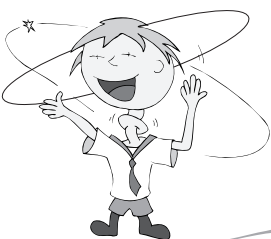
**T**his book has been written by teachers for teachers as a practical model with a middle years focus. It is a culmination of ideas, current trends and real teaching experiences that have led to curriculum and classroom teaching reform. First hand experience and success with the Thinking Curriculum has resulted in an analysis of teaching and learning styles, the development of autonomous learners and an increase in academically engaged time.

As teachers in the middle years of schooling, our role of equipping children with the knowledge, skills and understanding of learning is paramount in the formation of independent thinking. Teaching within a Thinking Curriculum involves a change in the teacher's role, from spoon-feeder and provider of knowledge to facilitator of learning. In essence, it involves taking a step back and providing opportunities for children to take responsibility for their own learning.

This book is a guide for planning and implementing the Thinking Curriculum. It has been structured in a manner that allows individuals, teams or whole schools to start thinking about the concept of the Thinking Curriculum, and provides a variety of planning methods, teaching tools and strategies for implementation. Whether it is in one classroom, a teaching team or a network of primary and secondary teachers working towards effective transition, you can jump in the deep end or dabble your little toe in the water towards best teaching practice.

The idea of the book is to engage children through the use of a range of thinking tools, using the technology available to you. To demonstrate this, many of the models for planning and classroom use have been presented using the 'inspiration' program and graphic organisers.

The whole aim is to get heads spinning - whether it be yours or the individuals within your classroom - and have a lot of fun doing it!



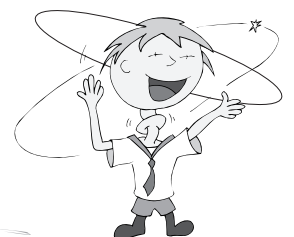


## PART A: Attacking the Concept of the Thinking Curriculum

### What is the Thinking Curriculum?

The Thinking Curriculum is a collaboration of a range of teaching and learning philosophies. Its aim is to develop and foster thinking skills which empower individual students and develop responsible and autonomous learners.

- It encourages thinking
  - critically and creatively
  - laterally/divergently
  - independently.
- It provides tools to encourage thinking.
- It provides opportunities to think.
- It is engaging.
- It makes thinking and learning fun, interesting and purposeful.
- It helps to manage the diversity of thinking and learning styles.
- It provides opportunities for negotiation of tasks and curriculum content relevant to individual needs.
- It is for all children.
- It is developing responsible, lifelong learners through:
  1. Motivation/engagement
  2. Skill development
  3. Confidence
  4. Recognition of the need for lifelong learning
  5. Reflection.





## How does the Thinking Curriculum work?

The Thinking Curriculum works through a variety of strategies and methods that target and trigger thinking. It works by 'making heads spin' in a positive way that is exciting and relevant to all types of learners and teachers. The Thinking Curriculum is best put to use within an environment that facilitates and nurtures students according to their individual needs and strengths. It is about thinking within an active learning environment that captures student enthusiasm and draws them into the web of learning.

The following mind map is an example of the many different aspects of a Thinking Curriculum. It presents the various thinking models of:

- Gardner's Multiple Intelligences
- Bloom's Taxonomy
- De Bono's Six Thinking Hats and Direct Attention Thinking Tools

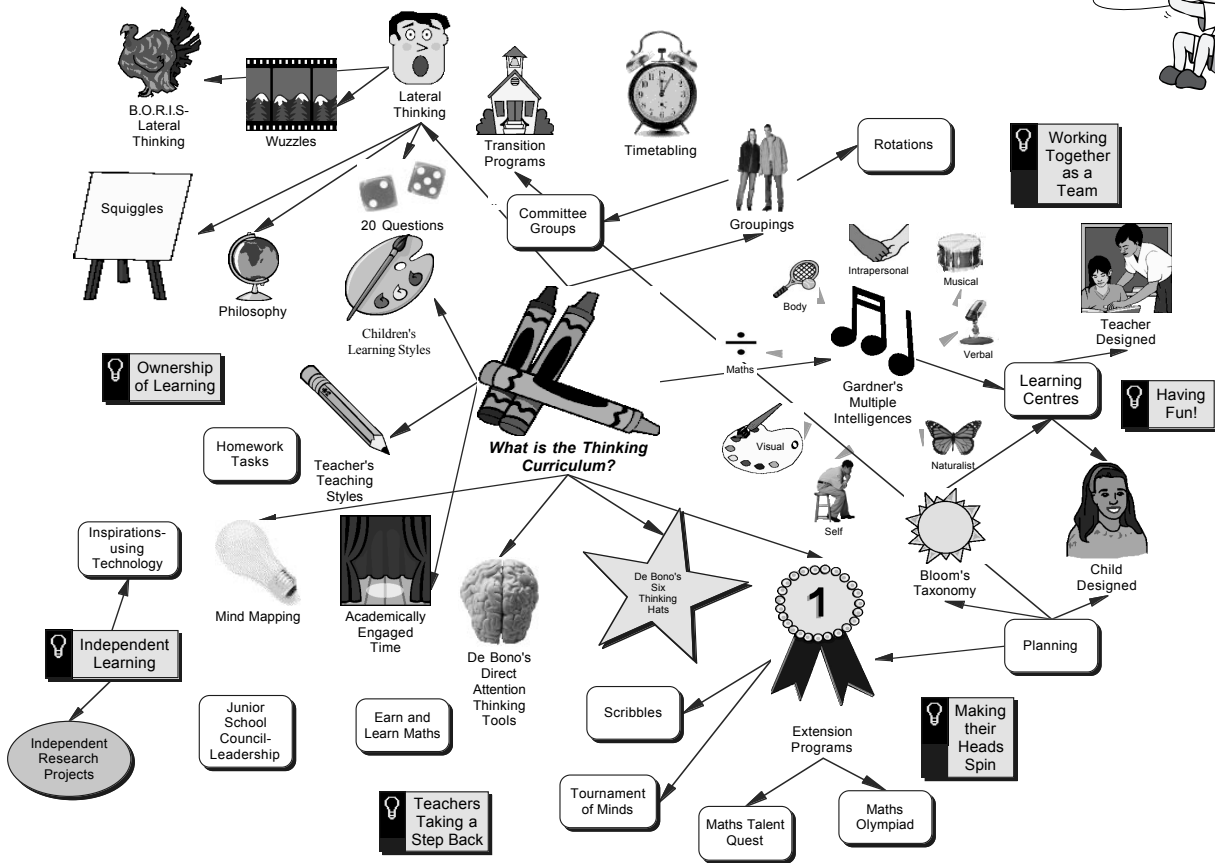
It uses such strategies as:

- B.O.R.I.S
- Learning Centres
- Lateral Thinking
- Mind Mapping
- Committee Grouping and Rotations
- Earn and Learn Maths

It also brings together the philosophies of:

- Working together as a team
- Ownership of learning
- Teachers taking a step back
- Independent learning
- Making heads spin
- Having fun.

While there are many strategies that comprise a Thinking Curriculum, the purpose of this book is to provide you with the tools necessary for you to begin your journey.



## Why the middle years?

The middle years of schooling are usually referred to as the period between years 5 and 9 and include the important transition between primary and secondary school. Some characteristics of learners and schooling within these years can include:

- a time of distinct physical, social and psychological development in children
- a time when morals and values are formed, reflected upon and challenged
- a time when egocentric thoughts and beliefs are developed into worldly knowledge and attitudes
- a time where children are developing an awareness of their role within their world and therefore an awareness of the role that education has in their future
- a time when young adolescents are able to take on further responsibility for themselves and independence in their learning
- a time when the people around children, including parents and teachers, have an important role in nurturing learning and creating a supportive environment
- a time when the step from primary to secondary school is often a social and emotional rollercoaster ride.

