

Rationale and Planning

WHAT ARE HABITS OF MIND?

Habits of Mind are thoughtful behaviors—what some have called “intellectual dispositions”—that allow us to cope with a complex and rapidly changing world. They are powerful tools we can use to intelligently navigate the moral, ethical, and spiritual challenges we encounter in our increasingly complex world. Habits of Mind also serve as guiding principles to promote successful lifelong learning both within the classroom and in the world beyond it. Habits of Mind can be used to

- Establish and maintain positive relationships, including appreciation of the unique perspectives and points of view evident in our culturally diverse world.
- Develop and use effective communication techniques and strategies, including active listening, consensus building, and interpersonal awareness.
- Apply flexible thinking strategies to complex situations requiring authentic problem solving and decision making.
- Demonstrate powerful character traits, such as self-reflection and resilience, that have been labeled 21st century skills for our global economy and increasingly interdependent world.



Thinking Flexibly

PURPOSE OF THIS TOOL

This tool focuses on the Habit of Mind called Thinking Flexibly. Effective, intelligent people have control. They are able to change their mind as they receive additional data. They look for unique ways to solve problems, and they have a well-developed sense of humor. They are good at seeing consequences of different options. Thinking flexibly means approaching a problem from a new angle using a novel approach.

Also called lateral thinking, this skill requires thinkers to have confidence in their intuition. They are able to tolerate confusion and ambiguity to a point. They can also let go of a problem, trusting that their subconscious can continue to apply creative strategies for solving it. As students explore this Habit of Mind, they learn to consider alternative points of view and different ways of solving problems. They learn that their initial ideas and strategies are not the only way, and that it is useful to be open-minded and creative.

The resources in this tool will enable students to

- Use flexible thinking to solve riddles.
- Consider alternatives to classic fairy tales.
- Use creativity to rewrite a classic fairy tale.
- Define the term *thinking flexibly*.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

The following list of resources and activities includes the suggested sequence for using this tool:

- Riddles worksheet (Motivating Activity)
- Twisted Fairy Tales worksheet (Core Activity)
- Thinking Flexibly Word Splash worksheet (Reflection Activity)

The activities and tasks included in this tool should take about 45 minutes to complete. You will need a clock or watch.

TIPS AND VARIATIONS

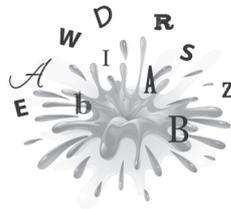
1. Motivating Activity

- Give students the Riddles worksheet, and tell them to work through each riddle to find the answer.

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision Word Splash

A word splash starts with one phrase. To complete it, create several different endings for the phrase to fully describe the meaning of the term. Use the space below to create a word splash for the term *thinking and communicating with clarity and precision*.



Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision means ...



Persisting



PURPOSE OF THIS TOOL

This tool gives students opportunities to find examples of persisting in the world around them. They draw analogies and create visual portraits, and then connect their understanding to literature. As students further apply the concept of persisting, they form a deeper understanding and begin to make it a true Habit of Mind.

The resources in this tool will enable students to

- Relate an animal or object to persisting in some way.
- Visually portray how the animal relates to persisting.
- Identify examples of persistence in literature.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

The following list of resources includes the suggested sequence for using this tool:

- Persisting Metaphors (Introductory Discussion)
- Persisting posters (Core Activity)
- Connections to Persistence (Reflection Activity)

The activities and tasks included in this tool should take about 45 minutes to complete. You will need the following materials:

- Poster board
- Markers

TIPS AND VARIATIONS

1. Introductory Discussion

- Write the following sentences on the board:
A cat is like the Habit of Mind called Persisting because it waits patiently for its prey. An army of ants is like the Habit of Mind called Persisting because they keep going and going to create an anthill.
- Tell students to look at these comparisons of animals to the Habit of Mind of Persisting. Ask: Do these comparisons make sense to you? Can you imagine the cat quietly waiting for the bird to land in the yard? Can you see a long row of ants slowly carrying bits of soil up a hill to create a mound?



Ideas for Schoolwide Implementation

The Habits of Mind offer the greatest potential when they are seen, heard, and felt across every aspect of school life. Achieving this goal requires strategic leadership. Suggestions for implementation approaches are described in this tool.

1. Outlining a Skills Vision for the School

Work with other school leaders to create a plan for widespread integration. Gather other school leaders together and begin by analyzing where you are and what you are hoping to achieve, using questions such as the following:

Step 1: What skills and dispositions do lifelong learners in the 21st century need?

Step 2: What skills and dispositions do you want your learners to have before graduating from your school?

Step 3: To what extent do you achieve this already? Where are the gaps?

Step 4: How could you fill in the gaps?

Then discuss whether and how a Habits of Mind program might help fill the gaps.

2. Having Schoolwide Thematic Assemblies

A great way of heralding the Habits of Mind across a school is to have a school assembly centered on one habit at a time. You could take a current event, a news story, a fairy tale, a parable, or an issue within the school and use it to outline the appropriate habit.

Example: Several years ago a principal introduced the Habit of Mind of Persisting in a whole-school assembly. The audience consisted of girls ages 11–18. The principal told the girls a story of a young French woman who had recently climbed to the top of Mt. Blanc. The principal described the incredible obstacles the girl faced during her climb. Despite these difficulties, the girl persevered and pushed forward, determined to reach her goal—and she was successful. The principal concluded the story by asking the girls to consider the “mountains” they themselves had climbed in the past and might climb in the future and by assuring them that if they persisted in their efforts they would reach their personal summits.

3. Using Other Methods to Deliver Consistent Messages

Look for opportunities to deliver consistent schoolwide messages both to students and staff. For example, discuss a Habit of Mind at every pep rally, or at regular times (e.g.,