



The TLC Newsletter

Trends in education



Critical Thinking in Community Colleges

Adapted from ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges (ED348128)

The issue of critical thinking is being addressed at all levels of education throughout the nation. Many of today's youth lack the basic skills to function effectively when they enter the workforce. A common complaint is that entry-level employees lack the reasoning and critical thinking abilities needed to process and refine information. With the modern work environment requiring more thinking and problem solving than the jobs of the past, community college teachers should emphasize critical thinking on their campuses, in their curricula, and in their teaching practices.

WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING?

Critical thinking has gone through a transformation from meaning the ability to distinguish the thought patterns in the work of others to a reflection on one's own beliefs, thoughts, and decisions. Critical thinking skills are (a) those diverse cognitive processes and associated attitudes, (b) critical to intelligent action, (c) in diverse situations and fields, (d) that can be improved by instruction or conscious effort.

TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING

Much of community college instruction is still delivered through lectures. The instructor stands in front of a classroom and recites facts and information, while students sit passively and soak up (or ignore) what the instructor is presenting. The goal of teaching, in this mode, is to facilitate students' rote memorization of facts from lectures and textbooks.

Instead, students must be encouraged to go beyond the memorization of a fact, and adjust that fact to a particular domain of thought. For students to gain critical thinking skills, teachers will have to change the way they present materials and change who does the presenting in their classrooms. They must learn to ask more open-ended questions (why, how, what if) and coach students through the process of learning how to answer them.

CRITICAL THINKING PROGRAMS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Some colleges have introduced campus-wide programs to implement critical thinking across the curriculum.

- At Miami-Dade Community College, the **Learning to Learn Subcommittee** was formed to help create a course for faculty in teaching-learning theory, specify student behaviors and teaching methods to promote critical thinking skills, and develop ways to include the learning-to-learn concept across all disciplines.

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Spring 2004 Hours

Monday - Wednesday:

8:30 - 5:00

Tuesday - Thursday:

8:30 - 6:00

Friday: By appointment

*Need some Teaching Tips
check out*

<http://tlccvc.org/teachingtips.htm>

The TLC offers the TAP

<http://tlccvc.org/tap.htm>

*Did you know that CVC
has a help network?*

<http://tlccvc.org/helpnetwork.htm>

*A link to **all** professional
development opportunities
at CVC is also located at*

<http://tlccvc.org>

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Editor..... Kate Burkes*

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- Similarly, Oakton Community College's (OCC) **Critical Literacy Project** is a year-long, faculty seminar designed and taught by OCC faculty, to teach volunteer participants ways of incorporating critical literacy skills into their courses. In addition to providing a theoretical context for course revisions, the seminar utilizes a workshop format during which participants rethink and revise at least one of their courses to incorporate critical literacy content and assignments.
- The Community College of Aurora, Colorado, involves faculty in a year-long **Integrated Thinking Skills Project**, in which interdisciplinary teams of faculty participate in critical thinking training, curriculum redesign, coaching, evaluation, and follow-up.

At other institutions, critical thinking is implemented through curriculum change. At Alverno College, eight abilities (i.e., communication, analysis, problem solving, valuing, social interaction, responsibility toward the global environment, effective citizenship, and aesthetic responsiveness) have been embodied in the curriculum to facilitate the intellectual development of students.

CONCLUSION

The ability to analyze problems and think critically will serve students well in today's complex world. Taking on the role of preparing and training students for this world will require many changes in teaching practices and learning styles, and in community college curricula and institutional mission.

This digest was drawn in part from "Critical Thinking: Educational Imperative, New Directions for Community Colleges, Number 77," edited by Cynthia A. Barnes.

The Vanguard Group

Community colleges, from their earliest days, have been regarded as the segment of higher education really focused on teaching and learning. Some colleges have been quite successful and have developed climates in which innovative strategies and practices are highly prized. The most notable have embedded innovation as a core value and have successfully made the pursuit of innovation an integral part of the institution's culture.

CVC has instituted a faculty innovation group (**The Vanguard Group**) to showcase new instructional ideas for the classroom. The group will provide a supportive environment for faculty to explore, develop, implement, and share ideas and experiences for the advancement of student learning. Emphasis will be placed on addressing pedagogical issues, effective use of technology, and building communities of learners.

This group will focus its initial experiments on how to use innovative strategies and make modifications to content delivery. Results will be presented that will focus on both the student and faculty perspective on the use of innovation in the classroom and how to best use new ideas to improve the student experience.

Please contact the Teaching & Learning Center for more information.

PowerPointers

Printing Options

PowerPoint can be used to print handouts, note pages, outlines and transparencies for over-head display.

Choose **File > Print...** from the menu bar. This will bring up the "Print" dialog box.

Choose one of these "**Print what**" options:

Slides: Prints each slide full-size for transparencies. *Be sure you have the correct type of transparency film for your printer. Some types of transparency film will melt during the printing process and may damage the printer.*

Handouts: Prints mini-sized versions of each slide. Also choose the number of slides per page. *The "3 slides per page" option is particularly useful because it displays small versions of your slides on the left half of the page, and leaves space for your students to write notes on the right side of the page.*

Note Pages: Prints one slide at the top of each page, with speaker notes at the bottom.

Outline View: Prints the text contents of the slides as displayed in the left pane of the PowerPoint screen.

You may also:

- Select print ranges
- Set number of copies
- Choose grayscale or black & white if desired.