



Our thinking ability is what makes us distinctively human. Yet we have no generally accepted approach to teaching thinking – and no common vocabulary to describe different ways of thinking.

This, when you think about it, is extraordinary. Imagine trying to teach or learn maths if we did not have commonly accepted terms such as add, subtract, multiply and divide.

Thinking Moves A – Z provides a vocabulary for thinking. The moves themselves are not new – we all use them in our learning and our life every day. But now we have a way of talking about how we think, and that gives us a means to work on improving the effectiveness of our thinking.



Thinking Moves A – Z supports the Education Endowment Foundation’s framework for metacognition and self-regulated learning . The EEF’s research has shown that effective strategies for metacognition and self-regulation:

- Have consistently high levels of impact;
- Are better when taught in collaborative groups;
- Require pupils to take greater responsibility for their learning;
- Can be particularly effective for low achieving and disadvantaged pupils.



Ahead

Predict - Aim

What will happen next?

“You do this sort of thinking everyday – when you wake up, you’re already thinking about what will happen that day. There are lots of ways to think ahead – you might be predicting what will happen next in a story, getting ready for something, setting yourself a challenge, or be looking forward expectantly to a special occasion.”

Predicting, preparing, intending and hoping are all ways of bringing the future into the present. Anticipating what will, or might, happen enables us to be ready when it does. Foretelling dangers enables us to minimise harm, whilst foreseeing opportunities enables us to maximise benefits.

In school, thinking ahead is crucial for forming targets, setting short-term goals for group work and preparing revision timetables. With young children, we do most of the thinking ahead for them, but getting them think ahead for themselves is important for developing independence. What’s needed in today’s schoolbag? How should I organize these notes so they will help me revise

How would we use it in class?

What would happen then?

This storytelling game thinks ahead through chains of predictions. Start with an imaginative scenario, for example, “What would happen if you were invisible?” Take the first suggestion offered, e.g. “You’d be lonely because nobody could see you.” Then ask, “What would happen then, because of that?” Continue the chain, recapping occasionally or breaking into pairs to generate new ideas. “Because of that” is the key element, as stories are not just random, they follow in a chain of consequences.

Won't, Could, Will

Get some predictions for what won’t happen next (this helps to narrow the domain of reasonable answers) and what could happen next. Then from the candidate “coulds” – four or five are enough – hear reasons for what students think actually will happen.

Project Projections

Projecting one’s thinking into the future is essential for a successful project. Next time there’s a group task that lasts 2 lessons or more, pause them after the first lesson and ask them “If you carry on like this, will you achieve what you want to achieve?” They can reflect on current progress and predict how they will fare against their deadline. They might need to change tack!

Applications in the curriculum

Music - later in a composition

ICT - ... in a robot's response an algorithm

RS - ...in a Hindu wedding



Zoom

Focus on - Survey

In: where should we focus?

Out: let's look at the big picture

“When directors are making films, they use different camera shots for different purposes. They might zoom in to show the sweat on the brow of a hero at a tense moment, or zoom out to show the full scale of an army ready for battle. In thinking, zooming in to small details and zooming out to get the bigger picture can both be important.”

Zooming In means giving closer attention to the small details. Zooming out shows things in proportion or perspective. The journal of a single soldier or a map of the front can both be illuminating in understanding a conflict. You can zoom in or out in time as well: what makes news today is rarely as important as trends that develop over years and decades.

Choosing the best level at which to investigate something is part of being a good enquirer. You might need to focus on a particular word to understand the question better, but you should also step back occasionally to weigh up how well your inquiry is going.

How would we use it in class?

S,M,H,D,W,M,Y,D,C,M

First solve the puzzle of what this series means – units of time from second to millennium. Then consider something broad and interesting – the life of an animal, or a nation. Think about what might be important in understanding it at each of these timescales – from respiration to natural selection, or from the signing of a treaty to the preservation of a language.

Yo-yo facilitation

Move from a particular question, such as “Was it right for the UK to go to war over Poland?” to a more general question, such as, “When is it right to go to war?” and back again, using the particular arguments to inform general principles and vice versa.

Gradual Picture Removal

Start with a small detail from a picture to get focused attention, and invite predictions as you gradually reveal the whole thing.

Half-time Oranges

At some point in a piece of work, ask learners to pause and consider which Thinking Moves they have made so far and which would be most helpful to do next. You could go a step further by asking which have been easiest and hardest, and activate some members of the class to act as Move Mentors for others.

Applications in the curriculum

Geography – Is salmon farming sustainable? – What makes something sustainable?

English – Is Jekyll and Hyde a typical gothic novel? / What makes a gothic novel?

Training

Our 1-day or 3-twilight Thinking Moves A-Z training will:

- Introduce you to the Thinking Moves A – Z;
- Show you how to build Thinking Moves into the main curriculum;
- Give you practical guidance on how to embed Thinking Moves in your school's overall approach to teaching and learning;
- Show you how to enrich inquiry based learning programmes, such as Philosophy for Children, by incorporating Thinking Moves.

Resources

To help you build [Thinking Moves A-Z](#) into your teaching and learning:

- [Thinking Moves A – Z Book](#): comprehensive guide to all 26 Thinking Moves, with associated games, exercises and other learning activities
- [Thinking Moves free and premium resources](#) on the DialogueWorks website
- Thinking Moves Curriculum: 20 plans for inquiry based lessons, covering the full range of Thinking Moves
- Thinking Moves Online: tips for incorporating Thinking Moves into all areas of the curriculum, and skill building webinars
- Thinking Moves Evaluation: survey based evaluation tools to monitor teacher and student progress with the adoption of Thinking Moves and impact on metacognition



Roger Sutcliffe, internationally renowned educator, P4C thought-leader and originator of Philosophical Teaching and Learning is the author of the Thinking Moves A - Z

Contact

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