

Six Thinking Hats

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“Wear your 6 Hats of Intelligence as often as you can, providing it's not windy and preferably not at the same time because you'll look ridiculous. And above all, have them blocked regularly.” ~ Dr. Edward De Bono, *Six Thinking Hats*

RATIONALE

As teachers we strive to teach our students the skills and strategies to be critical thinkers and active learners. When we consider the need for our students to be active, we must consider that active literacy is the “means to deeper understanding and diverse, flexible thinking” (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). Students that give their opinions, thoughts and ideas while also spending time questioning, connecting, debating, and inquiring are seen as engaged in their own learning and comprehension. While we may hear teachers telling students to “put on their thinking caps” or “get ready to think”, as a primer to set-up learning, it's important to ensure that students are given the tools to critically contemplate about what they are learning.

One way to assist students with thinking about a subject or topic from just one point-of-view is by using a thinking tool such as the *Six Thinking Hats*. The *Six Thinking Hats*

“thinking strategy” was developed by Edward de Bono (1987). This popular strategy is used to promote parallel thinking and to help students look at a problem or decision from many different perspectives. It is used in education and a variety of industries and businesses for training and decision making.

The *Six Thinking Hats*

strategy uses the metaphor of “put on your thinking hat” to mimic a change of thought processes as one puts on or takes off a hat. Each colored hat represents a specific area to focus on when focus to consider ranging from looking at topic for new ideas, from a neutral and objective perspective, while taking an alternative perspective, with opportunity in mind, while focusing on emotions, or to consider the overall issue at hand (de Bono, 1987).

Some benefits of the *Six Thinking Hats* strategy include:

1. Students are allowed to say things without risk of ridicule.
2. Awareness is created that there are multiple perspectives on a topic or problem.
3. Is a convenient mechanism for transitions.
4. Rules for the game of thinking are verified (see link below).
5. Will lead to more creative thinking.
6. Improves communication.
7. Improves decision making.

The use of the Six Thinking Hats model can benefit students' understanding of a topic, text, or issue as they consider alternate viewpoints and outlooks on the topic, text, or issue.

HOW TO USE THE STRATEGY

The Six Thinking Hats

can be seen as a parallel thinking model as it focuses on learning together through cooperative thinking. With this in mind the focus on the six hats provide students a way to discuss new ideas and considerations without an ego coming into play about who is right, wrong, first, or last (de Bono, 1987). The objective is not to argue your point in such as a debate, but to investigate all directions and sides of a topic.

The Six Thinking Hat Colors with Corresponding Questions

- **White Hat Thinking:** Neutral, think about the facts and details of a topic
 - What do I know about the topic?
 - What information am I missing regarding the topic?
 - What information about the topic do I want/need to know?
 - How do I get that information? What is relevant to me about the topic?

- **Red Hat Thinking:** Emotions, examine a topic through emotions and feelings
 - What is my reaction to this information?
 - How do I feel about this information right now?
 - How will others feel about it?

- **Green Hat Thinking:** Creative, use your imagination about a topic
 - How can this be worked out?
 - What else can we try?
 - Is there another solution I/we haven't considered?

- **Black Hat Thinking:** Critical, judgmental, think about the negative aspects of a topic
 - What is wrong with this?
 - Is it true?
 - Does it fit?
 - Will it work?
 - What are the dangers and problems?

- **Yellow Hat Thinking:** Optimistic, think about the positive aspects of a topic
 - What are the good points?
 - What are the benefits?
 - Why should it work?

- **Blue Hat Thinking:** Observer, reflect, think metacognitively, and try to grasp the big picture, summary of topic
 - What have I/we done so far?
 - What do I/we do next?
 - What decisions have been reached?

Planning for Instruction (Myers & Anderson, 2008)

At the beginning, before using the strategy, you may want to consider the following regarding planning for instruction:

- The hats may be used one after another in a sequence. They should not be used at the same time.
- Any hat may be used as often as you like. Students can use a hat during one part of the assignment and then move onto another hat, but still come back to their original hat, and other used hats, later on.
- Blue hats are often used before reading/assignment and after a reading/assignment.
- If this is your first time using the strategy you will want to model it using the entire class before moving into smaller groups.
- Remember to use a variety of texts with the strategy.
- Allow for time and practice so that students develop ownership of each type of "thinking".

Procedure

- Determine a topic that would offer the opportunity for students to apply multiple perspectives. Consider using a reading to go along with the topic.
- As the teacher, activate prior knowledge on the topic with the class. You may want to start with blue hat within the large group to go over what might already be known about the topic.
- Take time to model the strategy if this is the first time students are using it or if they need more support. Modeling is very important; model what kind of thinking is involved with each hat first and provide guided support as students apply what they learned.
- Pass out the six hat strategy sheet. While completing the reading assignment students should consider each hat's focus and write down notes, thoughts, and opinions they derived from the reading.
- In small groups have students listen to the thoughts each one has on the topic, each taking turns "wearing" the different hats. Each person should only wear a hat for approximately one minute dependent on group size and during that time they should discuss their findings. Remember, hats should be worn one at a time, but can be taken on and off as needed if something needs to be reviewed or reconsidered.
- As each participant gives their input on the topic, the facilitator of the group should take notes on a six hat handout.
- When everyone has given input, the group can come up with further questions to challenge and explore the ideas they've presented to each other. The blue hat should be revisited and a summary created.
- Students should then come together as a class to discuss the topic and findings.

Alternate Procedure

Instead of having each person and group do all the hats, have each group focus on just one hat and discuss deeply the implications their hat conveys.

Examples

Name: _____
Topic: _____

**Florida Online Reading
Professional Development**

6 Thinking Hats Strategy

 White hat - deals with facts and information	 Yellow hat - positive aspects	 Black hat - problems, pitfalls, and dangers
 Red hat - feelings, emotions, gut reactions	 Green hat - creative solutions	 Blue hat - summarize and organize the topic

Six Thinking Hat Blank Activity Sheet

Name: Elementary Example
Topic: The Little Red Hen

**Florida Online Reading
Professional Development**

6 Thinking Hats Strategy

 White hat - deals with facts and information	 Yellow hat - positive aspects	 Black hat - problems, pitfalls, and dangers
1. What does the little red hen find in the field? 2. What color did the wheat turn when it was ripe?	1. Why does the little red hen get to eat the bread? 2. Why should those who work hard get rewarded?	1. Why didn't the pig, dog, or cat get bread? 2. Why is it better sometimes a bad thing?
 Red hat - feelings, emotions, gut reactions	 Green hat - creative solutions	 Blue hat - summarize and organize the topic
1. How do you think the hen feels about being all of the work? 2. How might the other animals feel about not getting bread?	1. What could the pig, cat, and dog do to make the dog give them some bread? 2. How could the hen get the animals to help reap the next year's wheat to make bread?	1. Describe the events that happened for the little red hen to make the bread.

Six Thinking Hat Example-Elementary

Name: Secondary Example
Topic: Medical Practices in the Civil War

**Florida Online Reading
Professional Development**

6 Thinking Hats Strategy

 White hat - deals with facts and information	 Yellow hat - positive aspects	 Black hat - problems, pitfalls, and dangers
1. What do I already know about the medical practices of the Civil War? 2. What do I want to know about these practices? 3. How do I find more information about the medicine during this time?	1. What practices are there in these medical treatments? 2. How has today's medicine been influenced by the Civil War Era?	1. What's wrong with these practices? 2. What are the weaknesses? 3. What are the consequences of a lack of supplies?
 Red hat - feelings, emotions, gut reactions	 Green hat - creative solutions	 Blue hat - summarize and organize the topic
1. After learning about the meaning of medical professionals, how does this make me feel? 2. How will the soldiers feel after receiving medical attention during time of battle?	1. What alternatives were there to the medicine available? 2. What could medical professionals have done differently to take a step back?	1. What have we discussed so far? 2. What questions should I have after this reading? 3. What else could have been done?

Six Thinking Hat Example-Secondary

ASSESSMENT

There is a range of possible assessment when using the Six Hats thinking. Teachers may want to consider the outcome of the strategy such as new findings, an assigned report, or possibly an open project. The process of student use of the strategy, by observation, discussion, or meetings, may also be considered.

RESOURCES

Thinking and Learning

<http://www.in2edu.com/downloads/thinking/index.htm>

This site contains many PDF materials to use with conducting 6 Thinking Hats in your classroom or meetings. The posters would be great to use in a classroom setting to encourage critical thinking.

Put On Your (Six) Thinking Hats!

http://www.education-world.com/a_curr/voice/voice102.shtml

Want to move your students' thinking from the predictable to the profound? Educator Brenda Dyck describes a powerful thinking tool that will help students approach problem solving in innovative ways.

Seeing Integration from Different Viewpoints

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=816

This middle school lesson plan uses *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles. A post-reading group activity called The Five Decision Lenses, adapted from *Six Thinking Hats* by Edward de Bono, is used.

Free Resources for Teachers & Parents

http://debonoforschools.com/asp/fr_free_resources_intro.asp

Click here for a great variety of free resources you can use in your classrooms and to spark ideas for your own lesson plans using six thinking hats.

Turn a Sad Goodbye into a "Problemunity"

<http://www.middleweb.com/MWLresources/dyckarticle2.html>

A middle school teacher describes using six thinking hats in her middle school class to problem solve.

Dr Edward de Bono's six Thinking Hats and Numeracy

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_6932/is_3_11/ai_n28433380

Learn how a teacher, Anne Paterson, applies the popular teaching approach of "thinking hats" to mathematics education.

REFERENCES

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