



Cognitive Tools For Imaginative Leaders: Engaging & Expanding Imaginations In Your School Community

Expand Your Understanding

Engage With Affective Alertness

You are a *perfinker*. What is the emotional significance of the issue/topic? What transcendent quality* defines the topic/issue in some way? (*See handout)

Engage Broadly/Openly

How can the body's senses evoke emotion and contribute to learning about this issue/topic?

Engage Differently

How might someone else understand this topic? Approach the topic from a radically different point of view. Work to understand this other perspective.

Get Extreme

What are the extremes or limits of the issue or topic?

Excavate

What biases, perspectives, values does your understanding reflect? What is missing?

Envision

What vivid mental image exemplifies what you know and feel about an issue/topic? What "comes to mind"?

Identify Patterns/Rhythms/Processes

What patterns contribute to the meaning of the topic? What are the general causal chains, networks or systems that can be seen with in the topic? How does everything work together?

Generate Ideas

Seek The Story

What is the typical narrative or "story" on this topic? Reframe: What other unusual & effective narrative might be possible?

Play: Humor

What is unexpected, playful, or incongruous in the topic/issue?

Make Meaningful Metaphors

What metaphors will help engage emotions and reveal the meaning of the topic?

Play: Practice "What If'ing"

What do you wonder about? Use your sense of wonder to create a new ideational space! Set practicalities aside—engage in some *extreme* "what if'ing" about the topic/issue. Which of your questions might be explored in more detail?

Play: Change The Context & Perspective

How can examining your issue/topic from a different context or perspective illuminate it? E.g. consider the issue/topic from different stakeholders' perspectives? What might x person do/say suggest?

Generate Ideas cont.

Visualize The Topic/Issue

What vivid mental image exemplifies what you know and feel about an issue/topic? What would your ideal mental image for this issue/topic be?

Puzzle

What is puzzling about the issue/topic? Why? What ideas/concepts/examples don't fit into your understanding of the issue/topic? What do these anomalies reveal?

Engage Your Inner Rebel

What limitations do you face when dealing with this issue/topic? Which would you, ideally, like to surpass? Which rules are "breakable"?

Challenge "Right" Answers

What is the "best practice" in relation to this issue/topic? How might combining different ideas or perspectives create another "right" answer?

Engage Your School Community

Story-Shape Issues/Topics For Your Teachers/Staff

- What is the emotional significance of the topic/issue? (The story-form/narrative)
- What dramatic tension provides access to the topic/issue? (Abstract Binary Opposites)
- What transcendent quality lies within the topic/issue? (Heroic Qualities)
- What mental image reveals its importance (Mental Imagery)
- What analogy extends/conveys the meaning of the issue/topic? (Metaphor)
- How does it connect to someone's hopes/fears/passions? (Humanization Of Meaning)

Encourage Adults To Play

- Do some "extreme" brainstorm or "what-if'ing". Encourage unusual responses. (Extremes of experience & limits of reality)
- Make the familiar "strange"-- present the topic in a new light (Sense of wonder)
- Afford opportunities for exploration of what is incongruous or puzzling about the topic/issue. Ask for "unusual" combinations of ideas/solutions. (Incongruity/humor; Sense of mystery)
- How can hypothesis and experimentation be encouraged? (General Theories/Anomalies)

Encourage New Perspectives/Outlooks/insights

- Consider a topic/issue from someone else's perspective (Humanization of Meaning)
- Nudge your teachers/staff outside their comfort zones in thinking differently about an idea/topic. How can role-play unpack a topic and/or generate ideas and engagement? (Role-play)
- How can the topic be encountered in multiple ways? How might you provide your teachers a holistic opportunity to explore it?

That's right. No box.