

Learning how to think about information

Prompt for thinking creatively

C	Can I COMBINE these things?
R	Can I REVERSE these parts or processes?
E	Can I ELIMINATE this part of the process?
A	Can I ALTER something here?
T	Can I TWIST something around?
E	Can I ELABORATE or EXTEND some property here?

Prompt for thinking critically

C	What are the CONSEQUENCES of this?
R	What REASONS are given for this?
A	What ASSUMPTIONS are being made here?
M	What is the MEANING of this statement?
P	What is the other POINT OF VIEW ?

Prompt for problem solving

S	Can I SKETCH the problem?
T	Have I TALKED aloud the problem to myself?
U	Have I UNDERLINED key information, limits, goals?
B	Can I BREAK the problem up into smaller parts?
S	Can I use SIMPLER numbers, parts, examples?

These questions are a guide for students when they have found information, to help them form and reform the connections that link concepts together in the neural networks of the brain. Thinking about information involves us asking ourselves questions about it, and making mental connections. We need to teach the children these strategies, as very few of them will work them out for themselves.

The other useful tool to use in the question matrix, which is a visual prompt for helping students to create their probing questions about any topic. In this way the probing questions better thinkers use can be shared to improve the thinking of all students. For example, below is a possible prompt for teaching students to ask themselves questions about something they have read.

How can I	DEFINE this?	DESCRIBE this?		
What are some	PROPERTIES of this?	USES of this?	EXAMPLES of this?	
Why does it have this	PART?	MATERIAL?	SHAPE?	SIZE?
What is the	MEANING of this?	MAIN ISSUE here?	REASON for this?	OPPOSITE pnt of view?
How	RELIABLE is this writer?	BIASED is this?	RELEVANT is this point?	