Core Visible Thinking Routines

Circle of Viewpoints
Compass Points
See / Think / Wonder
Think / Pair / Share
Think / Puzzle / Explore
I Used To Think..., But Now I think...
What Makes You Think That?
CIRCLE OF VIEWPOINTS ROUTINE
A routine for exploring diverse perspectives

Brainstorm a list of different perspectives and then use this script skeleton to explore each one:

1. I AM THINKING OF …the topic … FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF…the viewpoint you’ve chosen
2. I THINK…describe the topic from your viewpoint. Be an actor--take on the character of your viewpoint
3. A QUESTION I HAVE FROM THIS VIEWPOINT IS…ask a question from this viewpoint

WRAP UP: What new ideas do you have about the topic that you didn’t have before? What new questions do you have?

Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?
This routine helps students consider different and diverse perspectives involved in and around a topic. Understanding that people may think and feel differently about things is a key aspect of the Fairness Ideal.

Application: When and where can it be used?
This routine can be used at the beginning of a unit of study to help students brainstorm new perspectives about a topic, and imagine different characters, themes and questions connected to it. It can be used after reading a book or chapter. Provocative topics and issues are encouraged and the routine also works especially well when students are having a hard time seeing other perspectives or when things seem black and white. The routine can be used to open discussions about dilemmas and other controversial issues.

Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?
After identifying a topic, ask students to brainstorm various viewpoints about this topic. This can be done solo, or as a class, but make sure to give the initial brainstorm enough time for students to really stretch and explore diverse ideas. If students need help thinking of different viewpoints, try using the following prompts:

- How does it look from different points in space and different points in time?
- Who (and what) is affected by it?
- Who is involved?
- Who might care?
After the brainstorm, ask each student to choose one of these viewpoints. Give them time to prepare to speak about the topic from that perspective and to embody the viewpoint using the script skeleton to structure what he or she says.

Once students have prepared their “characters”, the class should be ready to go around the circle and act out their various perspectives. Taking turns, ask students to speak briefly about their chosen viewpoint using the script skeleton. Invite them to stand up and use gestures and movement if necessary. The discussion at this point might move fairly quickly, capitalizing on the immediacy of the experience as each student goes through the script and presents a perspective. The array of responses will hopefully be broad and distinct, as each student should strive to produce a unique viewpoint. If some students choose the same character, encourage them to perform differently. For example, if several students choose the viewpoint of an explorer, one may be trying to seek out wealth through trade, another explorer might be adventurous or want to become famous. Ask them to raise different questions in order to elaborate their viewpoints.

Viewpoints connect to the idea of physical perspective taking and you may notice that your students interpret this literally at first by naming and describing what their characters see. While it is fine to help students get started with concrete examples, try to move your students to consider thoughts and feelings of characters, rather than describing a scene or object.

As students perform their viewpoint in the circle, their ideas can be recorded or written on the board so that a class list of perspectives is created. The last question of the routine asks students to think of a question they might have from their chosen viewpoint. Collect these questions or ask students to write them down and answer them as they think more about the topic as it is studied in class. Once everyone in the circle has spoken, the teacher can lead a discussion by asking: “What new ideas do you have about the topic that you didn’t have before?” and “What new questions do you have?
COMPASS POINTS
A routine for examining propositions

1. E = Excited
   What excites you about this idea or proposition? What’s the upside?

2. W = Worrisome
   What do you find worrisome about this idea or proposition? What’s the downside?

3. N = Need to Know
   What else do you need to know or find out about this idea or proposition? What additional information would help you to evaluate things?

4. S = Stance or Suggestion for Moving Forward
   What is your current stance or opinion on the idea or proposition? How might you move forward in your evaluation of this idea or proposition?

Purpose: Why use this routine?
To help students flesh out an idea or proposition and eventually evaluate it.

Application: When and where can I use this routine?
This routine works well to explore various sides and facets of a proposition or idea prior to taking a stand or expressing an opinion on it. For instance, the school may be considering the idea of a dress code, a teacher might present the class with the idea of altering the room arrangement, a character in a book might be confronted with making a choice, a politician might be putting forth a new way of structuring taxes, and so on.

Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?
The routine needs to be modeled with the whole group initially with responses recorded for the entire class to see. This enables students to build on each other’s ideas. You might record responses using the directions of a compass to provide a visual anchor. That is, draw a compass in the center of the board and then record responses corresponding to the appropriate direction: E, W, N, or S. It is generally easiest for students to begin with what is exciting or positive about the idea or proposition and then move to worrisome and need to know. Students might be asked to write down their individual stance or suggestion for moving forward after the initial group discussion.

You can also ask students to make an initial judgment or evaluation of the idea or proposition before doing the compass points and then ask them how their thinking has changed after discussion using the compass points routine.
SEE / THINK / WONDER
A routine for exploring works of art and other interesting things

- What do you see?
- What do you think about that?
- What does it make you wonder?

Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?
This routine encourages students to make careful observations and thoughtful interpretations. It helps stimulate curiosity and sets the stage for inquiry.

Application: When and where can it be used?
Use this routine when you want students to think carefully about why something looks the way it does or is the way it is. Use the routine at the beginning of a new unit to motivate student interest or try it with an object that connects to a topic during the unit of study. Consider using the routine with an interesting object near the end of a unit to encourage students to further apply their new knowledge and ideas.

Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?
Ask students to make an observation about an object – it could be an artwork, image, artifact or topic – and follow up with what they think might be going on or what they think this observation might be. Encourage students to back up their interpretation with reasons. Ask students to think about what this makes them wonder about the object or topic.

The routine works best when a student responds by using the three stems together at the same time, i.e., “I see..., I think..., I wonder .... “ However, you may find that students begin by using one stem at a time, and that you need to scaffold each response with a follow up question for the next stem.

The routine works well in a group discussion but in some cases you may want to ask students to try the routine individually on paper or in their heads before sharing out as a class. Student responses to the routine can be written down and recorded so that a class chart of observations, interpretations and wonderings are listed for all to see and return to during the course of study.
THINK PAIR SHARE ROUTINE
A routine for active reasoning and explanation

Think Pair Share involves posing a question to students, asking them to take a few minutes of thinking time and then turning to a nearby student to share their thoughts.

Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?
This routine encourages students to think about something, such as a problem, question or topic, and then articulate their thoughts. The Think Pair Share routine promotes understanding through active reasoning and explanation. Because students are listening to and sharing ideas, Think Pair Share encourages students to understand multiple perspectives.

Application: When and where can it be used?
Think Pair Share can be applied at any given moment in the classroom. For example, when approaching a solution, solving a math problem, before a science experiment, or after reading a passage or chapter of a book you may ask students to take a moment to think about a particular question or issue and then turn to their neighbor and share their thoughts. Sharing can also be done in small groups. Sometimes you will want to have pairs or groups summarize their ideas for the whole class.

Launch: What are some tips for starting and using the routine?
When first introducing the routine, teachers may want to scaffold students’ paired conversations by reminding them to take turns, listen carefully and ask questions of one another. One way to ensure that students listen to each other is to tell students that you will be calling on individuals to explain their partners thinking, as opposed to telling their own thoughts.

Encourage students to make their thinking visible by asking them to write or draw their ideas before and/or after sharing. Journals can also be useful. Student pairs can report one another’s thoughts to the class and a list of ideas can be created in the classroom.


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THINK / PUZZLE / EXPLORE
A routine that sets the stage for deeper inquiry

1. What do you **think** you know about this topic?
2. What questions or **puzzles** do you have?
3. What does the topic make you want to **explore**?

**Purpose:** What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine activates prior knowledge, generates ideas and curiosity and sets the stage for deeper inquiry.

**Application:** When and where can it be used?

This routine works especially well when introducing a new topic, concept or theme in the classroom. It helps students take stock of what they already know and then pushes students to identify puzzling questions or areas of interest to pursue. Teachers can get a good sense of where students are on a conceptual level and, by returning to the routine over the course of study, they can identify development and progress. The third question is useful in helping students lay the ground work for independent inquiry.

**Launch:** What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

With the introduction of new topic—for example, earth, leaves, fractions, Buddhism—the class can engage in the routine together to create a group list of ideas. Between each phase of the routine, that is with each question, adequate time needs to be given for individuals to think and identify their ideas. You may even want to have students write down their individual ideas before sharing them out as a class. In some cases, you may want to have students carry out the routine individually on paper or in their heads before working on a new area.

Keep a visible record of students’ ideas. If you are working in a group, ask students to share some of their thoughts and collect a broad list of ideas about the topic on chart paper. Or students can write their individual responses on post-it notes and later add them to a class list of ideas.

Note that it is common for students to have misconceptions at this point—including them on the list so all ideas are available for consideration after further study. Students may at first list seemingly simplistic ideas and questions. Include these on the whole class list but push students to think about things that are truly puzzling or interesting to them.
I USED TO THINK…, BUT NOW I THINK…
A routine for reflecting on how and why our thinking has changed

Remind students of the topic you want them to consider. It could be the ideal itself—fairness, truth, understanding, or creativity—or it could be the unit you are studying. Have students write a response using each of the sentence stems:

- I used to think…
- But now, I think…

Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?
This routine helps students to reflect on their thinking about a topic or issue and explore how and why that thinking has changed. It can be useful in consolidating new learning as students identify their new understandings, opinions, and beliefs. By examining and explaining how and why their thinking has changed, students are developing their reasoning abilities and recognizing cause and effect relationships.

Application: When and where can it be used?
This routine can be used whenever students’ initial thoughts, opinions, or beliefs are likely to have changed as a result of instruction or experience. For instance, after reading new information, watching a film, listening to a speaker, experiencing something new, having a class discussion, at the end of a unit of study, and so on.

Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?
Explain to students that the purpose of this activity is to help them reflect on their thinking about the topic and to identify how their ideas have changed over time. For instance:

When we began this study of _______, you all had some initial ideas about it and what it was all about. In just a few sentences, I want to write what it is that you used to think about _______. Take a minute to think back and then write down your response to “I used to think…”

Now, I want you to think about how your ideas about _______ have changed as a result of what we’ve been studying/doing/discussing. Again in just a few sentences write down what you now think about _________. Start your sentences with, “But now, I think…”

Have students share and explain their shifts in thinking. Initially it is good to do this as a whole group so that you can probe students’ thinking and push them to explain. Once students become accustomed to explaining their thinking, students can share with one another in small groups or pairs.
WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?
Interpretation with Justification Routine

1. What’s going on?
2. What do you see that makes you say that?

Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?
This routine helps students describe what they see or know and asks them to build explanations. It promotes evidential reasoning (evidence-based reasoning) and because it invites students to share their interpretations, it encourages students to understand alternatives and multiple perspectives.

Application: When and where can it be used?
This is a thinking routine that asks students to describe something, such as an object or concept, and then support their interpretation with evidence. Because the basic questions in this routine are flexible, it is useful when looking at objects such as works of art or historical artifacts, but it can also be used to explore a poem, make scientific observations and hypothesis, or investigate more conceptual ideas (i.e., democracy). The routine can be adapted for use with almost any subject and may also be useful for gathering information on students’ general concepts when introducing a new topic.

Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?
In most cases, the routine takes the shape of a whole class or group conversation around an object or topic, but can also be used in small groups or by individuals. When first introducing the routine, the teacher may scaffold students by continually asking the follow-up questions after a student gives an interpretation. Over time students may begin to automatically support their interpretations with evidence without even being asked, and eventually students will begin to internalize the routine.

The two core questions for this routine can be varied in a number of ways depending on the context: What do you know? What do you see or know that makes you say that? Sometimes you may want to precede students’ interpretation by using a question of description: What do you see? or What do you know?

When using this routine in a group conversation it may be necessary to think of alternative forms of documentation that do not interfere with the flow of the discussion. One option is to record class discussions using video or audio. Listening and noting students’ use of language of thinking can help you see their development. Students words and language can serve as a form of documentation that helps create a rubric for what makes a good interpretation or for what constitutes good reasoning.

Another option is to make a chart or keep an ongoing list of explanations posted in the classroom. As interpretations develop, note changes and have further discussion about these new explanations. These lists can also invite further inquiry and searches for evidence. Other options for both group and individual work include students documenting their own interpretations through sketches, drawings, models and writing, all of which can be displayed and revisited in the classroom.