

FOSTERING CREATIVITY, IMAGINATION AND CRITICAL THINKING IN GMGY THROUGH STORY BOOKS

SUPPORT MATERIALS - GMGY - STORY



CREATIVITY, IMAGINATION AND GMGY

GMGY can play a key role in fostering a child's creativity and imagination. The strand of story enables children to express themselves through engagement with the mediums of story (both written and spoken), poetry, art, drama and music. This support material aims to assist teachers in using story books to encourage the development of a child's creative and imaginative thinking skills.

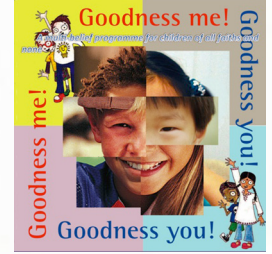
WHAT ARE CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION?

Imagination has been defined as a person's ability to move their perception and thought away from the existing 'what is' towards 'what was, what could have been, what one can try for and what might happen' (Singer & Singer, 1992). The definition of creativity is a more ambiguous and contested matter; however, Looney and Collard (2014) state that it is about the desire for self-expression and identity. Creativity and imagination are frequently used interchangeably and seldom differentiated in specific ways. For the purpose of this material imagination is foregrounded as the act of mind that generates creativity (Mendelowitz, 2014). However the two terms will be used interchangeably for the purposes of this material.



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HOW CAN I FOSTER CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION IN MY CLASSROOM?

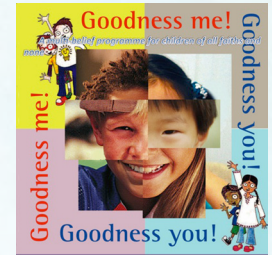
Looney and Collard (2014) highlight ways teachers can foster creativity. They state that a teacher can foster creativity by nurturing a child's creative dispositions. These dispositions include:

- Personality variables such as 'openness to experiences' (Amabile, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1987) curiosity, willingness to explore the unknown (Edwards, 2001) and ability to tolerate ambiguity (Barron, 1969).
- Cognitive and affective variables such as effort and persistence (Grant & Dweck, 2003), the ability to generate a variety of ideas (Atchley, Keeney & Burgess, 1999; Guilford, 1967; Torrance, 1966, 1972), to question and to reflect critically, and to synthesise ideas from diverse sources (Sternberg & Kaufman, 2010).
- Creative self-efficacy—i.e. belief in one's capacity to address challenges and to persist, as well as willingness to take intellectual risks—are particularly important (Bandura, 1997). Intrinsic motivation, engagement and intense focus are also important.
- Active participation in social networks has also been identified as important to enhance creative potential (Dawson, et al., 2011).



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IS THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT IMPORTANT?

'The teacher is essential in helping children find venues for creative expression and growth, and once teachers tap into their own creativity, they are better equipped to assist children with creative expression that is appropriate to their own developmental potentials.' (Miranda, 2015)

Yes, the classroom environment has a clear impact on a learner's creativity. Amabile (1990) cited in Looney and Collard (2014) noted that individuals were more creative in environments that encouraged exploration and independent work and that value originality—in other words, in settings that encourage open learning.

Teachers are also more likely to focus on learner creativity and teaching creatively in school environments that value and support them and encourage innovation and associated risks, and that allow them to develop their own creative dispositions (Looney & Collard, 2014).

HOW CAN I ENSURE THAT MY TEACHING FOSTERS CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION?

Research notes that disequilibrium (a loss or lack of balance) may spur creative processes. For example, Timperley (2007, cited in Looney & Collard, 2014) found that learners were most likely to benefit from creative processes that addressed significant problems or when confronted with new information that challenged their previous conceptions. This requires that the learner thinks in new ways and makes new connections with prior knowledge and beliefs.

When meaningful problem-solving is a regular feature of lessons and when children are given the time to think about solutions to newly-posed problems, opportunities for creativity and imagination are increased. Lessons that challenge a child's current perception or understanding of a concept can encourage children to think creatively.

Creative classrooms are child-centred and teachers take on the role of 'guide on the side' rather than 'sage on the stage'. This approach involves deep content knowledge, sophisticated pedagogy and openness to the unexpected. The change in your role as a teacher and in the dynamics of the classroom is potentially quite profound (Looney & Collard, 2014), but can be very rewarding to teachers trying to foster their pupils' creativity.

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HOW CAN SCHOOLS SUPPORT TEACHERS IN FOSTERING CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION?

Teachers will not be able to integrate creative teaching methods or nurture creativity in their regular practice without the support of their school leaders and colleagues (Looney & Collard, 2014).

Looney & Collard (2014) note that if schools are to support creativity, they will need to:

- Support teachers to take risks —teachers need permission to take risks. High-functioning schools challenge teachers, allow plenty of flexibility, and create a free flow between the school, families, communities and workplaces. They encourage teachers to be curious, imaginative and open, while also challenging them to improve students' wellbeing and attainment.
- Ensure that teachers have the necessary feedback and support to improve practice —feedback focused on areas for improvement, followed by effective professional development can have a positive impact on student attainment.
- Encourage collaboration among school leaders, teachers and creative professionals—teacher collaboration can have a strong impact on teacher learning and student attainment. Research points to the positive impact of collaboration with professionals beyond the school. This could extend to creative professionals working in technical areas, as well as artists. The main point is that schools need to be more permeable (be open to the broader community) if they are to also encourage learners to be curious and open to new experiences.



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HOW CAN I USE STORY TO FOSTER CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION?

'Engaging the imagination is not something to be attended to after the hard work of learning is completed, but is rather something that can make the tasks of control and basic instruction more stimulating to teacher and students.'
(Egan & Madej, 2010)

Storytelling is the oldest form of education. People around the world have always told tales as a way of passing down culture and beliefs, traditions and history to future

generations. Why? Stories are at the core of all that makes us human (Hamilton & Weiss, 2005). Amazingly, children are born knowing how to put every thought and feeling into story form (Hamilton & Weiss, 2005).

Picture books are often thought of as belonging only in infant classrooms, but they are perfect for introducing children of all ages to big ideas, critical engagement, and the notion of making meaning together through thinking and discussion (Leland, et al., 2013).

Critical thinking and Book talk encourage children to become critical thinkers and allows for critical reflection, one of the dispositions of creativity identified above. The approach is about fostering thinkers, speakers and readers who enjoy reading, discussion and dialogue. This [video](#) outlines how to set up Critical thinking and Book talk in your classroom.

This approach can be used in the strand of Story to foster creativity. One way of organising this activity is as follows:

1. Choose a period of 45-60 mins when you are reasonably sure of minimal interruptions in the classroom.
2. Have the children sit in a circle in a quiet space, e.g., the library or a space in the classroom cleared of furniture. The teacher also sits in the circle and is in role as a teacher while the story is being read to the children.
3. After reading the story, the teacher takes on the role of class member in the circle for the remainder of the session.
4. It is important that the teacher maintains this role within the circle and allows the discussion to flow, only speaking when it is his/her turn. It is also important to resist the temptation to turn the discussion into 'work' by following it with 'an activity'. Allow the discussion to be simply that—a discussion.

By allowing children time to reflect upon the story and express their thoughts, creativity will be fostered within the lesson.

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HOW DO I CHOOSE A SUITABLE STORY?

It is important to choose a story which will challenge the children's previous understanding of a concept.

When choosing a picture book, ask yourself:

- What could I do with this book?
- Is the context of the story familiar to the children?
- What are the underlying topics which might provide a stimulus for critical thinking and critical reflection?
- Can the children make connections between the story and/or images and their own experiences?
- Does the book present a different viewpoint on some issue?

Initially, the teacher might choose a suitable book. Subsequently, if a child presents a book and suggests it would be a good book for discussion, you can evaluate it and consider what can be garnered from it in terms of concepts for analysis or issues for discussion.

HOW CAN I FOSTER CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION IN THE STRAND OF THINKING TIME?

Thinking time encourages children to think about big ideas, open ended questions and abstract concepts in a safe and respectful environment. Once again the teacher participates as a facilitator of dialogue. When engaging in Thinking time, the children build critically and constructively on what the other party has said, thus offering suggestions and statements for joint consideration. Arguments and counterarguments are justified, and alternative solutions and perspectives are offered.

The following strategies could be used by the teacher during Thinking time in order to foster creativity;

1. Choose discussion topics that challenge childrens' previous understanding of a concept.
2. Allow children to select discussion topics that interest them.
3. Encourage respectful debating and social interaction between peers.
4. Incorporate ambiguity into the discussion by offering alternative viewpoints.
5. Allow further research of topics or concepts that arise in order to enable interests to develop.

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