

DESCRIBING 16 HABITS OF MIND

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By definition, a problem is any stimulus, question, task, phenomenon, or discrepancy, the explanation for which is not immediately known. Thus, we are interested in focusing on student performance under those challenging conditions that demand strategic reasoning, insightfulness, perseverance, creativity, and craftsmanship to resolve a complex problem. Not only are we interested in how many answers students know, but also in knowing how to behave when they DON'T know. Habits of Mind are performed in response to those questions and problems the answers to which are NOT immediately known. We are interested in observing how students produce knowledge rather than how they merely reproduce knowledge. The critical attribute of intelligent human beings is not only having information, but also knowing how to act on it.

A "Habit of Mind" means having a disposition toward behaving intelligently when confronted with problems, the answers to which are not immediately known. When humans experience dichotomies, are confused by dilemmas, or come face to face with uncertainties--our most effective actions require drawing forth certain patterns of intellectual behavior. When we draw upon these intellectual resources, the results that are produced through are more powerful, of higher quality and greater significance than if we fail to employ those patterns of intellectual behaviors.

Employing "Habits of Mind" requires a composite of many skills, attitudes cues, past experiences and proclivities. It means that we value one pattern of thinking over another and therefore it implies choice making about which pattern should be employed at this time. It includes sensitivity to the contextual cues in a situation which signal this as an appropriate time and circumstance in which the employment of this pattern would be useful. It requires a level of skillfulness to employ and carry through the behaviors effectively over time. It suggests that as a result of each experience in which these behaviors were employed, the effects of their use are reflected upon, evaluated, modified and carried forth to future applications

HABITS OF MIND ATTEND TO:.

- ● **Value:** Choosing to employ a pattern of intellectual behaviors rather than other, less productive patterns.
- ● **Inclination:** Feeling the tendency toward employing a pattern of intellectual behaviors.
- ● **Sensitivity:** Perceiving opportunities for, and appropriateness of employing the pattern of behavior.
- ● **Capability:** Possessing the basic skills and capacities to carry through with the behaviors.
- ● **Commitment:** Constantly striving to reflect on and improve performance of the pattern of intellectual behavior.

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When we no longer know what to do we have come to our real work and when we no longer know which way to go we have begun our real journey. The mind that is not baffled is not employed. The impeded stream is the one that sings.
Wendell Berry

What behaviors are indicative of the efficient, effective problem solver? Just what do human beings do when they behave intelligently? Research in effective thinking and intelligent behavior by Feuerstein (1980), Glatthorn and Baron (1985), Sternberg (1985), Perkins (1985), and Ennis

(1985) indicates that there are some identifiable characteristics of effective thinkers. These are not necessarily scientists, artists, mathematicians or the wealthy who demonstrate these behaviors. These characteristics have been identified in successful mechanics, teachers, entrepreneurs, salespeople, and parents—people in all walks of life.

Following are descriptions and an elaboration of 16 attributes of what human beings do when they behave intelligently. We choose to refer to them as Habits of Mind. They are the characteristics of what intelligent people do when they are confronted with problems, the resolution to which are not immediately apparent.

These behaviors are seldom performed in isolation. Rather, clusters of such behaviors are drawn forth and employed in various situations. When listening intently, for example, one employs flexibility, metacognition, precise language and perhaps questioning.

Please do not think that there are only sixteen ways in which humans display their intelligence. It should be understood that this list is not meant to be complete. It should serve to initiate the collection of additional attributes. Although 16 Habits of Mind are described here, you, your colleagues and your students will want to continue the search for additional Habits of Mind by adding to and elaborating on this list and the descriptions.