

## THE CREATIVE TEACHER by Bonnie Tsai

A creative person is curious, experimental, adventurous, playful, and intuitive. In our society, we tend to view certain kinds of people, like artist, scientists, and inventors as being creative. But what about teachers? We are all born with creativity, and if you believe you are a creative person you will find ways of using this creativity in your teaching. All it takes is an inquisitive mind, a willingness to take risks, and the drive to make things work—three qualities that everyone has.

Take a few moments to think about a time when you reached a goal or accomplish something when the situation seemed hopeless. You were stumped, trapped, or caught in a bind you'd never experienced before. But you found a way. That is creativity.

Maybe you even had the experience of inventing something or coming up with an idea only to find it already exists in a store or a book. This just means that some clever person just took your idea a few steps further.

Thinking creatively almost always comes out of what you already know or from knowledge borrowed from other people and we think, "Oh, I've been doing that for years" or better still, "I can change that part and it will be perfect for my group."

Recognize that all your novel little solutions are the result of real creativity, and give yourself a little pat on the back. You'll start to feel more confident in your ability to explore and come up with the ways and means, which will make your teaching more satisfying to yourself and to your students.

The real secret of being creative is to first of all remember your past successes, both large and small. These are valuable resources inside of you, because if you did it once you can do it again. Remind yourself of that when you are looking for a new way to do something.

Also remember that failure leads to success. Many great inventors and scientists lived through countless failures before they achieved success. So be willing to take risks even if you get it wrong. This is often the necessary path to getting it right.

You can train yourself and your students to be creative through playing mental games. Your brain like other parts of your body needs to be kept in good condition. Here are some things you can do:

- Think of new uses for old things.
- Invent metaphors to describe something to someone.
- Listen to Baroque music. These composers used very specific beats and patterns that automatically synchronize our minds and bodies. It thus allows us to work in a state of harmony conducive to creative thinking.
- Do crossword puzzle and other word and number games.

- Look at scenes from everyday life and make up stories that could lead to them. The newspaper or just personal observation will provide you with a rich source of material.
- Don't forget to listen to your right brain speaking to you. Many times our dreams and fantasies are the product of our subconscious mind working on the solutions to a problem. Listen to them even if they seem farfetched, because wild dreams can lead to innovative solutions. This is the basis of good brainstorming.
- Play! Let the inner child come out and provide fresh insight.

People learn in proportion to how fully they use their senses. You learn through your senses-by seeing things, hearing them, and feeling things, you even learn by smelling and tasting. One of the most useful ways to engage the senses and teach learners how to think is through the arts.

Firstly all art requires thinking. Art must be thought through. Secondly, thoughtful looking at art has instrumental value. It provides an excellent setting for the development of better thinking skills. We can learn to use our minds better through looking at art. Art assists us in a natural way. Looking at art invites, rewards and encourages a thoughtful tendency, enthusiasm, and commitment. This is because works of art connect to the personal and social dimensions of life with strong affective overtones. So, better than most situations, looking at art can build some very basic thinking dispositions.

Here are some important features of art, which make it a strong creative learning context.

- It provides sensory anchoring. It stimulates and moves students to want to speak.
- It has instant access. Any point of discussion can be instantly checked through asking questions like, "What do you see in the picture that supports what you are saying?" or by simply asking students to look more closely.
- Art is made to draw and hold attention. This means that you can encourage a prolonged reflection.
- Although we tend to think of art as visual, looking at art recruits many kinds of cognition-visual processing, analytical thinking, posing questions, testing hypotheses, verbal reasoning and many more.
- Multi-connectedness. Art typically allows and encourages rich connections with social themes, personal anxieties and insights. This reveals something of why art is so special and all of these are skills that are needed in today's world. It is not often that we can learn so much in the presence of something as compelling as art. Art is an opportunity.

Finally, thinking of a lot of different ways to do the same thing is an important ingredient of creativity. Take Mozart as your inspiration. He found twelve variations on *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*. How many different ways can you find to go with your favorite classroom activity?