

Creative Problem-Solving Curriculum

Lesson 5

Cultivating Creativity

Lesson Overview:

Students will continue exploring ways to successfully approach creative problem solving by cultivating their own curiosity skills. They will complete the following steps: 1) screening the Cultivating Creativity video and considering how creativity impacts problem solving success 2) researching a creative role model and create a biography or creative response to their learning 3) challenging themselves to a 2-4 week creativity cultivation commitment.

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Creative Problem Solving

Lesson 5 – Cultivating Creativity

Lesson Overview:

During this lesson, you will guide students to consider how creativity is a skill that can be cultivated rather than a talent that one is born with. Students will investigate creative role models and use their learning to inspire their own creative product. You will then challenge students to commit to a 2-4 week project to cultivate their own creative skills and confidence.

Time Frame:

2 to 3 hours

Out of class time spread over 2 to 4 weeks

Optional 1-2 class periods to share out at end.

Core Concepts:

- Creativity is a critical skill for successful problem solving.
- Creativity is not an inherent talent, but is a skill that can be developed.
- Practicing creativity leads to more creativity.

Lesson Objectives:

In this lesson students will:

- Consider how creativity is a critical skill that can be learned, or developed, for problem solving.
- Research a creative person and then respond to what they learn through the creation of a product that either shares about or is inspired by the creative individual.
- Complete a creativity challenge in which they commit to a 2-4 week plan to push their creative boundaries, practice creative skills, and build creative confidence.

Materials Needed:

- [Lesson 5 Video: Cultivating Creativity](#)
- Two sheets of paper with the word “Agree” printed on one and the word “Disagree” printed on the other. Hang one sign on one side of the classroom and the other sign on the opposite side of the room.
- Photocopies of the Cultivating Creativity Recommendations Sheet on the last pages of this lesson plan.

Part 1:**Step 1: Activate Prior Knowledge and Engage****(10 minutes)**

Ask students to consider their problem-solving experiences in Lesson 2 (Design Thinking) and Lesson 3 (Applying Design Thinking to Your Life). Have them write down a list of all of the times during one or both Design Thinking processes in which they had to use creativity or wished that they had been more creative.

Next, point out the two signs that you have posted on opposite ends of the room. One should say “Agree” and the other “Disagree”. Ask students to stand up and place themselves along an imaginary continuum between the two signs according to how they feel about the following statements. Read each statement individually and wait for all students to situate themselves between the signs before moving to the next statement. Allow students to observe how the class arranges itself for each statement, but it is not necessary to leave time for discussion.

STATEMENTS:

- I am a creative person.
- I have always been creative.
- Brainstorming is usually really fun to me.
- I am usually the most creative person on a team when we have to work in groups.
- I have never really been that creative.
- Creative people amaze me with their ideas and the things they create.
- I wish I could be as creative as others.
- My family just isn't really that creative.
- Some people are just born creative.

Step 2: Present the Cultivating Creativity video**(15-20 minutes)**

Show the video and then facilitate a discussion after the viewing. You may wish to solicit questions and comments from the students first. You can use these suggested discussion points to deepen the conversation and student thinking:

- What is your initial reaction to the idea that creativity is a skill rather than an innate talent?
- Is there a difference between thinking of creativity as a skill or as a mindset? Explain your ideas.
- After watching the video, would you change any of your responses to the statements in the Agree/Disagree activity? How so?
- What does creativity have to do with problem solving?
- What could you (would you?) do if you could become as creative as you wished to be?

Step 3: Get Inspired**(30-60 minutes – can be assigned as homework)**

Explain to the students that surrounding themselves with creative inspiration can lead to greater creativity and motivate us to work towards greater creativity. Ask students to choose a creative person that they admire or about whom they are curious. They may want to look to inventors, entrepreneurs, or artists of all kinds. Students conduct a brief internet search and then compile what they learn about their creative individual into a creative response that is either inspired by or about the individual.

Possible works could include:

- Write a one-page creativity biography, essay, short story, or poem.
- Record or write a song.
- Draw, paint, photograph or otherwise create a visual art piece.
- Prepare a spoken word performance.
- Choreograph a dance.
- Create a video

This project is not intended to take a long time. Projects may be assigned as homework but should not take up more than an hour of the students' time. The idea is to allow creative individuals to inspire creative impulses in the students. Perfection and even completion are not the goals.

Step 4: Share Your Inspiration**(45-60 minutes)**

Ask each person to share their creative work from Step 3. For students who are hesitant to speak in front of the group, encourage them to be brave, but also offer alternatives. For example, they could ask a friend to read their written work aloud or video record their spoken word performance so that they only have to show the video rather than perform in front of the group.

If time allows, lead a brief discussion to reflect upon the experience. What did students learn or gain from their research and creative work? Make sure to keep the focus on the creative individuals that were researched and the process of creation that the students completed. Stay away from critiquing student work.

Part 2: Push Your Creative Boundaries**Step 1: Review Ideas for Increasing Creativity****(15 minute)**

Ask students to read through the Cultivating Creativity Recommendations Sheet included at the end of the lesson.

After reading the Recommendations Sheet, have students work in small groups to share out the ideas

from the sheet that they find to be the most interesting or compelling. Groups can also suggest additional ideas that they have for practicing and cultivating creativity. Ask groups to share out any additional ideas with the larger class and record a list in a visible place in the classroom.

Step 2: Challenge Yourself!**(10 minutes)**

Ask the students to make a commitment to try one of the recommendations from the list provided or suggested by the class. This commitment should be a stretch. Because students may be starting from different skill levels and different comfort levels, students should choose something that will challenge them to create in ways that are new, and maybe even slightly uncomfortable. It is okay for students to work together on this commitment. For example, a group might form to complete an Odyssey of the Mind project together. Or perhaps the entire class would like to start their own #The100DayProject and post their daily work on Instagram or another platform.

Students should write down their commitment and turn it in for your review before starting the work.

SCOPE: Students should choose something that will take between 2 and 4 weeks of daily or weekly investment, although, the 2-4 weeks could be the beginning of a bigger commitment. For example, students may start the 100 Day Project and continue beyond the first 2 to 4 weeks.

Step 3: Reflection**(30 minutes)**

After completing their Creativity Commitment, ask students to fill out the Lesson 5 Worksheet to reflect upon their experience.

Optional: Share Out**(1-2 class periods)**

Ask students to share their experience, outcomes, physical products, and/or reflections in short presentations to the class.

Cultivating Creativity Recommendations Sheet

There is good news for those who consider themselves “creative types” *and* for those who don’t: creativity is not an inherent trait or talent that some people are born with and others are not. Instead, creativity is better seen as a skill that can be learned and developed. Or better yet, think of creativity as a mindset that embraces innovation and ambiguity. In creativity, there are no right or wrong answers. The opportunities and possibilities are limitless.

What does that mean for you? With curiosity, imagination, and practice you can activate your creative mindset and *become* more creative! Here are a few ways for you to do exactly that!

Invite Creativity In

- Surround yourself with creative inspiration. Listen to different kinds of music. Visit art museums. Read science fiction and fantasy novels ([Here](#) are a few books to start with). Explore nature. Learn more about creative people like inventors, entrepreneurs, and artists. Experiencing the creativity of others can inspire you to try new things, too.
- Explore cultures that are different from your own. Creativity is expressed differently across cultures, so learning about different ways of self-expression and problem-solving can open up your own understanding of what it means to be creative and all of the infinite possibilities. Learn from one another.

Cultivate Creativity - Mindsets

- Be curious! Investigate the things that make you curious. Seeking out different kinds of information can give you a broad understanding of the world from which to draw when you are creating. Exploring curiosities early in the problem-solving process has even been shown to lead to greater creativity and originality in solutions.
- Reframe mistakes. Give your failures a positive spin and think of them as steps along the way towards creative success. Sir Ken Robinson, a world-renowned education expert once said, “If you’re not prepared to be wrong, you’ll never come up with anything original.” Take on a mindset that frames mistakes as opportunities... and let your creative ideas flow.

Practical Ideas – Sometimes you need to just jumpstart your creativity. Here are just a few practical ideas for you to try.

- Walk. A [Stanford study](#) has shown that *walking* while brainstorming can result in greater creativity!
- Take a break. If you are trying to be creative and feel like the ideas just are not flowing, take a

nap, go for a walk, distract yourself with something mundane like washing the dishes. Sometimes our best ideas come when we let our brains wander and relax.

- Start an Idea Notebook. We all have flashes of inspiration when an amazing idea comes to us. Write them down in your notebook before you forget them. You may be surprised to see how many unique ideas you really have. Perhaps you'll realize that you are more creative than you give yourself credit for.

Just Do It! – Flexing your creative muscles will make them stronger, so challenge yourself to *be* creative. Do it for fun! Pick something that you think you will enjoy and don't worry about perfection or what you think your creative work is *supposed* to be like. Here are a few ideas.

- Take an art class
- Do a science fair project
- Participate in a design challenge competition such as [Odyssey of the Mind](#).
- Write a poem, a short story, an essay, or even a novel
- Start a blog, vlog, or podcast
- Play! Make up a game and play it with friends. Dust off the old building blocks or Legos.
- Turn on some music and dance
- Create a [vision board](#)
- Challenge a group of friends to [#The100DayProject](#).
- Start a [TED-Ed club](#) or event where you can share, discuss, and celebrate creative ideas.

What else can *you* think of?