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Thinking: The Foundation of Critical and Creative Learning in the Classroom

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Boostrom, R. (2005). *Thinking: The Foundation of Critical and Creative Learning in the Classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press. ISBN 0-8077-4569-3. \$44.00

In *Thinking* author Robert Boostrom writes perhaps more about non-thinking and its pervasiveness in American classrooms than about thinking. He suggests how thought and intellectual engagement are discouraged by driving students to pass standardized measures of their education.

The book is divided into three main sections, each of which contains two chapters. The sections present the teaching or learning activities of defining, telling, and believing. In the first section, Boostrom discusses how thinking and knowledge have been defined and categorized. The second section covers the telling of stories, or how teachers convey information in the classroom. The third section discusses searching for truth and meaning, particularly in personally relevant ways. Beginning with such broad concepts could signal a lack of focus, but this book does not wander. Boostrom uses his concepts as frames for concise discussion of thinking and non-thinking. Defining, telling, and believing are presented as paradoxes: they are necessary parts of classroom teaching and learning, they restrict thinking or even allow students to *not* think, and yet they can and should foster the creative thinking that should be a desired outcome of education.

The ideas of philosophers and scholars familiar to those who study education pepper Boostrom's text. Among others he quotes Plato, John Dewey and Bertrand Russell. He discusses Bloom's taxonomy, E. D. Hirsch's ideas on cultural literacy, and Howard Gardner's concept of multiple intelligences. Boostrom deftly examines this work on the nature and aims of education to illustrate his points and paradoxes. He also presents useful ideas on plagiarism in light of the vast amount of information available online to students. For example, how does instruction on citing and paraphrasing coincide with learning and thinking?

Boostrom does not provide a template for bringing creative thinking into the classroom so much as encourage or challenge teachers to examine critically their methods and practices in hopes that their students will be enabled to do the same – that is, that the students will be enabled to think, to really think, as they learn. This book would benefit teachers at any level of education. It employs examples from the early grades through graduate school. It would serve well as reading in courses for pre-service teachers, and in continuing education courses. Any teacher who seriously pondered the implications presented in Boostrom's book, and brought that thought into the classroom consistently, would become more adept at increasing students' abilities to learn.

Boostrom, states, "Thinking does not settle anything; it unsettles"(137). The book has its unsettling aspects, too. It questions much of today's classroom activity. Boostrom challenges educators and those who set education policy to consider again fundamentals. *Thinking* could be of great benefit to students and to society if it was carefully read by administrators, legislators, school board members, engaged parents – any decision makers - who participate in driving schools ever further into a standards-based maelstrom of stifling conformity.

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Catherall, P. (2005). *Delivering E-Learning for Information Services in Higher Education*. London: Chandos. ISBN 1-84334-088-7. \$59.95.

This book covers the whole range of e-learning, from a broad introduction and summary of virtual and managed learning environments, training and support requirements, accessibility, other online learning tools to quality assurance and maintenance. It consists of eight chapters which seem to blend and overlap in content much like its subject matter.