Getting Started With Building Thinking Classrooms: Part 2
Hand2Mind Webinar

Where do we find tasks?
- The world doesn't need more tasks. Tasks are out there. They're like pebbles on the beach.
- There are different types of tasks and all tasks are thinking tasks until we suck the thinking out of them by pre-teaching them or using them in the wrong sequence.
- Our textbooks are dripping with great thinking tasks.
- We need a handful of non-curricular tasks first.
    - Kids don't feel like they're doing math.
    - They are fun and playful.
    - They are also nice to use after a long break to reboot the culture.

How do I balance it all?
- Don't drown them in direct teaching. Plan on the assumption that the students know something. Launch the lesson on the assumption that they don't.
- Find your efficiencies. Student autonomy is one of the greatest efficiencies.
    - Students should help each other and steal tasks from one another.
    - Foster autonomy. The smartest person in the room is the room. The less demand there will then be on the teacher.
    - Students are knowledge keepers and knowledge makers.
- If you answer a question for one group and another group asks the same question, send that group to the first group for the answer.
- Trying to prepare for consolidation requires seeding, selecting, and sequencing if you're going to do a gallery walk.
    - This works best when you have a divergent task. Every group does something different and there's value in lookin at different group's work.
    - If the task is convergent, the gallery walk is not the best. Teacher scribe is better for this. Pay attention to how far the class gets in order to know what three tasks will work during consolidation.
- When monitoring for assessment purposes, be a hunter, not a gatherer. Pick three kids and gather data on them.

How do we combine BTC with required common assessments?
- Paper and pencil tests are efficient ways to gather data. It's not the test that is the problem. It's what we do with the data.
- Gather data rather than points. Don't record it as an event. Record it as data.

How can teachers strategically plan keep thinking questions?
- Decide what kind of question the student is asking.
- Keep thinking questions are usually clarifying or extension questions.
- It's not so much about anticipating the question. It's more about spotting the question.

- Try not to give away too much. Give them the smallest thing. You can always give them more if you have to.

What about students who need constant validation?
- There's a huge difference between a student having the answer and knowing it must be the answer.
- If students are hiding their work and complaining that others are stealing the work, most likely the teacher gives too much praise. Praise becomes the currency. Students don't want to share work, because they might not receive the praise for their work if they share.
- Praise something you want to see them do again tomorrow. Praise their perseverance or how they shared the marker or how they got help from someone else.
- Try not to be the keeper of the knowledge, because then the students will stop being the keepers of the knowledge.

What recommendations do you have for doing BTC in other subjects?
- Random groups don't change when doing ELA vs. math. When working with technology, groups of two are better.
- Most practices are the same no matter the subject area: Vertical whiteboards, knowledge mobility, launching quickly, being verbal, etc.
- What changes is what constitutes a thinking task in other subject areas.
- Six learning activities - think about how to turn each one into a thinking task
    - Deductive - students use logic and reasoning to extend understanding
    - Analytic - give students something to analyze
    - Exploratory - similar to analytic but students get data themselves
    - Creative
    - Apprenticeship
    - Factual - it's inherently not a thinking activity (to turn this activity into a thinking task, try to heighten curiosity through intuition, instinct, and prior knowledge)

How often should you randomize groups for different subjects?
- Building Thinking Classrooms is research based, but you have to decide what's best for you.
- What the research shows is that when students have been in the same group for about 50 - 70 minutes, their roles become static.
- Dynamic roles are very powerful. Students don't know what their role should be, because then they assume roles that they wouldn't normally assume. They start thinking, because they're not just following.
- Groups should change every 60-ish minutes, which is easy to do at the secondary level.
- At the elementary level, randomize every time they return to the room or randomize at the white boards but have more stable groups when at seats.

Are thinking tasks and thin sliced tasks the same or are thin sliced tasks designed to check for understanding?
- Thin sliced is a sequence of curricular tasks that get progressively harder.
- Students are always feeling capable and willing to take on a challenge. The balance between ability and challenge is perfect.
- If we give the students the whole list, about 80% are overwhelmed. 20% see the finish line and they're racing to the finish line. We want students to be present and to be present we have to stop reminding them of what's coming next.
- The banner allows for autonomy and knowledge mobility.
- A mastery experience is when a student knows something and they know they know it, and when they're having that experience they want to take on a new challenge. They want something harder.
- All tasks are thinking tasks until the student knows how to do it, and then it becomes a mimicking task. Maybe they've seen it for six years in a row or you just told them how to do it.
- It's a thinking task if they don't know what to do.

How do you recommend supporting multilingual students?
- Do these students need more support? Yes, but not in the same way as in a traditional classroom.
- Channels of communication
  - Verbal channel - they're talking to each other
  - Written channel - written work is synchronized with what is being said
  - Pointing channel - talking and pointing are synchronized
  - Gesture channel - communicates emotion and mathematics, makes interrupting not rude
  - Manipulative channel - objects are involved
  - Technology channel - tablet, calculator, etc.
- Five of the channels are visual.
- The language is hard for them but the language is only one channel. They find so many other avenues to communicate. Let's see what they're capable of before we overload them with support.

How do you allow for time to work on tasks and still stay on a pacing calendar?
- Quality over quantity
- Some tasks take a long time.
- If students are thinking and making meaning, it will take them longer than just practicing. It's valuable time spent.
- The problem is not what's happening at the whiteboards. The problem is our adherence to the pacing guide.
- We don't have to get through 18 questions. We need to get through six questions really well and really have their understanding solidified.