



## SIMPLE WAYS TO IMPROVE CREATIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Sir Ken Robinson in his famous [TED talk](#), *Do Schools Kill Creativity?* (a video with a staggering 36 million views) argues that we are educating creativity out of our students.

Teachers are finding themselves in a difficult situation with increased standardization and testing, stricter evaluations, and prescribed curriculum that leaves little room for their talents, let alone engaging the unique passions and talents of every individual student.

Robinson says, "Creativity now is as important in education as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status." In a study from the book *Breakpoint and Beyond*, the skill of divergent thinking (a thinking process for generating creative ideas by exploring many possible solutions) was found to be 98% of kindergartners who tested in the 'genius' category. Yet, divergent thinking steadily decreases as students become more educated.

In a world that changes at break-neck speed, creativity and innovation are more necessary than ever before. Without developing creativity, we are not adequately preparing our students to succeed.

Teachers are under enormous stress to follow too many rules and are given very little opportunity and encouragement to think outside of the box. It is more important than ever to intentionally teach creativity in your classroom. Below are a few ideas how.

### GET PERSONAL

Students think and learn in different ways. Encourage students to learn how their unique mind works and how they can use it to its full capacity.

- Have students take a multiple intelligences test. Here's [one](#) to try.
- Use other assessments to discover strengths like Gallup's StrengthsFinder.
- Gauge what interests students on an individual level and create student-led projects that encourage them to explore their interests.
- Have students create reflections on the content presented in class. This can take the form of a journal, artwork, music, dance, drama or other self-expression.
- Build a classroom culture where students can freely express their ideas without criticism. Use strategies like concentric conversation circles, socratic seminars and gallery walks.

### BREAK THE RULES

Part of the reason why students lose their creative capacity is because they are presented with more and more rules for understanding the outside world. Creative thinking can spawn from breaking these rules that students have been taught to follow and showing them how to think outside of the box.



- Shake up the class structure by allowing students to take control of the classroom, whether that involves changing the seating arrangements, deciding what topic is addressed that day, or leading how the topic is discussed.
- Have students create [mindmaps](#) instead of writing a paper.
- Engage in divergent thinking practices using problem-based learning. Encourage students to explore new solutions to problems and consider not only a safe answer, but potentially a wrong answer
- Find ways for students to make associations between seemingly unrelated concepts or items.
- Encourage curiosity and asking questions.
- Create a class agreement and culture that promotes and celebrates creativity.

## BROADEN THEIR MINDS

Research suggests that one of the best ways to teach creativity is to integrate emotions. Learning is not just about cognitive knowledge, but should include the whole person. Emotion is often ignited through experience.

- Most importantly: encourage mistakes and failure. Create an expectation that students should fail and that they should become more comfortable with failure. Encourage experimenting with new ideas, designs, projects, problems, etc.
- Integrate emotions by telling stories, encouraging reflections, bringing in guest speakers to tell personal testimonials and engaging in hands-on projects in the community.
- Explore different cultures and points of view, especially those very different from their own. But don't let them stay indifferent and fickle. Encourage them to critically think about their own perspective, in light of all others, and decide on which position they choose.
- During research projects, require that students conduct both the typical academic research as well as action-based research that requires students to find ways to emotionally connect and experience the issue.
- Explore different sources for inspiration, such as [Pinterest](#).
- Have them play [Improv games](#). The only rule in Improv is they must say 'yes.'

*The Big Idea Project is an excellent creativity-building experience that incorporates many of the leading strategies for practicing imagination, creativity and innovation. For more information about how to become a certified Big Idea Project educator for high school students visit [www.bigideaproject.org/educators](http://www.bigideaproject.org/educators).*