



CRITICAL THINKING

Competency Profiles

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CRITICAL THINKING

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OVERVIEW



Critical thinking involves making judgments based on reasoning: students consider options; analyze these using specific criteria; and draw conclusions and make judgments. Critical thinking competency encompasses a set of abilities that students use to examine their own thinking, and that of others, about information that they receive through observation, experience, and various forms of communication.

Development of critical thinking begins within families, before students enter formal schooling, and expands at every level of schooling. At each stage, students maintain and enhance competencies from previous stages, while developing new skills. Students encounter many opportunities for critical thinking in activities such as decision making, issue analysis, problem solving, inquiry, and self-assessment. Students move from basic or highly supported thinking to increasingly complex, sophisticated, and independent thinking. The development of competency in critical thinking does not end with school graduation, but continues to develop in personal, social, educational, and workplace contexts.

The Critical Thinking Competency Profiles describe and illustrate students' development, focusing on three interrelated facets described below. Note that these overlap, and any task/sample is likely to demonstrate more than one of these facets. All critical thinking tasks and illustrations involve review and reflection; these are highlighted as part of the analyze and critique facet.

1. Analyze and critique

Students learn to analyze and make judgments about a work, a position, a process, a performance, or another product or act. They consider purpose, focus on evidence, and use criteria (explicit or implicit) to draw conclusions and make defensible judgments or assessments. They consider a variety of perspectives. Some opportunities for analysis and critique are formal tasks; others are informal, ongoing activities (e.g., assessing a plan they are developing to solve a problem). Students often analyze and critique their own work as a key part of their learning.



SAMPLE “I” STATEMENTS

- I can show if I like something or not.
- I can identify criteria that I can use to analyze evidence.
- I can analyze evidence from different perspectives.
- I can reflect on and evaluate my thinking, products, and actions.
- I can analyze my own assumptions and beliefs and consider views that do not fit with them.

2. Question and investigate

Students learn to engage in an inquiry and investigation where they identify and explore questions or challenges related to key issues or problematic situations in their studies, their lives, their communities, and the media. They develop and refine questions; create and carry out plans; gather, interpret, and synthesize information and evidence; and draw reasoned conclusions. Some critical thinking activities focus on one part of the process, such as questioning, while others may involve a complex inquiry into a local or global issue.

SAMPLE “I” STATEMENTS

- I can explore materials and actions.
- I can ask open-ended questions and gather information.
- I can consider more than one way to proceed in an investigation.
- I can evaluate the credibility of sources of information.
- I can tell the difference between facts and interpretations, opinions, or judgments.

3. Develop and design

Students apply critical thinking to create or transform products, methods, performances, and representations in response to problems, events, issues, and needs. They work with clear purpose and consider the potential users or audience of their work. They explore possibilities, develop and refine plans, monitor their progress, and adjust their procedures in the light of criteria and feedback. They can determine the extent to which they have met their goals.

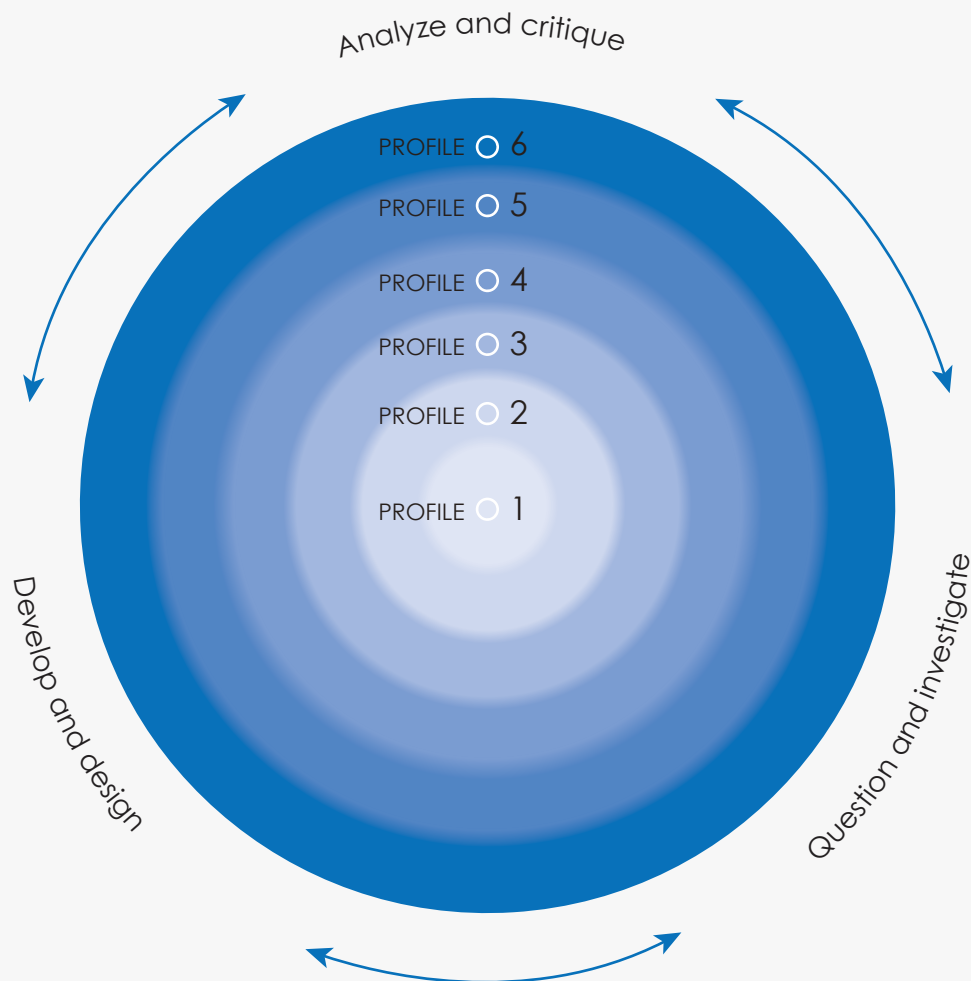
SAMPLE “I” STATEMENTS

- I can experiment with different ways of doing things.
- I can develop criteria for evaluating design options.
- I can monitor my progress and adjust my actions to make sure I achieve what I want.
- I can make choices that will help me create my intended impact on an audience or situation.

CRITICAL THINKING COMPETENCY



The Critical Thinking Competency Profiles emphasize the concept of expanding and growing. They are progressive and additive, as illustrated by the concentric circles in this graphic.



Set of Profiles: Critical Thinking Competency

These profile descriptions include the three facets that underpin the Critical Thinking Competency: analyze and critique, question and investigate, and develop and design. The three facets are interrelated and are embedded within the profile descriptions, which are written from a student's point of view.

PROFILE

DESCRIPTION



1

I can explore.

I can explore materials and actions. I can show if I like something or not.



2

I can use evidence to make simple judgments.

I can ask questions, make predictions, and use my senses to gather information. I can explore with a purpose in mind and use what I learn. I can tell or show something about my thinking. I can contribute to and use simple criteria. I can find some evidence and make judgments.



3

I can ask questions and consider options. I can use my observations, experience, and imagination to draw conclusions and make judgments.

I can ask open-ended questions, explore, gather information, and experiment purposefully to develop options. I can contribute to and use criteria. I can use observation, experience, and imagination to draw conclusions, make judgments, and ask new questions. I can describe my thinking and how it is changing.



4

I can gather and combine new evidence with what I already know to develop reasoned conclusions, judgments, or plans.

I can use what I know and observe to identify problems and ask questions. I can explore and engage with materials and sources. I can consider more than one way to proceed and make choices based on my reasoning and what I am trying to do. I can develop or adapt criteria, check information, assess my thinking, and develop reasoned conclusions, judgments, or plans.



5

I can evaluate and use well-chosen evidence to develop interpretations; identify alternatives, perspectives, and implications; and make judgments. I can examine and adjust my thinking.

I can ask questions and offer judgments, conclusions, and interpretations supported by evidence I or others have gathered. I am flexible and open-minded; I can explain more than one perspective and consider implications. I can gather, select, evaluate, and synthesize information. I can consider alternative approaches and make strategic choices. I can take risks and recognize that I may not be immediately successful. I can examine my thinking, seek feedback, reassess my work, and adjust.



6

I can examine evidence from various perspectives to analyze and make well-supported judgments and interpretations about complex issues.

I can determine my own framework and criteria for tasks that involve critical thinking. I can compile evidence and draw reasoned conclusions. I can consider views that do not fit with my beliefs. I am open-minded and patient, taking the time to explore, discover, and understand. I can make choices that will help me create my intended impact on an audience or situation. I can place my work and that of others in a broader context. I can connect the results of my inquiries and analyses to action.