

The Six Thinking Hats of Edward de Bono

Grade Level: All

Time: Varied

Objectives:

- Consider issues from a number of important perspectives
- Use the broader perspectives to assist in developing successful strategies for addressing the issue
- Become more tolerant of a group member's unique way of thinking

Curricular Connections: All

Materials: Six different colored and styled hats.

Procedure:

1. Present a problem/issue to students. Tell them that they are going to think about it from a variety of perspectives. There will be 6 types of thinkers—those who are in those roles will only address the issue from that particular perspective.
2. Students will need to practice this type of activity to get used to it, so you could role play a couple of examples to help them understand.

Example #1—Should _____ change schools? [Questions should be asked from these viewpoints.]

- White: What information do we need?
- Green: What are possible opportunities?
- Red: Choose the best three.
- Yellow: What are the benefits of each?
- Black: What are the weaknesses of each?
- White: What additional information is needed?
- Blue: What are the next steps?

Example #2—Students are talking while others are talking or teaching. [Resolve issue using these pieces of information.]

- White: State the facts
 - Students are talking when the teacher is talking
 - The noise distracts others so they cannot hear
 - Students do not know what the directions are
 - Many students get silly or off task
- Red: State the emotions
 - The teacher feels offended
 - Students feel frustrated when they cannot hear directions
 - Students who have the floor feel like others do not care
 - Those talking enjoy joking around and being heard
- Black: State the negatives
 - Time is wasted

- Learning is compromised
- Classroom is chaotic

Yellow: State the positives

- Everyone gets to say what is on their mind
- It can be fun
- You don't forget what you were going to say
- Not just the "smart" kids get to speak

Green: State creative ideas from seeing the problem in a new light

- The teacher will be more aware of the time she "talks"
- The teacher will include more students
- Students will reflect on whether their comments are "on topic"
- Students will think about whether their comments interfere with others
- The 6 Hats chart will stay up so we can remember these ideas.

Blue: State a summary of what was learned

- The teacher will limit the amount of time she uses "talking" teaching.
- The teacher will involve all students in the discussion.
- The teacher will allow for "think time."
- Students now realize they make others feel foolish and unappreciated when they talk over them.
- Students realize that getting a laugh compromises the learning of others.
- Students learned that speaking whenever they want shows a lack of self-discipline.

Adaptations:

- Team members could each take the role of a different stakeholder involved in their issue.
- Team members could each take the role of a person with a different disability, age, gender, ethnicity, religion, etc., in order to help them experience diversity.
- Students could be given only the meaning of their own hat and be asked to guess the viewpoint of the others.

Reflection: Students should debrief about what they learned when taking a role that is unfamiliar. Students should critique the value of this process as a problem-solving tool.

Adapted from Edward de Bono's book 6 Thinking Hats.