Culture of Creativity

Description: As teachers, we consistently reflect on what we do in the classroom, but mostly we ask the question *why*? Why teach what we do and why teach it the way we do it? The answer has to be more than "Because it's in the curriculum" or "That's how we have always done it." In the 21st century, we need to develop new "whys." The whys for today's students are that the challenges of today are happening so rapidly as a result of technological advances; students need to develop the executive function skills that will enable them to react accordingly. Additionally, these challenges require creative solutions to complex issues. Creativity is a learned skill; it needs to be fostered and developed.

Maslow had self-actualization; Sulla has efficacy. These skills come when students are equipped to take ownership of their learning. As Dr. Sulla noted in her book *Building Executive Function: The Missing Link to Student Achievement*, "efficacy comes from within: it is your own ability to decide upon a desired outcome and make it happen." Our goal as teachers and educators is to help students "make it happen"— whatever "it" might be. Today's "it" is the ability to solve complex problems in our increasingly complex world.

To accomplish that, we must create a culture of efficacy, creativity, and problem solving in the classroom. Dr. Sulla describes this culture as "a set of shared beliefs, values, assumptions, symbols and traditions" that fosters student growth in all aspects of their lives. In order to create this culture, Dr. Sulla leans on the work of Kaufman and Gregoire (2015) to identify nine behaviors shared by creative people.

The tool below can be used to teach students the skills necessary to be creative and effective problem-solvers. It is to be used in conjunction with a *problem-based task* launched at the beginning of a unit. It will build on developing students' executive function skills and creativity by having them apply nine essential traits of creative people. In doing so, it will also foster better problem-solving skills by providing deeper analysis and exploring more creative options and solutions.

Directions: Use this chart as a tool to examine and reflect on your *problem-based task*. It is a guide to foster skills recognized as promoting creative attributes.

1) Complete two or three of the boxes individually.
2) Meet with your home group once per week to discuss your individual responses.
3) Each week, complete two or three more boxes individually, meeting with your home group once per week until the chart is completed.
4) This will help provide opportunities and flexibility to explore and ponder the problem in order to provide innovative solutions to complex problems. It will also help develop and expand your creative talents.

Creative people **Observe Everything:** Look at the problem from many angles. What is obvious? What is less obvious? What is missing that you would like to know?	Creative people learn to **Fail Up:** What has already been tried and failed? Why did it fail? What are the risks of failure? What are the benefits of failure?	Creative people **Ask Big Questions:** What are the consequences of not solving the problem? How could solving the problem have added benefits? What are the unintended consequences of solving the problem?
Creative people **Work Hours That Work for Them:** When is the best time for you to work on this problem? How can you find time to work with others that is convenient for everyone? What techniques, strategies, and/or technology can you employ so that all can maximize their time?	Creative people **Make Time for Mindfulness:** In much the way we need to clear our workspace of clutter, we need to clear our minds of clutter. Take time out from your day to sit comfortably and think of nothing other than your own breathing. Feel it in your chest, in your stomach; breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. If a thought enters your head — let it go and get back to hearing and feeling your breathing.	Creative people **Daydream:** Dare to dream big! What would be the biggest, best solution to this problem? What other thoughts do you have about it that may or may not have specific relevance to the problem?
Creative people **Connect the Dots:** To what other problems does this issue relate? How will solutions affect other issues and people both directly and indirectly? What are the long-term benefits and costs of solving the problem?	Creative people **Take Another Person's Perspective:** How might other people view this problem or issue? Do others view it as a problem? What might their opinion be about how to address the issue?	Creative people **See Life as Opportunity for Self-Expression:** How does this issue/problem relate to you personally? How can you best represent your thoughts on this issue: visually, written, orally, theatrically, in a song, a video?