



## Making Thinking Visible:

### *Building Understanding through Critical and Creative Thinking*

#### Overview

How can we activate students' thinking to build understanding in the subject areas? And how can we help students to think more critically and creatively at the same time?

During this course, you will learn to personalize and apply a research-based framework called Visible Thinking which is being used effectively in a number of schools. Adaptable to any subject area, Visible Thinking allows getting started almost at once with 'thinking routines' that help students ponder ideas from the subject areas. These routines, together with other 'cultural forces' such as language and expectations, and often with the use of art and artifacts as conversational foci, create a vibrant culture of thinking and understanding in the classroom.

Documenting students' work (and reflecting on it both with colleagues and the students), makes students more aware of their thinking and feeds professional conversations that foster collegiality and collaboration among teachers.

Videos of practicing teachers, extensive online resources, and text resources support your exploration of how to build a culture of thinking and thoughtful learning for understanding that is visible to both teachers and students.

*Courses available September-December, February-May, and May-August.*

For more information or to register email: [wideworld@gse.harvard.edu](mailto:wideworld@gse.harvard.edu)

Price: \$399 per team member / \$599 per individual

#### The core questions we will investigate during this course are:

How can we build students' understanding, increase engagement in the subject areas through thinking, and improve students' thinking?

How can we foster positive thinking and learning attitudes as well as abilities?

How can we use the arts and artifacts as foci of thoughtful learning for understanding across the subject areas?

How can we document student thinking so that both teachers and students are better able to understand and develop it?

How can we foster a culture of thinking and regard for thoughtful learning in the classroom?

How can we build teacher collegiality and collaboration around a culture of thinking and thoughtful learning?

#### Instructor Karin Morrison

Karin Morrison, the course instructor, brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise as an experienced teacher and currently as the in-school leader of the Cultures of Thinking Project at Bialik College, a Pre K - 12 school in Melbourne, Australia.

#### For More Information

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## Orientation Session

In this session you will become acquainted with the course web site and the role of instructors, coaches and learners in WIDE World courses. You will meet your fellow course participants and learn about each other's goals for the course, their backgrounds and leadership contexts.

## Session 1 – Getting Started with ‘Thinking Routines’

In this session, you will get acquainted with a basic tool of Visible Thinking, ‘thinking routines’. These simple patterns of conversation (see-think-wonder, claim-support-question, circle of viewpoints, step inside, and many more) make students’ thinking visible to them and you. The strategies generate rich explorations ‘out of the box’ without elaborate introductions, although students get better at them with practice over time. When students explore and analyze topics using thinking routines, they develop deeper and broader understandings in the subject areas.

## Session 2 – Developing Abilities, Attitudes, and Alertness in the Subject Areas

In this session, you will become familiar with more thinking routines. You will discover how they speak to various stages in the arc of learning a topic – getting started, advancing understanding over time, and consolidating as a topic is rounded out. You will learn how routines serve various ideals of thinking -- achieving understanding, assessing what's true, valuing thinking, and more. You will examine a key idea of Visible Thinking: getting better at thinking and learning has as much to do with attitudes and alertness as it does with abilities, strategies, and skills. Good thinkers and learners develop positive attitudes toward thinking and learning. They also show alertness to situations that invite a thoughtful approach, rather than missing them in the clutter of everyday life. Thinking routines are one among several ‘cultural forces’ in the classroom that foster abilities, attitudes, and alertness.

## Session 3 – Using Documentation to Look at Student Work with Colleagues to Deepen Practice

In this session, you will explore ways of documenting students’ thinking through the use of newsprint, Post-its, and other strategies. Documenting takes the idea of making thinking visible a step further, producing a record that both students and teachers can look back at later. You will get acquainted with simpler and more sophisticated approaches to documentation, and approaches suited to younger and older learners. You will experience how documentation helps to foster student awareness and continuity over time, and how documentation provides the basis for teachers’ collegial exchange and collaboration through the LAST protocol (Looking At Student Thinking). You will also see how visible thinking fits with Teaching for Understanding, by providing a repertoire of flexible ‘understanding performances’ useful for almost any situation.



#### Session 4 – Using the Arts and Artifacts to Foster Visible Thinking and Learning

For students to think and explore ideas deeply, they need something on which to focus their thinking and center their explorations. In this session, you will consider how concrete objects such as works of art, and various sources and artifacts can help make thinking visible by providing concrete foci for learning-centered discussions across the subject areas. Often students study topics in the subject areas through relatively abstract descriptions— the general narrative of an important historical event, the basic principles of a science concept together with problems to solve. Works of art, photographic images, scientific instruments, primary documents from history, and the like can provide objects of analysis and creative exploration that, because they are right there and visible for examination, sustain unusually rich and deep patterns of thinking and learning. Finally, you will begin planning toward a small end-of-course project.

#### Session 5 – Marshaling Cultural Forces toward an Overall Culture of Thinking

In this session you will revisit the idea of cultural forces, examining how thinking routines are just one among several cultural forces that can deepen thinking and learning. You will see how the development of thinking and learning dispositions depends fundamentally on a culture of thinking in the classroom. Building on this and the idea of documentation, you will examine how Visible Thinking can contribute to the assessment of students' thinking and learning in ways that support a positive energetic culture. You will develop a first draft of your end-of-course project, where you plan how to approach the arc of learning a particular topic using at least three thinking routines and at least one other cultural force besides routines.

#### Session 6 – Building Arcs of Learning within a Culture of Thinking

In this session, you will advance further your ideas about how thinking routines and other cultural forces can create an arc of learning around a topic. You will revise and try out with students or peers the plan drafted in the previous session, articulating your observations. You will also learn how a culture of thinking is important at the level of teachers as well as students, and how teacher study groups can constitute a force for building a culture of thinking through a school. Finally, you will get acquainted with several other resources that can help you carry Visible Thinking further.



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1-888-759-8829

In each two-week session participants take on the following assignments:

- >> read new material on the course website in the 'Session Note'
- >> complete readings and other assignments
- >> post responses to assignments in the online course discussion
- >> receive response to work from coaches and online colleagues
- >> respond to online colleagues

#### Professional Development Credit

For those interested in earning professional development points/units/credits, a certificate for up to 42 hours will be issued upon completion of the course, if all the assignments have been completed -- approximately 7 hours per session.

Three additional hours may be earned by completing the following assessment, for a total of 45 participation hours:

Final Course Evaluation (3 hours)

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