Grotzer Clip 2 Transcript

TINA GROTZER: And then take a few minutes to think about that question. You can reach all the way back into elementary school, if you want. You probably hear some things here too, right?

Does anyone want to share any of the things that you remember hearing, that just got said, in your early education or later, about thinking and the nature of thinking? Yeah?

AUDIENCE: This was much later. This was last semester.

AUDIENCE: In the Thinking and Learning Today and Tomorrow class, we were thinking about-- we discussed thinking routines. And they mentioned that even though a lot of people know how to think critically, we often fail to recognize the opportunity to think critically. And that very much resonated with me because-- this is a weird example. But when I watch TV with my boyfriend, he's always like, oh, this is happening and this is happening. And he's always giving this commentary. And I'm like, I'm trying to watch TV.

And after they mentioned that, I realized that I usually have to turn on a switch to think critically. And now, I'm as annoying as he is, watching TV, because I'm just trying to have that type of thinking all the time. So yes.

TINA GROTZER: And you're narrating it out?

AUDIENCE: Yes. So now-- and we don't do this with other people. So you can watch TV with us. But what we're trying to do think critically about the plot, to see what makes sense, what doesn't make sense. And it's been a good example of transitioning from an activity that used to be very passive in my thinking to being very active in my thinking. And now I try to be that way in other instances of my life.

TINA GROTZER: Nice. Very nice. Thank you. Thank you. Any examples from K to 12? Joe?

AUDIENCE: I mean, I was mostly-- my childhood, and the fact that I was very science focused, and my family is, in general, very science focused-- but for me, it was a lot of analytic-- question something, gather data, in some form or another, about that something, reshape what you think about that. It was like that kind of scientific method, maybe not in the same explicit steps, but that sort of process was just-- that's how you do something. That's how you think about something, is this sort of question, criticize, gather data, reassess, rinse and repeat.

TINA GROTZER: Yeah. So you had somebody actually modeling and encouraging that?

AUDIENCE: Yeah, constantly.

TINA GROTZER: Constantly. Yep, nice. Do you want to hand it to [? Nidi? ?]

AUDIENCE: I was just going to say, on the topic of thinking critically, when I think about messages about thinking, especially in elementary school and middle school, growing up, critical thinking was such a big buzzword. And it was-- in the textbooks we used, there would be like a little heading, like, critical thinking, and then some questions.

But none of it was actually critical thinking. It was just like a slightly harder recall question about the textbook. And so I think the term, critical thinking, lost all meaning of actually being critical or questioning a source.

TINA GROTZER: So my understanding-- so in those examples, nobody was teaching you how to think. They were just expecting you to think about something that was a little harder, maybe.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

TINA GROTZER: OK. All right. That's fair. That's a fairly common experience. So yeah, yeah. Go ahead. What was that?

AUDIENCE: I was thinking about elementary school, as well. I just remember being told to put on my thinking cap and furrow my brow, and if I just work hard enough, my brain will do this magical thing, and that some people can think faster than other people. Somehow I internalize that. But I'm not sure I ever thought about what is thinking, just that it's hard, you have to focus to do it, and it involves some eyebrow movements or something.

TINA GROTZER: So what you can see is the person, when they're thinking, they're doing this. And they're kind of-- but nobody's telling you what's going on in here. And that-- yeah, anybody else have that experience? [? Laurie? ?] Yeah, a lot of you. Yeah?

AUDIENCE: I was just going to add the concept that ideas come to you, that it's passive, and if you're lucky, an idea will pop into your head, and that's thinking, similar to the thinking cap. That was always kind of how I conceptualized thinking.

And so if you could then express your idea, behaviorally, in some way, that was proof that you had thought. But I remember, as a kid, wondering, well, what is thinking, then? What do I have to do, if ideas are just going to kind of pop up throughout my life, and that's how people come up with things?

TINA GROTZER: Do you remember how old you were, when you were thinking about this question of, what do I have to do?

AUDIENCE: Probably fifth grade. I had a teacher who did a lot of metacognitive reflection with us. And that sparked a lot of it.

TINA GROTZER: Yeah, so that idea that it's just going to pop into your head and you don't have to, like, what am I doing. But what am I doing to make this happen? Yeah. Anybody else's similar? Jamie?

AUDIENCE: Just building off of that, there was this sense that I didn't really know what thinking was. But I knew that there was such a thing as like quality of thinking, that thinking had an attribute and that some people were better at thinking than others, or that you could demonstrate really good thinking versus not as good thinking.

And I don't-- I think people reinforced that, where they would be like, ooh, that's really good thinking. And in class, you would be like, oh, I must have done-- I did that thinking right. I got there. And that was something that you could judge, even though I didn't really understand how it worked.

AUDIENCE: I'm so happy we got to this topic because I've been on the soapbox for an entire year, implicating and questioning critical thinking. And I think that some of the ways that people support that is in language. And there are words that are affiliated with critical thinking. There's a way of saying things. And if you don't possess that language, a lot of times, you may be thinking critically, but no one will identify because, you're not using the same markers that others are using.

So that always really bothered me. And I really want to say-- and when I think about academic language, I always want to question why-- what is academic language. And folks will say, it's thinking critically and using the language of critical thought. And I don't think that true because you could use colloquial language and still think very critically.

TINA GROTZER: Yeah, so it's really, what are you doing to get-- what is that language standing in for?

AUDIENCE: Right.

TINA GROTZER: And sometimes it's a mask.

AUDIENCE: Yes.

TINA GROTZER: Just like with the misconceptions research that we talked about, sometimes people say something, but what's underneath looks nothing like--

AUDIENCE: Exactly.

TINA GROTZER: --what people think it should look like.

AUDIENCE: So sometimes we think that markers-- that people find the way of, OK, someone else was supported in their thought because of their using certain pieces of language. But maybe that's critical thinking instead of actually what the process really looks like.

TINA GROTZER: Do you want to hand to [? Seffna? ?]

AUDIENCE: I think for me, also, the time that is given to think-- I always felt what was reinforced was the best answer, the first answer, the immediate response. And I always felt that I would have questions, or I would have something to say. But I needed more time.

And if I came back the next day, or as I tried to apply it in my setting, it would pop questions from the challenges that was facing or from the experience. But what was appreciated was always the right-- the immediate, rapid answer. And so, yeah, just time for thinking.

TINA GROTZER: Yeah. So one of the things that you may notice I try to do, in here, is I try to give you all an opportunity to take some time for thinking. And some people are frustrated with it because you come up with something fast, and then you want to bounce it off of other people. That's another way to get ideas, to do that sort of leapfrogging with other people, and bouncing back and forth of ideas. But it's to give all of you a chance to do some thinking.

And when I was teaching science in middle school, one of the things we did is we gave everybody a whiteboard, to think about their ideas, and then to change them as they heard different ideas going back and forth, but taking that time for thinking. One of the funny things I learned, also, working though, in eighth grade, is that if you just give think time-- the reason they got whiteboards-- if you just give think time, they sit there and they think about the social consequences of opening their mouth. And it gets quieter and quieter. I was like, ah.

So that's why I give them the whiteboard, so everybody had a chance to think visually. And then they had something to share from. And I often would have everybody share in that context because then it took away the social-- what they thought of as a stigma, what I thought of as a plus-- of sharing.

So the kinds of experiences that you've had, in some ways, resonate with what many kids have. And in some ways, I mean, you've been in a class where you've focused specifically on thinking and the nature of thinking and some of the research. But these

are the things I used to hear from my fourth, fifth, and sixth graders about how thinking was talked about.

So they didn't know what they were supposed to do. But they knew they had to think about it more, put more thought into it. And then there's the think. You have to use your head. What do I do with it?

And when they came up with an idea that didn't fit with what a teacher might be looking for, aren't you kids thinking? And they were kind of, well, what does that mean, that we're not thinking. We came up with a response. And we like our response. And then this one, too, more about at least putting more into it. And the thinking-cap one, really huge.

So there is some research, actually, to back up some of that notion of a force-and-focus conception, that thinking harder means you just grimace, and you look like you're thinking really hard, but nothing to show kids what's going on in their heads.