

## **The Delphi Report**

I would like to start my comments about this report with how I'm amazed that I had never heard the term "critical thinking" until after I started this master's program. Having a class in Critical Thinking has totally confused my poor husband who struggles with what I do for a living already! It's been wonderful, though, to find I am a good critical thinker and was taught these skills, even though I didn't know the name for them. This report really emphasizes the importance of defining what critical thinking is and what skills are needed for our students to have this so important ability, yet it also explains that these skills can, and need to, grow. I will go through the report point-by-point and make comments on each section.

### **1. Interpretation: Categorization, Decoding Significance, Clarifying Meaning**

I believe this is the basis for using all other critical thinking skills. I was shocked to read that this was not chosen as a central CT skill. I personally feel if you cannot interpret the situation and the information, there is no way you can apply the other skills you need to use. You must be able to categorize, decode and then clarify the information in order to analyze that same information later. There are times you cannot take situations at face value, either, and you must be able to decode other things relative to the situation other than just the information. At times, you must also be able to ask the appropriate questions to gain more information needed to analyze and evaluate. I've encountered many situations where the information given is not enough information, and it's not willingly given. I must press and ask the appropriate questions to get the information I need.

### **2. Analysis: Examining Ideas, Identifying Arguments, Analyzing Arguments**

This is probably one of the most important of the CT skills. You must be able to analyze the information you receive in order to interpret and evaluate that information. You must be able to look at an idea or an argument, hold it in your hand, turn it around and see all the sides of that situation. I feel that is what analysis is. It's looking through and around

all sides of an argument, idea, or situation. It's critical that a person be able to do that in order to apply the later steps of critical thinking.

### **3. Evaluation: Assessing Claims, Assessing Arguments**

Once you have all the ideas and sides of an argument or situation, you must be able to look at all of it and critically evaluate the information using your life experiences and knowledge. I think of when I served on jury duty in January and February. I served on one jury during that time. We heard the arguments from both sides of the case. After listening, interpreting, and analyzing the arguments, we then had to apply evaluation skills to the situation and decide whose claims and arguments were valid. I exclaimed at one point in frustration it would be easier if they took the swearing-in more seriously and all told the truth! However, that was our part in the case... we had to evaluate all the arguments and decide who was telling the truth, who was lying, and if anyone broke the law.

### **4. Inference: Querying Evidence, Conjecturing Alternatives, Drawing Conclusions**

This is where you assign levels of weight to various arguments or ideas presented in a situation or argument. In addition to placing weight to the arguments, you can also question what would happen if you chose a certain outcome. It is a time to begin placing outcomes on your decision. There must be a level of honesty applied here that allows the decision-maker to truly see the outcomes of their decision: not through rose-colored glasses, but factually.

### **5. Explanation: Stating Results, Justifying Procedures, Presenting Arguments**

I was again surprised to see that this skill was not seen as a critical CT skill. Once a decision is made, I feel strongly that person should be able to explain why that decision was made. I think this is probably a writing and communication skill that is not taught as well as it should. A person should be able to communicate all the reasons why a decision

was made, including feelings and knowledge that came into play while making that decision. This is one skill I do believe I was taught as a child, but failed more often than not! I was able to make the decision, but not explain why I made that decision in a way that made any sense at all. I strongly feel you can make a decision, but if you can not communicate your reasoning behind the decision, no one will follow you or even understand what you are wanting to do or believe.

## **6. Self-Regulation: Self-examination, Self-correction**

This is probably the most difficult of the skills for me. I am the sort of person who makes up her mind and sticks with it...even if she's proven wrong! Not a great trait, and one I'm not particularly proud of, but now I see that it's essential I correct that natural tendency if I'm to be a good critical thinker. I must be able to evaluate why I made a decision and then be able to change that decision based on new information if necessary. I must be honest with myself at all times through the critical thinking process. I need to realize when prejudices are influencing my decision and keep an open mind at all times. It's very difficult not to close your mind off at times, but it's essential to be a good critical thinker.

The last part of the report talks about the disposition of a critical thinker. This person must be open to new ideas and open to the possibilities of change. He or she must be a life-long learner. I'm happy that I can honestly say I am. I love to learn and I love to see other sides of situations. I work hard not to let my prejudices color information I receive. I get very frustrated with people who can only see one side of an argument and refuse to change because "it's always been done that way" or "If it ain't broke don't fix it" mentality. Nothing makes me angrier faster. I am happy that I am confident that when I need to and have the information needed, I can make good strong decisions. I've always been a fast decision-maker, though, so I need to slow that process down and not go with what I'm feeling. Rather, I need to make sure that I do look at every side of the situation before getting my hopes up or making a decision. This disposition is something I can carry into every area of my life, including my personal life. I hope and pray that I can teach my children these all-important skills and this love for learning.