

You Can Teach Content and Creativity Skills at the Same Time?

An Executive Summary of Michael Scott Accurso's Master's Project

The Torrance Incubation Model of Teaching in a Middle School Social Studies Classroom

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A Brief Overview of the Torrance Incubation Model of Teaching:

Are you seriously telling me that I can teach my students about the Great Compromise at the Constitutional Convention and teach them to “Be Flexible” all in the same lesson?

The answer to the above question is yes. E. Paul Torrance designed a framework for teachers to use to develop lessons for their students that would develop their creative thinking skills while covering content. His creation covers any content at any developmental level. This framework of teaching is called the Torrance Incubation Model of Teaching (TIM).

This three-step model of teaching is unique because of deliberate strategies in each stage designed to create incompleteness, which will lead to creative learning and incubation. Torrance (1979, p.23) noted that “...incubation has long been recognized as critical to genuine creative thinking and breakthrough.” The TIM provides a model for the dissemination and delivery of creative learning using a lesson plan format which is contingent on three stages: Stage 1 – Heightening Anticipation, Stage 2 – Deepening Expectations, and Stage 3 – Keeping it Going. Incubation only occurs in the last stage, however the preceding stages are necessary in order for it to occur (Torrance, 1979).

Torrance developed the TIM because he believed and saw through his work and research that people prefer to learn creatively (Torrance, 1994). He felt that teachers should create situations where students are encouraged to think in a creative fashion and that opportunities to practice the creative thinking skills used in the TIM should be developed and given to the students.

The creative thinking skills associated with the TIM were developed through Torrance’s work and research in the field of creativity. “Torrance derived his skills or abilities in a very

different manner and they emerged over time. He went back and forth between the behavior of history's high creative achievers, today's high creative achievers, test responses of children who became high achievers, and statistical analyses" (Torrance, Safter, 1990, p. 32). They are: Finding the Problem, Produce and Consider Many Alternatives, Be Flexible, Be Original, Highlight the Essence, Elaborate, But Not Excessively, Keep Open, Be Aware of Emotions, Put Ideas Into Content, Combine and Synthesize, Visualize Richly and Colorfully, Enjoy and Use Fantasy, Make It Swing, Make It Ring, Look at It Another Way, Visualize the Inside, Breakthrough: Extend the Boundaries, Let Humor Flow and Use It, Get Glimpses Of the Future (Murdock & Kellar-Mathers, 2002, p. 6). The creativity skills identified by Torrance's research are not the only one's that can be used in the TIM, however these skills have all been validated via research on the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (Torrance, Safter, 1999).

Content

The title of this Master's project by Michael Scott Accurso is: "The Torrance Incubation Model of Teaching in a Middle School Social Studies Classroom". Accurso developed lessons around the content of the Constitutional Convention, specifically for Unit Four: Experiments in Government, Section III: The Writing, Structure, and Adoption of the United States Constitution of the New York State Scope and Sequence (7 & 8 Social Studies and New York State History).

The first section of Accurso's project discusses his personal reasons for tackling this project, which included answering Torrance's call for great teachers and to move his students beyond rote learning of content and supplying them with creative thinking skills necessary to be successful in today's world.

The second section of the project reviewed the pertinent literature pertaining to the TIM. The history of the model, the philosophy behind the model, the structure of the model and Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences were all topics researched and discussed.

The process plan to develop this project was discussed in the third section. Here Accurso reviewed the process he went through researching and creating the project. An interesting part of this section is the description Accurso gives of the struggles that he ran into with this model of teaching. He goes into greater detail of this occurrence in Section Five of the main work.

Section Four was the fruit of Accurso's labor: Lessons that illustrated the model and showed a variety of choices in warm-ups were created. Each of these lessons contain an example of a visual, auditory (verbal), and kinesthetic warm up, which Torrance deemed necessary for incubation and creative thinking to occur.

Accurso turned to Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences to answer Torrance's call for visual, auditory (verbal), and kinesthetic warm up's for two reasons. First, Torrance's model of teaching was open and invited other modes and methods of teaching into it. Second, part of Gardner's multiple intelligences research dealt directly with visual, auditory (verbal), and kinesthetic intelligences which tied directly into the first stage of the TIM (but could easily be used in all three stages).

Section Five described Accurso's key learnings and recommendations for future research. In this section Accurso again discusses the struggles and frustrations he ran into with this model of teaching. His learning curve is obvious when he discusses the mistake he made with the model and the eventual success he had in using the model.

Accurso's project would be of great interest to anyone looking to see sample lesson plans that were developed using the TIM. Examples of TIM lessons are rare. Not since the

publication of Torrance and Safter's, *The Incubation Model of Teaching: Getting Beyond the Aha!* in 1990 have there been a series of lesson using the TIM in publication. Social Studies educators with an interest in bringing creative thinking skills into their classroom may find this project useful.

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