Curiosity and Creativity in the Classroom 101

(This is a draft of the presentation - a PowerPoint will be created along with a handout)

Introduction - My story

Why?

- Why are creativity and curiosity important in today's world and especially in education?
  - Future employers require it
  - Research from Linkedin. Adobe, World Forum
  - Curiosity leads to creativity which leads to innovation - our world is full of uncertainties, and these skills will assist students in navigating the future
  - Creative thinking leads us to solve problems we haven't experienced and view multiple solutions
  - Creativity encourages social-emotional learning and empathy

- Why do we need to teach it?
  - Challenges students
  - Creates rigorous curriculum
  - Encourages collaboration
  - Allows teachers to act more as a facilitator
  - Gives students more autonomy to learn what they are curious about

Why not?

When I talk to teachers across the country about their concerns with infusing their curriculum with creative thinking – I receive various responses:

- "I have too much content to teach - I don't have time for any creative lessons."
- "Incorporating creativity in my classroom seems less structured – thus seems more chaotic. It throws my classroom management off."
- "Assessing for creativity is impossible. I need to stick to the standards being tested"
- "I'm not a creative person, so how can I teach creativity?"

What if?

Imagine your classroom, school, district, and community as you have always pictured it. When I started teaching, I envisioned that all my students loved me and my teaching style (that bubble burst early on). In the middle of my career, I just wanted students to "have fun learning" (great goal, but what I thought was fun – they didn't). Later, as a seasoned educator, I realized that something vital was missing in our classrooms. The ability for students to think and act for themselves. Students today want the right answer – the easy answer – they no longer see

challenges and failure positively. The common response from students is "will this be on the test?" or "is this worth points?"

After researching innovative ways to teach and a lot of trial and error, I realized that reimaging my classroom and incorporating more curiosity and creativity would allow me to have the classroom I always envisioned. I want that for you and your students as well.

Think about it:

What if our students started to look forward to learning? What if they started to have more ownership over their experience? What if students had input on how they are assessed? What if teaching was full of joy, connection, purpose, and creativity? What if we made curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking the focal point of our curriculum? What if students worked with peers to solve relevant problems creatively?

Think back to your learning experiences. When were you excited, invested, and engaged in what you were learning? Describe that learning experience. What were you doing? What were you learning? Why was this experience so memorable?

What is stopping you from having these kinds of experiences in your classroom? We know finances are always an issue so let's look at things we can do within our budget to create the kind of classroom you dream of. List the challenges you might face when creating this type of classroom.

What if?

What is creative thinking, and how does it look in a classroom?

"A process of generating thoughts (ideas, interpretation, or insights) that are evaluated by oneself or others to be original and meaningful in the context of a particular task, situation, or domain." (Beghetto 2020)

Creative thinking is a process!

1) Identification - What are your students curious about? What are they most interested in? What makes them excited?
2) Preparation - What resources and research can your students find about this topic, problem, or issue?
3) Incubation - Let students take a break from the project - go for a walk, think over the weekend, do a separate lesson.
4) Generation - Ask students what questions or ideas they have about their topic. (brainstorming, mind-mapping - divergent thinking)
5) Selection - Now that students have seen all the possibilities - select the best possibilities to move forward on. (convergent thinking)

6) Evaluation - Have students determine their own set of evaluation tools. Have peers look at the finished product, plan the next steps, and revise if needed.

This process may take time in your classroom - but you can use what you are currently learning and infuse it with creativity.

In a way - you want to flip your classroom from problem-solving to problem-finding. It may add more uncertainty for you and your students, but it allows students to discover their unique creative problem-solving process.

So now what?

This is all great in theory, but what does it look like in a classroom?

Using the CREATE Method, educators can evaluate their current curriculum and find areas where curiosity and creativity can be infused.

C- Content Curator

Content Curation is sharing knowledge in an in-depth, relevant, and challenging manner. It allows educators and students to consume information critically, become inspired to learn more, and creatively question ideas.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

R - Risk Facilitator

Many students and teachers fear expressing new or contrasting ideas for fear of what others may think or how they may react. Insecurity and vulnerability surround This segment of the CREATE program aims to change that mindset and show participants the importance of embracing uncertainty and what to do when experiencing it. During this stage, the focus is on brainstorming, storyboarding, reflection, and building on outcomes to continually drive towards further advances toward our objectives.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

E- Experience Navigator

Navigating different learning experiences can be a challenge. Terms such as scaffolding, differentiation, and individualized learning empathize with the need for varying classroom experiences.
Many of us think we just "can't" because we are not the smartest, the most experienced, or the wealthiest. But that is a myth. None of those things matter when it comes to curiosity and creativity. Creativity is a great equalizer.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

A- Attitude Shifter

"Why do we have to learn this? How is this going to benefit me in the future?" These questions can be heard in classrooms around the nation. How we view the learning process, ourselves, and others can significantly impact the ability to be curious and creative. Learning how to shift attitudes and embrace the "not yet" allows learners to be more confident decisions makers. Combining a growth mindset and affirmative judgment allows one to approach creative ideas with an open mind, even while evaluating them. Consider those novel ideas are, by definition, unfamiliar and, at times, uncomfortable. Even an old idea put in a new context can seem like an unlikely pairing that you might, at first glance, want to reject outright. However, when you shift an attitude from "I can't" to "what if" unfamiliar and uncomfortable ideas become possibilities. Therefore, learning to move one's attitude to align with each unique situation is essential when encountering curiosity and creativity.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

T- Team Transformer

Learning how to function in a creative environment allows team members to be stronger, more efficient, and more confident. Using the Foursight model, Curiosity 2 Create leads each participant through a series of questions to determine their thinking preferences. In uncovering 'your' thought patterns/approach, this knowledge will enable a transformational breakthrough while communicating through the problem-solving process enabling improved team effectiveness. This session will introduce the key tools and strategies that allow the discovery of thinking preferences and transform communication skills and team effectiveness.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

E - Evaluation Designer

Data, assessments, evaluations, oh my! The education world can focus more on the collection of data than the investment of knowledge. Soft skills such as creativity and curiosity can be a challenge to assess. According to John Hattie, feedback is the number one tool to help students grow and learn. Therefore, designing assessments that offer numerous opportunities for feedback while encouraging risk and creative thinking is essential to acquiring knowledge. Learn how to provide opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

So, now what?

Don't let yourself get overwhelmed. Embrace the joy of teaching creative thinking. One-step-at-a-time - One classroom at a time.