Critical Thinking

1. **Andreotti, V. (2007). *Critical Literacy in Global Citizenship Education*. Retrieved Feb 2011, from Open Spaces for Dialogue and Enquiry: http://www.osdemethodology.org.uk/osdemethodology.html**

The Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice is based in the United Kingdom. Their premise is based on the idea that there should be an open, safe space for people to dialogue with each other about various issues of global importance. This in turn fosters critical engagement between one another and sets the stage for independent, informed and responsible decision making. The Open Spaces for Dialogue and Enquiry (OSDE) offers a methodology that can be used both in the classroom and outside.

Their educational agenda is one that much of our Teacher Education training has been based on at OISE. The belief is that if we, as teachers, can foster critical thinking within our classrooms, it can then foster responsible action from our youth. In a democracy, and with regards to citizenship education, this is something that we can hope and strive for.

In an effort to provide these safe spaces in classrooms, OSDE proposes the following principles: (1) Every individual brings to the space valid and legitimate knowledge constructed in their own contexts, (2) All knowledge is partial and incomplete and (3) All knowledge can be questioned. Through a series of questions that prompts students to enquire critially about the task at hand, they are better able to understand what their own perspectives and beliefs with regards to the issue are.

The OSDE offers teachers with a ready-to-print set of handouts that discuss various methods of questioning, enquiry and informed thinking. It also provides examples for each section that are not only well organized, but also very colourful. It makes the reading easy, practical and very useful. The site also offers ready-made lesson plans based around ten topics that can be applied to a variety of courses. It reinforces the idea of citizenship education and social action quite well and is definitely a resource that all teachers should be familiar with.

A drawback to the OSDE is that because it is relatively new, the resources it has accumulated are limited. As more teachers join the team, more resources can be shared with the rest of the world.

1. **Bennett, B. (2008). *Beyond Monet: The Artful Science of Instructional Integration.* Toronto: Bookation Inc.**

Barrie Bennett and Carol Rolheiser are both from the Ontario Institute for Studies (OISE) and have combined their skills to create a wonderful document on instructional strategies that cater to a variety of learners including: students at risk, students with different learning styles and fostering critical thinking in students. They reiterate the notion that the best way to manage a classroom is to ensure that students are critically engaged and that the material is presented in an interesting manner. They are attempting to present ways to create effective learning environments.

A personal favourite within this vast book of resources is the section on Bloom’s Taxonomy (p.77). In Beyond Monet, the author’s present six levels that allow the student to move from knowledge based questions, to those that require them to critically challenge and evaluate what they know. The six steps include: recall, understanding, application, analysis, evaluation and synthesis. Teaching students the process (inadvertently) will allow them to get into the habit of going through this process automatically the more they are exposed to it.

Beyond Monet offers question stems as well as an example that teachers can use to implement this practice in their classrooms. It is a highly effective way of gathering how much the students have learned. It also prepares them to work within the Ministry achievement chart guidelines.