Creativity Challenges | 3rd Grade Content Connections

Creativity Challenges foster imaginative and critical thinking skills needed for all disciplines. Off-the-wall and playful prompts support divergent and unexpected thinking; a list of these is available elsewhere in this packet. These challenges are designed to support deep thinking, linked to 3rd grade content standards.

Social Studies

***Economics 15***

***Both positive and negative incentives affect people’s choices and behaviors.***

**Challenge**: Get a small classroom present (game to play, art tools, etc.). Leave the gift in the room for the students to wonder about. Place a sheet of paper on the wall for students to document their wondering. The challenge is for the students to determine the fate of the gift. They have a choice. They can keep the gift and play with it as a class, or they can elect to give it to another class with the promise of a bigger, better gift tomorrow. The next day, same process. A larger box wrapped as a gift. Place a sheet of paper on the wall for students to log new wonderings about the mysterious gift. After a day or two to build anticipation, open the gift (or have the students select a classmate they feel deserves to open the gift). When the students see there is nothing inside, explain to them it is bigger and better and ask them why? An exercise in empathy, compassion and respect.

*Reflection Questions:*

How did it feel giving the gift to the other class?

What did you notice about the other class when you gave them the gift?

Why might this gift be bigger and better than the previous one?

How did it make you feel when you opened the gift?

What lesson does this make you think of?

If you could do this activity all over, knowing what you know now, what would you do and why?

*Materials:*

Small classroom gift

Wrapping paper

Large Box

***Government 10***

***Individuals make the community a better place by solving problems in a way that promotes the common good.***

**Challenge:** Have students solve a room problem. Begin by telling the students to spend 5 minutes looking around the room, without talking just observing, to identify an area they would like to improve. If you have longer, have them identify a space in the morning and spend the day observing how others interact with the space, paying attention to problems or issues that might arise in that space. This is a form of research to inform their redesign. If more than one student identifies the same area, this becomes an exercise in collaboration as well. They need to listen to others’ opinions, think of advantages and disadvantages, and consider all options. Once they have identified a space in the room, they should be given a certain amount of time to help improve that space. Maybe they organize the space, clean it up, or rearrange it to make it more conducive to certain tasks. Then allow time for students to use the new space. Have students reflect on what works or doesn’t work and why.

*Reflection Questions:*

What did you notice about the space before your redesign?

What problems did you notice?

How did students use the space or not use it and why?

How did your observations influence your ideas?

How did you think of others in your redesign?

Was the redesign effective or present more challenges, why or why not?

*Materials:*

Paper

Pencil

Camera (optional to record observations and playback to class to document and discuss)

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Science

***Earth’s resources can be used for energy.***

**Challenge:** After discussing renewable and nonrenewable resources, have students engage in a short creativity challenge. Using only the materials you provide, write the following prompt on a piece of paper for the class to see: “Welcome to the Futuristic Design Lab (FDL). You are now designers charged with the mission to make kids’ lives easier.” Explain to students, using the materials set out before you, create a machine that will make the job of a kid easier. The most important part is to decide how the machine will run. Will you use a renewable resource or nonrenewable one? You can use your imagination as well to think of an energy source we have never used, but you must classify it as renewable or not and state why. Design and build a small model and share it with the class. You must explain your thinking and which energy resource it uses. At the end, the class will vote on the machine that makes the most sense from a practical and energy standpoint.

*Reflection Questions:*

What is the problem your machine will solve?

Why do you think your machine is important?

How will your machine run?

Why did you pick that source of energy?

Do you think it is renewable or nonrenewable and why?

Will this form of energy be able to last?

Could this machine be adaptable to other forms of energy?

*Materials:*

Index cards

Rulers

Tape

String

Pencils

Scissors

Cardboard (optional)

Plastic bottles (optional)

Another materials you can find (optional)

***Offspring resemble their parents and each other.***

**Challenge:** As a creativity challenge follow up, have students create offspring of inanimate objects. Ask the students to select an object in the room and ask them to imagine it is an actual living organism. Imagine what that object does all day. Give it a name and a personality. Perhaps write a short biography of the object on an index card. The next step is to have the students draw or build an offspring of that object. The student should think about the appearance of the offspring. Will it look exactly like the adult when it’s born? Will it transform as it grows? The student should also think about how the offspring will learn how to do its job as it grows older. Think about the environment that the adult and offspring live in. How might this effect its development and actions? Ask the students to share their imagined offspring to the class and share its behaviors, development and appearance.

*Example: I select a chair. I write a biography about the chair. “Hi, my name is Metalia. I was born 30 years ago in a small factory down south. I grew up in another school and learned from my parents how to be a proper chair. I started off as a small stool and soon grew 4 legs. In the beginning I could only hold small toddlers and backpacks, but as I grew I able to support more and more things…..” Next I imagine the offspring as a footstool and it progresses through to a stool, chair and later on in life a leather chair and back to a rocking chair in later years. Explain how observing other chairs, the offspring learned its way. The environment of a classroom meant it was moved around a lot, as it became a rocking chair, it stayed in one place until it went to the scrap heap :(*

*Reflection Questions:*

How does the appearance compare to the adult object and why?

What is the function of the object as an adult and how does it learn its job?

How does the environment the offspring lives in effect its behaviors and job?

*Materials:*

Paper

Cardboard

Scissors

Pencils

Random objects (Adults)

Index cards

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Language Arts

***Reading Literature***

***RL. 3.3. Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.***

Challenge: Using a hat or other container, place the names of characters from a story in the hat. In another hat or container, have students write various settings they like to go to today (movies, football games, friends house, etc.). Have the students select a name from the “character” hat. Have one student select a card from the “setting” hat to read aloud to the class. For the next few minutes the students must act like their selected “character” while attending the event that was picked.

*Reflection Questions:*

What were some of the key characteristics of your character that would impact their attendance at this event and why?

Do you think they would be comfortable or uncomfortable at an event like this and why?

How did your characters interact with others at this event and why?

How might the characters actions effect the events of the setting and why?

What actions do you think might happen at this setting based on what you know about the characters and why?

*Materials:*

Bin

Pencils

Paper

Materials for costumes (optional)

***Speaking and Listening***

***SL. 3.2. Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.***

Challenge: Collect magazines to use for this challenge. Place them in a pile on a table. Precut several images from a magazine, newspaper or other source. Make sure the image has no text on it. Place one image on each table. Have the students get into small groups and look at the image. This collaborative challenge may need a little set up about working in groups if the class is not used to this. Reflection at the end can also focus on the act of collaboration as well. Have students conduct a “[See, Think, Wonder](http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org/VisibleThinking_html_files/03_ThinkingRoutines/03c_Core_routines/SeeThinkWonder/SeeThinkWonder_Routine.html)” of the image to determine its theme and supporting details. The next step, with the magazines, have the students cut out images (no text) to create a collage with either the same theme but with new supporting details and different visual appearance or a new theme and new supporting details. Lastly, have each group share out their initial image and its theme and the newly created collaged image and its newly created theme, while also pointing out supporting details as well.

*Reflection Questions:*

What was the theme of your initial image and what makes you say that?

What are some of the supporting details you noticed?

What theme did you choose for your image and why?

What supporting details help strengthen your theme and why?

*Materials:*

Magazines

Scissors

Glue/tape

Paper

Pencils

Thinking Habit and Team Building Creativity Challenges

**Challenge:** “It’s A and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” Have students get into small groups. Give one person in each group a piece of paper. The first person turns the paper into something in a short time period and announces to the group what it is. Then they pass it along to the next member. This person announces the previous creation and states, “It’s a \_\_previous creation\_\_ and it’s also a \_\_(create something new)\_\_. Keep going around the circle a few times until everyone gets to try it a few times. At the end, pull the whole group together to process. This activity is good for thinking about flexibility, risk taking, sharing with confidence, elaboration, creativity, originality, and so on. Pick one or two areas to focus on. Focusing on too many will lose the impact.

*Reflection Questions:*

How did you feel when you heard about the challenge and why?

Did you get inspired by the person before you?

Did you come up with more interesting ideas the more you went around, why or why not?

How might you have taken a risk with this challenge?

What did you learn about others from this challenge and why?

What did you learn about yourself and why?

*Materials:*

Paper