

The Habits of Mind

Overview

According to the Institute for Habits of Mind, the Habits of Mind are dispositions of effective, efficacious, critical thinkers and are attributes displayed by successful people in response to problems, dilemmas, and questions in which the resolution or answer is not immediately apparent or known. The Habits of Mind serve as mental disciplines that empower creative and critical thinking, particularly when confronted with problematic situations. Taken together, these cognitive, social, and emotional Habits direct users toward increasingly authentic and ethical behavior in that they guide decisions and focus on how to act on information. The Habits of Mind framework includes 16 competencies.

History of the Framework

In 1981, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) invited Art Costa to edit a book on what good thinking is and how to help students become more thoughtful. Commonality among characteristics and attributes of effective, efficient thinkers identified by leaders in the fields of cognition, philosophy, psychology, and education surfaced. These common dispositions became the Habits of Mind framework. Art Costa and Bena Kallick are authors of the seminal book, *Learning and Leading with Habits of Mind*, and many other books and articles. They are co-founders of the Institute for Habits of Mind and have worked with many teachers and schools around the world.

The Habits of Mind

Arthur L. Costa and Bena Kallick

Habits of Mind are a set of thinking dispositions at the core of social, emotional, and cognitive behaviors. These Habits help us respond intelligently and empathically when confronted with problem situations, conflicts, and uncertainties the resolution to which are not immediately apparent.

– Arthur L. Costa and
Bena Kallick

The briefs in this 10-part series each describe an individual framework currently in use. They are intended to illustrate how frameworks can be analyzed and help practitioners learn to evaluate frameworks on the types of criteria that matter most in their settings. The briefs are not an endorsement of these frameworks.

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 <p>1. Persisting <i>Stick to it!</i> Persevering in task through to completion; remaining focused. Looking for ways to reach your goal when stuck. Not giving up.</p>	 <p>2. Managing Impulsivity <i>Take your time!</i> Thinking before acting; remaining calm, thoughtful and deliberative.</p>	 <p>3. Listening with understanding and empathy <i>Understand others!</i> Devoting mental energy to another person's thoughts and ideas; Make an effort to perceive another's point of view and emotions.</p>
 <p>4. Thinking flexibly <i>Look at it another way!</i> Being able to change perspectives, generate alternatives, consider options.</p>	 <p>5. Thinking about your thinking (Metacognition) <i>Know your knowing!</i> Being aware of your own thoughts, strategies, feelings and actions and their effects on others.</p>	 <p>6. Striving for accuracy <i>Check it again!</i> Always doing your best. Setting high standards. Checking and finding ways to improve constantly.</p>

An example of six of the competencies

Purpose and Intended Audience

Habits of Mind are intended for everyone in the learning community (such as teachers, parents, students, and school staff) and involve the whole school. As schools adopt and integrate these life skills, the Habits can be infused into a curriculum and taught along with content. However, the framework is not considered a program or intervention; rather, each school is encouraged to be creative and generative around the framework and responsive to the students in their community and schools. As schools adopt the Habits of Mind over time, the Habits become part of the school's culture. The goal of the framework is to shift school culture so that teachers, students, and everyone in the learning community think more creatively and critically, and that people are more thoughtful, sensitive, and approach situations with a positive lens.

Settings

The framework is used within a whole-school context. The Institute of Habits of Mind's mission is to transform schools into learning communities where thinking and Habits of Mind are taught, practiced, valued and infused into the school culture.

COMPETENCIES NAMED IN THIS FRAMEWORK

- ✓ Persisting
- ✓ Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision
- ✓ Managing impulsivity
- ✓ Gathering data through all senses
- ✓ Listening with understanding and empathy
- ✓ Creating, imagining, innovating
- ✓ Thinking flexibly
- ✓ Responding with wonderment and awe
- ✓ Thinking about thinking (metacognition)
- ✓ Taking responsible risks
- ✓ Striving for accuracy
- ✓ Finding humor
- ✓ Questioning and posing problems
- ✓ Thinking interdependently
- ✓ Applying past knowledge to new situations
- ✓ Remaining open to continuous learning

Criteria Ratings: Conceptual Clarity

FIVE CONCEPTUAL CLARITY CRITERIA			
CRITERIA	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Specificity	Each Habit has a definition and description of concrete behaviors indicative of success.		
Balance	The Habits of Mind represent intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competencies, with particular emphasis on habits in the cognitive domain. The developers note that isolating one habit is not as effective as clustering multiple habits because they are interrelated and meant to be linked together.		
Developmental	The developers do not provide a developmental progression or benchmarks for developmental stages. However, they note each individual student learns how to apply the habits at different rates as they build their capacity to be strategic in their thinking. The Habits look different across developmental periods and in various contexts. Further, the capacity to acquire these habits grows over time.		
Culturally Sensitive	Based on action research in the field, the developers demonstrate in their books the work of international practitioners who find the Habits to be meaningful. The language and meaning of the Habits resonate with students regardless of race, ethnicity, social class or culture. The National Urban Alliance for Effective Education has used the Habits as a part of their work for many years. In addition, schools in countries such as Brazil, Wales, South Africa, Mexico, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Cambodia, and China successfully use the same language of the Habits with their learners. However, questions about cultural responsiveness are not explicit in the framework.		
Empirically Grounded	Two publications provide a synthesis of research on the Habits of Mind and the importance of each. Additionally, many dissertations and reports using the framework are available on the web-site.		
<p><i>These ratings are intended to help illustrate the strengths and limits of some popular frameworks. They are neither designed to formally compare frameworks nor endorse any framework. The ratings are based on criteria defined more fully in this brief and the process of rating and appropriate uses are discussed in the introductory brief to this series. We urge practitioners to review these and prioritize which criteria are most important for use in their particular context.</i></p>			

Criteria Ratings: Implementation Support

FIVE IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT CRITERIA			
CRITERIA	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Intended for Practice	The primary audience of the ASCD books is practitioners. Additionally, the Habits were intentionally expressed as actions, which has shown to make a large difference in the way the framework is used. Naming attributes as verbs puts the Habits into actions that teachers and students can use. Further, materials from practitioners in the field are shared on the website.		
Resources for Practitioners	In addition to the ASCD books for practitioners, the website provides many resources, including blogs, artifacts, ideas and examples from the field, and video online learning. The Institute offers professional development through virtual media, workshops, consultations, and conferences. Four times a year newsletter blasts are also sent to a large community highlighting what's been successful in the field. Additionally, a growing team of affiliates (trained professional developers) are around the world - in New Zealand, Australia, Finland, Brazil, Mexico, and elsewhere - and the Institute is growing their consultant base to help school staff everywhere. Further, animations of the 16 Habits of Mind, co-developed by Wondergrove, are available to students and teachers for children from pre-school through 3rd grade.		
Resources for Use with Children and Youth	Most teachers or practitioners will design or create resources for children themselves, and such artifacts are shared on the Habits of Mind website. The Animations (described above) are also sold on the website.		
Resources for Measurement and Data Use	While the Institute for Habits of Mind has not produced any measures, assessment rubrics and checklists from others utilizing the framework can be found on the website: http://www.habitsofmindinstitute.org/resources/assessments/ . They also encourage assessment strategies that are more personalized, growth-oriented, and self-directed (e.g., portfolios, self-reflection, interviews).		
Empirically Tested	Over 40 schools worldwide have been certified in Habits of Mind. Further, many people have done doctoral work using Habits of Mind around the world including Cambodia and Turkey.		

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Summary of the Framework

The Habits of Mind are a set of 16 problem-solving, life-related skills necessary to effectively operate in society and promote strategic reasoning, insightfulness, perseverance, creativity, and craftsmanship. Through books, articles, and the website, the Institute for Habits of Mind provides instructional strategies for activating the habits and creating a “thought-full” classroom environment; offer assessment and reporting strategies developed by others that incorporate the habits; and provide real-life examples of how communities, school districts, building administrators, and teachers can integrate the habits into their school culture.

About the Developers

Bena Kallick is a private consultant providing services to school districts, state departments of education, professional organizations, and public agencies throughout the United States and internationally. Her work focuses on group dynamics, creative and critical thinking, and alternative assessment strategies in the classroom. Kallick has taught at the Yale School of Management, University of Massachusetts Center for Creative and Critical Thinking, and Union Graduate School and has served on the board of Jobs for the Future.

Arthur L. Costa is professor emeritus of education at California State University, Sacramento and has served as a classroom teacher, a curriculum consultant, an assistant superintendent for instruction, and the direction of educational programs for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. His work focuses on improving education through more “thought-full” instruction and assessment.

Costa and Kallick are co-founders of the Institute for Habits of Mind and recipients of the Malcolm Knowles Award for Self-Directed Learning from the International Society for Self-Directed Learning.

References

Costa, A. L., & Kallick, B. (2008). Learning and leading with habits of mind: 16 essential characteristics for success. <http://www.ascd.org/Publications/Books/Overview/Learning-and-Leading-with-Habits-of-Mind.aspx>

Useful Links to Explore

- Habits of Mind website: <http://www.habitsofmindinstitute.org/>
- Habits of Mind and EduPlanet21 Products: https://www.eduplanet21.com/product-category/habits_of_mind/
- Habits of Mind and WonderGrove Learn Animations: <https://wondergrovelearn.net/>

About the Author



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Teresa Borowski is a graduate student in the Community and Prevention Research PhD program in Psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), where her research focuses on social-emotional competence development, particularly through dance and other arts. She works as a research specialist with CASEL’s research team and the Frameworks subgroup of the Assessment Work Group.

She is also the co-editor of Measuring SEL’s blog. Prior to UIC, Teresa worked as a research assistant in the Infant Cognition Lab and the Cultural Studio at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and for the Learning and Memory Lab at the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology.

The Measuring SEL Series of Frameworks Briefs

The Establishing Practical Social-Emotional Competence Assessments of Preschool to High School Students project as guided by the Assessment Work Group (AWG) is dedicated to helping advance the effective use of data to inspire practice in SEL. In deciding how the AWG could best contribute to advancing the field and complement rather than compete with other efforts underway to address the challenges of multiple frameworks and inconsistent use of language, the AWG Frameworks Subgroup, led by Stephanie Jones and Roger Weissberg, developed four series of briefs designed for practitioners. Each series and each brief in the series is designed to help advance how people think about the issues and make reasonable choices that work best for them and their context. We hope they provide a set of “building blocks” that systems and practitioners can use to advance and improve their SEL efforts. Learn more at <https://measuringSEL.casel.org>

Introductory Series

These briefs are about what frameworks are, how they are useful, the challenges and opportunities they present in practice, and defining criteria that are helpful when considering what frameworks to use.

Comparative Series

These briefs explore efforts underway to categorize and align ways of thinking about comparing unique frameworks. The briefs also describe tools available to aid systems and practitioners in their selection and use of a framework.

Special Issues Series

These briefs identify critical issues that frameworks must address or that influence how they are used that are important to consider when selecting and using frameworks, such as equity and SEL, and developmental considerations.

Descriptive Series

These briefs each describe an individual framework currently in use. They are intended to illustrate how frameworks can be analyzed and help practitioners learn to evaluate frameworks on the types of criteria that matter most in their settings. *(The briefs are not an endorsement of these frameworks.)*

The Assessment Work Group is committed to advancing dialogue on key issues in the field and stating a perspective when appropriate. The views and opinions expressed in these briefs reflect the general position of the Assessment Work Group. They do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of CASEL or any of the individual organizations involved with the work group.