

What is The Depth & Complexity Framework? Depth + Complexity = The Differentiation Solution

The Depth and Complexity Framework was originally developed in the mid 1990's by Dr. Sandra Kaplan, Bette Gould, and Sheila Madsen (Sheila created the Depth and Complexity Icon pictures). Its primary purpose is to push students towards thinking that is similar to professionals/experts. The creators sought to answer the question: How can educators prompt students to go beyond basic understanding of content and elicit critical thinking regardless of topic/content?

From this analysis of how experts practice their craft, eleven different pathways/lenses that professionals use were identified. Those eleven (Language of the Discipline, Details, Patterns, Rules, Trends, Unanswered Questions, Ethics, Big Idea, Over Time, Multiple Perspectives, and Across Disciplines) were each assigned a symbol and the Depth and Icons were born. Indeed, pairing thinking skills with iconic prompts demands deeper analysis, evaluation and a more complex understanding of a topic. While the Depth and Complexity Icons are the most widely-used component of Depth and Complexity, there are several more pieces that comprise the Depth and Complexity Framework.

The Depth and Complexity Framework's components: Critical and Creative Thinking Skills, Depth and Complexity Icons, Content Imperatives, Disciplinary Thinking, and Universal Concepts & Generalizations are meant to be used in conjunction to make traditionally scripted curriculum and instruction open-ended, triggering and stimulating all students' abilities. While used originally within Gifted/Talented education programs, Depth and Complexity has "spilled-over," as intended, into heterogeneous classrooms and other specialized departments. And while Depth and Complexity has been around nearly three decades, more and more educators are currently turning to the framework as the pedagogical engine ensuring students have opportunities to maximize their learning potential while thinking in complex manners about – well, everything.

J Taylor Education and The Center for Depth & Complexity are focused on bringing Depth and Complexity to every teacher and student in the country. We're changing education – focusing all efforts on moving away from scripted initiatives and towards creativity and teaching students "how to think." Depth and Complexity is the only tool you'll need to bridge the gap between the never-ending talk about developing rigor and actually having concrete tools to empower high-level thinking. Change is inevitable and the era of thinking in deep and complex ways has arrived.

Join over 100,000 educators dedicated to creating challenging learning opportunities for students using Depth and Complexity. Students at all learning levels deserve high expectations and access to an environment that offers appropriately differentiated instruction. We welcome the partnership with districts, schools and most importantly classroom teachers to make that a reality.

