

Educational psychology

[Psychology](#)



One of your objectives for the coming school year is to foster your students' creative thinking and/or behavior in a subject area you will be teaching.

Basing your discussion on at least four different factors known to influence creativity, describe four strategies you might use to promote such creativity.

Illustrate each strategy with a concrete example of what you might do.

Firstly, I would show students that creativity is valued. Teachers are more likely to foster creativity when they show students that they value creative thoughts and behaviors.

For example, one way I would encourage this is by rewarding unusual ideas and responses. I would express excitement when students completed a project in a unique and unusual manner. And, as I graded assignments and test papers, I would look for responses that, though I might have not been expecting, are legitimately correct. I would also make a point of engaging in creative activities myself to show students that teachers value creativity.

Secondly, I would focus students' attention on internal rather than external rewards.

Students are more creative when they engage in activities because they enjoy them and take pride in what they have done; they are less creative when they work for external rewards such as grades. Therefore, I would foster creativity by giving students opportunities to explore their own special interests-interests that they will gladly pursue without having to be prodded. For example, I might encourage students to choose a topic about which they are genuinely curious when planning for the science fair.

I would also foster creativity by downplaying the importance of grades, instead focusing students' attention on the internal satisfaction that their creative efforts bring. Thirdly, I would promote mastery of a subject area. Creativity in a particular subject area is more likely to occur when students have considerable mastery of that subject; it is unlikely to occur when students have little or no understanding of the topic. One important way of fostering creativity, then, is to help students master course content.

For example, if I wanted my students to apply scientific principles in a creative manner-perhaps as they conduct a science fair experiment or develop a solution to an environmental problem-I would make sure that they first have those principles down pat. Fourthly, I would ask thought-provoking questions. Students are more likely to think creatively when we ask them questions that require them to use previously learned information in a new way. Questions that ask students to engage in divergent thinking may be particularly helpful.

For example, during a unit on the Pony Express, I might ask: " What are all the ways mail might have been transported across the US at that time? " " Can you think of some very unusual way that no one else has thought of to transport mail today? " Fifthly, I would give students the freedom and security to take risks. Creativity is more likely to appear when students feel comfortable taking risks; it is unlikely to appear when they are afraid of failing. To encourage risk taking, I would allow students to engage in certain activities without evaluating their performance.

I would also urge them to think of their mistakes and failures as an inevitable-but usually temporary-aspect of the creative process. For example, when students are writing a creative short story, I might give them several opportunities to get my feedback, and perhaps the feedback of their peers, before they turn in a final product. Lastly, I would provide the time that creativity requires. Students need time to experiment with new materials and ideas, to think in divergent directions, and occasionally to make mistakes.

A critical aspect of promoting creativity, then is to give them that time. For example, when teaching a foreign language, I might ask small groups of students to create and videotape a television commercial spoken entirely in that language. This is hardly a project that students can do in a day; they may need several weeks to brainstorm various ideas, write and revise a script, find or develop the props they need, and rehearse their lines. Creative ideas and projects seldom emerge overnight.