

What do the terms “depth”, “complexity” and “higher-order thinking skills” really mean?

Depth: (Based upon the work of Sandra Kaplan, adapted by Jere Fitterman 2008)

- **Language of the Discipline** – Using vocabulary terms that are specific to the content or discipline (jargon, acronyms, slang, abbreviations, special phrases and terms).
- **Details** – Examining the defining features or characteristics; finding examples and evidence to support opinions and ideas.
- **Patterns** – Looking at elements that reoccur; sequencing and order of events; making predictions based on past events.
- **Unanswered Questions** – Asking what information is unclear, missing, or unavailable? What evidence is needed? What has not yet been proven?
- **Rules** – Examining the structure that underlies the subject, including the guidelines or regulations that affect it. Determining the hierarchy or ordering principles that are at work.
- **Trends** – Noting factors (social, political, economic, scientific, artistic, geographic) that cause events to occur. Identifying patterns of change over time.
- **Ethics** – Considering the moral principles involved with the subject. What controversies exist and what arguments could emerge from a study of the topic?
- **Big Ideas** – Asking what theories or general statements apply to these ideas? How do these ideas relate to broad concepts such as change, systems, etc.? What is the main idea?

Complexity: (Based upon the work of Sandra Kaplan, adapted by Jere Fitterman 2008)

- **Across the Disciplines** – Relate the area of study to other subjects within, between, and across disciplines.
- **Changes Over Time** – Examine how elements are related in terms of the past, present, and future. How and why do things change? What doesn't change?
- **Different Perspectives** – How would others see the situation differently? What are the opposing viewpoints?

Higher-Order Thinking: (Bloom's Revised Taxonomy)

- **Analyzing** – Breaking information down into its component elements (comparing, organizing, deconstructing, outlining, structuring, integrating).
- **Evaluating** – Judging the value of ideas, materials and methods by developing and applying standards and criteria (hypothesizing, critiquing, experimenting, judging, detecting, monitoring).
- **Creating** – Putting together ideas or elements to develop an original idea or engage in creative thinking (designing, constructing, planning, producing, inventing, devising).