



SUPPORTING CRITICAL THINKING AT HOME

WHAT IS A CRITICAL THINKER?

At Norwalk Public Schools, we define a critical thinker as someone who can logically interpret, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information and ideas. This skill helps students make informed and thoughtful decisions.

STUDENTS ENGAGE IN CRITICAL THINKING BY...

- Logically interpreting, analyzing, and synthesizing information.
- Evaluating information for accuracy, credibility, and relevance.
- Reflecting on and revising ideas using evidence.

WHY IS CRITICAL THINKING IMPORTANT?

Critical thinking empowers children to think independently, evaluate information, and connect ideas. It helps them make informed decisions and life choices, making them better equipped to face challenges in life, work, and relationships.



HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY CHILD IN DEVELOPING THEIR CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS?

GRADES 6-8

CONSIDERING DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES



Middle schoolers are developing more advanced empathy and abstract reasoning skills, allowing them to consider multiple viewpoints and how experiences shape perceptions. Engaging with different perspectives helps them understand the complexities of social interactions and decision-making processes.

Discuss current events, books, or personal experiences that involve multiple perspectives. Ask your child to analyze how people's backgrounds, values, or circumstances might influence their interpretation of the same situation.

CONSIDER ASKING QUESTIONS LIKE:

- How might someone's background or experiences shape their opinion on this issue?
- What perspectives do you think are missing from this discussion? How might including these voices impact the outcome?
- How would you explain this situation to someone who sees it differently?

NAVIGATING COMMUNITY AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Middle schoolers are beginning to think abstractly and often show a growing interest in fairness, justice, and broader societal issues. Engaging in discussions about global or community challenges helps them develop analytical and problem-solving skills.

Encourage children to explore topics like social justice, local community challenges, or global issues. For example, research a local community issue, such as waste management or public transportation. Discuss the challenges and potential solutions. Identify the key facts, the perspectives represented, and any biases in the coverage.

CONSIDER ASKING QUESTIONS LIKE:



- What do you think is the biggest issue in our community? Why?
- Why do you think this issue exists and has not yet been solved?
- What ideas do you have for solving this problem?
- How can you or others take small steps to make a difference?

HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY CHILD IN DEVELOPING THEIR CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS?

GRADES 9-12



ANALYZING CURRENT ISSUES AND CONSIDERING MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

High schoolers are strengthening their critical thinking skills by using evidence and reasoning to develop logical conclusions and considering multiple perspectives. They can explain the patterns, trends, and cause-and-effect relationships found in their analyses. At this stage, they think more abstractly, comparing the current state of things to potential alternatives. They are also refining their moral code, gaining a deeper understanding of right and wrong, and grappling with questions about justice, fairness, and societal norms.

Discuss current news events or policies with your high schooler. For example, investigate the environmental impact of a current policy, such as single-use plastic bans or renewable energy mandates. Identify the stakeholders involved, their interests, and the potential long-term consequences of the policy. Additionally, you can analyze a news article or media report on a controversial topic. Evaluate the credibility of the sources, identify biases, and propose alternative ways the information could be presented to achieve greater objectivity.

CONSIDER ASKING QUESTIONS LIKE:

- What do you already know about this issue?
- What perspectives had the most influence in designing this policy/writing this article? What evidence makes you think this?
- Why does this situation or policy exist? What historical factors contributed to it?
- Why might some groups support or oppose this policy/article? What are their reasons?
- What solutions could address this problem and what trade-offs might those solutions involve? How might this solution impact different groups?

CREATING A CHANGE PROPOSAL

Ask your high schooler to identify a problem in their school or community that they are passionate about. Work together to research the issue, gather evidence, and develop a proposal for change. Encourage them to present their proposal to family members or peers for feedback, and then submit the proposal to the appropriate party.

CONSIDER ASKING QUESTIONS LIKE:

- What issues do you see in your school or community and what issue do you think is the most important to solve first? Why?
- What stakeholders do you need to buy-in to your idea? What evidence will these stakeholders find to be the most compelling? Why?
- What challenges might you face in implementing this solution?
- How might this solution impact different groups or stakeholders?
- What are the ethical considerations of this proposal?



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