

# Making Thinking Visible to Inform Next Steps

Invention is a process that often follows unpredictable routes. This tool\* can become the basis for ongoing teacher inquiry, or it can help you consider your next teaching steps by reflecting on children's thinking.

## Step 1: Preparation

- Choose an *Inspiring Inventiveness* [practice](#) or [principle](#) that you want to understand more deeply in your work. Alternatively, observe with an open mind to see what *Inspiring Inventiveness* practices and principles emerge over the course of a day or week.
- Think ahead to when you might see the practice or principle in action.
- Decide how to record your observations (e.g., video or audio-recording, notes and photos, examples of student work).
- Arrange to have a parent, colleague, or student help you document or watch the rest of the class while you document.

## Step 2: Observation

- Focus on capturing the thinking and activity of one small group, rather than trying to document multiple groups.
- Invite one or more colleagues whose perspectives you value to meet with you afterwards to review your documentation.

## Step 3: Shaping your documentation to share with colleagues

- Select photographs, short video-clips, and/or excerpts from your notes or recordings that best reveal the practice or principle in action.
- Be sure to include enough material for a group to engage in a meaningful conversation, but not so much that there isn't time to both look at and discuss it. It shouldn't take longer than 5-7 minutes to read or view your documentation.
- Put your documentation into an easily shareable format such as PowerPoint or video, or make copies of texts and images for the group to look at.

\* Inspired by "Tool 7: Designing and Facilitating Adult Study Groups," (Krechevsky, M., Mardell, B., Rivard, M., & Wilson, D.G. (2013). *Visible learners: Promoting Reggio-inspired approaches in all schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.)

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## Step 4: Discussing the documentation

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Possible questions to raise with colleagues about your own or another's work include:

- *What principle or practice are you reviewing? What relationship do you see between your observation of the children and this principle or practice?*
- *What evidence do you see of inventiveness? Of learning? What makes you say that?*
- *When does one person's thinking seem to influence the thinking of another or of the whole group?*
- *How do the interactions or conversations among children help or hinder their learning (consider size and composition of the group, the language and strategies used, and the roles children take)?*
- *What does the documentation suggest about creating better conditions (physical space, time, materials, nature of the task, etc.) for inspiring inventiveness?*

Consider:

- *What might you try next to deepen or extend children's thinking related to this practice or principle?*
- *What might be the value of sharing some or all of this documentation, and perhaps your own and your colleagues' reflections, back with children? What might you select and how might you frame it?*
- *What is still puzzling or interesting to you after viewing the documentation?*

For video examples and reflections on practices that inspire inventiveness, become an Opal School Online Sustaining Member at [learning.opalschool.org](https://learning.opalschool.org).



## Inspiring children’s inventiveness requires that adults consider education a process of invention and develop practices that inspire their own inventiveness.

An image of children being inventive—and school as a place to encourage inventiveness—requires an image of teachers who are inventive with their practice. Teaching, like invention, is an uncertain journey, requiring constant recalibration. Grounding next steps for learning in a careful review of children’s work is a powerful way to inform one’s practice and keep it connected to children’s thoughts and feelings. This tool invites teachers to engage in collective reflection grounded in children’s work in order to make sense of and improve their practice.



### Suggested Time Frame

Reflecting on children’s thinking with a small group of colleagues is a practice best carried out over time. Allot at least 30 minutes to discuss the documentation.

### When and How

Use this tool to support an ongoing practice of teacher reflection grounded in student work.

### Tips and Variations

- This tool supports collegial inquiry. In addition to guiding teaching decisions, it can become the basis for professional development for teaching teams, grade level or other school divisions, or whole-school meetings.
- Consider using other discussion protocols, such as the thinking routine [See-Think-Wonder](#) or protocols from [schoolreforminitiative.org](#) or [makinglearningvisibleresources.org](#).
- Consider choosing one or two *Inspiring Inventiveness* [practices](#) or [principles](#) to focus on per month or per year.

