

THE MIND GIANTS



Join Smarty
Wonderbeak
and his pals on
a critical
thinking
journey!

WholeBrainTeaching.com
Characters and concept created by Chris Biffle
Product created by Kate Bowski

THE MIND GIANTS

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REDEFINING TEACHING FOR GROWTH IN CRITICAL THINKING ABILITIES

“Critical thinking is a desire to seek, patience to doubt, fondness to meditate, slowness to assert, readiness to consider, carefulness to dispose and set in order; and hatred for every kind of imposture.”
~ Francis Bacon (1605)

As professional educators, we hold the key to unlock the development of critical thinking abilities in our students. To do this, we must learn to make the leap between teaching the foundational knowledge necessary to speak coherently about and understand the basics of subject matter and instructing our students on how to take and defend a position supported by evidence, experience, and cognizance. When we teach our children to think critically at even the earliest elementary levels, we are providing them a skill which will serve them well into their futures.

The key that will unlock this door for greater student understanding is questioning. Through the use of the Mind Giants, we will move our students from rote factual knowledge (Bobo Robo-Dilly) to in depth thought about concepts (Smarty Wonderbeak and the rest of his pals). As we pose questions, a cautionary word is in order. Probing questions will require your students to expand on their answers through the use of examples, reasons, or connections. When Dilly Dilly appears on the scene, her questions should not lead to dead thinking or simple regurgitation of material. Instead, she should be asking students questions such as, “Why do you think that?”, “How do you know?”, or “What else can you tell me about that?” Appropriate questioning strategies will instill in your students the ability to consider carefully their statements and truly assess the assertions they make.

When students identify misconceptions or analyze errors, they step deeper into the world of critical thinking. Enter Uncle Louie “Trickster” Dilly. By presenting “tricky” ideas or answers, he challenges students to find the evidence to disprove and correct his statements. So often students arrive in our classroom willing to accept anything and everything presented to them at face value. They need to feel comfortable taking a risk to say, “I disagree”. Uncle Louie allows them to do this through a non-threatening manner.

When Mind Giants are infused into the curriculum, deep thinking about subject matter happens and students learn to question the information in the world around them. As students grow in their critical thinking abilities from childhood to adulthood, they become more capable of making well informed decisions as citizens of our world. As teachers, we must heed the call to instill critical thinking skills in our students if they are to be productive, educated human beings. Mind Giants to the rescue!

References:

CriticalThinking.net, R.H. Ennis, 2003-2011

Foundation for Critical Thinking, CriticalThinking.org, 2011

WholeBrainTeaching.com, 2012

Biffy Bluebird



Powers: Always knows how anyone can improve. Never says a negative word.

Secret: Whenever confronted with a challenging problem, can morph into Smarty Wonderbeak, Biffy's secret identity.

Favs: Chocolate Marshmallow Sundaes with a fudge brownie.

Smarty Wonderbeak

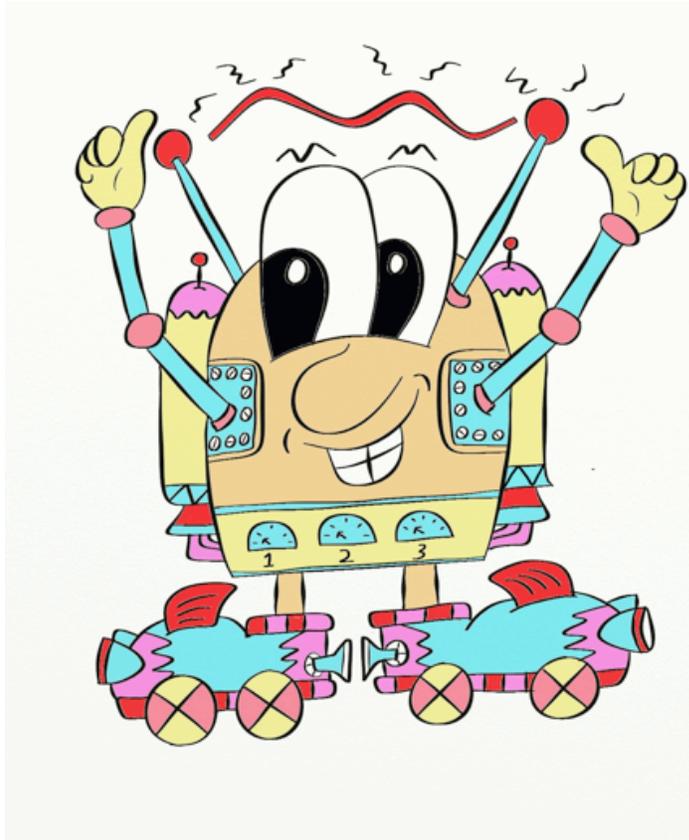


Powers: Deep Thinking, Super Hero, Problem Solver; Expert user of Because Clappers, Detail Adders and Example Poppers.

Secret: Stores Classroom rules, math facts, language arts concepts, key ideas in Bobo Robo-Dilly's memory bank for instant access.

Favs: Playing soccer on pogo sticks.

Bobo Robo-Dilly



Powers: Often has Perfect memory of any rules or concepts previously learned; makes wonderful large gestures.

Secret: Dial 1 controls Bobo's volume; Dial 2 controls bobo's speech speed; dial 3 is the mystery dial.
What does it control???

Favs: watching himself watching himself watch himself on TV.

Big Dilly



Powers: Is an eager student, asks for more details, loves to hear Because clappers, example poppers, detail adders, is super excited to learn anything, always encourages whoever is teaching him.

Secret: Big Dilly is especially excited when he is taught with large gestures and props (a pencil, piece of paper, anything) that will help him understand an answer.

Favs: Loves Making up Rhymes. "Big Dilly is so Silly and lives in Philly and learns Willy Nilly!"

Dilly Dilly



Powers: Poses wonderful questions that always begin with one of the following; who, what, where, when, why, How?

Secret: If tickled under her chin, she will give answers to her own questions!

Favs: Celebrates good classroom work by Pretending to ride a rocket powered skateboard while sitting in her seat.

Uncle Louie "Trickster" Dilly



Powers: Very clever and is always trying to trick a student by giving wrong answers. However, he is happy whenever he is corrected ... because he gets another chance to give a clever wrong answer!

Secret: He loves to see kids learn although he pretends to be unhappy, saying "Oh Phoeey! You fooled uncle Louie!"

Favs: Wrinkling his nose and wagging his head when he says, "Oh Phoeey! You fooled Uncle Louie!"

MIND GIANTS TRADING CARDS



Print the attached
cards back to back
for classroom fun!

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Classroom Applications for The Mind Giants

Using the Posters and Trading Cards

- Print the posters to hang around your room. Refer to them as you do critical thinking.
- Print the trading cards and put them on a ring or a baggie for students to use as they do critical thinking activities.
- Put the trading cards on popsicle sticks for students to use as puppets.
- Project the posters on the white board or Smart board as you do critical thinking activities. You could even pretend the Mind Giants are whispering their questions or ideas to you!

Using the Mind Giants with Students

1. Sockless Hand Puppets

Students their hands as puppets as they create critical thinking conversations.

For example:

- Big Dilly asks Smarty Wonderbeak to explain classroom concepts.
Smarty uses because clappers and example poppers to clearly explain content.
- Uncle Louie Trickster Dilly tries to trick Smarty Wonderbeak by telling him the wrong way to do things or that mistakes are ok.
Smarty explains with deep thinking why the “right” way is correct and needs to be followed.
- * Bobo Robo Dilly can repeat facts and definitions when given a word or phrase.

2. Error Analysis

Present students with a problem or example containing errors. They must find the error and explain both why it is wrong and the correct method of fixing the problem.

For example:

- * Uncle Louie Trickster Dilly tells a student this sentence is correct:

my mother went to kansas city on a business trip

Use Bobo Robo Dilly to remind students of the rules for capitalization and punctuation. Then Smarty Wonderbeak will make the corrections using because clappers and example poppers to support the reasons for the corrections.

This scenario can be used with math problems, reading responses, or concepts in any other subject (science, social studies, art, music, keyboarding). The sky is the limit!

3. Literature Circles

Breathe new life into those literature circles when you bring in the Mind Giants as your job holders!

For example:

- * Biffy Bluebird - presents the task for the class period and keeps the group on track
- * Dilly Dilly becomes the Questioner asking Who, What, Why, When, and How questions.
- * Bobo Robo Dilly becomes the Summarizer
- * Uncle Trickster Louie Dilly becomes the Word Wizard (and of course he always tries to trick kids by giving the wrong definition)
- * Smarty Wonderbeak becomes the Connector when he explains in depth connections within the text or to other items requested by Biffy.

4. Writing Paragraphs and Essays

Brainstorming for paragraphs and essays seems to always be a challenge for students. Use the Mind Giants to get those creative juices and ideas flowing!

For example:

- * Biffy Bluebird presents a topic.
- * Students become Dilly Dilly and begin to create questions about the topic that can be answered in a paragraph or essay.
- * Uncle Trickster Louie Dilly can throw in a few misconceptions as students discuss or write answers to questions.
- * After students write, have them share their writing. Then Smarty Wonderbeak critiques it with comments and complements supported with because clappers and example poppers.

5. Vocabulary Review

Rather than spending hours having kids write definitions or bubble in worksheets, try using the Mind Giants to add some flair to your vocabulary practice

For example:

Students have a conversation using one of the Poster or Trading Card methods described on page 10.

- * Biffy Bluebird asks what content words mean.
- * Bobo Robo Dilly gives the definition.
- * If the situation exists for examples to be given to enhance the vocabulary word, Big Dilly can ask for more information and Smarty Wonderbeak would provide the examples.

So the conversation might sound like this:

Biffy: What is verb? I know you know that one!

Bobo: A verb is an action word.

Big Dilly: I would love to know more about verbs! Can someone give me some examples?

Smarty: Sure, I can! Examples of verbs are run, talk, and skip. These are verbs because they are actions that people do.

Biffy: Thanks guys! That sure helped me understand verbs!

6. Teaching Rules or Directions

One of the most important things we do, whether at the beginning of the year or at the beginning of presenting an assignment, is to teach rules, expectations, or give directions. The Mind Giants help us know that children understand what the rules or directions are and what their purpose is.

For example:

- * When giving directions for assignments, Dilly Dilly can ask questions to clarify what was said. (What are we supposed to write? How are we supposed to find a partner? When are we supposed to be finished?) Smarty Wonderbeak can provide the answers with because clappers.
- * When teaching rules (which we revisit often throughout the year), we can use the Mind Giants to reinforce the importance of and reasoning behind the rules.

For example:

- * Biffy Bluebird tells students to state the rules.
- * Bobo Robo Dilly assists in repeating the rules.
- * Dilly Dilly asks questions about the rules. (Why is Rule 2 important? What does Rule 5 mean? How do we follow directions?)
- * Smarty Wonderbeak provides the answers to Dilly Dilly's questions using because clappers and example poppers.
- * Uncle Louie Trickster Dilly tries to throw curve balls at students by saying things like "Running to get in line is a smart choice because we will get there faster." or "Screaming while we gesture is good because louder is better."
- * Then the students all get to chant, "Oh Phooey Uncle Louie" and Smarty Wonderbeak can correct Uncle Louie using critical thinking statements.

7. Story or Article Review

Use the Mind Giants to pose questions and answers about stories or articles students have read and need to review.

For example:

- * Dilly Dilly asks questions of Biffy Bluebird. (Who was the main character? What was the climax of the story? How did the story conclude? What was the main idea? Why did the author choose to include these text features?)
- * Biffy Bluebird morphs into Smarty Wonderbeak to answer the questions using example poppers and because clappers.
- * Uncle Louie Trickster Dilly can jump in and try to trick students with the wrong answer but Smarty will correct him using his critical thinking skills.

8. Readers Theater

For a real change of pace, try writing a Readers Theater script using the Mind Giants as characters to teach concepts or ideas from a unit. If your students are older, they can actually write the script.

Then students practice reading the scripts in small groups, just as in a typical Readers Theater, and they present their “play” to the class.

With this approach, students will not only be practicing fluency, they will be conquering a new type of writing (especially if they are the ones writing it!), they’ll be solidifying the concepts or ideas taught, and they’ll gain experience from “performing” in front of a group, a life skill.

INCORPORATING TECHNOLOGY WITH THE MIND GIANTS

9. Email, Blogging & Edmodo

Email & Blogging:

If you use email or blogs with your students, try sending a message or make an entry from one of the Mind Giants. Choose the Mind Giant that will accomplish your goal for each particular lesson.

For example:

- * Present a challenge from Biffy Bluebird either in an email or as a blog post. Students respond by emailing back or posting a blog comment.
- * Make Dilly Dilly a “student” on your blog or send an email from her. She can ask all sorts of questions to make students think deeply about a subject.
- * Uncle Louie Trickster Dilly can also send messages and blog. He would present a misconception or problem with an error and students would correct the mistakes using because clappers and example poppers in their response.

Edmodo:

If you haven’t tried Edmodo.com, it is like Facebook for school. It provides a safe atmosphere for students to post thoughts and comments without the ads or public access of Facebook.

When you create an Edmodo class, make the Mind Giants part of your student group. Then, post questions, comments or challenges from them for students to respond to. This is a great interactive way for students to “talk” to each other about class content and still accomplish what you want from them!

** A note about these activities:

Be sure to teach your students about online etiquette prior to setting them free into the world of technology. Just as we teach classroom rules on day one, so should we teach about courtesy when we introduce email, blogs, or social media. Of course, the Mind Giants will make sure our students understand these rules thoroughly!

INCORPORATING TECHNOLOGY WITH THE MIND GIANTS (con't)

10. Using Smart Boards and Projectors:

Put the Mind Giants on your whiteboards or projection screens so they are live and in living color! Upload the mini posters from this book or cut and paste the Mind Giants into your own slides.

Add a touch of creativity by using the many special effects available in the Power Point or Keynote software. Students always seem to enjoy these!

For example:

- * Choose something flashy when Biffy Bluebird has a challenge to present.
- * Dilly Dilly's questions can appear one at a time so students can focus on just that question.
- * Big Dilly can appear and disappear when you want students to give added details or go further into an explanation.
- * Vocabulary words or content area words/phrases pop up individually and Robo Bobo Dilly gives the meanings.
- * Sentence frames appear and Smarty Wonderbeak completes them. Be sure to include because clappers and example poppers.

Smart Board users can achieve these same results by using the Notebook Software. The fade in features are always a hit. Check out the multiple options in the Activities section for interactive ideas where the Mind Giants can be used.

For example:

- * Multiple Choice - Smarty Wonderbeak, Big Dilly, and Uncle Louie Trickster Dilly can be used as students play the Prove It! game or label answers with Smarty, Trickster, and Doofus.
- * Note Reveal - great for reviewing content ideas/vocabulary. Bobo Robo Dilly is used to repeat the basic facts.

Examples (con't.)

- * Sentence Arrange - students arrange sentences in the correct order. Uncle Louie Trickster Dilly can challenge students by giving tricky reasons for the misplacement of sentences and Smarty Wonderbeak can correct him using critical thinking.
- * Balloon Pop - edit the balloons with vocabulary for Bobo Robo Dilly to repeat, questions from Dilly Dilly, or ideas from Uncle Louie Trickster Dilly for students to correct.

Smart Board pre-made activities have unlimited uses with the Mind Giants!

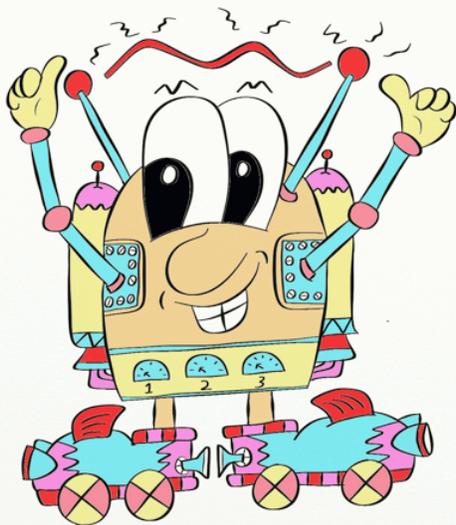
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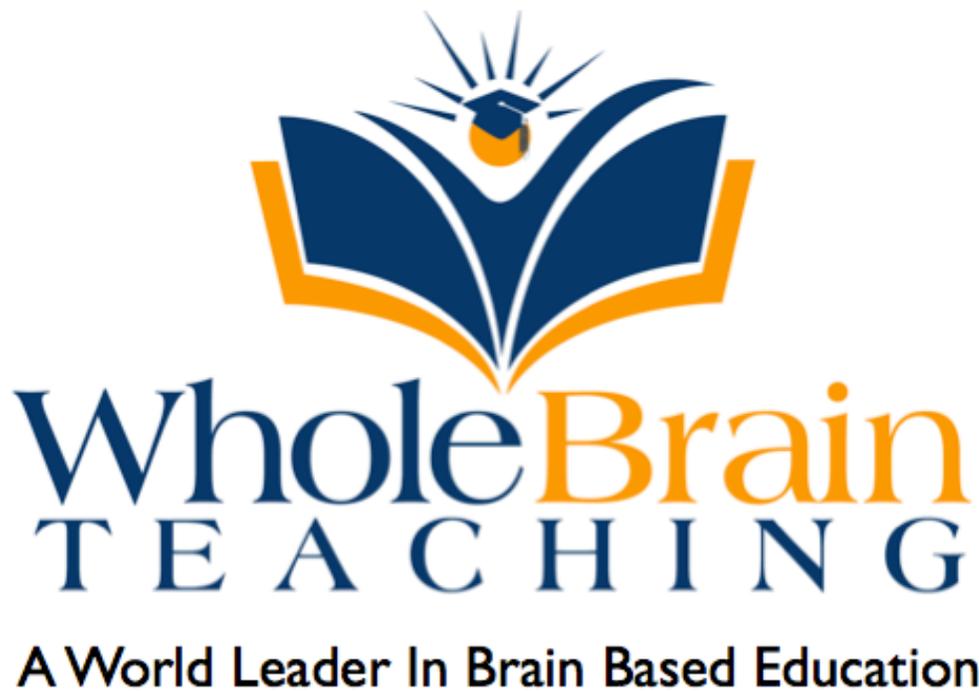
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For more information about Whole
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