Exploring Leadership

PROBLEM SOLVING: DIVERGENT THINKING

Our educational system tends to focus on getting the right answer. Divergent thinking is different. It's all about taking creative risks. Every time you choose to use an object in a different way or connect ideas that seem disconnected, you are taking a creative risk. Some might say you are thinking outside the box, but you might also be thinking differently *about* the box. Maybe the constraints of the box are actually the keys to creativity and innovation. (Think of all the things a large box can become for an imaginative child!) D

CONVERSATION STARTER:
- **Show this YouTube Video.**
- **How do you think the filmmaker came up with the idea for this short movie? What kind of thinking does it illustrate?**

Divergent thinking is a crucial problem-solving skill. It can be helpful when writing an essay, debating an issue, keeping an open mind when learning things you disagree with, and even math. here are many situations where boundaries and obstacles (i.e., the box) cannot be removed, so they have to be worked around. This requires divergent thinking, and those who do it creatively are much more likely to succeed in work, leadership, and life.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- **Play a simple game that requires divergent thinking.**

- **Distinguish divergent thinking from "getting the right answer."**

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Computer/Projector to view YouTube video

- Timer

EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES:

Change One Letter Game Instructions
Circle up! Whoever has the birthday closest to today will go first.
The facilitator will write/display a word. The object of the game is to change one letter in the word so it forms a new word.

FACILITATOR TIP:

- **The video has a lot of credits at the end, stop it as soon as the first one appears**

- **This is not a problem-solving activity; it is a problem-identifying activity. It might frustrate the participants that the goal is not to state a solution.**

- There are infinite possibilities and no single correct answer, but players will have a limited amount of time (15-30 seconds depending on the size of the circle) and no repeating of words is allowed. Proceed around the circle until no more new words can be formed. The object of the game is to go until time is up without having to start over.
- Example: Star >> Stab >> Slab >> Slat >> Slit >> Slim >> Slid >> Slip >> Clip >> Flip >> Flit >> Flat >> Flax >> Flux >> Flub >> Club >> Blub >> Blur >> etc.
- The game can be restarted with a different word if necessary. Based on the group size and enthusiasm, the facilitator can decide time limits and whether or not they are allowed to help each other. (Make it fun!)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- How is the divergent thinking required in this game different from the thinking you do when you solve a math problem?
- What were the boundaries, limitations, and obstacles of this game? (What "box" did you have to work within?)
- While observing the circle, how often did you think of a different word than the one that was given?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- When in real life is divergent thinking required? Give some examples.
- How does being limited by the rules or expectations of something force you to be more creative?

CONCLUSION:

Sometimes in life we have to come up with the "right answer," but most of the time there are many ways to solve a problem. Divergent thinking will allow you to see the possibilities and come up with creative solutions.

REFERENCES

- https://spencerauthor.com/divergent-thinking/
- https://www.edutopia.org/blog/fueling-creativity-through-divergent-thinking-classroom-stacey-goodman
- https://instructionaldesignfusions.wordpress.com/2010/10/23/strategies-and-tools-for-divergent-thinking/