Think, Ponder, Ruminate, Surmise!
Ideas to Increase Student Development of Thinking Skills

For many educators, this time of the school year brings extended opportunities with their students. The numerous fall and winter breaks are over and now they can really dive deep and help students accomplish their learning goals. Teachers often welcome this occasion of fewer breaks to set or adjust goals with their students and focus closely on student growth. Educators are tasked with helping each of their students attain adequate yearly growth. This is not a small feat. It's also important to help students grow their thinking skills. The next paragraphs will highlight some tried and true "go-to" activities and resources to develop student thinking skills.

If you're looking for a resource that is easy to use and can be used in every lesson you teach right now, look to Gifted Guild's Depth and Complexity Question Stems by Ian Byrd and Lisa Van Gemert. This resource is extremely user friendly. It takes the question stems discussed in the book Depth and Complexity (same authors), and puts them into a well-organized, question-stems-only resource. It is separated into 4 sections: The Elements, Content Imperatives, Disciplinarianism, and Content-Area Questions. This resource is a no-frills, get-right-down-to-it aid to implementing Depth and Complexity into every lesson and will most certainly get your students thinking more deeply.

For a more extended project, consider having your students create a documentary. Use a theme that can expand into many areas of interest. For instance, a group of students may be very concerned about climate change and the impact it is having on our planet. Allow each student to become an expert in some facet of climate change e.g., the greenhouse effect, water pollution, deforestation…you get the idea. Each student conducts research and writes a script for their part of a group documentary. The scripts are edited by fellow group mates, and the entire group determines the order of the script so the documentary flows well for the viewer. The students also need to write transition scripts to nicely move from one component of their theme to another. Each student uses photos and video clips which tie nicely to their script. After rehearsing, the students create a video documentary with each group member reading their part as voice-over to their photos and video clips. These ideas just scratch the surface. Students will want to perfect their video editing skills, voice inflection, etc. but, once students catch the bug for creating documentaries, they will certainly want to do more.

Maybe you don't want to embark on a project. If online, quick activities are what you desire, check out KenKen Puzzles at kenkenpuzzle.com, Hashi Puzzles at conceptis.puzzles.com, or a variety of puzzles at brainzilla.com. Although these puzzles seem like games to students, they are developing deductive thinking skills and logic which can be applied to curricular lessons in your classroom.

Lastly, the website *Mensa for Kids* at mensaforkids.org offers many resources for students and teachers. From lesson plans to activity plans to TED Connections to Games, *Mensa for Kids* has so many resources for you to use. Some of the resources are ready for immediate use, and some may require a gathering of materials on your part. In any case, you will not be disappointed with the offerings on this website.

Happy thinking!