

Assessing Thinking: Six Continua

OBVIOUS **BEYOND THE GIVEN**

1 2 3 4

States the obvious, just scratches the surface, doesn't stretch to go beyond the given information or surface story. **Continuum one** Probes beneath the surface, reaches beyond the obvious, stretches for new applications, questions, connections.

FUZZY **CLEAR & FOCUSED**

1 2 3 4

Thinking moves aren't clear (questions slide into statements, reasons slide into claims, observations slide into interpretations). Sprawling: rambling, unfocused, disorganized. Loses sight of main ideas or goals. **Continuum two** Thinking moves are clearly differentiated, thinking has a clear structure. Goals and purposes are clear and appropriately met. Anchored to main ideas, conceptually well-organized.

SIMPLISTIC **ELABORATED**

1 2 3 4

Under-described, no detail or nuance. Overly broad, overly simplified, overly generalized. **Continuum three** Rich in detail, evocative, imaginative, nuanced, descriptive

ONE-DIMENSIONAL **MULTI-DIMENSIONAL**

1 2 3 4

Only touches on one layer or dimension of a topic, work of art, or idea. Doesn't see complexity, layers, or other viewpoints. **Continuum four** Touches on several layers or dimensions (e.g., facts, big ideas or themes, deep structure, puzzles, perspectives). Recognizes complexity, recognizes that there are different levels, layers, or perspectives.

RESTRICTED **GENERATIVE**

1 2 3 4

Closure-oriented. Doesn't seem to want to explore big ideas or ask hard questions. Often shows bias, resistance to thinking. **Continuum five** Expands or extends thinking in new directions. Broadens understanding, opens up new lines of inquiry. Often reflects curiosity and openness.

TANGENTIAL **ESSENCE-CAPTURING**

1 2 3 4

Doesn't capture or recognize important themes, characteristics or elements. Strays from the topic. Hovers over unimportant details or ideas. **Continuum six** Insightful, captures the heart of things. Identifies key themes, characteristics or elements. Sees deep structure. Shows an appreciation for the relative importance of things.