Framework-at-a-Glance: Cultivating Creative & Civic Capacities

How can we imagine, think critically, and act together toward more just and sustainable worlds?

We all belong to communities that are facing complex challenges, and that are full of opportunities for more fairness, sustainability, and beauty. This is true from the classroom to the global stage. Yet, business-as-usual undermines our ability to engage this complexity with imagination, critical thinking, care, and agency.

Creativity can empower us to imagine, explore complexity, and bring our ideas into the world. Civic-mindedness can help us understand ourselves and one another as both independent and interdependent. It can enable us to negotiate the tensions, and tap the potential, of living together in shared societies. **When we nurture creativity and civic-mindedness in tandem, we can support students in being imaginative, thoughtful, collaborative agents in building better worlds**.

Although constructive engagement with the challenges of our times is certainly difficult, we - teachers, students, and everyone around us - possess the power to navigate and harness our **Interconnectedness** as unique citizens of a shared world, and to

> Slow down and reframe to **Investigate** complexity,
> **Imagine** collectively how the world could be otherwise,
> and Transform our ideas into meaningful **Influence**,

Toward more fairness, sustainability, and beauty in our worlds.

Cultivating Creative & Civic Capacities (C4) outlines a framework of ideas and practices organized around these four lenses – Interconnectedness, Investigation, Imagination, and Influence. The framework comprises classroom-ready tools, ideas for practice, and resources for teacher exploration and reflection.

Co-created by the Columbus Museum of Art, Project Zero, and public-school teachers across disciplines and levels, C4 is grounded in the explorations of educators harnessing the potential of Thinking Like an Artist[1] and of thinking with art.

Artists question the world around them and create ideas that are both original and influenced by their cultural and social contexts. Powerful art can inspire viewers to consider the world – and their relationships to different people, places, and times – in new, more complex ways; imagine possibilities; and think expansively about how to inspire and impact others. The C4 framework adopts powerful practices from artists and art museums to apply across disciplines.

The C4 framework seeks to support teachers of all contexts, content, and age group to design for learning that helps student **slow down to investigate, imagine, and influence as interconnected citizens of a shared world, empowered with the creative and civic capacities our students and communities need to thrive**.

Framework developed with the input of central Ohio public school teacher-researchers: Marc Alter, Maggie Boggess, Lindsey Danhoff, Lori Ehrensberger, Becky Grabosky, Eric Gregg, Dione Greenberg, Molly Hinkle, Rachelle Howland, Laura Koontz, Karmyn Metzger, Sarah Pence, Emily Reiser, Sarah Rough, Christine Scarborough, Pam Sexton, Meredith Stone, Matt Szozda, and Andrea Vescelius.

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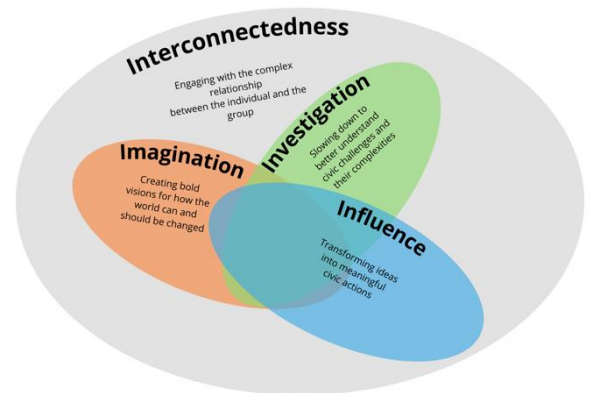
[1] Thinking Like an Artist here refers to the creativity habits artists demonstrate, and which are applicable across domains. For more information about the Columbus Museum of Art's Thinking Like an Artist rubric, visit https://www.columbusmuseum.org/resources/

Framework at-a-Glance: Key Points & Potential Challenges

Investigation

Key Points

- Slow down to better understand a civic problem
- Step out of our limiting mindsets to deepen understanding of the complexities of a civic problem
- Observe and reason using reliable and diverse evidence and expertise

Potential Challenges

- Feeling a sense of urgency or general desire to "fix" problems, rather than slow down to think more expansively about embedded or related civic challenges
- Questioning our own assumptions and positionality
- Sorting out evidence in a polarizing environment full of mis- and disinformation

Imagination

Key Points

- Identify what is unjust or unsustainable about our current reality
- Collectively imagine how that reality could be otherwise
- Craft a shared vision for thriving as a community, incorporating diverse perspectives

Potential Challenges

- Failing to project beyond one's immediate space and time to envision how things could be otherwise
- Creating an echo chamber by not inviting multiple voices into the conversation
- Projecting one's own values and biases onto others rather than listening with humility

Influence

Key Points

- Seek to understand how we are influenced and how we influence others
- Consider the change we want to see and what is actionable and promising in different spheres of influence
- Transform a vision into meaningful civic action

Potential Challenges

- Lacking awareness of influences on oneself
- Insufficient relevant knowledge for ideas to be credibly actionable
- Lacking awareness of how an action might impact different people and communities

Interconnectedness

Key Points

- Understand we are always both individuals *and* part of intersecting communities and systems
- Engage the tensions[i] inherent in the complexities of being an individual and members of a community
- Be mindful of the wellbeing of oneself and the community

Potential Challenges

- Falling into a "good vs. bad" way of thinking about the tensions
- Prioritizing either individual *or* community achievement and well-being, rather than supporting both
- Essentializing people or oneself rather than accepting the range of identities we each carry

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[i] independence and interdependence, distinctiveness and belonging, self-care and stewardship, agency and equity