

SWATS

(School-Wide Assessment of Thinking Skills)

by Jean Edwards and Chris Gladstone © 2007

IS THIS YOU?

- you want to monitor how much your students knowledge of thinking skills increases from year to year
- you need hard data and graphs
- your staff are teaching thinking tools and strategies: e.g.
 - Six hats
 - Bloom's Taxonomy
 - PMI
 - Venn diagrams
 - flowcharts
 - Graphic Thinkers

IF THE ANSWER IS YES: then feel free to use SWATS

WHAT IS THE REASONING BEHIND SWATS?

I invented the SWATS test in the hope that it will help schools whose teachers are keen on implementing a school-wide thinking-skills-development programme*.

I've been working for quite a while now on designing a way of assessing students' thinking skills, and recording some kind of progress across the school. Tricky. After much research and trialling and refining, SWATS is the result to date. It's a work in progress, and I'd be happy for you to use it if you're willing to share with me any suggestions for improvement and also let me know if the results are proving their worth to you and your school!

WHAT is the PURPOSE of SWATS?

- SWATS is designed to measure students' KNOWLEDGE and UNDERSTANDING of thinking tools across the year
- Results are for teachers and administrators to inform practice for the year
- Can be given as a Pretest at the start of year one, then at the beginning of every year after that for comparative analysis
- Results can be easily tallied and graphed
- Designed so that younger students can have the test administered verbally by an older "buddy"
- Results can be analysed for scoring purely on Six Hats, and/or on Bloom's and thinking strategies (PMI, Venn diagram, flowchart)

It is not designed to measure HOW students are applying those tools in their schoolwork; once the test data shows strengths and weaknesses in thinking tools and strategies, then teachers can assess how well students are applying the thinking tools during daily schoolwork and performances of understanding. Some of the questions are difficult on purpose, so that there is less chance of a 'ceiling' on the test. I hope SWATS will help schools whose teachers are keen on implementing a school-wide thinking-skills-development programme*.

NOTE: Question 9 refers to Success Criteria; you may want to change this phrase to personalise it to your own school's vocabulary - perhaps your staff use another phrase when referring to expected outcomes when talking to students?

SPECIAL THANKS

I'd especially like to thank **Chris Gladstone** of St Joseph's School in Nelson, for bouncing ideas around and for her enthusiastic help in tweaking and testing SWATS at St Joseph's Catholic School in Nelson.

And please remember to send me feedback!

And yes, you're welcome to hand out copies as long as you acknowledge the source.

Best regards,

JEAN and the team at ThinkShop

* For a Scope and Sequence chart for years 1-13, see "How To Teach Thinking Skills" pages 112-113, available from ThinkShop.

ADMINISTERING THE TEST

- Can be given as a Pretest at the start of year one, then at the beginning of every year after that for comparative analysis
- Younger students can have the test administered verbally by an older "buddy"

1. PHOTOCOPY ENOUGH FOR THE SCHOOL

(but lots of paper every year)

2. LAMINATE, and USE THE ANSWER SHEET

Simply photocopy and laminate a couple of class sets of the test, double-sided (it's been designed to fit on two sides of an A4 sheet). Then the test sheets can be used year after year. Use the answer sheet provided, photocopyable 2 per page.

3. USE YOUR COMPUTERS

Put on classroom computers, or on the school computer network. Students use photocopied answer sheet.

ANSWERS

- 1 **b)** to help us to focus on different ways of thinking
 - 2 **c)** when you're trying to think about facts
 - 3 **a)** red hat
 - 4 **b)** look at the good points and bad points of an idea
 - 5 **b)** looking for what's the same and what's different about 2 things
 - 6 **c)** children are made up of boys and girls. The answer (a) is actually NOT correct if you understand flowcharting and look carefully at the direction of the arrows.
 - 7 **b)** With lower level you are working mostly with facts, and with higher level you're extending your thinking
 - 8 **d)** six
 - 9 **c)** the things we use to tell us that we've achieved our learning goal or learning intentions
 10. **c)** A thinking tool for looking at both sides of an issue and coming up with new ideas on it as well.
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SCORING

The score for the **first 5 questions** will show you Six Hats and Venn diagram knowledge and understanding;. **Questions 6-10** give you information on more advanced strategies and tools, such as Bloom's and PMI.

An overall score (i.e. total from qu 1-10) will give you a score for overall knowledge and understanding of thinking skills and tools. Results can be easily tallied and graphed

WHERE TO NEXT?

The test data shows strengths and weaknesses in thinking tools and strategies. Staff can then use this data to plan a school-wide approach to thinking skills so that there is a solid, achievable and defensible approach to applying the thinking tools during daily schoolwork and during performances of understanding.

SWATS (for measuring knowledge & understanding of thinking skills tools)

Name _____ Age _____ Room _____ D:

SCORES
1-5: _____
6-10 _____
TOTAL: _____

Please circle or highlight the correct answer

1. What are the six hats for?

- a) something the teacher talks about but I don't know much more
- b) to help us to focus on different ways of thinking
- c) for the six dwarves in the story of Snow White
- d) I'm not sure

2. When would you use the white hat?

- a) when you're making up new ideas
- b) when you want to decide about something
- c) when you're trying to think about facts
- d) I'm not sure

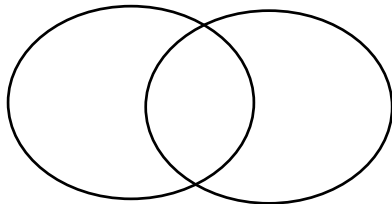
3. Which of the Six Hats would you be using when you are talking about your feelings?

- a) red hat
- b) yellow hat
- c) black hat
- d) I'm not sure

4. You'd use yellow and black hats together to

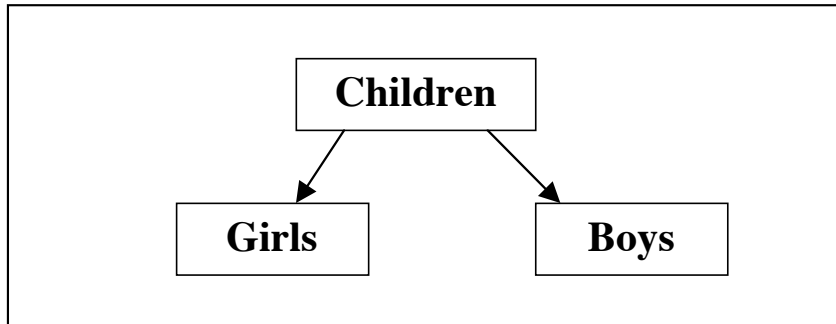
- a) compare facts and opinions on something
- b) look at the good points and bad points of an idea
- c) think about your feelings about something
- d) I'm not sure

5. What would you use a Venn diagram like this for?



- a) to share something out into 3 parts
- b) looking for what's the same and what's different about 2 things
- c) looking for what's the same and what's different about 3 things
- d) I'm not sure

6. What does this flow-chart tell you?



- a) boys and girls are both children
- b) girls and boys like each other
- c) children are made up of boys and girls
- d) there are more boys than girls
- e) I'm not sure

7. What's the difference between lower-level and higher-level thinking?

- a) Lower level is for the younger students in school and higher level is for the older students.
- b) With lower level you are working mostly with facts, and with higher level you're extending your thinking
- c) Lower-level is for children and higher-level is for adults
- d) Lower-level is creative thinking and higher-level is analytical thinking
- e) I'm not sure

8. How many levels of thinking are there in Bloom's?

- a) eight
- b) four
- c) five
- d) six
- e) I'm not sure

9. What are success criteria used for?

- a) the marks we get for projects and school-work
- b) the right answers to questions
- c) the things we use to tell us that we've achieved our learning goal or learning intentions
- d) the learning intentions used to measure our success criteria.
- e) I'm not sure

10. What is a PMI?

- a) It means the Prime Minister
- b) A thinking tool for coming up with lots of ideas of how you feel about a topic.
- c) A thinking tool for looking at both sides of an issue and coming up with new ideas on it as well.
- d) A thinking tool for marking how well you have done on an assignment
- e) I'm not sure

When you are using Bloom's, which level of thinking do you like best? _____

Why? _____

