

# **Dispositions of Effective Education Leaders**

**Learning Forward  
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THE INSTITUTE FOR  
HABITS OF MIND

*Educating for a more thoughtful world*

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***Exploring Dispositions in the Words of Ron Ritchart  
Interpreted by Arthur Costa and Bena Kallick***

Dispositions Reframing Teaching and Learning, pages 20-22.

***Acquired patterns of behavior that are under one's control and will as opposed to being automatically activated.***

1. Dispositions are acquired. We are not necessarily born with them (although we believe that the capacity and potential for their acquisition is innate), rather, they are learned over time. They are repetitive patterns, not single events or skills. They are under our control; we can consciously, intentionally choose to employ them rather than being mindless habits on autopilot.

***Dispositions are overarching sets of behaviors, not just single specific behaviors.***

2. Dispositions are manifested by a complex integration of several skills or behaviors. Skillful listening, for example, is a complex mix of skills requiring attention to what others are saying, paraphrasing, inquiring, holding your own thoughts in abeyance, self-monitoring, taking turns talking, etc.

***They are dynamic and idiosyncratic in their contextualized deployment rather than prescribed actions to be rigidly carried out.***

3. There are no recipes, prescribed sequences, or scripts for the actions and behaviors of dispositions. Rather they are "maps of the territory" with several pathways leading from where you are to where you hope to be. Furthermore, as we become aware that territory is changing, so too, must our actions change.

***More than desire and will, dispositions must be coupled with the requisite ability.***

4. Not only must we have the desire and yearning to accomplish some task or master some performance, we must also have skills, capacities, and abilities to do so.

***Dispositions motivate, activate, and direct our abilities.***

5. Directing our abilities implies constant monitoring of our actions and comparing them with our intentions, values, and desire—are we behaving consistently, “walking the talk”? Furthermore, what we are not “up on” we are most likely “down on.” Human beings are more likely act on the beliefs that they embrace. They are more likely to move to action about passions they hold; they are more likely to advocate to others what they are skillful at themselves.



### 1. Persisting

*Stick to it!*  
Persevering in task through to completion; remaining focused. Looking for ways to reach your goal when stuck. Not giving up.



### 2. Managing Impulsivity

*Take your time!*  
Thinking before acting; remaining calm, thoughtful and deliberative.



### 3. Listening with understanding and empathy

*Understand others!*  
Devoting mental energy to another person's thoughts and ideas; Make an effort to perceive another's point of view and emotions.



### 4. Thinking flexibly

*Look at it another way!*  
Being able to change perspectives, generate alternatives, consider options.



### 5. Thinking about your thinking (Metacognition)

*Know your knowing!*  
Being aware of your own thoughts, strategies, feelings and actions and their effects on others.



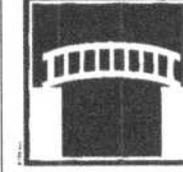
### 6. Striving for accuracy

*Check it again!*  
Always doing your best. Setting high standards. Checking and finding ways to improve constantly.



### 7. Questioning and problem posing

*How do you know?*  
Having a questioning attitude; knowing what data are needed & developing questioning strategies to produce those data. Finding problems to solve.



### 8. Applying past knowledge to new situations

*Use what you learn!*  
Accessing prior knowledge; transferring knowledge beyond the situation in which it was learned.



### 9. Thinking & communicating with clarity and precision

*Be clear!*  
Strive for accurate communication in both written and oral form; avoiding over-generalizations, distortions, deletions and exaggerations.



### 10. Gather data through all senses

*Use your natural pathways!*  
Pay attention to the world around you Gather data through all the senses. taste, touch, smell, hearing and sight.



### 11. Creating, imagining, and innovating

*Try a different way!*  
Generating new and novel ideas, fluency, originality



### 12. Responding with wonderment and awe

*Have fun figuring it out!*  
Finding the world awesome, mysterious and being intrigued with phenomena and beauty.



### 13. Taking responsible risks

*Venture out!*  
Being adventuresome; living on the edge of one's competence. Try new things constantly.



### 14. Finding humor

*Laugh a little!*  
Finding the whimsical, incongruous and unexpected. Being able to laugh at one's self.



### 15. Thinking interdependently

*Work together!*  
Being able to work in and learn from others in reciprocal situations. Team work.



### 16. Remaining open to continuous learning

*Learn from experiences!*  
Having humility and pride when admitting we don't know; resisting complacency.

## Enhancing Self-Directed Learning

A 21<sup>st</sup> century learner and leader must be able to become more self-governing. Dispositions, the Habits of Mind, encourage adults and students to become more effective as self-directed learners and leaders.

### The Self-directed Learner and Leader is:

### Habits of Mind that Encourage Self-Directedness

#### Self-Managing

Knowing the significance of and being inclined to approach tasks with clarity of outcomes, a strategic plan, and necessary data, drawing from past experiences, anticipating success indicators, and creating alternatives for accomplishment.

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Managing Impulsivity, Thinking Flexibly, Questioning and Problem Posing, Applying Past Knowledge, Gathering Data, Creating, Imagining and Innovating

#### Self-Monitoring

Having sufficient self-knowledge about what works, establishing conscious metacognitive strategies to alert the perceptions for in the moment indicators of whether the strategic plan is working or not and to assist in the decision making processes of altering the plan and choosing the right actions and strategies.

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Thinking about Thinking, Persisting, Striving for Accuracy and Precision, Listening with Understanding and Empathy

#### Self-Modifying

Reflecting on, evaluating, analyzing, and constructing meaning from experience and a making commitment to apply the learning to future activities, tasks, and challenges.

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Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision, Remaining Open to Continuous Learning, Responding with Wonderment and Awe, Thinking Interpedently

# Habits of Mind Tournament

ROUND 1

ROUND 2

SEMI-FINAL

FINAL

WINNER

Thinking about Thinking

Remaining Open to  
Continuous Learning

Applying Past Knowledge

Thinking Flexibly

Striving for Accuracy

Creating, Imagining &  
Innovating

Responding with  
Wonderment and Awe

Persisting

Finding Humor

Thinking Interdependently

Taking Responsible Risks

Managing Impulsivity

Questioning and Posing  
Problems

Thinking and Communicating  
with Clarity and Precision

Gathering Data through  
all Senses

Listening with Understanding  
and Empathy

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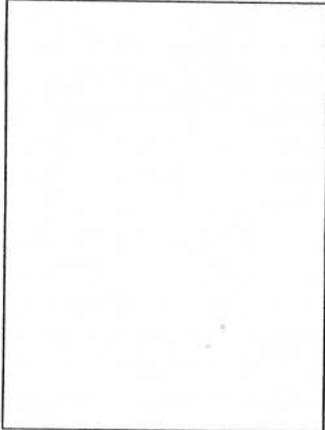
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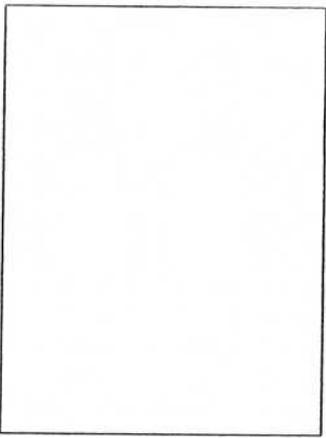
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## Dispositions: The Call to Leadership and Leaders

The frame of the Habits of Mind makes cognitive processes concrete, bringing *clarity and precision to our thinking* and actions, thereby providing opportunities to learn and grow.

The Habits of Mind are pervasive enough to cover the territory; they allow us to set a rich context for our leadership discoveries and they continue to provide ongoing knowledge, skills, and applications in our leadership roles.

By adopting the Habits of Mind as a thinking frame, leaders widen their repertoire of possible actions and foster *flexibility* in response. Having only one or two response sets for difficult problems limits a leader's influence and ability to find a resolution.

When leaders learn to stay flexible, they increase their personal and professional efficacy by being able to imagine possibilities and *innovate* along the way. That ability, in turn, expands a leader's sphere of influence.

The Habits of Mind are fractal in that by adopting one, others tend to emerge on their own as part of the larger pattern...As leaders, thinking about our thinking is key to our success and help us to build healthy organizations that foster excellence.