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The Culture of Thinking is founded on a very powerful framework. Cultural cues trigger students to participate—perhaps without their knowing—in vicarious, social learning. Models give implicit and explicit explanation of principles in practice. Because the students and the teachers engage in the same activities, this conception of culture-as-classroom is very democratic. Practically speaking, a community approach to learning is particularly effective because it is rife with assessment opportunities. Formative assessment takes place continuously in this system. As students emulate their model, the instructor has ample chance to provide feedback. Students, therefore, can respond and implement constant, small adjustments to their behavior according to the culture of the classroom. In this case, the authors have chosen to focus on a very narrow, though widely applicable, set of skills: thinking skills. I appreciate the need to develop general thinking skills, but I'm afraid that a larger phenomenon has been shadowed by their example.

All learning environments exist as communities. Communities, by definition, comprise two parts: the *constituents*, or individual members; and the set of rules, or *culture*, by which the individuals operate. When constructing a learning environment, curriculum designers usually center their attention about three dimensions: the content knowledge to be taught, the knowledge (beliefs, cultural biases, etc.) that students bring with them, and assessment. It is crucial to remember that the way a space¹ transmits value is through culture. So, design around any classroom element is really a value judgment of that element, and therefore, a statement about the culture of the classroom.

If learning environments are to communicate values such as critical thinking or problem solving skills, they must be built into the culture, either expressly or tacitly. If in a math class, for example, the instructor ponders about the meaning behind the representation of the mathematics (e.g., what does Euclid's first postulate actually do; could we leave it out?), students will begin to internalize the practice. Eventually, an internal critic will prompt the students to ask the same questions for themselves for no reason other than because that's the way mathematics (as structured by the culture) is done.

It is surprising to me that so many people are surprised that students don't learn for understanding in environments that don't value understanding. Heavy emphasis on summative techniques place a strong albeit implicit value on memorization and facile computation. A proper knowledge-centered classroom will balance automaticity of skills with deep comprehension. Because the balance of summative and formative techniques is a balance of values, the implementation must come from culture.

¹Here my use of the word 'space' is a little bit unconventional. A collection of actions or behaviors constitutes a space. If it did not, so many classic song lyrics would be rendered meaningless. How else could you "take me to Funkytown" or "waste away in Margaritaville"? The implications are half-shocking, half-boring. The classroom is not, then, the physical space which we call a classroom, but a set of practices that take place in a classroom. That's why students are not dumbfounded if class is temporarily (or permanently) moved from its ordinary location. Students can learn just about anywhere. Still, putting behavior on par with physical space is a little weird.

Of course, culture is not restricted to the classroom. Every group of people have their own cultural practices. Indeed, a single person may belong to several, distinct communities each with its own associated culture. Each new member must learn the accepted behaviors of the community in order to become an active, functioning member of it. (If a person rejects all of the cultural practices, he becomes a pariah, and then is not part of the community by definition. However, participating in the exile might actually show that he acknowledges the rules of the community and is therefore, paradoxically, actually participating in the culture by not participating. Anyway.) The moral is this: cultures provide the structure to transmit values. The values manifest themselves in accepted behavior. The learning of these behaviors is the point of a classroom. People engage in culture everyday. Therefore, everyday life is a classroom—operating (abstractly) no differently than conventional classrooms.