

Effects Of The Implementation Of Critical Thinking On The Students' Developing Of Critical And Creative Thinking In 9-Year Schools Of Gjakova Region

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Abstract:

This research paper deals with results of applying critical thinking program and techniques strategies in developing students' critical and creative thinking. In the reforming its education systems, Kosovo is implementing constructive philosophy and active teaching strategies of this program that creates an appropriate learning environment. Many schools in our country have started and somehow have stabilized in the implementation of this new philosophy and mindset in education which favors the free and creative thinking of students in our schools. On the other hand, many other schools have not begun to reform yet and consequently their pedagogical everyday life is still traditional with elements of formalism and instructional verbalism. In this research we have specifically collected data from the Gjakova Region which is one of the seven regions of Kosovo. These data are the opinions of students and teachers. These opinions, which we present as research findings, are collected from school environments that apply Critical Thinking Teaching techniques, and from school environments that have not begun yet to implement them. The thesis consists of theoretical treatment and comparative analysis of findings from these two school environments which we have elaborated with SPSS software and presented with different tables and graphs. Both theoretical treatment and research findings emphasize the importance of Critical Thinking Philosophy for developing students' Critical Thinking and creative abilities.

Keywords: contemporary teaching, interactive learning, critical thinking, creative thinking

1. INTRODUCTION:

Preparing students with critical and creative skills is already an imperative of the contemporary school. So far, our country's schools have been intellectual overloaded schools with little or no useless information on students' formation and development. Students were object of learning forced to memorize data and information that did not help develop their availability and creativity thinking. With the start of reforms in our educational system, the objectives for the formation of new generations with the required qualities by rapid socio-economic and technological changes also changed. In this context, the critical thinking program as a successful alternative to the reform of Kosovo's education system has made an important contribution to improving many aspects of pedagogical practice in our schools.

On training teachers critical thinking has changed the pedagogical viewpoint and practice of teachers for students and the need to incorporate the thinking process into their learning. With the use of new teaching strategies and methodology, students are now more active and included in the lesson. They better understand the content of the lessons by discussing concrete topics, giving their opinions and advocating different attitudes and behaviors which are selected for discussion in the classroom. They are often confronted with situations and tasks, by their teachers whose choice the requires their critical and creative thinking. In this way we say that students through contemporary philosophy of education are active and contributors to the education of their critical and creative qualities. They are encouraged in the classroom by other active and contemporary teaching questions and techniques to

assimilate the content of the lessons by analyzing and comparing multiple data and information. This important approach to the developing of Critical Thinking and original attitudes and individualities of students will be the subject of analysis and discussion in this research paper. The constructive theoretical treatment of this research is followed and supported by the opinions of students and their teachers.

2. Purpose And Objectives Of The Research

The main purpose of this paper is to investigate the effects of applying to Critical Thinking on the development of students' free and creative thinking in elementary schools in the Gjakova Region. The following are the specific objectives of this research :

- To explore the role of implementing teaching instructional techniques and strategies with a constructive and progressive approach to developing students' critical and creative thinking.
- Emphasize the importance of contemporary teaching for the formation of an appropriate learning environment that cultivates free thinking and the development of students' creative abilities in the schools that work in this philosophical approach.

3. Research Question And Research Methodology

The research questions of this research paper are:

- Critical Thinking teaching strategies and techniques as a new educational approach in our schools do help students' to develop critical and creative thinking?
- What are some of the positive impacts of this teaching on cultivating students' independent thinking and different skills and talents?

The contemporary approach of critical thinking as a professional novelty of teachers in the function of developing students' critical and creative thinking, in this paper we have initially addressed the theoretical aspect. From this point of view, we have emphasized the didactic-methodical advantages of this strategy for enhancing the qualitative of many aspects of teaching. These pedagogical improvements enable students' to initiate free thinking confront learning tasks that require and develop their creative abilities. In this paper we have emphasized the importance of this teaching approach for mobilizing students in the active and critical acquisition of teaching content. For a more complete treatment and illumination of this topic, we have also conducted research in schools. Through standardized tests we have obtained opinions of students and teachers from school environments that apply the philosophy of contemporary teaching. For the development of their critical and creative thinking, we have also received the opinions of students and their teachers from school environments that still work mainly according to traditional approaches and strategies. We present these opinions as comparative findings through different tables and graphs.

Student As A Subject And Teaching Center In The Critical Thinking Training Program

Critical Thinking as a contemporary approach in teaching and as a project of reformation considers the student as the center of the classroom and other learning activities. Its skills and interests are a measure and criterion for organizing the lesson. The School of Critical and Contemporary Thinking generally has a working - class climate where the student feels at home. He is no longer a crouched individual connected for school - desk with eyes and ears directed to the "holy word of the teacher". They have already been relieved of the obligation to memorize formal facts and data. Fortunately therefore, they have been relieved of the coercion and embarrassment to repeat in front of the teacher what they had heard or read from the textbook the day before. On the contrary, today students are encouraged and taught by their teachers for the logical and active acquisition of effective knowledge and learning experiences. They are also stimulated for creative answering and solving of teaching tasks, letting them know that their implementation, analysis and critical approach to the acquired knowledge are valued above. From this implementation, they are stimulated to give as much thought and ideas as possible to the specific topic. "Explain that when we make an important decision - through creative thinking - the first step is to come up with as many ideas as possible, and then choose the best option from them." (C. J. Simister, 2007: 64). This assessment of students' knowledge based on the taxonomy of learning objectives contributes to quality education and the development of personalities with creative potential and critical attitudes in their social environment.

Students are active and self-contributing subjects in the path of their education. By participating in and engaging in learning activities, they develop their intellectual potentials and interests in new knowledge in different areas of life and technological developments. They have partnerships with peers and teachers in common areas of activity. School reform and the implementation of the Critical Thinking program has also empowered students in school decisions making. In reformed school environments with a culture of education, they are consulted on the organization of the teaching process and other extracurricular activities. Their opinion is take up by the school on meters of discipline, maintenance of school premises and other internal schoolrules. Students, as active subjects and teaching centers, students are increasingly being entrusted with responsibility for the school and becoming aware that they are the primary responsible for achieving the learning outcomes and the path of their education.

Students in the group are enabled to make the most of their individual contribution to the common task. So, they are not silent and hidden under one's shadow, but are visible, active and valued for their contribution. By their teachers and Critical Thinking their development is stimulated of individual interests and inclination. The student is commended for creative and independent choice of teaching tasks and problems. They are not ridiculed or deceived by anyone if they give interesting, strange and different opinions to others. On the contrary, by creating an environment and circumstances of appropriate learning environments, he is encouraged to illustrate this approach by sharing it with others as a new experience and new way of knowing. "Strategies are not always found with rigorous methods ;Discoveringanappropriate strategy usually depends on past experience and resolving similar problems" (John Butterworth and Geoff Thwaites, 2013: 84). Students in a classroom are known to have differences in their cognitive abilities, experiences, interests and education. Critical thinking, as a teaching strategy, considers these differences as normal and added value in educational practice. "We want the students in the classroom to be encouraged to learn the democratic skills of life: the ability to express strong emotions in an acceptable way, in an effort to understand how others are seeing things, to solve problems together, to accept human differences, to share it with others, and consider themselves worthy person. " (Daniel Gartrell, 2000: 92).

Such differences are an opportunities for educating generations with democratic attitudes and open minds, ready to accept the different opinions of others. This circumstance is also the premise for organizing multi-level teaching that suits groups of students with different interests, skill levels and learning styles. Adapting learning activities to student differences makes understanding and acquiring knowledge easier for these groups of students. This gives children the chance to progress in their learning achievements according to their individual tempo andabilities.

Teachers trained in the Critical Thinking program take care of the functioning of democratic relationships in the students' group. This makes the members of the group in the interactive working group of students equal and accompanied. Only when they are equal and valued in the group they can be vividlyinvolved in learning assignments. By being free in giving their opinions, students develop their critical thinking and creative abilities. By taking on different tasks and roles in the interactive group, they develop communication abilities, responsibility for the task, and their moral competencies. Contemporary teaching creates space and opportunities for students to differentiate themselves by learning work and effort. It also runs an unpublished constructive competition between students and their working groups. In fact, class groups strive for the most dignified success and presentations. This is also an impetus for extra commitment so that the group can better present the fruits and the results of their work.

Interactive Learning of Critical Thinking through other problematic tasks and demands puts the student in front of situations that require the initiative of his / her thinking. Other high-level tasks and questions do not providethe clue choices. They are suspended and wait for the student's hand and mind to make choices. In these cases, students think of choices and try alternatives. "The decision to try something new is really a decision to learn. In choosing to learn, the student engages in the developmental dynamics that can make him or her a healthy and responsible adult. " (Daniel Gartrell, 2000: 55). Through individual activities and contributions to the common group task, students also gain the sympathy and respect of the class. In the eyes and attention of the class the student is an inventor and a solver of the task. To achieve this class attention and gain the primacy of the inventor they activate thinking, experience and other intellectual abilities. These and many other similar situations that increase the subjectivity and inclusion of students in learning activities are provided by

Critical Thinking as a contemporary teaching methodology and as a successful alternative to reforming our education system. Concrete teaching methods and techniques give all students the opportunity to present in front of the classroom, to be evaluated and appreciated for their commitment to learning achievement. This approach followed by the pedagogical master pulls the teacher out of the podium of the classroom into the rear of the classroom. He is now more supportive of the students and is involved with his/her working groups. 5

This makes him/her more effective, more instructive and closer to students and their specific needs in meeting the schools' educational objectives. The student through this philosophy and nature of the teaching work, is an active subject and responsible for their own education and development. They also develop their intellectual and human competencies, while learning the craft of logical and productive learning.

Effects Of The Implementation Of Critical Thinking In The Development Of Critical And Creative Thinking Of Students In 9-Year Schools In The Gjakova Region

Implementation of the Critical Thinking training program at school is also intended to contribute to the development of students' critical and creative thinking. Learning by examining and discussing different aspects of knowledge is an important feature of this educational philosophy. The Critical Thinking schools teacher confronts students with learning problems, whose choice requires engaging in the thinking process. They achieve this approach by paving the lesson through questions and situations where students must necessarily reflect different experiences and knowledge. Before these problems and learning tasks, all students are called upon to contribute. Their commitment to giving thought and findings solutions clarifies multilateral aspects of the topic being tackled by contrasting the students' different opinions. "Both the children and adults have their own views and each of them is encouraged to know the views of others, although they may disagree with each other. They need to be able to discern that different views are based on distinct reasons and that these grounds form the basis for judging rival beliefs. (Jerome Bruner, 2003: 70).

Critical Thinking - trained Teachers introduce and connect students to various sources of recognition where they can search for solutions of the school assignments. Through our research we sought the opinions of students and teachers on aspects of teaching that develop students' critical and creative thinking. The students were offered an opinion in which they stated how much they needed their teachers to understand and analyze the learning topics. The opinions of students from both school environments are given in percentage, as follows:

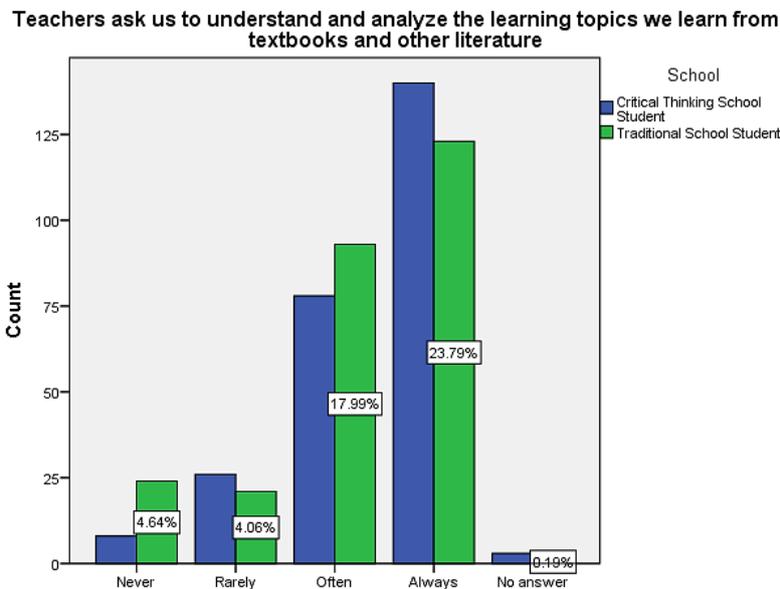
Table 1

Teachers ask us to understand and analyze the learning topics we learn from textbooks and other literature		School			Total
		CT School Student	Traditional School Student	School	
Never	Number	8	24		32
	%	3.1%	9.2%		6.2%
Rarely	Number	26	21		47
	%	10.2%	8.0%		9.1%
Often	Number	78	93		171
	%	30.6%	35.5%		33.1%
Always	Number	140	123		263
	%	54.9%	46.9%		50.9%
No answer	Number	3	1		4
	%	1.2%	0.4%		0.8%

Total	Number	255	262	517
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The percentages of students' opinions from both school groups we are comparing reveal significant differences. The percentage of students' opinions about the first option (never) of this assertion for Critical Thinkingschools students is 3.1%. Whereas, for students of traditional schools these percentages of opinions are 9.2%. So, from the percentages of the first negative variant of this assertion, students in traditional schools stated that their teachers were less likely to ask them to understand and analyze specific teaching topics. This means that they, have less opportunities for analysis, comparison and teaching debate compared to students in Critical Thinking Schools. Whereas, the percentages of students' opinions on the last positive (always) positive variant of the aforementioned assertion for Critical Thinking Schools are 54.9%. Whereas, for traditional schools, the percentages of students' opinions on the same positive variant is 46.9%. So, students of Critical Thinking Schools emphasize their teachers demand for understanding and analysis of learning knowledge.

These findings appear as follows:
 Graph 1



The graph above also gives us a general overview of the Critical Thinking school tendency to understand and analyze the knowledge gained from different sources of information. According to Bloom's Taxonomy, comprehension and analysis are the second and third levels of cognition from which derives the development of learning and discussions and learning debates in functions of students' creative and critical skills development. Exactly these differences and tendencies in educational practice of these two environments that confirm the above findings.

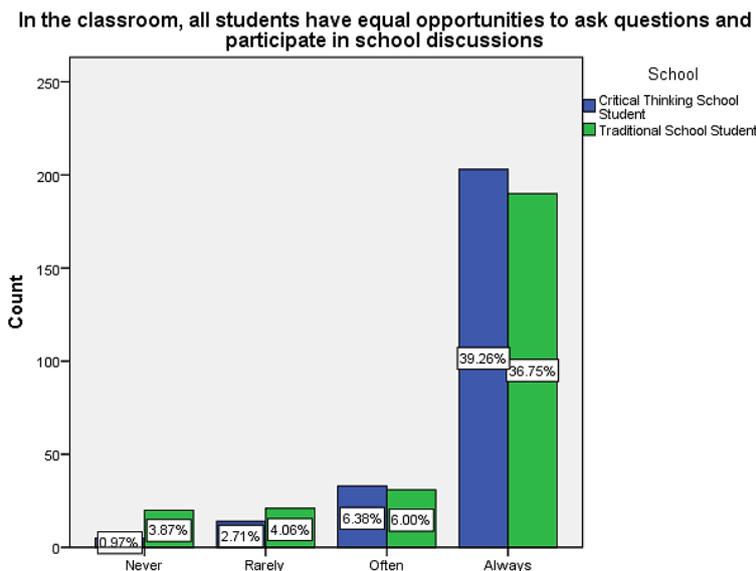
Schools of Critical Thinking and their constructive approach create greater space and opportunities for all the students to participate in learning activities. This teaching aims to highlight the individual contributions of students, by measuring their group tasks and responsibilities. In this way, no student can hide under the shadow of contributions of the members of the group, that is other students in the class. This principle and philosophy of education is the methodical mastery of the teacher which he / she will put into educational practice. Through the survey, we asked students how they have equal opportunities to question and participate in class discussions. The opinions of students from the two school groups are as follows:

Table 2

In the classroom, all students have equal opportunities to ask questions and participate in school discussions		School		Total
		CT Student	School Traditional Student	
Never	Number	5	20	25
	%	2.0%	7.6%	4.8%
Rarely	Number	14	21	35
	%	5.5%	8.0%	6.8%
Often	Number	33	31	64
	%	12.9%	11.8%	12.4%
Always	Number	203	190	393
	%	79.6%	72.5%	76.0%
No answer	Number	255	262	517
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The findings here also showed differences between the schools we are comparing. For both negative variants of this statement the percentage of students' opinions from traditional schools is higher. Thus, this students, according to these findings, do not have the same opportunities as students of Critical Thinking Schools to participate in discussions and ask questions about the learning topic. Contemporary teaching more than traditional teaching stimulates students' by questioning and freedom to express their opinions and ideas. The above differences in the percentages of students 'opinions from the school groups we are analyzing are differences in educational practices that influence the development of students' critical and creative thinking. When students ask and receive answers from their peers and teachers, they develop interests, skills, and even improve the quality of the questioning itself. Learning questions stimulate learning debates and contribute to the development of students' critical thinking. "Critical answers must include reason, opinions, and judgments" (John Butterworth and Geoff Thwates, 2013: 164). Students in these school environments confront each other with original ideas and approaches, that facilitate the active and comprehensive acquisition of teaching knowledge. Through the discussion and teaching debate, they argue and evaluate data and learning experiences where they develop their finding, judgment and independence in the learning process. The above tabular findings presented through the graph show as follows:

Graph 2



The graph above also shows that students of Critical Thinking schools have equal opportunities and greater space to ask and participate in classroom discussions. In these schools, teachers work with all students in the class, giving them the opportunity to develop their individual affinities and interests.

However, these findings attest the general tendency and practice of these two school environments. If we analyze the particular schools of these educational environments, the findings on the percentages of students' opinions would probably be even further apart.

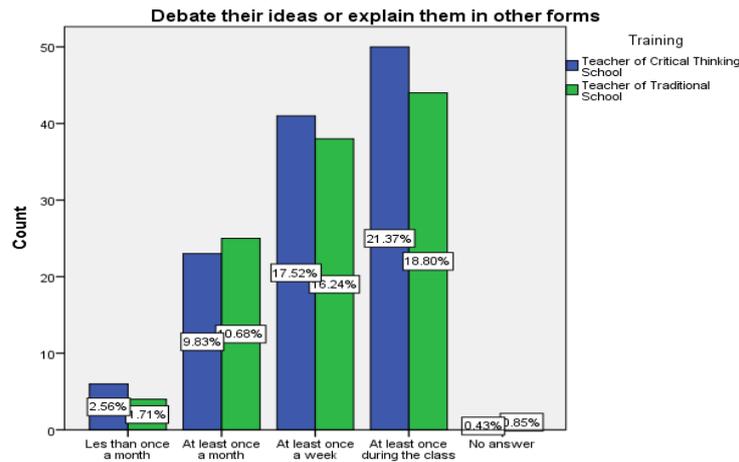
We also asked teachers about the effects of the implementation of the Critical Thinking training program on the development of students' critic and creative thinking of the students in the schools of the Gjakova Region. In the survey, we offered them the statement that students argue about their ideas or explain them in other ways. The percentages of opinions of these teachers surveyed give the four variants of the above statement are as follows:

Table 3

Debate for their ideas or explain them in other forms		Training		Total
		Teacher of CT school	Teacher of traditional school	
Less than once a month	Number	6	4	10
	%	5.0%	3.5%	4.3%
At least once a month	Number	23	25	48
	%	19.0%	22.1%	20.5%
At least once a week	Number	41	38	79
	%	33.9%	33.6%	33.8%
At least once during the class	Number	50	44	94
	%	41.3%	38.9%	40.2%
No answer	Number	1	2	3
	%	0.8%	1.8%	1.3%
Total	Number	121	113	234
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

It is noted that the variants for teachers' statements are listed according to the frequency of organizing debates and other forms of explaining students' ideas. This assertion presented in the survey for receiving teachers' opinions is almost the same as the assertion stated by the students. Differences in percentages of teachers' opinions from the two school groups are about the same as differences in percentages of their students' opinions. In fact, both teachers and students of Critical Thinking schools emphasize slightly more than traditional schools the frequency of applying the learning debates between students. Those with these opinions, also indicate that these schools more often organize students' presentations and other forms of explaining their ideas and efforts in the way of learning material. These findings argue that the implementation of the Critical Thinking training program has positive effects on the development of students' critical and creative thinking. The differences in teachers' opinions from the percentages in the table above are distinct but not very divergent. This gives us the impression that even in traditional schools, the spirit of contemporary philosophy of education is beginning to be felt and understood. Also, in those schools, the classical and herbartian authority of the teacher is in decline, which keeps his students disciplined and compelled to learn mechanically and formally, even useless teaching data. The above tabular data through the following graph, looks as follows:

Graph 3



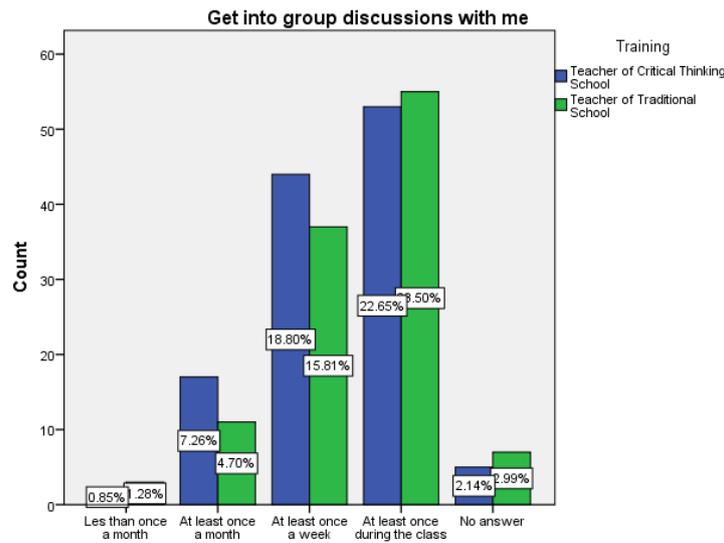
Even this next graph as a teacher's perspective also increases the number of arguments for the superiority of Critical Thinking teaching. Both teachers and students have positive evaluations of this approach to education, highlighting in their statements the positive effects of implementing this teaching methodology in many aspects of schools educational. Interesting and meaningful are teachers opinions on the following assertion of our survey which we present in the table as follows:

Table 4

Get into group discussions with me		Training		Total
		Teacher of CT school	Teacher of CT school	
Less than once a moth	Number	2	3	5
	%	1.7%	2.7%	2.1%
At least once a month	Number	17	11	28
	%	14.0%	9.7%	12.0%
At least once a week	Number	44	37	81
	%	36.4%	32.7%	34.6%
At least once during the class	Number	53	55	108
	%	43.8%	48.7%	46.2%
No answer	Number	5	7	12
	%	4.1%	6.2%	5.1%
Total	Number	121	113	234
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Here, too, teachers stated that they agree with one of the four variants of this assertion and, as can be seen, traditional school teachers have higher percentages of their opinions in the first version (less than once a month) and in the last (at least once during the class). Whereas, their colleagues from Critical Thinking schools have higher percentages of opinions for the two secondary variants. From our point of view, the percentages of these teachers are more constructive, more in line with the teaching methodology and didactic order of processing teaching material. The tabular percentages presented in the graph are as follows:

Graph 4



The graph also shows that the percentages of teachers' opinions from Critical Thinking schools are more evenly spaced for the frequency of discussion with students about the instructional topics being explained. Also noticeable is higher proportion of teachers from traditional schools, who have not stated at all about this survey statement.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Conclusions Of This Research Can Be Summarized As Follows:

- From the theoretical approach of this paper we conclude that the schools that apply the methodology of teaching critical thinking have mobilized the students in the active acquisition of knowledge by discussing and analyzing information and perspective from different aspects.
- These schools encourage their students to contribute to the development of their personality as an individual with initiative, intellectual skills and creative abilities.
- Through this new philosophical approach teacher have contributed more than their colleagues from traditional schools to developing students' independent and critical thinking and cultivating their creative abilities and talents.

The Following Are The Recommendations Of This Research:

Schools that work in accordance with the philosophy of critical thinking should continue to train teachers on the instructional strategies of this new educational approach with the aim of preparing new generations with creative qualities and critical thinking skills.

- Traditional schools should collaborate with contemporary schools and mobilize their teaching staff to improve many aspects of teaching that provide opportunities for original thinking and to developing creative thinking.

Municipal Directorates of Education and the relevant Ministry should provide assistance and support to our schools in reform daily pedagogical practices with quality training and equipping them with appropriate teaching aids and technology.

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