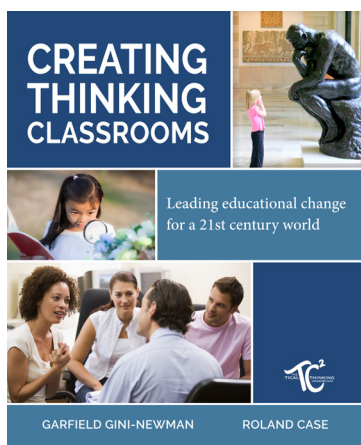


# Creating Thinking Classrooms:

Leading educational change for a 21st century world

**Reid Findlay** reviews a practical new book that lends itself both to study and as a resource.



by Roland Case & Garfield Gini-Newman

Every so often a book arrives that helps educators to bring coherence and clarity to the many disparate topics that dominate the field of education. Such is the case with Garfield Gini-Newman and Roland Case's new publication, *Creating Thinking Classrooms: Leading educational change for a 21st century world*. This is a book that is truly about best practice, not rhetoric. It is a book that invites, rather than tells. And perhaps most importantly, it provides assistance to educational leaders that support and lead teachers to "respond thoughtfully to the diverse and sometimes overwhelming calls for reform that currently dominate public and professional attention."

Readers familiar with the work of the Critical Thinking Consortium, with roots in BC dating back to 1993, will recognize the type of teaching and learning experiences that are examined in this book. The expertise of the authors is evident throughout this book, which lends significantly to the book's credibility (Garfield Gini-Newman is the Senior National Consultant for the Critical Thinking Consortium and Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), while Roland Case is the Executive Director of the Critical Thinking Consortium, and a former professor of curriculum in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University.) The book is steeped in Ca-

nadian content and has extensive links to the work of other authors and researchers – Stuart Shanker, Grant Wiggins, Michael Fullan, Douglas Willms, and Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi to name a few – that effectively support their central thesis.

The authors use the metaphor of a house to describe in detail three significant shifts that they believe are necessary to create thinking classrooms in 21st century schools. The first shift involves a reorientation of the beliefs about teaching and learning from the mindset characteristic of a discovery or didactic classroom to that of a thinking classroom. This, they contend, is the foundation of the educational house. They make a compelling argument through the first four chapters about why thinking needs to be at the heart of 21st century learning. The second shift involves a refocusing of goals from fostering knowledge to deep understanding, from skills to real-life competencies, and from attitudes to genuine commitments. These goals, they contend, are the roof of the house. Chapters five through seven cover this terrain in further detail. The third shift pertains to school and classroom practices. This, they contend, is the equivalent of wall coverings and siding to a house, and as such, they are "*the most visible aspects of a building as they determine its look and feel.*" They caution the reader that, as with the facade of any building, these must be attached to the infrastructure to avoid falling or crumbling away. The authors explain chapter-by-chapter in refreshing detail how the five core principles for 21st century learning – engaging students, sustaining inquiry, nurturing self-regulated learners, creating assessment-rich learning, and enhancing learning through digital technology – should inform educators' decisions about almost every aspect of their practice. They appropriately characterize these five core principles as the driving forces behind 21st century school reform.

The book has an organizational scheme that makes it both accessible and a joy to read. Each chapter begins with a single page summary where concepts to be


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explored are outlined briefly. This page also has an eye-catching visual that matches the chapter's focus, as well as a thought-provoking quote to kick-start the reader's brain. Each chapter begins with a story from the field that succinctly captures the essence of the learning objectives of the chapter. These stories are real and serve as an excellent way to illustrate the potential of what the reader is about to examine. Regardless of the individual stories, each chapter addresses how to shape climate, create opportunities, build capacity, and to provide guidance. Each chapter ends with one or two comprehensive concluding thoughts – essentially the big ideas – before challenging leaders to act. I personally found these challenges, the “opportunities for leadership” section at the end of each chapter, to be most valuable part of each chapter as they link your learn-

ing to your reality. This is an area where many great ideas will be generated for the action-oriented leader.

One of their stated goals in writing this book, which I believe they clearly achieve, is to help principals and vice-principals understand the concepts within the book so that we can help lead and support teachers to realign their practi-

ces to create thinking classrooms. While the entire book lends itself to book study, any one of the chapters examined in isolation would serve as an excellent resource to those who are involved in the hard but rewarding work of improving schools. Indeed, the authors accomplish their stated goal of helping to “unpack the widely recommended goals, initiatives and pedagogical practices that advocates of reform are championing” and effectively and repeatedly “separate the rhetoric from the reality surrounding many of the popular buzzwords and vague claims associated with learning in the 21st century.”

If this book isn't on your “must read” list yet, make room for it. 

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### Creating Thinking Classrooms

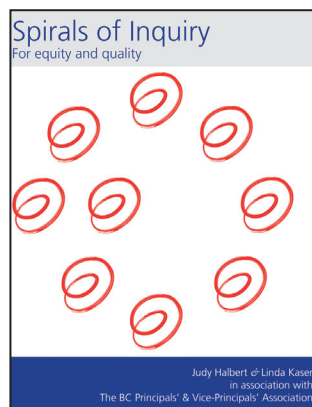
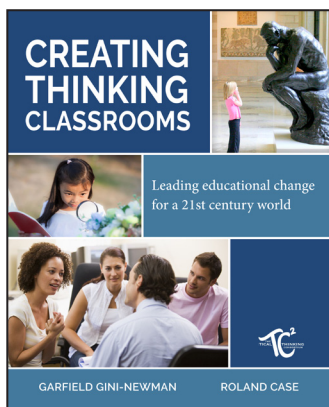
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### Spirals of Inquiry

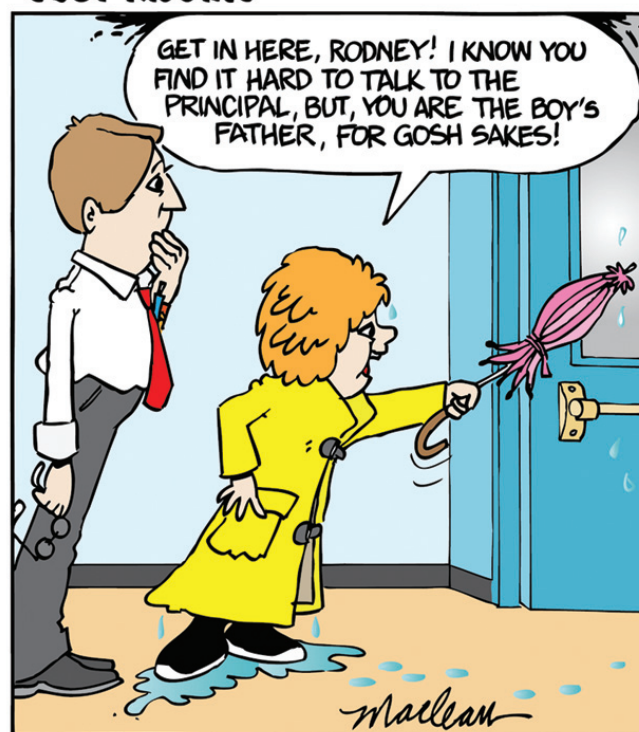
by Judy Halbert & Linda Kaser

Organized to provide readers with specific inquiry tools, research evidence and examples from practice in BC schools.



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### JUST KIDDING



Rod Maclean is a former Surrey principal. Visit Rod's website at [www.justkiddingcartoons.com](http://www.justkiddingcartoons.com)