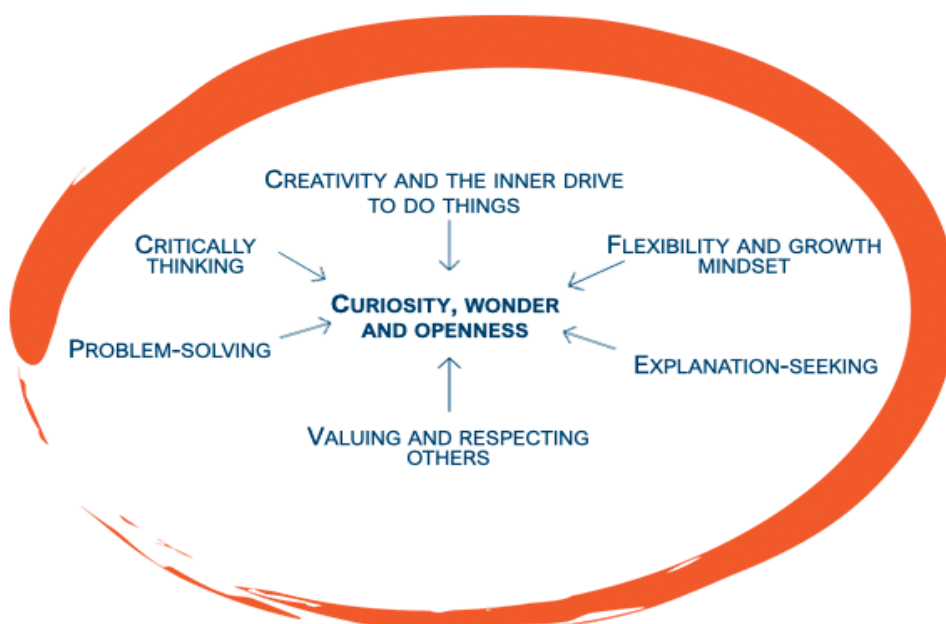


2.7 Curiosity, sense of wonder and openness

Definition of the skill

Curiosity, sense of wonder and openness form a foundational skill that drives a desire to explore, learn, and understand the world. This skill represents a mindset of active interest and enthusiasm in experiencing new things, asking questions, and staying open to diverse perspectives. It is the inclination to approach situations with eagerness to learn rather than judgement, paired with an open heart and mind. This skill enables children to discover, appreciate, and reflect upon the uniqueness and complexity around them, fostering a lasting love for learning and discovery.

Complexity of the skill



- **Creativity and the inner drive to do things:** Curiosity is the engine of imagination. When children wonder about something, they begin to look for new connections, come up with ideas, and see things differently. Creativity is thus directly fuelled by openness and the joy of discovery, and vice versa.
- **Explanation-seeking:** Children are known for asking ‘why?’ — a query motivated by their desire for explanations. Curiosity encourages children to ask questions.
- **Problem-solving:** Children experiment out of curiosity, trying to find connection and solutions, and this process helps them to think independently and persistently seek answers.
- **Critically thinking:** Openness means not only acceptance but also consideration. Curiosity drives children to ask questions, and our job is to guide them to consider multiple perspectives and distinguish facts from opinions. Thus, critical thinking can become a natural element of curiosity.
- **Flexibility and growth mindset:** Facing new experiences often challenges previous views. Openness is achieved when children are able to flexibly change their ideas and adapt to new evidence or perspectives.

- **Valuing and respecting others:** Curiosity and openness can also lead to understanding other people. When children show interest in the stories, feelings, or cultures of others, they become able to empathize and appreciate differences.

Importance of the skill for lifelong well-being

- In a fast-evolving world, curiosity, wonder, and openness are crucial for adaptability and mental agility. Cultivating these qualities early contributes to: resilience and continuous learning; enhanced emotional satisfaction and well-being; improved problem-solving, empathy, and adaptability. Adults who embrace curiosity and openness thrive in a world of expanding knowledge and shifting career paths. These traits nurture joy in learning, innovation, and positive relationships.
- Studies further underscore that encouraging these traits in childhood contributes to improved long-term outcomes. Adults with a strong foundation of curiosity and openness report greater satisfaction in navigating life's challenges and show higher levels of adaptability and empathy in their personal and professional relationships.
- Research highlights the long-term benefits of nurturing curiosity, wonder, and openness in children. Studies show that children encouraged in these areas tend to develop stronger problem-solving skills, higher emotional intelligence, and a positive attitude toward challenges. For example, classroom environments that support this skill see students who are more engaged, ask more questions, and show greater interest in learning. Longitudinal studies also suggest that adults who were encouraged to be curious as children are better able to adapt to complex life changes, tend to experience lower stress levels, and demonstrate stronger relational skills due to their openness and empathy.

Manifestation and development of this skill in ages 6-10

Between the ages of 6-10, curiosity, wonder and openness are already natural inclinations, often displayed through spontaneous questions, exploration, and a fascination with the world. This skill is readily observable in children's interactions such as their delight in learning about animals, space, history, or technology and their natural interest in peers' perspectives. At this age, children can develop this skill further by being encouraged to:

- Encouraging open-ended questions: inviting children to ask questions without fear of judgment helps them explore different viewpoints.
- Promoting explorative play and activities: storytelling, hands-on experiments, and guided nature walks teach children to view the world with wonder.
- Practice perspective-taking: exposing children to different cultures, ideas, or historical events builds openness and understanding of diverse perspectives.

The benefits of these activities manifest in children's growing engagement in learning. Research shows that students supported in developing curiosity, wonder, and openness are more likely to ask thought-provoking questions and engage fully in learning activities. They exhibit greater enthusiasm for exploring diverse topics and show an enhanced ability to understand complex ideas.

Observation parameters for establishing class level

Level 1: The child occasionally shows interest in new topics or asks questions but is hesitant to engage in exploratory activities or express opinions.

Level 2: The child regularly shows curiosity, frequently asking questions, and engages in new activities with minimal encouragement. They are open to others' perspectives.

Level 3: The child actively seeks out new information, shows excitement in learning across a wide range of topics, and exhibits a high degree of openness to different ideas. They ask thought-provoking questions, contribute insights in discussions, and engage fully in activities with an eagerness to explore and learn.

Interconnections with other skills

- Creativity: curiosity drives the desire to explore new ideas, which fuels creative thinking and problem-solving.
- Problem-solving: a curious mindset enables children to approach challenges with an open mind, asking questions and testing solutions.
- Critical thinking: openness allows children to question assumptions, consider alternative perspectives, and think critically about information.
- Resilience: a sense of wonder and openness builds emotional resilience, as children learn to face unknowns with curiosity rather than fear.
- Empathy: openness toward others' experiences and ideas cultivates empathy and helps children connect with those who may have different perspectives.
- These interconnections underline the importance of fostering curiosity and wonder as a foundation for other critical life skills, resulting in a well-rounded individual capable of adapting and thriving in a complex world.

Didactical tips for teachers

To nurture curiosity, sense of wonder and openness in children:

- Create “wonder walls”: allow children to post questions or topics they are curious about and discuss them regularly.
- Plan nature and science exploration days: facilitate outdoor activities or experiments that inspire observation and inquiry.
- Introduce cultural exchange projects: share stories, food, or art from various cultures to celebrate diversity and foster openness.
- Encourage journaling: have children document their questions, observations, and reflections to deepen their engagement with the world.
- Model curiosity: demonstrate inquisitiveness by asking questions and exploring answers alongside children.