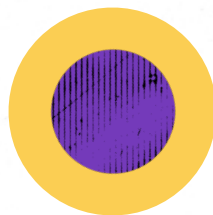
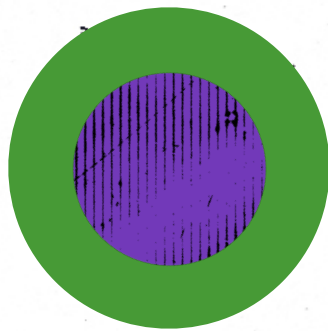


CollectivED: *Flourish* vignettes 2023-24



LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY
CARNEGIE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Introduction



This collection of vignettes is a celebration of the founding of *Flourish*, a programme of support for and a growing community of educators interested in creating cultures in which others can flourish without fear.

The vignettes demonstrate how the aims of the wider Leeds Beckett CollectivEd community have been met through the founding programme this year:

- encouraging and enabling collaborative conversations which create powerful professional learning
- building the capacity of educators to create contexts which support inclusive career-long and profession-wide learning
- removing barriers to professional development
- increasing opportunities for educational change through enhanced professional agency and well-being.

Each story told by the eleven *Flourish* participants recounts the details of their experience of participating in the eight-month pilot programme of support in their particular education settings in different parts of the U.K. Through their voices, we learn how they made sense of Kline's Thinking Environment®: the Ten Components™ and building blocks and how they applied them in their contexts spanning all phases of education from Early Years through to Higher Education. We learn about what has been successful as well as what has been problematic and their plans for next steps.



Supporting inclusive practice within the Early Years is the focus of Cathy's vignette in which she shares how her experimentation has 'fuelled and nourished pedagogic thinking, personal growth, confidence and self-efficacy'. Also in the Early Years context, through immersing herself in the Ten Components, Debi's story details her shift from a designer of training and a deliverer of knowledge to a creator of thinking spaces in which educators have been able to reflect on their own contexts, problem solve and change their practice in the interests of the youngest learners.

Lakshmi's vignette recounts how she adapted Kline's Thinking Environment for young children in her primary school and the powerful difference it has made particularly for those with complex needs. Within the context of her all through school for learners with special education needs, Kay's vignette reveals how embracing listening to ignite others' thinking has enhanced organisational values, practices and initiatives. For Kev, in a similar context but for secondary aged learners, transforming the meetings culture to one that is 'rich and empowering' is the focus of his vignette.

Nikki's vignette tells of the power of rounds in meetings to improve thinking as well as the impact of Incisive Questions™ and the building block of Presentations on student learning in a sixth form college. Participating in *Flourish* also enabled Nikki to shift her coaching stance from problem solving to igniting colleagues' listening. In Sarabjit's vignette, we learn how applying Kline's principles and practices in further and higher education settings has resulted in young people feeling listened to as well as learning how to better listen to others.

Within the context of higher education, Roy's vignette shows how Kline's work can support undergraduates' critical thinking and strengthen the supervisor – student relationship. However, in his attempts to ensure more voices were heard, O'Ryan's vignette reveals how being listened to in the way Kline advocates can be uncomfortable for some. His story is a healthy reminder that being and



creating an environment for thinking is a process which is likely to be successful when everyone present genuinely wants to engage in independent thinking as opposed to exchange thinking (Kline, 1999).

Whilst Karen's vignette shows how line management and trainee teachers have been positively affected by rounds and Thinking Pairs, it also reminds us of the importance of context when introducing cultural change. Also, within Initial Teacher Training, Henry's vignette recounts his application of Kline's Thinking Environment to the Early Career Framework, in particular mentoring and its potential for encouraging new entrants to the profession to 'flourish and develop their own identity'.

As you read, you will find themes of inclusion, social justice, equity and democracy woven through participants' narratives. I hope you will also discover, as Nancy Kline did, what can happen when we 'ennoble people with the depth of [our] attention ... if [we] take them into [our] hearts' and 'show them that who they are and what they think matter profoundly' (Kline, 1999: 10).

Thank you to Rachel Lofthouse, founder and former director of CollectivEd, Lou Mycroft, Kathryn Pogson and all at CollectivEd for enabling *Flourish* to take seed. Thank you to Nancy Kline for continuing to be an unwavering source of encouragement.

Do contact participants directly (email addresses included in vignettes) if you wish to know more about their experiences of *Flourish*. Similarly, if you are interested in learning more about the *Flourish* programme, you can access the flyer [here](#) or contact me directly.

Sheila Ball

Founder of *Flourish* for CollectivEd

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Cathy Gunning

CollectivED: *Flourish* vignette



Why Flourish?

There were many motivators for taking part in Flourish this year, primarily because Time to Think (1999) by Nancy Kline and her Ten Components™ of a Thinking Environment® can be transformational in education.



I have used Nancy Kline's Thinking Environment in my coaching mentoring practice since I was introduced to her work in 2019 whilst studying for the Post Graduate Certificate in Coaching and Mentoring in education in 2020. When I was made redundant in 2020, it was collaborative peer coaching that fuelled me into my current practice. Conversations, reflections, collaborative spaces, and creative possibilities shaped my coaching way.

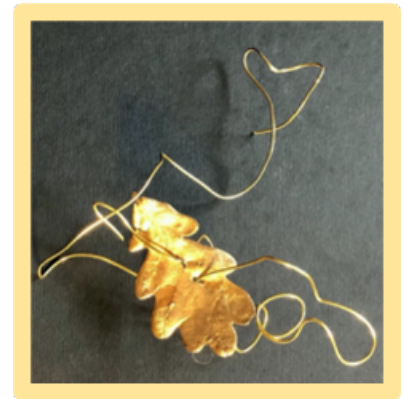


It was here, for the first time, I explored combining and interweaving my lived experience, creativity and professional knowledge into a unique bespoke coaching way. I grew into an independent education coach mentor and used Kline's Thinking Environment to deepen pedagogical thinking in a variety of contexts across the care and education sectors. Kline's Ten Components align with my values in education and include values such as listening without prejudice, offering a safe space for conversation, and having unconditional positive regard.





Enabling a safe space to think supported by the components and values of Kline's Thinking Environment can support growth in educator confidence. I can invite people into a revolutionary safe thinking space away from a busy stressful work environment where demands are ever-increasing, and reflection is rushed if given any time at all. And this space can be transformational.



The opportunity for me to participate in Flourish in today's fast and furious performative educational landscape was perfect timing and matched my convictions for these formative and generative creative spaces full of possibility and hope. It was also serendipitous because of another work project starting simultaneously. Interweaving strands of creativity and the arts, collage, and coaching, and fuelled by the power of spaces to think and creative possibility in education, I collaborated to dream up a 'SPACE To Flourish' project bid and successfully won funding to deliver a four-year project. SPACE stands for: 'Supporting Pedagogy in Arts and Creativity Everywhere' and I love that our 'space' acronym also signifies a 'flourish space' that is safe for reflecting, thinking and creative exploration for all. My colleague and co-creator of this [Early Education SPACE to Flourish](#) project, Debi Keyte-Hartland, also joined the Flourish programme, which enabled us to journey and think together, significantly shaping and impacting our project work.



Flourishing Spaces

We found we gained mutual and symbiotic flourishing through attending Flourish. Debi and I brought thinking space to each



other, giving mutual acceptance, space and time to process and explore, which has been enriching. We have been able to sharpen and shape our creativity and pedagogy mutually through our creative collaboration.

I was reminded of Kline's rich concepts during the opening Flourish Workshop, when we gathered in person in November 2023. The day was energetic, focused, and richly fulfilling. It fuelled my thinking through a variety of applications of the Thinking Environment relating directly to my coaching way of being. I reflected,

"We are here as our own selves, being generative and enabling.... we focus on the positives... this is true to my way of being, my 'think bubble'... It is a joy to become an apprentice of listening."

As the day unfolded, I was reminded about Kline's component of 'Ease': a state where there is no stress or cortisol present, and the thinkers are truly at ease, relaxed in themselves - they feel safe and heard. This prompted me to reflect more deeply about the conditions for learning and when we think about inclusive practice, teaching more vulnerable and disadvantaged children and how we in education and as coach mentors provide and offer safe spaces for them to be fully themselves, validated, truly heard and not interrupted. My pedagogical thinking was provoked. As a specialist in early years education, and an advocate for care-experienced, vulnerable children I reflected on this through a trauma informed, attachment aware, therapeutic parenting lens.

Inclusion not interruption

Kline's 'promise not to interrupt' has impacted all dimensions of my work and life. My deliberate intention to fulfill her promise not to interrupt has enlightened me on how often people cut in and prefer to speak their agenda rather than hear mine. I find myself more often than not pausing and apologising for cutting into a conversation professionally and personally, with colleagues and family.

Freshest thinking enabled me to delve into deeper reflection about the time and space that is afforded for young children with little or no 'voice'; children who some educators might call "non-verbal". These children might choose not to speak, they may be multilingual and not yet speaking words of English out loud, they may have a speech and



language delay, they may be on a neurodivergent pathway, they may prefer not to speak in a scary classroom.

Uniquely attuned

I feel particularly passionate about this in the context of my work supporting inclusive practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) ensuring that we can enable flourishing for vulnerable, underserved children, and early childhood settings. Unique children whatever their context or story must be seen and heard, valued and known. I was curious about how we ensure this and began to enmesh flourishing, creativity and inclusion with Attuned Teaching (co-written with Professor Rachel Lofthouse, 2023). I still have work to do, but with this as a focus, my commitment to not interrupt is helping me to truly listen and give attention to an individual's thought flow, authentic communication, needs and wants, and not impose my agenda or presumptions.

Children are communicators and unique individuals - we use the term 'unique child' in the Early Years Foundation Stage (2024). The component qualities of 'ease' and safety, unconditional acceptance, difference, and non-interruption sit securely within an attuned teaching way of being, bringing acceptance, belonging, safety, community and deepening of understanding to the fore. I wondered how we might truly hear and listen to these children? I questioned how we give them value, security, acceptance, and help them feel at ease.

Transferring the Thinking Environment components in an attuned way in our practice in early years - by listening attentively, giving space and time, pausing, noticing and truly listening and responding to body language, play and expression we can hear volumes even without any words being said out loud. In fact, we might not see the child as "non-verbal" at all but rather a great communicator who is able to share with us how they truly feel and who they truly are. Perhaps with practice an attuned Thinking Environment invites children to truly share what they would like to communicate with us in ways best suited to them.

The Flourish sessions have been a great way to connect, practice and refine the Ten Components, growing deeper in knowledge and



understanding through expert modelling and teaching. Thinking with colleagues, creatives and peers has been fundamental and invaluable for my development of thinking and practical application. My final reflections were exhibited in a gallery walk at our final Flourish gathering. Symbolically, the exhibit was without any spoken words, and I invited colleagues into the space with the following poem.

My mind takes me to a place to think about the promise not to interrupt.

I wonder how many times my spoken words take over and talk over?

How many times were my words more important than yours?

What was communicated without spoken words?

How do I show you that my time with you is precious and important?

Here, I offer you a space without interruption from the spoken word.

I invite you into a space to think - a space to flourish.

Cathy Gunning, June 2024

Flourish creates flourishing

Being real and truly listened to in a formative space has led to the flourishing of ideas and golden threads of thinking entwining into new possibilities and dreams. I became more courageous and developed pedagogical thinking around Slow Pedagogy (Clark, 2022) and Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002), Attuned Teaching and created Thinking Environments with children. Enabling Thinking Environments for educators fueled and nourished their pedagogic thinking, personal and professional growth, confidence and self-efficacy. I saw flourishing in children and adults. A headteacher wrote,

“Thank you so much for your support..., it was inspirational and we are all really buzzing and excited to continue and develop this work!”.

An early years teacher journalled,

“ We will promise to enable children to be themselves, be original and explore freely and safely.”.

A primary school leader wrote,

“Designated time and space to reflect, think and share has been a very effective part of our school’s improvement process. This process has contributed to improvements in our setting”



Hopes and dreams

The definition of 'flourish' perfectly symbolises what we must restore in education and life. Both Flourish programmes this year have brought restoration. They have created opportunity to grow thinking to restore hope and joy in education. With newly emerging collaborations, continued spaces to think, coaching of educators and leaders, re-thinking EYFS curriculum and pedagogy, and promoting creativity we can get excited about opportunities to come.

My dream is to continue to grow creative collaborative communities of confident, child-centred, creative pedagogues in early education. With a Labour education policy, our SPACE to Flourish project continuing for another three years, and a new cohort of Flourish participants at Leeds Beckett, all this is possible and I have hope.

Appreciation

I would like to thank the wise educational thinkers and leaders Professor Rachel Lofthouse and Dr Kay Sidebottom who introduced me to Kline's work, Sheila Ball who gave me the opportunity to grow deeper in the Thinking Environment and Dr Lou Mycroft whose articles and thinking accompanied me throughout. I am very grateful to these wonderful women educators for my Flourish journey.





Debi Keyte-Hartland

CollectivED: *Flourish* vignette

What was your motivation for participating in Flourish?

My motivation for participating in Flourish came from a deep seated question that had been niggling away at me for several years: *how can I transform the professional learning, development and formation work I undertake (in my work as an early childhood pedagogical consultant) so that instead of giving out ideas and advice, participants can think together and for themselves about the changes to practice and pedagogy they identify and want to make?*

I had stumbled upon Nancy Kline's 'Time to Think' (1999) and had finally found a text that for me was rich in values that aligned with my own pedagogical beliefs and ethics developed out of the listening and relational pedagogy of the Reggio Emilia infant toddler and pre-schools in Italy and cultivated in the complex role of the pedagogista. In Reggio Emilia, the pedagogista is someone who works collegially with teachers and educators of a small number of connected schools, to collectively research, participate and explore the understandings of the children's competencies developed in daily practice and how they might be documented, debated and put into play in future plans made (Giamminuti et al., 2024). The role is not of advisor, or expert, but as fellow co-researcher alongside the teachers, who are simultaneously researching the children, who are researching their world (Bancroft et al., 2008).

I felt that this course, with its roots in exploring Kline's work which connected so well, would offer me the opportunity to dwell and discover, explore and experiment and think about how Kline's components and building blocks could help reshape and transform my work. And this is exactly what I have been able to do. It has been a deep and enlightening experience in which I have simultaneously taken part in numerous thinking environments as a part of the course whilst also applying Kline's thinking environments within the numerous contexts in which I work.



What is my context?

The context of my work is in the professional development of early childhood educators spanning across the sector to include childminders, headteachers, senior leadership teams, nursery and reception teachers, early years practitioners and teaching assistants. As a freelance consultant, I can find myself working in many different places across the UK and with international schools abroad, sometimes with whole settings, and other times with individuals from a range of settings who may or may not know each other. I am also a tutor with MA Education students at the Centre of Research in Early Childhood (CREC) and an Associate Consultant with Early Education developing training and professional learning opportunities. My background is in the arts, and I specialise in creativity and the arts but also with a specialism in the Reggio Emilia Approach.

I would often find myself frustrated, tasked with designing 'training' for a wide range of participants in which participants would expect me to hand out advice and give them the answers to their questions along with a sprinkling of theory and an armlength worth of practical ideas to take back to the setting. I was concerned as to the impact of this seemingly wanted and desired approach yet was also unsettled by the oversimplistic idea of focusing on the mechanisms of professional development recommended by the Education Endowment Fund (EEF, 2021) and the building of knowledge through developing teaching techniques that then were to become embedded in practice. It just seemed like it was a case of *'tell them what to do; make sure they understand what to do; and then check in so as to ensure that they can do it'* which offered little agency or motivation for educators to think about their own context and situation, their interactions and their children who they know well and better than any trainer or consultant in responsive ways.

How have I experimented with Kline's Thinking Environment®?

I have experimented with Kline's Thinking Environment through an investigation of how the components activate and create generative environments for thinking together within a range of professional learning contexts throughout the academic year 2023 - 2024. As part of the portfolio of work I created through this programme, my reflective journal (Ortlipp, 2008) became the place in which I collected my experiences to consider the differences and changes



which emerged in my experimentation. These reflections were then used within a film that I created for the final day of the programme, in which we shared our experiences collectively.

The film I created aimed to capture a flavour in words and images of each of Kline's Ten Components™ in which I narrated and used visual metaphors to represent my findings and understanding gained in this programme against each component. Below, in Figure 1, is the script I used to narrate each component which I hope makes visible in this vignette the power of enabling others thinking through the application of Kline's components and building blocks.

Figure 1: Narration from my final portfolio film

Ten Components	Narrated script from film
Attention	Now that I am alert to it, I see people interrupting people all the time. I have been thinking with others about how we interrupt children's flow of thinking as well as each other's. Being fascinated in children's or educators' thinking has meant really paying attention to how I attune and attend to where they are going in their thinking. In the early years, we are so focused on what children are saying in words alone and we ignore all the ways in which their thinking happens, and is expressed, and communicated. I am now asking questions about how we attend-to and pay attention to all the ways in which young children and educators think such as thinking through drawing or thinking through engagement with the natural world.
Equality	To be able to regard others as capable and equal thinking peers it has meant learning to let go of the importance of my own thinking when facilitating the thinking of others. It doesn't mean I can't think, but it means putting aside for a while my thoughts, ideas and suggestions. I wrote in my journal after holding a thinking day about play with a federation of 2 nursery schools: "Wow! What came up today from the group was exactly what they needed, and I could not have thought about or known in advance what they really needed. They needed to do the thinking, and in doing so, have identified their own problems and considered the solutions for them too. This is truly powerful."



Ten Components	Narrated script from film
Ease	This has been about making it easy to think together. Sometimes we can feel like we have been put on the spot to think about something and then nothing rises up in the tension of having to think, and now! I have found this year, how thinking with materials such as collage and charcoal has enabled educators I have worked with, a sense of ease in which to allow their thinking to bubble, percolate, incubate and flow through their hands. I ask myself how do I attend to thinking through our hands as well as our minds?
Appreciation	It feels good to be appreciated, and I've just tried in everything that I do to notice what is good and to say it. It has been amazing how simple this is and what it does to nourish the thinker. For any living community such as a school to thrive, I think it requires nourishment to grow and build resilience against the flow of forces and fluctuations it might experience. So, sharing and engaging in appreciation is an opportunity to make visible, nourish and recognise the liveliness and vitality of the thinking of children and the thinking of educators.
Feelings	In paying attention and welcoming the release of emotion, I have recognised how disabling strong emotions, when not released, can be to the thinking process. I have been working with educators who are desperately worried about the health of loved ones, who are deeply worried whether their jobs are safe and educators who are angry about the increasing burden of expectations. Sometimes, just recognising and acknowledging the emotion has been enough of a release. To be able to say I recognise that you are angry, or hurt, or sad is often enough for the other to feel seen. I can then open a dialogue, in which to think together about what the other needs in that moment.



Ten Components	Narrated script from film
Encouragement	It is joyful to encourage others to think for themselves. When they recognise that a space has been created for them to do just that then there are so many benefits and rewards. Following a thinking day at a nursery school, a member of staff messaged me afterwards to say: "This time to think together is really valuable. Without the space to do this, I don't think I would've realised what I needed to do. I think I would've just kept on chugging along happily, but not changing anything, not even realising the need to change, so thank you."
Information	This has been the tricky one for me as I've realised that giving information and advice, as much as I love it, can really limit the opportunity for others to think for themselves - even when it has been offered with both love and hope. Yet I also realise that sometimes we can also withhold information from others which can also limit their thinking. So, for me, this isn't about an either-or dichotomy. But rather it is about recognising the complexity of this component. Nancy Kline invites me to question: how can I use information at the right moments to ignite the thinking of others? This is both valuable and pertinent.
Difference	For me this is about seeking. Seeking different points of view that challenge our ways of thinking. I am seeking and welcoming different points of view and creating the fertile conditions for this diversity, difference and uniqueness in identity and thought to be championed. Creating thinking spaces in the professional development work I undertake has enabled educators to think differently about their children, enabling them to see children's differences as richness instead of deficit.



Ten Components	Narrated script from film
Incisive Questions™	I have used this component as a way of seeking out possible assumptions which may be lurking in my own thinking as well as the thinking of others. An example of this was when an educator was winding themselves up into a circle of knots about what they needed to get their children to do within a certain time frame. All I asked was 'do you think it's true, and what is the evidence for you to think that this is the case?' It turned out, she realised, that it wasn't the case at all, and that she needn't have worried so much about it.
Place	I have also always connected with Loris Malaguzzi's idea that the environment is a teacher of children. And for me, this component of place is a continuation of this idea that resonates - that spaces and places affect us. For me, place has become a kind of container in which all these components must be activated and generated within it. Whichever place or space we are in, we all need to feel like we matter - right? And the biggest problem of all is when we feel that we don't, or we fail to treat others as if they don't matter.

What have I valued?

To flourish, as is the name of this programme, I realised that the flourishing has to be mutual, and in my context of early childhood that means of course that the children are flourishing, but also their educators, the setting or organisation, and their families or primary carers, and our shared community of the planet itself. Robin Wall Kimmerer (2020) in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass* reminds us that all flourishing is mutual but when we fail to be mutual, we all fail to flourish.



What are my next steps?

Like the mycorrhizal web of fungal strands that inhabit tree roots, and which connect all the trees in a forest, perhaps my biggest understanding of all has been that we all need to weave these webs of reciprocity and to act in togetherness for mutual flourishing. I have learnt that living Kline's components as values for mutual flourishing is a way of weaving those webs of reciprocity, and is a way of connecting, living and becoming collective in our thinking together.

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Lakshmi Divakarla

CollectivED: *Flourish* vignette

Exploring and Implementing Nancy Kline's Thinking Environment® in a Year 5 Classroom

Throughout my career as an educator, I have consistently strived to find creative ways to improve the learning process and cultivate a classroom atmosphere that promotes respect and engaged participation. This quest inspired me to incorporate and promote Nancy Kline's Thinking Environment in a Year 5 classroom. This decision has had a significant impact on both my students and me.

Discovering the Thinking Environment

It all began with a deep desire to create a place where every child would feel seen and valued. Working with a group of twenty-eight enthusiastic students, it was quite a challenge to keep everyone engaged and ensure that each individual had a chance to share their thoughts. After attending the first induction day of Project Flourish, I was filled with inspiration and a strong desire to bring new ideas into my teaching. Upon encountering Nancy Kline's Thinking Environment, I made the choice to incorporate its principles into the classroom. These principles emphasise the importance of giving individuals dedicated time to contemplate and share their ideas.

I invited a colleague to join these sessions with the intention of providing support to my students and coaching my colleague on these principles. We embarked on this exciting journey together, dedicating ourselves to weekly sessions that completely transformed the dynamics of our classroom.



Organising weekly sessions in a structured manner

Each session was tailored to suit the specific needs and age of the children. It began with an activity designed to help the children relax and focus. After the room fell silent, I posed a question that made everyone stop and think such as, "What is one thing you appreciate about your class?" Another time, I asked, "Imagine a world where all the animals suddenly started talking to each other - what would happen? What do you think would be the human response to animals gaining this new ability? Would they feel fear, curiosity, or awe at this newfound communication between species?" I highlighted the significance of confining their comments to a set word count to guarantee clarity and conciseness. The students then had five minutes of silent thinking time. For those who needed a visual aid, I provided scrap paper to jot down their thoughts. This period of reflection was crucial, as it allowed even the most hesitant students to prepare their answers.

Systematic sharing

When it was time to share, we proceeded in a systematic manner, with each child speaking in turn. There was no need to raise hands because everyone knew their turn would come. This technique reduced fear of being overlooked and ensured a smooth, ordered procedure.

I highlighted the necessity of listening to what is being expressed. Each child's response was met with full attention by their peers, instilling respect and validation. I reminded the pupils that when someone speaks, our role is to listen. This demonstrates that we value their ideas and allow them to talk freely.

Participation and inclusion

To ensure inclusion during the round, I informed the children that they could pass if they did not feel prepared to speak. However, if they needed more time, I agreed to return to them later. This flexibility promoted voluntary engagement.



My colleague and I also took part, abiding by the same word constraints. This showed that we were a part of the process promoting the concepts of equality and respect, fundamental principles of the Thinking Environment. I made it clear to the children that every voice in our classroom is valued equally. "In this environment," I would say, "everyone has the right to express themselves and the responsibility to be paying attention." It's important to show respect for everyone's feelings and thoughts.

We openly discussed our feelings, recognising that each person has their own unique emotional experiences. This realisation fostered a nurturing atmosphere where students felt safe to freely express themselves. Active listening was the foundation of our sessions. I guided the children in the art of truly listening, encouraging them to go beyond their ears and connect with their hearts. "When you pay attention to your fellow students," I explained, "you demonstrate the significance of their words." It gives them a sense of being listened to and valued.

Exploring challenges and solutions

There were some difficulties encountered while implementing the Thinking Environment. One of the main challenges I faced was trying to stick to a regular schedule. At times, it was challenging to adhere to a consistent day each week due to shifting priorities or unexpected circumstances pulling me in different directions. At times, we had to end the session early due to unexpected interruptions or conflicting responsibilities.

At first, we encountered difficulties with children who were struggling to regulate their emotions. To address this issue, I implemented a strategy of playing soothing music for a brief period of five minutes during their designated thinking time. This simple intervention proved to be highly effective in helping them enhance their concentration and focus. One of the difficulties I faced was making sure the children were ready for the session. I consistently provided them with advance notice of the session's timing to assist them in seamlessly transitioning into a state of reflection.



There were instances when I faced challenges due to technical difficulties with classroom equipment, but we managed to overcome this by being prepared with alternative activities.

Thoughts and insights

I was deeply affected by these sessions. My colleague frequently commented on the observations she made:

"These sessions have been quite captivating. I notice the high level of engagement, particularly among the children with complex needs. The students eagerly follow the structure, creating a calm and focused class environment."

"The change in our students has been truly remarkable specially during these sessions. It's amazing to see how the children who once had difficulty participating have become some of the most engaged. It's truly inspiring to witness their willingness to open and express their thoughts."

"The Thinking Environment has fostered an equal and fair environment in our classroom. It is important to ensure that every child, regardless of their abilities or needs, is given an equal opportunity to express themselves and have their voices heard. It creates a genuine feeling of connection and mutual admiration."

"One of the most striking transformations is seen in the children with SEMH and SEN needs. They are frequently the individuals who feel unheard, but during these sessions, they have discovered their ability to express themselves. The structure empowers individuals to confidently express themselves, while their peers are growing in their ability to comprehend and value their unique viewpoints."

"It had made me think of certain things which I thought I would not even imagine in other situations and also it's so much more difficult to communicate or say within a specific number of words."



The Thinking Environment has shown great effectiveness when working with children who require additional support in their social, emotional, and mental well-being, as well as those with special educational needs. These children, who sometimes struggle to engage, were provided with a structured environment to gain insight into their classmates' emotions and for the rest of the class to comprehend their emotions and actions. By adopting this approach, a shift occurred in fostering inclusivity and empathy in the classroom.

The students themselves shared their appreciation for the atmosphere we had established. These are the children's responses:

"I love how everyone pays attention to what I say! It makes me feel special and important!"

"I really like thinking about my answer and knowing that it will be my turn soon!"

"This is the first time I feel like my friends actually listen to me."

"I feel really happy and important when it's finally my turn to talk!"

"Speaking in front of others was really tough for me at first. I mean, who likes talking when everyone's staring at you? It's not something we do every day in our classroom, you know? But I don't mind it now."

"It's really cool to have some time to think before I say anything."

"Wow, my friends have the best ideas ever!"

"I feel extremely valued because everyone is so patient and waits for me to finish what I'm saying."

"Before, I used to get all nervous when I had to talk, but now I feel super confident!"

"The sessions make me feel really calm and focused"

"Miss, when are we gonna do this again?"

"Can we pretty please have it twice this week?"



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In closing

After participating in these sessions, the Thinking Environment has become an integral part of our classroom culture. The experience taught the children the importance of actively listening, practising patience, and showing respect for the viewpoints of others. My colleague and I have observed a significant change in the students' behaviour and level of engagement, which has only strengthened our dedication to these principles.

Using Nancy Kline's Thinking Environment has greatly enhanced our classroom. We are committed to fostering an environment where all individuals are given the opportunity to express themselves and where every student is respected and appreciated.





Kay Tiffin

CollectivED: *Flourish* vignette



My journey towards flourishing without fear and helping others to do the same.

I work at Hope Wood Academy, a 2-19 special school based in the North-East of England, in Easington Colliery.

Hope Wood like most school settings, is a busy, short of time, short of space building, but inside those doors you will find a thriving community with the most dedicated adults, striving to do their best and get the best out of our group of very special young people. We are all driven by our motto "To provide a welcoming and purposeful environment where young people can flourish because their rights, needs and aspirations are met."

So, a little bit about me and what has driven me to the world of Flourish. I have worked at Hope Wood Academy for 16 years, starting in 2008 as a NQT and then in various roles with differing levels of leadership responsibility. Currently I am an assistant head who is very determined and forward thinking. I am driven by my insights "fiery red" profile and work hard and fast to see results to improve outcomes for the young people I work with. To date I have invested considerable time in taming (or at least positively directing) my fiery personality and animated facial expressions, which on occasion have landed me in rather hot water, in order to become the insightful, liberated leader that I strive to be.

Fast forward to October 23 when I received an email from my head of academy "saw this and thought of you" with an attachment to a flyer simply called "Flourish". I immediately clicked onto the flyer and straight away it spoke to me. One sentence in particular resonated, "enabling children, young people and educators to flourish without fear".



“Flourish without fear”

Tying into our academy motto so well and aligning with my own personal values I read on and further resonated with the words on the flyer. The next step was arranging a Teams call with Sheila to find out more about the Flourish programme and then hoping I would be accepted onto the Flourish journey.

November brought the first Flourish session which took me to Leeds Beckett University for the first face to face workshop. Here I met a diverse and wide-ranging group of professionals, each with a background story of how they had arrived here and wanted their settings to flourish.

On that day my introduction to the Ten Components™ was the first tool to starting to flourish:

Attention, Equality, Ease, Appreciation, Encouragement, Feelings, Information, Difference, Incisive Questions™, Place.

My learning from the first workshop and the introduction of the Ten Components funnily enough, highlighted that there were rather a lot of them that I did not consider in my daily practice, and none came particularly natural to me.

I was going to have to adapt my style in order to achieve my goal. I picked attention as the component I most wanted to work on and improve so that I could become a better thinking partner. Over the following months I shifted my focus between the different components and over time I found them coming more naturally to me helping me to transform meetings.

Reflecting on coaching conversations and meeting times, it was clear how my attention and listening skills had been enhanced whilst still completing tasks and getting the most out of my colleagues. The question “what are your thoughts and what would you like to think about?” has been a starter used in many of my thinking environments.

The online sessions were a great opportunity to catch up with other participants to hear how they had implemented aspects of Flourish in their workplaces as well as gaining



ideas that I could use in my own setting, discussing challenges we had all faced and which building blocks we had struggled to achieve. The online sessions offered time and a high-quality thinking space to reflect, with the final online session providing my biggest lightbulb moment so far throughout the programme.

I had been wracking my brains and even becoming a little concerned at how I would demonstrate my learning in a tangible way and what 'new' elements I had implemented. During the final online session in a breakout room, I finally realised Flourish did not offer 'new' concepts, but instead enhanced so many of the models we already have in place.



As the Flourish programme is drawing to a close, and we step out to really start flourishing without fear, the thing I have valued most about taking part in the programme is the opportunity to meet such a wide-ranging group of professionals from multiple settings and be given two of the elements that educators always wish they had more of, time and space! Time and space to listen, reflect and take stock.



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I have learnt some invaluable lessons about how to listen; something which has never been a strength of my chatterbox personality and allow others the time to think and speak without interruption. I have seen first-hand the benefits of allowing colleagues to do this.

Even though the programme is drawing to a close, I feel this is the true beginning of allowing colleagues and those around me to flourish without fear. My aims are to share my developments with my colleague team and try to embed the Thinking Environment® into other concepts we use within the academy.





Kevin Byrne

CollectivED: *Flourish* vignette

My motivation for participating in Flourish

Motivations on both a professional and personal level influenced my decision to participate in Flourish. I am fortunate to work in a highly motivated, caring and ethical organisation, but there was a need for a culture 'shift' especially in the area of strategic thinking and the prevailing culture of many school forums. On a personal level, I have been completing my headship qualification (NPQH) over the past 15 months and Flourish, although an addition to workload, appeared to be so strongly linked to school culture that I could immediately see some personal growth benefit!

Context

I began the year as Director of Personal Development and Wellbeing at Clare Mount Specialist Sports College, a secondary school for youngsters aged 11-19 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), primarily Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC). In June 2024 I became Deputy Headteacher.

The school is located in north Wirral, a highly populated suburb of Liverpool. Due to the nature of our specialism and the sustained success of the school over several decades, we draw our intake from right across the borough. Just under 60% of our young people are eligible for free school meals but they are ALL vulnerable in one way or another. The future for the majority of young people with SEND in the UK could be said to be quite bleak, with less than 30% moving onto employment in young adulthood.



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Our school motto is 'role models and catalysts for change' adopted from the vision of the London Paralympic Games in 2012. We have a culture of high aspiration for our young people knowing full well that U.K. society and especially the employability / career landscape and outlook will only improve if we continuously prove how capable our students are to live fulfilling and economically active lives in adulthood.

The Opening Workshop

What struck me most about the opening workshop was how quickly I was able to make the connection between Kline's principles and the potential for real, cultural change in my school setting. I was also impressed with both the professionalism and motivation within the room and the diversity of backgrounds and contexts we all had. There was an almost immediate sense of collaboration. The day was expertly and sensitively facilitated, and I left determined to make an impact back at school

Progress at Clare Mount throughout the year

A series of milestones have punctuated the development of a Thinking Environment® at Clare Mount over the past 12 months:

- an initial 'immersive' presentation about the Ten Components™ to members of the school leadership team
- the introduction of rounds and thinking pairs as a standing element of both whole staff and departmental strategic meetings
- the use of the Thinking Environment principles as a means for cross-discipline (pastoral and academic) strategy and vision meetings (now scheduled for 3 times per year)



- adaptations to the way meetings are structured – including how information is shared prior to meetings and how meetings are facilitated and chaired.

Online sessions, padlet, one-to-ones

All elements of the Flourish year have had added value. My one-to-one with Sheila, earlier this spring, was a well-timed, immersive, reminder of the power of active listening. I felt 'unlocked' during that hour because of the simplicity of the questioning and Sheila's excellent modelling of effective listening and questioning. Padlet has been very useful in terms of enabling personal preparation for events, meetings, tasks and for providing thought-provoking reading material and resources throughout the programme. The online sessions also helped to consolidate learning about some of the elements of the Thinking Environment that weren't immediately obvious to me (e.g. appreciation and incisive questioning) following the opening workshop in November.

What has been problematic?

The only issue I have had with the implementation of any part of this has been the time required at certain times of the year when I am so time-poor already. There have been (and I have alluded to them earlier) advantages to completing this course at the same time as my NPQH, but there have been times when I have found it very difficult to concentrate on matters outside of work and I am fortunate to have an understanding family!

Impact

My colleagues now recognise that they are valued members of a thinking community and that their thoughts are as valued as any other colleague within the organisation.



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Without Flourish this would not have happened. Where meetings especially had become formulaic and infantilising, they are now rich and empowering.

Next Steps

Implementation and sustainability are, in my opinion, the two most difficult and most overlooked aspects of school leadership. Stephen Covey, the author of 'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People' is credited with the quote: 'The main thing, is to keep the main thing the main thing.' The context in which I heard this quote earlier this year was to do with the importance of teaching and learning in a school, in other words, don't forget that the purpose of a school is to provide good education to young people. I see this quote as being a useful way of reminding myself about the importance of being dogged and resilient in how I continue to implement the Thinking Environment principles at Clare Mount. I am pleased to have the padlet and my twelve months of excellent professional development and learning to refer to as I enter a new year; one in which I hope to start an incremental yet profound change to the curriculum offered to the young people at Clare Mount.





Nikki Bains

CollectivED: *Flourish* vignette

What was my motivation for participating in Flourish?

After having completed a CMI Coaching Award in the summer of 2023, I was looking for a further programme of learning to either enhance or complement, the knowledge I had already gained. I had a keen interest in how to best develop individuals and came across the concept of the 'Thinking Environment®'. I was signposted to 'Flourish' where I registered my interest, and whilst I had very little knowledge as to what the programme would entail, I was excited with what new learning and development it would bring.

What is my context?

I am currently working in a sixth form college in Nottingham as a Skills and Progression Teacher. I work with students aged 16-19 providing pastoral and transition support through coaching and mentoring approaches. I also deliver classroom-based sessions covering a range of relevant topics such as progression plans, and the skillset required after college. My role involves utilising the learning environment to incorporate strategies for learners such as fostering self-awareness and confidence, communication, and critical thinking skills. I've also been working as a Team Development Coach for a year where my primary responsibility entails facilitating conversations with a cohort of colleagues, assisting them in establishing both personal and professional goals and serving as their collaborative thinking partner.



What did I learn from the Opening Workshop?

In the initial opening workshop, which took place in Leeds, group members were introduced to the facilitator, Sheila Ball as well as to each other. We were invited to Kline's Thinking Environment with a very powerful opening statement; 'The quality of everything we do depends on the quality of the thinking we do first'. Upon hearing this statement, it instantaneously took me to think about situations where the quality of my thinking affected my thoughts, actions and subsequently my decisions. Within a few minutes of hearing this statement, I reflected on the important correlation between quality and thinking.

Throughout the workshop we moved through Kline's Ten Components™ and building blocks through presentations and discussions via Thinking Pairs. Some of the components that I was immediately drawn to as they resonated with me personally and within my professional role included attention, ease and equality. In addition, I was fascinated with the component of Incisive Questions™ and started to think about how they could be incorporated within my roles as a teacher and team development coach.

Sheila introduced the group to opening rounds, freshest thinking rounds and closing rounds where we each had turns to share our thoughts on Kline's concepts, knowing that we would not be interrupted. This is where I learned about the value of creating space to generate and express insights and feelings. I left the opening workshop with an abundance of excited energy ready to implement what I had learned in my classroom, and I was hoping to help ignite change in how my department meetings were conducted.

How have I experimented with Kline's Thinking Environment?

Since participating in Flourish, I have experimented with Kline's Thinking Environment:



As a development coach

Although all ten components naturally cross into my current role as a development coach, I have been mindful to ensure that I have incorporated these when planning and delivering my coaching sessions. For example, I regard and refer to individuals whom I coach, as thinking peers/ thinking partners rather than a 'coachee' to help create a space where they are valued equally. I also ensure that the component of attention is at the forefront of my coaching sessions as this determines the quality of the thinking taking place; it is a key reminder that I am there to listen and ignite the thinking rather than to solve problems. I have also attempted to incorporate some Incisive Questions, particularly when starting the coaching sessions with common questions being asked, such as 'What would you like to think about?' Other components such as appreciation, ease, feelings, place and encouragement have played a fundamental role in helping shape the direction and subsequently positive outcome of my coaching conversations.

As a Skills & Progression Teacher

In my role as a Skills & Progression Teacher when conducting one-to-one review meetings, if students present a self-limiting belief (e.g. I don't think I can sit my exams, as I don't think I will pass) I have attempted to use the component of Incisive Questions to help challenge their assumption such as, 'What makes you think/what evidence do you have that makes you think you won't pass and how may that change if you were fully prepared for your exam?'. In some cases, students have reflected on this and been able to dig deeper into their limiting beliefs. As a result, they have changed their thinking patterns towards their exams. However, it does need to be noted that I do have my limitations when attempting to use the component of Incisive Questions, as I find this the most challenging to implement. I am hoping that with further practice, I can become more confident in using this powerful component.

Department meetings

I have introduced the concept of thinking rounds in



department meetings, and in two of the meetings that have taken place this year, team members have started the conversation with an opening round and finished with an appreciation round. In these meetings, team members have been given the space and encouraged to think about ideas to help drive the team forward, with a clear focus on all members listening without interruption. When facilitating the rounds, I observed that although this provided an element of discomfort to some individuals, it gave value and purpose to their thinking which generated a productive meeting.

PowerPoint presentations

When creating PowerPoint presentations, in preparation for teaching students, I am more mindful about engaging my audience and giving them the attention required rather than reading off the PowerPoint. This has resulted in my presentations being shorter in length and where possible, I attempt to tell stories with prompts to encourage students to be more engaged.

What have I valued?

I've valued the opportunity to continuously explore and share Kline's concepts, in a supportive and safe space through the Flourish workshops and I've valued the wealth of information and knowledge exchanged between Flourish members. Each workshop has given me the confidence to help transform my way of thinking which aligns with my values of wanting to become the best version of myself, personally and professionally.

As Kline's approach encourages a lot of self-reflection, I've valued the insight gained in my thinking patterns and how my self-limiting beliefs/fears have impacted my ability to incorporate the component of Incisive Questions and as mentioned, this is something I want to work on further. I've particularly valued the component of ease in my personal life. Trying to juggle motherhood alongside the demands of a professional working life and with timing playing a critical role, I often observe urgency when thinking is taking



place. I am now more mindful of how ease helps to create an environment free from rush and therefore a place where thinking can be at its ultimate best.

What are my next steps?

I will be continuing to implement the work of Nancy Kline in my personal and professional development. With a new cohort of students in the upcoming academic year, I will be planning some time in sessions to incorporate the Thinking Environment principles and I hope that this will encourage student engagement from the outset whilst promoting equality of opportunity. I'm hoping to continue to embed Kline's tools when meetings take place in my department. Making this a regular and habitual occurrence will help foster collaboration and trust amongst team members and help to ensure that meetings bring value and are meaningful. I'm passionate about my coaching role, and I believe that creating an environment where Kline's components are firmly implemented can help uncover the potential of individuals, leading to growth and development. Therefore, I will continue to develop my coaching sessions using Kline's thinking framework.

Additionally, as part of my coaching role, I am planning to incorporate and facilitate termly ideas/thinking rooms for colleagues who also coach, and whilst I am aware that this may be a challenge due to time constraints, I believe that it would be a great stepping stone in moving towards a college-wide coaching programme underpinned by Kline's components.

I am grateful to have been introduced to Kline's work and will endeavour to make it a fundamental part of my life. The Flourish programme may have ended, but for me, personally and professionally, it is just the beginning of a wonderful learning journey.





Sarabjit Borrill

CollectivED: *Flourish* vignette

What was my motivation for participating in Flourish?

Having been introduced to The Thinking Environment® by Lou Mycroft in 2018 and having practised the applications and components for some time, I wanted to enhance my practice further within a structured programme.

What is my context?

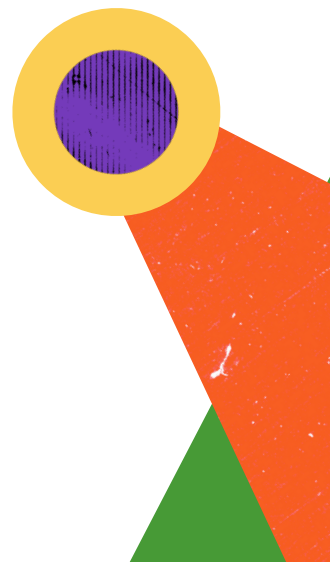
I have two roles: I am a Teaching and Learning Quality Lead for Adult Community Learning in Leicestershire and a lecturer on an international PGCE programme.

What did I learn from the Opening Workshop?

The first workshop not only allowed us to get to know each other as participants in the Flourish programme, we explored what it means to exercise a practice of care, through practising the Ten Components™ as part of Nancy Kline's applications such as rounds, and pairs.

How have I experimented with Kline's Thinking Environment?

I devised several resources including thinking rounds and thinking prompts for pairs, which were used with my level 3 trainees over a period of 16 weeks. I also introduced the Thinking Environment to Higher Education students through a workshop in which a student brought a problem to the group to discuss and solve collaboratively.





How have the online sessions, 121s, padlet supported me?

The Padlet is an excellent tool for holding together all the resources associated with the programme. It provides quick and easy access to essential material. The 1-2-1s were invaluable in encouraging thinking deeply even when I didn't think I needed to do 'more thinking'! Ideas were generated with Sheila's generous generative attention. Through peer discussions, active participation, and classroom experimentation, my knowledge of and skill in the use of the Thinking Environment grew further.

What has been problematic?

Trust is an essential ingredient when working with TE elements and I felt a sense of belonging and trust with the pilot group members for which Sheila should be thanked. A community with an appropriate ethos is important, and this was not an issue for the cohort as we were all genuinely interested in developing ourselves and supporting each other and our students. All components require ongoing practice but, the use of Incisive Questions™ can be an area that requires further support.

What difference do I think my experimentation has made so far?

I've incorporated TE into my lessons using thinking rounds and pairs, and when time and topic allow, the use of a Time to Think Council. My students have reported the benefits of experiencing the TE in class commenting that they are not used to being listened to or listening to others. It is a skill that requires practice. They also report feeling equal in a TE space.

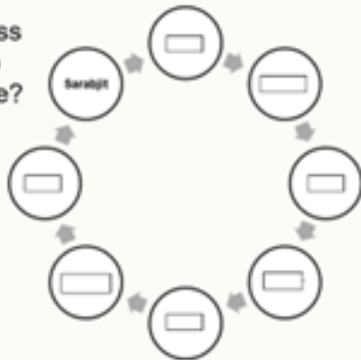
Below I share some examples of activities that I facilitated:



Opening Round:

1. How are you today?
2. What one success have you had so far on this course?

Anyone can start.
When finished talking, say
'over to ...' Go clockwise

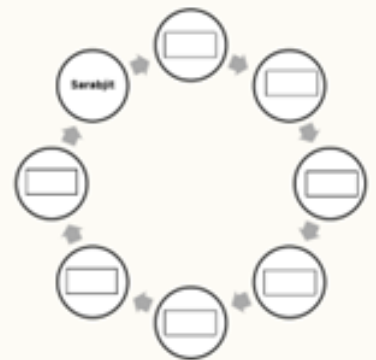


Closing Round:

What is your freshest thinking?

Give your appreciation to the person to your left.

Anyone can start.
When finished talking, say
'over to ...' Go clockwise.



Thinking Pairs Prompt Examples

What:

- Share what resources you might use in your future classes.
- Share how you would adapt them to meet **individual learner needs**.

Optional: share how cognitive load theory and dual coding theory help you to design your resources.

How:

Thinking Pairs:

Thinker: you have a **full 4 minutes** to talk about your ideas. You can be quiet to think.

Listener: provide your undivided attention. No interruptions. Then swap over.

What is the Thinking Environment?

The quality of your attention determines the quality of other people's thinking.

To what extent do you agree? Share your thinking – uninterrupted – in a 2-minute 'pairs' application.

What did it feel like to be listened to knowing there would be no interruptions?

Thinking Council Prompts

THINKING COUNCIL

- What are the strengths and challenges of evidence-informed practice?

Rules:

- Do not **ADVISE** others. Just share your experiences, thoughts, and ideas e.g., what's worked for you/what's not worked for you.
- No interruptions
- Give your undivided attention
- Act as a scribe for the person to your left

Thinking Council

The students are
uninterested: they
don't want to learn.

They want to stay on
their screens.

What can I do to get
them more engaged?



Ten Components of the Thinking Environment

In your own words: What does it take for people to help each other to think well for themselves?

Add your ideas to: Word Cloud
<https://www.menti.com/>.....



What have I valued?

I have valued getting to know the Flourish participants which I now see as a community of practice. I benefited from learning about how TE components and applications could be used in work meetings.

What are my next steps?

After Flourish, I wrote a short article about my experience for LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/time-think-my-journey-flourish-programme-sarabjit-borrill-wwxre/>

I shall continue to enhance my practice through application, and I am looking forward to introducing the TE to coaches within my organisation in early September 2024. Sheila has created spaces for us to connect regularly with each other next year, as well as contribute to the new cohort. This is exciting and I'm looking forward to participating.





Roy Halpin

CollectivED: *Flourish* vignette

What was my motivation for participating in Flourish?

Serendipity. A team email publicising Flourish arrived in my inbox just as I had finished listening to Kline's *The promise that changes everything* on audiobook. This book had piqued my interest and the email enabled it to remain towards the top of my thoughts. Flourish as a programme trailed the idea of being able to engage at length, in greater depth, and with colleagues, than what was likely to be possible as a solo research exercise.

What is my context?

My current role is Lecturer in Childhood and Education at the Carnegie School of Education, Leeds Beckett University. I work mainly with undergraduates as they transition from school or college to university, and then again as they transition onwards towards independent, professional employment or further training. Much of my time is taken engaging with final-year students as they step-up to independent dissertation writing and develop the skills required for their postgraduate future.

What did I learn from the Opening Workshop?

The opening workshop was fascinating in that it engaged a group of enthusiastic, disparate educators from a wide range of contexts. It created the environment in which the value of having a set structure to work within became clear. Setting out clearly and without fear the process and the key elements, and then using these within set activities enabled deeper discussion and focussed thinking. Crucially, this was completed without the distractions of the everyday world.



How have I experimented with Kline's Thinking Environment®?

The Thinking Environment process has been used in an informal way with students during meetings, often at final year dissertation supervisions. The process enabled and encouraged students to take control of their own (head) space and work through thoughts without the continual feed of ideas and materials from me as the supervisor/tutor. Stepping back and directly providing space for uninterrupted thinking was initially unsettling for all, and not successful with everyone. For some students though it was a valuable catalyst to greater depth and more analytical thinking.

How have the online sessions, 121s, padlet supported me?

The course support materials were valuable and offered an opportunity to clarify ideas following the day or evening workshops. Padlet works as a digital platform that can be easily accessed and content uploaded. The online group sessions enabled the continuation of a team ethic that was established during the initial face-to-face workshop. As is found in many online environments, there is a greater coherence and buy-in to the process if there is an opportunity to meet in person prior to online activities and this certainly was the case during Flourish.

What has been problematic?

Creating the culture around the use of Thinking Environments. There is a need to create the 'buy in' to assist with the longer-term development. Healthy scepticism often works in the short-term while techniques are played with and developed. Once structures are in place and there is an understanding of the process, then scepticism can be overcome. In terms of teaching, culture is set at the beginning of an academic year. Starting to use these techniques in-year was difficult for many students. Next year is an opportunity to directly embed a Thinking Environment approach at the outset.



What difference do I think my experimentation has made so far?

With self-starting, highly capable students this approach has enabled them to move forward independently of the tutor/supervisor. With clear embedding and thoughtful modelling, this should be expanded to a much broader group of students.

What have I valued?

The Flourish space provided an opportunity to work alongside colleagues from a range of environments with dedicated time available for deeper conversations. The allowance of time, in a setting removed from everyday teaching activity, enabled the shutting out of the various voices and demands of the day that is often difficult or impossible to achieve. I have also valued the openness of the concept to accept and use different ideas and parts of the programme rather than insisting on the use of all elements equally and in full.

What are my next steps?

Next steps include introducing thinking pairs into undergraduate work alongside the more traditional *study-buddy* approach. I also plan to trial a reset of the approach used for dissertation supervision; allowing more time and space for uninterrupted student thinking, and thereby hopefully reducing the degree to which some students feel the need for huge amounts of tutor support. Alongside this should be a strengthening of the professional relationships between supervisor and student.





O'Ryan Heideman

CollectivED: *Flourish* vignette

What was my motivation for participating in Flourish?

I was motivated to learn new approaches to organisation, teaching, presenting and listening. As a participant at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, I was also motivated to potentially expand my network and learn from experienced career educators.

What did I learn from the Opening Workshop?

I learnt how to initiate rounds and organise thinking pairs and/or groups. I also learnt more about giving good attention and asking the right kind of questions to encourage further thinking.

How have I experimented with Kline's Thinking Environment®?

I've primarily used it in informal contexts as participating in the programme has created the desire to listen with greater attention and to frame conversations as potential thinking environments. I've also used Kline's work in some meetings, using rounds to ensure that everyone is given an opportunity to make a contribution to discussions.

How have the online sessions, 121s, padlet supported me?

They've been useful in reminding me of the components and building blocks, thus reinforcing the knowledge that was received during the sessions.

What has been problematic?

With all due understanding that enacting effective thinking



environments requires consistent effort and practice, I still came to see some elements and aspects of it as deeply flawed. The thinking partner's lack of responses to what is being said takes away from a certain dynamic characteristic that is ideal for a dialogue. One gets the sense that more attention is placed on fulfilling all of the requirements or rules of being a good thinking partner than actually listening to what the speaker is saying. While it's understandable that the aim is for the speaker to discover the extent to which they can think well, most conversations desire an active exercise of give and take. I often felt that my thinking partner had not listened or cared about much that had been said due to the lack of information relay, and the small smiles, head nods and words of appreciation felt unnatural, and generally detached. Of course, I know these feelings do not reflect the actual attitudes of the thinking partners, but it was still how I felt in certain moments.

What difference do I think my experimentation has made so far?

I think this has all made me slightly more aware of the potential that all people have for good thinking. It's made me determined to be a good listener and enact some, if not all of the components in both formal and informal spaces.

What have I valued?

I have valued the positivity and enthusiasm of the participants that made this programme possible.

What are my next steps?

To keep contact with the amazing professionals that I have met on this journey and contribute to further activities that arise in the future.





Karen Duffy

CollectivED: *Flourish* vignette

What was my motivation for participating in Flourish?

I read about the project through a message on the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) weekly posting. I'm a senior manager, line managing a team of twenty people at a time of much change the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) sector. I wanted to engage in the programme to be a 'better manager' and to support those colleagues I work with to achieve their own potential. I didn't at the time, see how this was going to unlock my own potential. I'm not sure why I didn't think that would happen as I trained in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, so something related to listening is always exciting.

What is my context?

I am a principal lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) where I have worked for twenty years. Prior to that I taught Psychology A level in schools and colleges. As well as teaching on the educational psychology undergraduate degree course, I lead the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in Psychology training postgraduates to teach GCSE and A level psychology for 14-19 year olds. We are based in Manchester, however I work with 600 schools across the North West of England.



What did I learn from the Opening Workshop?

I absolutely loved the first day. It's been a long time since I have done any training for myself. The first thing that struck me was when we were asked to introduce ourselves and not to give a role, to develop equality. I'm so used to teachers being defined by their roles and status, which can be phenomenally intimidating. Introducing ourselves in this way was revolutionary as we were treated as equal without that judgement 'they know more than I do'. Later during informal discussions, we naturally discussed what we do but by that point we had developed a bond so it was less significant. I loved the discussions with Kathryn and Lou and how they had used Kline's work in their settings.

Some of the Ten Components™ naturally came easier than others. Attention, equality, difference and appreciation were the easiest however, I really struggled and to be honest still do, with Incisive Questions™. It did help that others also found this the most difficult to comprehend. However, after a few days back in work, I thought more about place and belonging. It became important to me to try to make people feel like they mattered.

I learnt a lot about the group on a shared taxi ride to the station as we naturally just chatted about life; it was a great moment. I spent the days after the opening workshop listening to podcasts on Kline's work whilst walking the dog which I found massively inspirational.

How have I experimented with Kline's Thinking Environment®?

My work climate is exceptionally difficult currently. Having undergone structural and staffing change, we have had to get used to new systems. Change at government level resulted in us having to reaccredit a whole programme. As a consequence, many colleagues feel frustrated and some understandably mistrustful of the new management.

I thought Kline's work would work perfectly in this context as people could have a voice in meetings, something I thought



would be welcome. I explained some of the basic points from the opening workshop and the book and facilitated an opening round to start the staff meeting. Disaster! The first person to speak was so upset about the changes that they continued for five minutes without me being able to stop them and eventually the process fell apart. However, I felt better after the session we had online about facilitating Transforming Meetings™ which gave me some more tools.

I realised I needed to be more skilled at facilitating Kline's Thinking Environment in a very difficult context, so I started learning the skills with a more suitable group: my post grads. They came back to university from school placement every Friday and so every week, we used opening rounds to start the day, asking for example, what were they grateful for in their school placement that week? Brilliant!!! They also loved Thinking Pairs as they just needed someone to listen to their week without judgement and to be able to think aloud about issues they had experienced. Feedback from the students was very positive with some saying that they had used some of the Ten Components themselves with their form classes – lots of ripples in the pool!

I was more attentive to my presentation work with them after the online session on Presentations in a Thinking Environment. The student teachers also said they had found this useful and used some of the ideas in their own practice – again ripples!

Towards the end of the PGCE psychology course, we had a session of appreciation where we invited each member of the group to be appreciated by the rest of the group. This was so powerful and for some of them very emotional.

I have also experimented with some colleagues who I line manage on a one-to-one basis, such as appreciation and Thinking Pairs. I am yet to tackle a larger group, but I will get there.



How have the online sessions, 121s, padlet supported me?

Online sessions were brilliant, difficult in winter at the end of a grim day but invigorating. I loved the padlet as I could return to this to refresh ideas or find some more suggestions for reading.

What has been problematic?

Timing as always is problematic for anyone in education. I didn't read as much as I wanted to during the year. I will do next year, or I'll lose momentum. I would appreciate gaining more knowledge of how to work with challenging settings and those who seem reluctant to engage.

What difference do I think my experimentation has made so far?

It has made a massive difference to how I think about those I line manage. I constantly think, how can I listen to them more? How can they use their voices when they are fearful of voicing problems? Experimenting has worked well with trainee teachers. Many of them told me how they are so used to being/feeling judged each week by mentors in schools. They found the Thinking Environment a useful tool for being appreciated and appreciating others as well as a means of sharing ideas in an equitable way unlike the school contexts they had been working in. They enjoyed the ease of pace without the rush experienced in their placement schools. Most importantly, experimenting with Kline's work has made me think about taking time to speak before I rush in and giving others time instead of (not before – I hope!) interrupting. I've found it so amusing the minute you give someone an overview of what the Flourish programme is about such as equality without interrupting, they instantaneously stop butting in! Powerful stuff.



What have I valued?

I have valued three things:

- Sheila's knowledge and patience
- the group and how we have become friends not just people on a same course
- time to spend on working out issues in the workplace.

What are my next steps?

I plan to read more and with Kline's principles and practices, create a healthier ethos so everyone has an equal voice. I would also like to continue engaging with the programme, Kline #2! Beyond MMU, I will keep spreading the word in schools I visit who I feel would benefit from engaging with the Flourish programme. Ideally, I would like to get a group of colleagues at work on the next programme as I think if there are more of us in the work setting creating cultural change it will be a lot easier.





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Henry Sauntson

CollectivED: *Flourish* vignette

The teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves.

Paolo Freire

What was my motivation for participating in Flourish?

The decision to participate in the Flourish programme was an easy one to make. I wanted to invest in my own professional development as well as explore a new idea that might help transform my working pattern – too often the field of Initial Teacher Training is dominated by compliance, checklists, codified knowledge and generic, technicist frameworks – I wanted to look at new ways of encouraging heterogeneity, allowing pre-service teachers to – excuse the pun – flourish and develop their own identity.

What is your context?

As a Director of a School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) provider in Peterborough, I firmly believe that learning to teach is, to paraphrase Pollard, an art, a craft and a science – it cannot be reduced to mere sets of competencies but must be allowed to embrace the context of the individual classroom and its surrounding demographics. So much of the development of pre-service teachers comes through the support from their mentors, and through a deeper exploration of Nancy Kline's work I saw the glimmer of an opportunity for mutual growth through dialogue.

What did you learn from the Opening Workshop?

The Opening Workshop was the first step into a new world for me; one that I knew I would inhabit for the rest of my professional life. Despite being surrounded by strangers,



I felt secure – the rules, expectations and principles of the environment gave me freedom to express myself and articulate my thinking, without fear of judgment or hierarchy – an equitable stage on which all had their allocated, dedicated time to perform.

Working through each of the components allowed me to contextualise and conceptualise how they would support – perhaps even underpin – aspects of pre-service teacher development, and with the freedom that came through dialogue I was able to ascertain how each aspect would form part of the framework for a new approach with mentors and their work.

The quality of the group was paramount in this – like-minded but varied individuals fully engaged in and committed to learning more about themselves and each other as professionals. By the end of the Opening Workshop, I already felt part of a group of people who had committed themselves to influencing professional change.

How have you experimented with Kline's Thinking Environment®?

Taking the work of Flourish back to my setting was enlightening and exciting. Creating new methods of sharing time and encouraging thought, and making more explicit the connection between the emphasis on thinking and attention in the new Core Content and Early Career Frameworks and the actuality of the pre-service teacher experience. If we shift the emphasis away from the trainee and mentor having a 'meeting' and focus instead on them sharing 'time' together, then we remove the pressure and the summative nature of the encounter, creating instead a formative and shared space for mutual growth.

One early dabble was to ask that leadership meetings (morning briefings and more formal agendas) were balanced. Turns were taken to speak with the option of passing on instead of a hands-up or 'who is loudest' approach. The power of the programme and its participants also helped me when I came to difficult leadership decisions



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around the sharing out of responsibilities to fill a gap following the departure of a staff member. Through a Time to Think Council, the group helped me realise that I should not consider the sharing of the duties as much as I should the sharing of the opportunities for individual success – the output as opposed to the input. What great wisdom!

Throughout the programme I found that everyone had a tale to tell, and that helped validate my own thinking. I have often felt unable to take any form of praise or appreciation, and unable also to invest in myself, and the components of the Thinking Environment helped liberate me, giving my thoughts a new and stronger voice.

How have the online sessions, 121s, padlet supported you?

The online sessions were hugely valuable, bringing us together across myriad contexts but with a shared goal, and to explore the components and engage in activities genuinely felt inspirational – the thrill of learning something new and relevant alongside others feeling the same way.

Having access to a group Padlet allowed for regular refreshing of the material and sharing of ideas, and helped keep a momentum as well as ensuring that priorities were clear. When everything is a priority, nothing is, and to know that there was a clear agenda really helped focus the learning and the application. SCITTs operate across many contexts, with multitudinous attempts at implementation. Each strand or person is a helium balloon that needs a lead weight to anchor it, lest it float away. I see Kline's work as the lead weight, the anchor for all involved in my training programme.

So often the single biggest myth in communication is the illusion it has taken place, to paraphrase G B Shaw. By creating a shared language, we avoid a Tower of Babel in teacher development, and ensure that everyone works together under agreed, understood circumstances and goals. The composer Franz Biber is credited with the phrase 'Hic dissonant ubique nam ebrii sic diversis Cantilenis calamari solent', which loosely translated means 'Here it is



dissonant everywhere, for thus are the drunks accustomed to bellow with different songs'. Often teacher professional development can feel like this, as everyone wishes to have their piece of advice heard without the consideration of time, space, equity or support. Flourish has shown me that this doesn't need to be the case.

What effect has the Flourish programme had?

Like all powerful and developmental experiences, I was challenged personally and professionally by the work of Flourish, but that challenge enabled me to learn more about myself, trust my thinking, share my feelings and ideas, and put faith in my 'freshest thinking'. Thoughts become active when they are given a voice, but thinking is such an organic process; it cannot be assumed, it has to be learned.

Flourish has changed the way I approach my own leadership and what I encourage in others, and provided a firm, evidence-informed platform for the training and education of mentors and pre-service teachers. Mentorship is a form of leadership, and all of my registered SCITT mentors henceforth will be asked to engage in professional learning related to Kline's Thinking Environment, so they too can start to foster learning environments in which they and their trainees 'flourish'.

The teacher, like the artist, the philosopher and the man of letters, can only perform his work adequately if he feels himself to be an individual directed by an inner creative impulse, not dominated and fettered by an outside authority.

Bertrand Russell

