

Innovation—Coming Soon to a School Near You

By Nicole Adrian

Creativity, critical thinking and innovation in education can mean a lot of different things to a lot of different people. For some, it means using current events and hands-on activities to engage students and make learning personal. For others, it means engaging educators to provide continuous improvements that infiltrate the classroom.

You'll find evidence of that in the articles in this issue of *ASQ Primary and Secondary Education Brief*. Definitions, examples and explanations are across the board, and each method and idea has its own unique and interesting message related to the subject.

To start off, an article about the recently passed economic stimulus package details how the U.S. government is providing \$650 million in an innovation fund to recognize educational institutions and programs that have gone above and beyond the expected—such as those that have significantly closed the achievement gap or improved graduation rates notably. These awards are intended to help these entities serve as models for best practices and work with the philanthropic community.

In another article, Cindy McClung and Bob Hogle explain the importance of critical thinking: "... it enables people to analyze, evaluate, explain and restructure thinking, thereby decreasing the risk of adopting, acting on or thinking with a false belief."

McClung, coordinator for quality and instructional processes for the School District of Lee County, FL, and Hogle, who consults, trains and presents keynote addresses for schools and districts, also write that the key to seeing the significance of critical thinking in the classroom lies in understanding the significance of critical thinking in learning.

In his article, Andrew Fraser, an education officer in Australia, addresses what he sees as an absence of innovative spirit in schools. Teacher-led innovation has a strong moral purpose and is focused on students, especially their needs and aspirations. Fraser goes on to say creativity is required to bring new thinking and solutions to the problems facing educators and involves seeking and discovering new perspectives.

In the fourth article, two students from the Innovation Academy Charter High School write about how the school provides them with an education suitable for world with rapidly changing technology.

“At Innovation Academy Charter School, we see and experience innovation on a daily basis, from the work displayed in our school hallways to the learning technologies available to us,” Naomi Gossement and Matthew Whiman write. “Most importantly, we see innovation in our own work. One quick glimpse of a class in action and you can find new, project-based approaches to learning.”

To implement creativity, critical thinking and innovation in your schools and classrooms, consider learning more about some of the programs and resources ASQ offers. ASQ has a framework for excellence already established, as well as a means of achieving it. Additionally, ASQ has a network of educators and administrators to help those new to this area on their journeys. A proven set of district solutions and professional development is also available for them.