

## What to do with the *Critical Thinking Competency Standards* by Professor Eliana C. Mukherjee

A few months ago, faculty received in their mailboxes a copy of *A Guide for Educators to Critical Thinking Competency Standards*, a resource provided by the QEP committee.

Remember it? It's the little blue book by Dr. R. Paul and Dr. L. Elder of The Foundation for Critical Thinking. Since then, we have heard some faculty ask, "So what do I do with this?"

That's a fair question, and I will offer some ideas on how to use this valuable resource. The first thing you need to do, of course, is to grab it from your bookshelf and dust it off.

### **Get a better understanding of what critical thinking means and why we need to focus on it.**

Once you open the book, you will note that the first 14 pages provide an overview of critical thinking. Those who want to have a better understanding of what critical think entails should read the section titled, "Understanding the Intimate Relationship Between Critical Thinking, Learning, and Education (p. 6-13). It provides a strong rationale for educators to focus on developing students' critical thinking skills.

### **Use the Critical Thinking Competency Standards.** This is the central feature of the book.

Twenty-five critical thinking standards are offered and explained beginning on page 17. To get started using the standards, take a little time to skim over all 25 of them. These standards are grouped into six domains for easy reference on pages 14 and 15. Keep in mind that they can be applied to any discipline, so as you are reading them, think about the courses you teach and how you currently address these standards. After you have read through all of them, select one that you would like to have your students develop. Carefully read that standard and consider ways in which you could teach it in your class. Review the related student outcomes for ideas on how to measure students' performance for that standard. Once you feel comfortable with implementing a given standard, try another.

**Develop a more in-depth understanding of the theory behind the competencies.** For those who want to delve a little deeper into the theory behind the competencies and standards, the Appendix (pages 46 to 53) provides a brief overview.

The purpose of this resource is to provide one way for faculty to develop a better understanding of critical thinking and to be more intentional in incorporating critical thinking in our teaching. The more we can help students develop these competencies, the better prepared students will be for their careers and further studies.

## Meet Eliana Mukherjee



*Eliana Mukherjee has nearly 20 years of work experience in all aspects of education, including teaching, administration, research, planning, curriculum development and teacher training. She was the Director of the American International School of Costa Rica for two years, and she taught elementary school in the United States for five years. She has worked on research projects for the World Bank on school improvement and for Harvard University on early language and literacy development. She worked as Assistant Professor in the Peace Education M.A. program at the United Nations mandated University of Peace for six years. Recently, she worked as a consultant for UNESCO/International Bureau of Education in developing guidelines for curriculum developers and teacher training institution in Angola. Mrs. Mukherjee earned her B.S. in Mass Communications from Emerson College and her Ed.M. in Administration, Planning and Social Policy from Harvard University. She is pursuing her Ph.D. at Florida Atlantic University in Curriculum, Culture, and Educational Inquiry. Eliana currently works as an Associate Professor in the teacher education program at Palm Beach State College.*