Rising Grades 9-11 Prompt

Recently, many policymakers, politicians, educators, and entrepreneurs have argued that what once represented a solid education – academic experiences based principally on building literacy and numeracy skills – no longer suffices for success in college, career, and citizenship in the 21st Century. Consequently, schools increasingly focus on the development of “21st Century skills” including critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (the “four Cs”). One challenge is building 21st Century skills into the school curriculum. But, HOW?

The focus of this application prompt is on one of the four Cs, specifically creativity. Many theorists and researchers have endeavored to define creativity, and there is no single or universally accepted definition of creativity.

■ How do you define creativity? What are the key features or elements of creativity under this definition? In answering this question, you may use a definition articulated by a prominent theorist. You may also make one up yourself. Please note, however, your definition of creatively should be clearly articulated. In other words, spell it out.

■ Based on the definition of creativity you have articulated, what is the most creative product – or thing -- you have ever seen, heard, felt, experienced, or witnessed? This could be a piece of music or art, an extraordinary athletic feat, a technological invention, or anything that meets your definition of creativity. It could be a product created thousands of years ago or yesterday; it could be well-known or known only by you. Again, the product or thing you identified must fully reflect your definition of creativity. Please be explicit.

■ In your opinion, does your school help its students develop the 21st century skill of creativity? If so, how? If not, what educational strategies or ideas would you recommend your Principal use to build creativity in students. Don’t forget – you’ve already defined creativity so be sure you keep this definition in mind in responding to this question. (For example, if the definition of creativity you articulated has the feature of novelty or originality, please tell us how your school does or should teach students to create novel and original products.)

■ Based on the definition of creativity you have articulated, what is the most creative product you have created? Again, this product must fully reflect your definition of creativity.

In thinking about this prompt, please address all questions fully and in-depth. Your responses will be rated on your ability to think and respond critically and – yes – creatively to all parts of the application prompt. Responses will be judged against others of the same age and grade and are not expected to be competitive with students of older groups.

Sometimes applicants have questions about what outside help is allowed when working on an SEP application prompt. Part of adequately responding to this prompt often requires talking with people, listening to their ideas and input, and discussing your own ideas with other people. (It is also a good idea to have someone proofread your response before you submit it!) Responding to this prompt also
requires you to spend a substantial amount of time thinking, researching, and writing or creating on your own. The final product that you submit to us should be the result of your own work to synthesize the information and ideas you have researched and discussed with other people. We expect responses to reflect the age of the applicant. Most importantly, we want applicants to claim ownership of their work and individually accept this challenge as part of the SEP experience. Good luck!