



# Building Collaborative Relationships with Colleagues

**Dr. Jeffrey S. Gemmell, Presenter**  
**Millersville University of Pennsylvania**

# Guide Questions

- What have you encountered and learned in your real-life teaching experience that was not covered in your choral methods courses and should have been?
- Does working with colleagues, administrators, or parents present difficulties? Do you have any advice/suggestions to help others that might encounter such difficulties?
- How do you reduce stress in your life?

# Group Responses - 1

- Help!!! Basic instrument repair! How to do it? Where to go to get it done?
- Warning: teaching is an all-consuming job, NOT just 8-4. One must choose this lifestyle knowing what to expect; you will constantly need to seek a balance between workload and other priorities in your life.
- Not prepared enough for what I am doing now in the grade level and/or subjects (choir or band), which I didn't expect to be teaching. This is a problem especially in elementary and junior high.
- Need more assistance in dealing with students' interpersonal and psychological issues that I'm forced to deal with, especially in mental health training, suicide prevention, or handling an unexpected tragedy (e.g., death of student). This topic came up repeatedly.
- Repertoire, repertoire, repertoire. Music is your curriculum! How do you choose your repertoire? Why? What is its educational value? Remember to begin with your own school's library – you'll be surprised what you find!

# Group Responses - 2

- Remember: it's not about YOU...it's about your STUDENTS! Plan for THEIR success and not YOUR ego.
- Don't cross the "teacher-friend line." You are not a friend with your students...keep your psychological distance. This is especially important for young teachers who are nearer in age to their students. As a new teacher, it's especially important to be very strict and professional in dress, attitude, work ethic, personal dealings, conversation, etc. It's much easier to become less strict later than to have to tighten the reins after being too loose. "Until Thanksgiving, be sure to . . . ."
- While you don't want to "friends," since you may teach an elective course, your students need to know you care about them. Remember, treat everyone the same way. No favorites, no special treatment for one group of students over another, recognize gender equality, etc.
- Must learn to manage LARGE groups of students (50-150) all at one time and keep them disciplined and engaged through effective leadership (strong "teacher voice"), proper pacing and sequencing, engaging presentation, ability to immediately determine voice parts and placements, conduct well, etc. All if this becomes more difficult as the numbers of students increase!



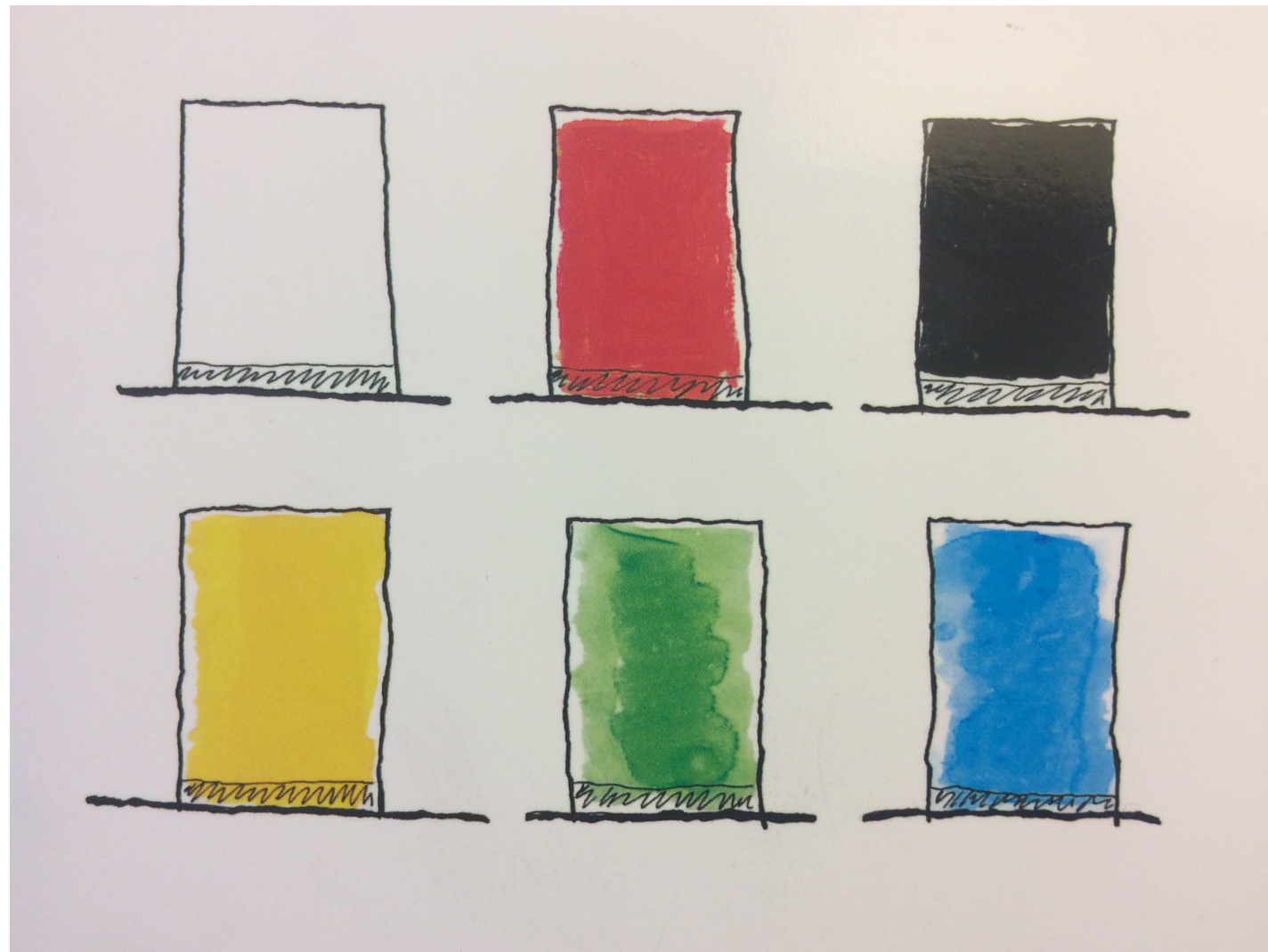
# Group Responses - 3

- How do you retain students' attention and connection? How do students stay engaged without the use of devices?
- In North Dakota, there are places where there is only one music teacher in the school with K-12 band/choral/general music position. How difficult is that? Networking is vital to build relationships, especially in joining professional organizations, getting to know other colleagues in the state, and not being afraid to ask for help! You're not alone!! [This topic came up repeatedly.]
- Be ready (and willing) to teach unexpected courses. You just don't know what the possibilities might be! Be prepared for anything. You may not begin in your ideal situation, but it may be necessary in order to get where you want to go!
- How do communicate being professional without being cold and stiff? You must be comfortable and confident with yourself without crossing boundaries of appropriateness.
- How do you teach music literacy to very young students?

# Group Responses - 4

- Choosing vocal solos for specific voice types, especially those different from your own, and including appropriateness for age, range, duets, trios, quartets, etc. Solution: how about Google shared documents?
- Operation of sound equipment and other technologies.
- Challenges of teaching large classes.
- Dealing with different socio-economic backgrounds.
- Other music teaching situations outside of the U. S. What might you find in other international teaching opportunities (American International Schools, distinctive uses of music in other cultures, etc.).
- Dealing with parents.

# “Six Thinking Hats”

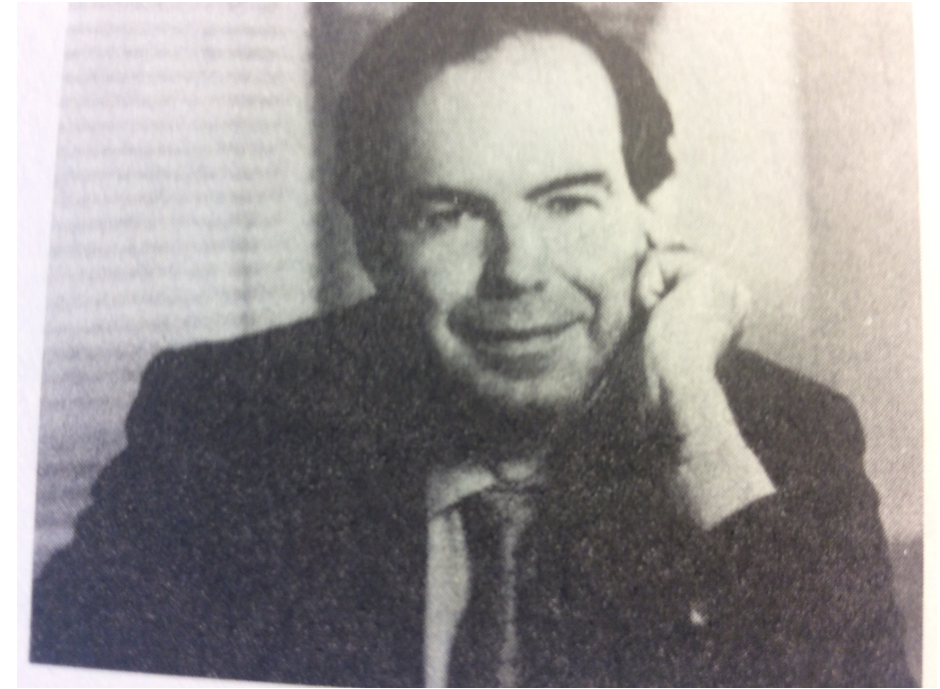


Edward de Bono  
(New York: Little Brown and Company, 1985/1999;  
International Edition, May 2016)

# The Nature of Thinking

- “Thinking is a skill and can be improved.” [cover]
- “The biggest enemy of thinking is complexity, for that leads to confusion. When thinking is clear and simple, it becomes more enjoyable and more effective.” [p. 172]
- “In this book I am concerned with the mapmaking type of thinking in which the terrain is first explored and noted. Then the possible routes are observed and finally a choice of route is made. [p. 149]

# Edward de Bono

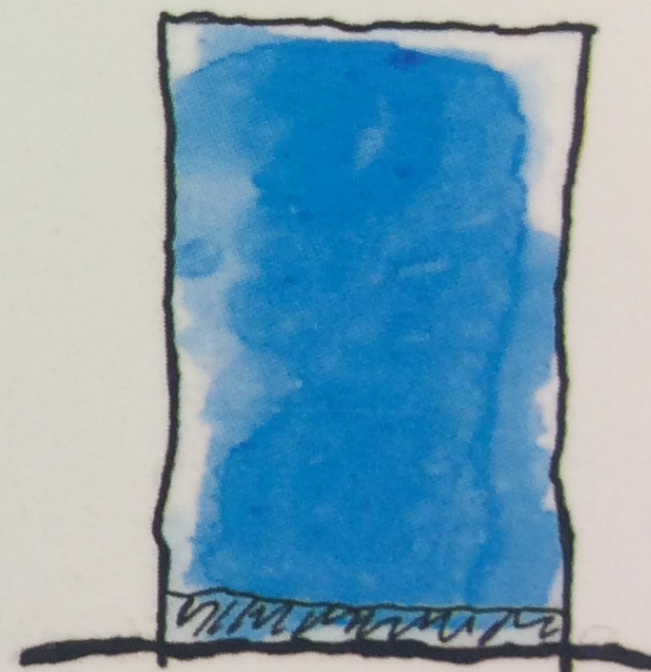
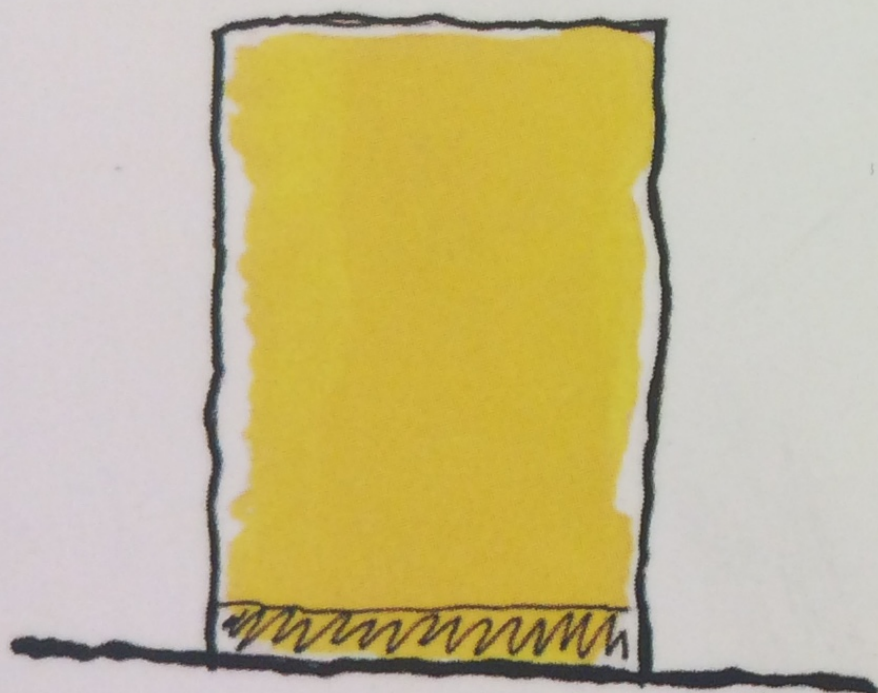
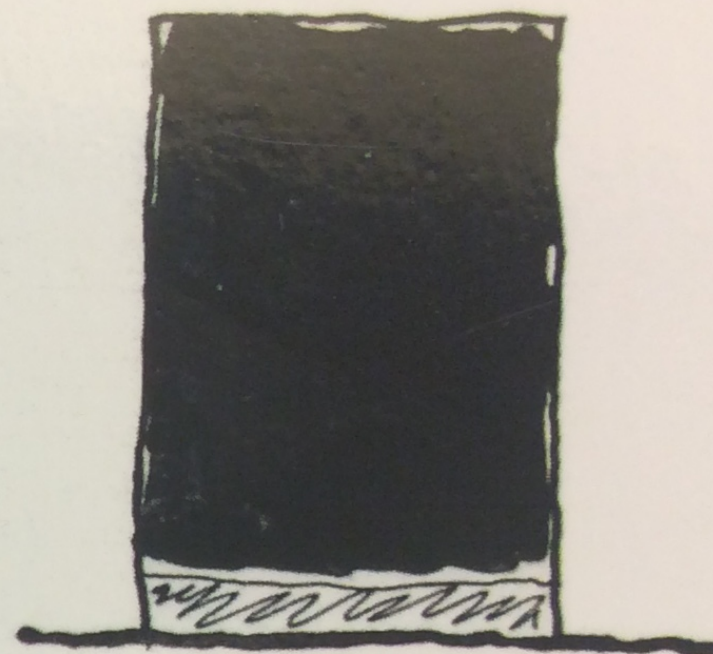
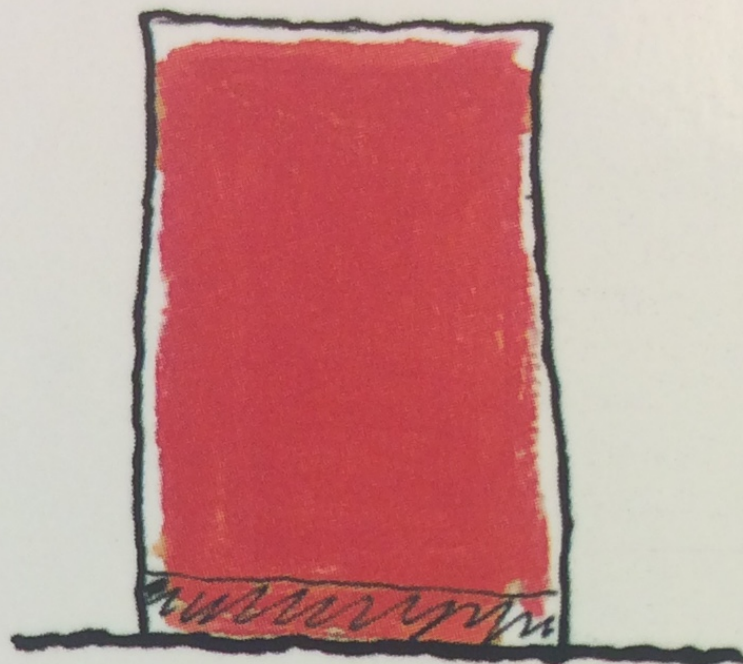
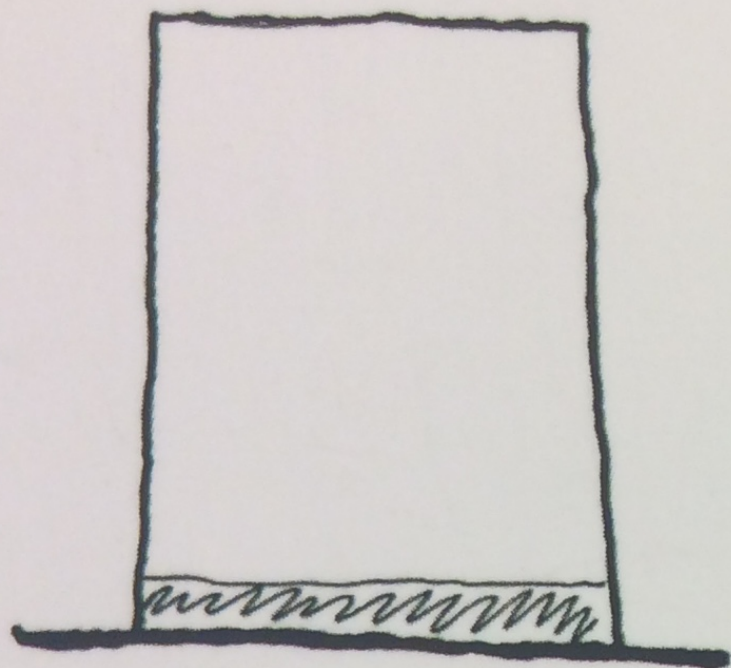


- Holds degrees in medicine and psychology
- Rhodes scholar of Oxford, Cambridge, England, London and Harvard universities
- Leading authority on teaching thinking as a skill
- Consultant to IBM, Exxon, DuPont, Proctor & Gamble, General Foods, BP, Ford, etc.
- Originator of concept of “lateral thinking,” a systematic approach to creative thinking based on how the brain works.
- “Six Thinking Hats” has been embraced by world leaders in business, government, and education because of its simplicity and power to change thinking behavior.

# Why and How?

- Thinking is a skill and can be improved
- Argument (right vs. wrong) vs. Parallel Thinking (thinking from all sides with emphasis on moving forward; can take contradictory points of view and consider each in parallel)
- “Standard situation box” vs. “what can be” (not just what is”)
- Hats (like “thinking caps”) are directions, not descriptions; everyone wears the same hat at the same time: thinking in the same direction simultaneously.
- Not categories of people! Avoid boxes.







# Six Hats Simply Put

- **WHITE**: absence of color indicates neutral, objective, facts and figures; imitate a computer
- **RED**: color suggests anger (seeing red), rage, emotions; “This is how I feel about the matter.” No justification is necessary
- **BLACK**: somber and serious; cautious and careful; points out weaknesses to avoid risks, dangers, and harm; easy to abuse if only mode
- **YELLOW**: sunny and positive; optimistic, hopeful, pushes and explores for value and benefit; makes things happen; focus on effectiveness; dreams, visions
- **GREEN**: grass, vegetation, abundance, fertile growth, value of seeds; creativity and new ideas beyond known and obvious; provocation for deviation; lateral
- **BLUE**: cool, color of sky, above everything else; control and organization of the thinking process; thinking about thinking; orchestra conductor

# Pairing Helps to Learn Them

- Black and White
- White and Red
- Black and Yellow
- Green and Blue
- Single use or in Sequence
- Individual and Group situations

# Applications to Music Education?

- Curriculum Design (long term planning)
- Lesson Planning (shorter term planning)
- Conductor/Educator Thinking
- Cooperative Learning in large and small ensembles
- Interpersonal Relationships with Colleagues, Friends, Family, etc.
- Faculty Meetings
- Other Applications



## Green Hat: Provocative Operation (PO)

Starbucks: Going in an opposite direction to inspire movement forward