

# Appendix A

## Creative Leader Checklists

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The following checklists were presented in Chapters 1 through 5. You can use these checklists as an advanced organizer for each chapter or as a quick reminder of the some of the key ideas presented in the chapters and the core principles of the SAIL framework.





## Chapter 1 Creative Leader Checklist

### Respond Creatively

Responding creatively to challenges you face as an instructional leader requires that you:

- **Understand what creative instructional leadership is (and is not)**
  - Creative leadership is more about working creatively inside the box rather than trying to work outside of it
  - Knowing how to think and act creatively, as the situation dictates, is the hallmark of creative instructional leadership
  - All leaders have the capacity and responsibility to respond creatively to ill-defined problems and challenging situations
  
- **View each crisis you face as an opportunity**
  - View each crisis you face (big or small) as an opportunity to improve existing practices
  - There are multiple ways you can respond to a crisis (ranging from dismissive to aggressive)
  - The most viable response to an ill-defined or uncertain situation is often the most moderate (or small-steps) response
  
- **Use a Small-Steps Approach to Instructional Leadership (SAIL)**
  - The SAIL framework is based on flexible principles of practice (not rigid prescriptions)
  - The SAIL approach will enable you to infuse creativity in your existing leadership practices
  - Remember that big wins can come from small steps
  - The SAIL framework will help you approach almost any challenge of teaching, learning, and leadership more creatively and effectively



## Chapter 2 Creative Leader Checklist

### Sit With Uncertainty

When faced with uncertainty:

- **Anticipate and address creativity-stifling fears**
  - These fears are normal, but left unchecked can undermine your and others' ability to recognize and capitalize on creative opportunities
  - Resist the temptation to become risk adverse by distinguishing between reckless and sensible risk taking
  
- **View uncertainty as a sign that new thinking is needed**
  - Avoid the temptation to quickly resolve the uncertainty
  - Avoid the temptation of forcing a solution
  
- **Prepare yourself and others for engaging in possibility thinking**
  - Start shifting away from certainty and predetermined strategies
    - Be aware of how you are thinking about and describing the situation
    - Start shifting away from fixed thoughts
  - Establish a supportive environment
    - Avoid using fixed, controlling and guilt-inducing language (e.g., "We must," "We're falling behind," "Why didn't you," "We have to," "This is *the* way to . . .")
    - Acknowledge and accept that people may be experiencing negative emotions
  
- **Have the courage to drop your tools**
  - Use uncertainty as a cue to stop what you are doing
    - Let go of the routine way of seeing and doing things
  - Explicitly acknowledge the uncertainty
    - Give voice to the uncertainty you are experiencing and signal to yourself (and others) that it is time to move into an exploratory direction



## Chapter 3 Creative Leader Checklist

### Engage in Possibility Thinking

When engaging in possibility thinking:

- **Assemble a small PT team**
  - Invite people with diverse perspectives and experiences
  - Select people who are willing to engage in exploratory thinking
  - Make sure your team members are open to having their ideas and assumptions challenged and can “play well” together
  
- **Establish exploratory ground rules**
  - Cultivate explicit norms of social interaction that emphasize (re)focusing the problem and exploring new possibilities
  - Use ground rules that establish expectations to keep thinking and dialogue open, tentative, and exploratory—including prefacing comments with “What if . . .,” establishing agreements that everyone is expected to share and listen to ideas and explanations (even seemingly unrelated and unusual ones), responding to others in the spirit of “Yes, and . . .,” and agreeing to challenge even your most cherished ideas
  
- **Redefine the problem by reasoning backward**
  - Stop focusing on what has been and start exploring the question “What might be?”
  - Use strategies that will help you see the situation with new eyes, such as: notice the uncommon and small features of the situation, search for potential explanations and connections (especially unlikely ones), and look for new connections by combining opposites
  
- **Flip your assumptions and move forward**
  - Relentlessly explore and flip your and other people’s taken-for-granted assumptions
  - Use strategies, such as the tactics for flipping assumptions, to help you generate new insights, alternatives, and possibilities



## Chapter 4 Creative Leader Checklist

### Prune Possibilities

When pruning possibilities:

- **Establish evaluative ground rules**
  - Establish norms of interaction focused on evaluation, but still maintain openness to new possibilities
  - Use ground rules that will guide you and your team in strengthening all ideas and identifying the best ideas for implementation
  
- **Start where you are and remain open to possibilities**
  - Start where you are with each idea and take the time to work through each one (even seemingly weak ideas)
  - Resist the temptation to jump ahead to the ideas that you feel are most promising
  - Remain open to the possibility of discovering hidden strengths in seemingly weak ideas and potential limitations in seemingly strong ideas
  
- **Ensure critiques are deep, specific, and useful**
  - Critiques should highlight deep, underlying issues
  - Critiques should focus on specific issues and should be clearly stated
  - Critiques should focus on providing useful and, when possible, actionable information
  
- **Look for novelty in practical ideas and practicality in novel ideas**
  - Try putting a new twist on a practical but ordinary idea
  - Find ways to make novel ideas more practical
  
- **Forecast first steps and potential pitfalls**
  - Identify a few first steps you can take with the most promising ideas
  - Anticipate potential pitfalls and how you might overcome those pitfalls



## Chapter 5 Creative Leader Checklist

### Take Measured Action

When taking measured action:

- **Take small yet challenging leaps**
  - Start with small yet challenging steps
  - Take reasonable risks that you are confident in taking
  
- **Establish modest milestones**
  - Milestones should be close range (so you can fail early and learn fast)
  - Milestones should be doable (within your reach)
  - Milestones should be easy to measure (so you don't get bogged down with cumbersome assessments)
  
- **Actively monitor and acknowledge progress**
  - Put conscious effort into monitoring progress
  - Acknowledge progress—remember small wins can be easily overlooked, but when recognized can boost motivation, persistence, and successful outcomes
  
- **Make necessary adjustments**
  - Anticipate the need to make adjustments
  - Be willing to change course and explore new directions as needed