Option A: Curriculum Brainstorm

**Initial List**

Listed below are possible ways I could use critical and creative thinking, motivational techniques and cooperative learning in in teaching elementary school.

**Critical thinking:**

* Have students understand their own prior knowledge and examine a topic through questioning (KWL chart)
* Have students summarize information and sequence and order it (ranking)
* Have students reflect on what they learned and analyze information (reflection logs)
* Have students recognize relationships between topics (graphic organizers)
* Have students view a topic from different perspectives (debates)

**Creative thinking:**

* Have students view a topic from different perspective and move out of their comfort zone (brainstorming and creative writing/story telling)
* Have students learn in an relevant and meaningful manner (strategies and techniques need to relate to student learning style)
* Have students student learn in an authentic way (role-playing)
* Have students find alternative ways to discuss a topic (need to find and learn about some techniques and strategies from class)

**Motivational techniques:**

* Create a classroom-learning environment that interests students (choice and variety)
* Create lessons and units that are relevant to students interests (meaningfulness)
* Create a good classroom rapport and environment (engagement)
* Create situations wherein students can develop relationships with each other and with the teacher (icebreakers)
* Motivate students extrinsically and intrinsically (extrinsic: rewards & intrinsic: relevant and meaningful learning)

**Cooperative learning:**

* Work with other teachers to create and implement new and creative lessons and units that support cooperative learning (turn to your partner and discuss)
* Create a cooperative learning and classroom environment for students and teacher (problem-based learning)
* Have students work together in learning (mixed groups and fishbowl)
* Use cooperative learning instructional methods wherein teachers in a mentor and co-learning with students (reciprocal teaching/questioning)

**Second List**

This second list is separated into four sections that state the goals I want to achieve in using critical thinking, creative thinking, motivational techniques, and cooperative learning in an elementary school setting and the specific strategies and techniques I can implement to achieve these goals. I have added new strategies and techniques to each section from the initial list I created. Lastly, each section has a ranking of the strategies and techniques I described.

**Critical Thinking**

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| **I want to use critical thinking strategies to:** | **Strategies and techniques I could implement to achieve this goal:** |
| Have students understand their own knowledge and then examine a topic through questioning. (KWL chart) | * **K-W-L:** A KWL chart allows the teacher to see what do students know about topic, what they want to know, and what they learned about a topic. This chart is a great tool to use to begin a lesson because it allows the teacher to assess the students’ prior knowledge and what questions they want to know. Then after learning about the topic during an activity in the lesson, the teacher can go back to the KWL chart as an assessment tool to see what they learned from the lesson. |
| Have students summarize information and sequence and order it. (Ranking: added Nominal Group Process to the list) | * **Ranking:** Have students rank what they think are the five more important things they learned from a reading or a lesson. * **Nominal Group Process:** Allows students to contribute ideas in a group and then categorize and rank them. This allows them to summarize their ideas with peers and work together to rank them. |
| Have students reflect on what they learned and analyze information. (Reflection Logs: added Minute Papers/Muddiest Points to the list) | * **Reflection Logs:** Have students write in a notebook about a topic they are learning about. The students can summarize information and give their opinion on what they are learning. Having the teacher read their notebook and comment on their reflection will allow the teacher to understand the students learning more. * **Minute Papers/Muddiest Points:** Have students write for a minute about a topic, especially areas that they had questions about or were confused about. This allows the teacher to assess what areas need to be addressed further. |
| Have students recognize relationships between topics. (Graphic Organizers) | * **Graphic Organizers:** Using different organizers such as flowcharts, concept maps, and Venn diagrams allow students to make connections about the material being learned. A Venn diagrams is a great tool in having students understand the similarities and differences between two topics. |
| Have students view a topic from different perspectives. (Debates: added Mock Trials to the list) | * **Debates:** Students assume different roles and are able to examine both sides of an argument. * **Mock Trials:** Students are able to role-play and create a trial wherein they will have to judge a topic from different roles. |

Ranking of the critical thinking strategies and techniques that I described above with #1 being a strategy or technique that I would use the most in teaching elementary school:

1. K-W-L
2. Graphic Organizers
3. Reflection Logs
4. Minute Papers/Muddiest Points
5. Ranking
6. Nominal Group Process
7. Debates
8. Mock Trials

**Creative Thinking**

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| **I want to use creative thinking strategies to:** | **Strategies and techniques I could implement to achieve this goal:** |
| Have students view a topic from different perspective and move out of their comfort zone. (Brainstorming, Creative Writing/Story Telling: added Reverse Brainstorming and Six Hats to the list) | * **Brainstorming and Reverse Brainstorming:** Have students discuss a topic by reverse brainstorming first to see what it is not and then move to brainstorming to see what it is. This can help students who are hesitant to participate feel more comfortable by having them say what something is not first. * **Creative Writing/Story Telling:** Have students write a story from the perspective of someone else. It allows them to think about how someone else might view a topic. I think using this technique would especially useful with younger students as they learn to write. Also, it allows them to use their imagination and let their creative juices flow. * **Six Hats:** Students assume different roles in discussing a topic and have to talk from that role. I think this would be more appropriate for upper elementary than younger students. |
| Have students learn in a relevant and meaningful manner. (Learning Styles: added Simulations, Analogies, Creative Dramatics/Improv to the list) | * **Simulations:** This would a good tool to use with visual learners as they learn best from visual displays. The use of technology would engage these students. * **Analogies:** This would be a good tool to use with auditory learners. * **Creative Dramatics/Improv:** This would be a good tool to use with tactile/kinesthetic learners as they learn through moving and doing. |
| Have students learn in an authentic way. (Role-Playing) | * **Role-Playing:** Have students act out a play about the topic they are learning. |
| Have students find alternative ways to discuss a topic. (No initial list of strategies or techniques: added PMI and FIP to the list) | * **PMI:** What are the pluses (good things), minuses (bad things), and interesting points of a topic? This allows students to discuss the different sides of a topic. * **FIP:** FIP is the first important priorities. This allows students to focus on the most important things of a topic. FIP is good for students understanding the general ideas. |

Ranking of the creative thinking strategies and techniques that I described above with #1 being a strategy or technique that I would use the most in teaching elementary school:

1. Brainstorming and Reverse Brainstorming
2. Creative Writing/Story Telling
3. Role-Playing
4. FIP
5. Six Hats
6. PMI
7. Analogies
8. Simulations
9. Creative Dramatics/Improv

**Motivational Techniques**

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| **I want to use motivational strategies to:** | **Strategies and techniques I could implement to achieve this goal:** |
| Create a classroom-learning environment that interests students. (Choice and Variety: added Curiosity (Fun) to the list) | * **Choice:** Giving students choice in activities allows them to be active participants and feel in control of some aspect of their learning. This is important for students in all grades! * **Variety:** Switch up the classroom environment. Have large groups, small groups, partners, and individual activities. Provide different activities, if teachers continually do the same thing students will become disconnected and disinterested. * **Curiosity (Fun):** Incorporate game like, fun, fantasy, curiosity, and suspense into lessons. Starting a lesson with a riddle, game, puzzle is a good way to have students be curious about the topic of the lesson. |
| Create lessons and units that are relevant to students’ interests. (Meaningfulness) | * **Meaningfulness (Relevant, Authentic):** Create activities based on the interests of the students. If students are interested in the topic they are learning about, it becomes meaningful for them and thus motivates them to learn. Creating problems that from real life situations is an effective way to make learning authentic. An example of how to make a lesson authentic is instead of discussing a situation, have students act it out and role-play the scenario. |
| Create a good classroom rapport and environment. (Engagement: added Feedback to the list) | * **Engagement:** Teachers must gain students attention before you can teach. One way to engage students by starting off a lesson in a fun way. Using a story, a joke, or movie clip are fun ways to hook and engage the students into a lesson. * **Feedback:** Provide positive praise for students to show that you care about them and their learning. Introducing students to the good work of their peers is a good motivator. |
| Create situations wherein students can develop relationships with each other and with the teacher. (Icebreakers) | * **Icebreakers:** Icebreakers are great tools for students and teachers to get to know each other and develop a relationship with each other. They can build a group identity and cohesiveness in the classroom. Some example of icebreakers are talking string, psychic massage, have you ever questions, expectations, treasure hunt, and coat of arms. These icebreakers allow the teacher to get to know fun things about their students. |
| * Motivate students extrinsically and intrinsically. (Rewards & Relevant and Meaningful Learning) | * **Intrinsic Motivation:** Teachers can stimulate this by providing tasks of optimal novelty and difficulty, relevant to student interests, and provide opportunities for students to have choice and control over their learning. * **Extrinsic Motivation:** Teachers can motivate students through rewards for good or improved performance such as stickers, candy, recess, free time, praise, etc. |

Ranking of the motivational strategies and techniques that I described above with #1 being the most important in teaching elementary school: (It is very hard to rank these because they are all so important and connected to each other)

1. Meaningfulness (Relevant, Authentic)
2. Engagement
3. Choice
4. Variety
5. Intrinsic Motivation
6. Curiosity (Fun)
7. Icebreakers
8. Feedback
9. Extrinsic Motivation

**Cooperative Learning**

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| **I want to use cooperative learning strategies to:** | **Strategies and techniques I could implement to achieve this goal:** |
| Work with other teachers to create and implement new and creative lessons and units that support cooperative learning. (Turn to Your Partner and Discuss) | * **Turn to Your Partner and Discuss:** Teachers needs to turn to the teacher around them discuss different lesson and teaching strategies that would be the most effective. Discussing and reviewing teaching methods with other teachers can help you learn new and fun ways to relay information to your students and involve more cooperative learning in the classroom. |
| Create a cooperative learning and classroom environment for students and teacher. (Problem-Based Learning: added Group Discussion with Roles to the list) | * **Problem-Based Learning:** Teachers can create a long unit wherein the class learns and works on a major problem or topic. This will allow students to collaborate together as a whole class to discover something new. * **Group Discussion with Roles:** In talking about a topic assign students and teacher with different roles at they analyze the subject they are learning about. The roles can be a checker, recorder, reporter, facilitator, supporter, questioner, unifier, etc. |
| Have students work together in learning. (Mixed Groups and Fish Bowl: added Think-Pair-Share, Round-Robin, Cooperative Learning Scripts to the list) | * **Mixed Groups:** Mixed groups promote cooperative learning in that the teacher divides students into groups of different backgrounds, academic achievement levels, and social skills to work together. * **Fish Bowl:** Have students create a circle and then create another circle around that. Have students sitting in inner circle turn around discuss issue with person behind them from outer circle. Then, the inside circle share their thoughts while the outside circle listens and then they switch seats/roles. This activity allows for collaborating as partners, as an active member in a group, and as an observer/listener. I think this strategy would work the best with upper elementary students. * **Think-Pair-Share:** This allows students to have time to reflect and think about a topic and then share their ideas with a partner and get another perspective on a topic from their partner. * **Round Robin:** Students contribute ideas orally in turn. This allows everyone to input their own opinion and hear those of their classmates. * **Cooperative Learning Scripts:** This would be an interesting co-learning experience for students. In partners, students read a passage and then put it out of sight. One student summarizes it and the other tries to correct any errors. Then they change roles. |
| Use cooperative learning instructional methods wherein teachers in a mentor and co-learning with students. (Reciprocal Teaching/Questioning) | * **Reciprocal Teaching/Questioning:** Have students and teacher switch roles. Teacher must model questioning for students and then scaffold students as they act as a teacher. This allows students to collaborate and work together to gain ownership over their learning. This technique is especially helpful in literature classes. |

Ranking of the cooperative learning strategies and techniques that I described above with #1 being a strategy or technique that I would use the most in teaching elementary school:

1. Mixed Groups
2. Turn to Your Partner and Discuss (its important to always have fresh new ideas and talking to colleagues is a great way to get that)
3. Problem-Based Learning
4. Think-Pair-Share
5. Reciprocal Teaching/Questioning
6. Group Discussion with Roles
7. Fish Bowl
8. Cooperative Learning Scripts
9. Round-Robin

**Reflection**

My initial list shows different ideas of how I want to use critical and creative thinking and motivational techniques and cooperative learning in teaching elementary school. Along with each idea, I listed a technique or strategy that I have effectively used before in teaching elementary school or have observed being used in an elementary school setting. The second list expands on the specific strategies or techniques that I had listed for my goals concerning using critical and creative thinking and motivational techniques and cooperative learning in teaching. Along with expanding on those, I added additional techniques and strategies that I learned from this course and feel would be successful in an elementary classroom setting. At the end of each list, I ranked the strategies and techniques based on how I would implement them in an elementary classroom with number one being used the most. In ranking the strategies, I thought of my experience in teaching kindergarten and how often I would have used them in my kindergarten class. However, it was hard to rank the strategies and techniques because I think all of the ones I described would be highly effective in elementary school. I hope to use my list in my future classroom, although, depending on the types of students I have and the flexibility of the school on teaching practices, I will have to adapt to fit the needs of my students.

In describing the strategies and techniques for critical and creative thinking and motivational techniques and cooperative learning in my second list, I added a lot to my thoughts on the ones from my initial list and I added new ones that I have learned about. Many of the techniques and strategies discussed in class can be easily implemented in elementary classrooms or can be easily modified to fit the elementary ages students. In total, I discussed a total thirty-five different strategies.

Overall, I think many of the strategies and techniques I described have to be used together in a classroom. I think in order to use critical or creative thinking or cooperative learning in a class, a teacher must first motivate students. Then after using motivational techniques, the teacher can move onto the other areas. I think the most effective way to use these strategies together is to use critical and creative thinking strategies in a cooperative learning context. An example of how to do this could be that in a problem-based learning unit (cooperative learning), a teacher could start discussing the topic or problem they are solving by using a KWL chart (critical thinking). In using a KWL chart, the teacher can have students brainstorm or reverse brainstorm (creative thinking) about what they know about the problem or topic to fill in the know part of chart. I think bringing together the strategies and techniques that I described in my list brings about the most authentic and meaningful learning experiences.