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VERSATILES FOR CRITICAL-THINKING SET

*2004. Grades 6 and up. Activity book 1-5 plus
Teacher's Guide and Answer Case, \$39.95 paper. ISBN
1-57162-166-0. ETA/Cuisenaire, 500 Greenview Crt.,
Vernon Hills, IL 60061-1862; (800) 445-5985.*

VersaTiles for Critical-Thinking Set offers a variety of mathematics-related activities that encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Each activity contains twelve questions that use a specific skill; the student marks the solution by placing the tile with the corresponding number on the letter within the answer case. Once all the letters have solutions, the user flips over the case and checks to see if the pattern matches the one on the activity page. The limited number of problems and self-checking aspects allowed my struggling students access to a fun way to practice critical-thinking skills.

The set includes five books and a teacher's resource guide. The teacher's guide offers many tips for ways to use VersaTiles, such as for daily practice, in activity centers, in a learning resource center, and so on. Blackline masters include tracking sheets for students

and classes, VersaTile answer templates, patterns, and pattern codes.

This product states that it is for the "middle grades." I tried it with students from second to eighth grades. I found that the fifth- to seventh-grade students enjoyed it the most. The activity books become progressively more challenging. Because of the variety of topics, students can randomly access the activities or work on specific skills assigned by the teacher. My students often requested to use the VersaTiles after finishing their tasks and during their breaks. Some students even found that taking a break from a difficult mathematics problem and working on a VersaTile activity sparked ideas for solving their mathematics problems. While completing a VersaTile activity, my students' conversations were very focused on the mathematics and strategies needed to complete the patterns.

I plan to have this set available for students to use as often as possible. I would also like to try some of the other VersaTile sets in mathematics and science.—

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