

Philosophy for Children The Pre-School Project



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P4C Start-Up kit for Pre-schooler

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LESSON 1: (Re)Orientation to P4C

1. Getting Comfortable:

- Speaking loudly (and softly), holding the ball when speaking, raising hands to get the ball (to speak), etc.
- Practice saying something (e.g., ALOHA) in a soft voice and then a loud voice-- altogether and then around the circle [bring volume meter] find medium voice
- Introduce the community ball and its connection to speaking
- Pass the ball around the circle and invite kids to say something when they have the ball-- name, favorite thing to do, some silly word
- Practice raising hands and passing ball across the circle

2. Giving Reasons:

I am special BECAUSE

- ask "Are you special?" -- go around circle and have each kid affirm that they are special
- introduce BECAUSE-- maybe have big colorful card with BECAUSE written on it
- invite kids to raise hands and answer "How Come?" to the above question-- "I am special BECAUSE....."
- wrap-up

LESSON 2: If/Thens with Pictures

1. Review the Giving Reason activity

Go around circle with ball-- do something fun... perhaps ask "What color do you feel like today?" and then encourage

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them to answer "How Come?". For example, "I feel like the color purple today BECAUSE....."

2. If/Then Activity

Bring in hand-drawn pictures of different I F situations and ask kids to fill in the THEN parts.... beginning with obvious examples and then moving on to more open-ended scenarios (for these THEN responses, we can (when possible) ask "How Come?")

LESSON 3: Thinking about Thinking, Community, and Safety through the Body

THE P4C KID Game

This lesson is designed to be a playful way of introducing the kids (and visually reminding them throughout the term) to some skills that are necessary for maintaining a safe community. In this lesson, we focus on things like safety (through feelings), inquiry (through exercising the brain), and sharing our ideas (by raising hands and then speaking) through the visual representation of a little kid body. By looking at the different parts of the body, we can see in what ways they are enlisted to build our community and to deepen our inquiry.

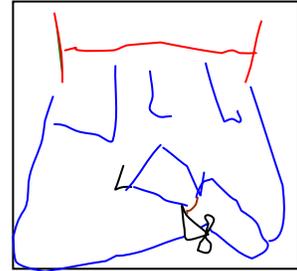
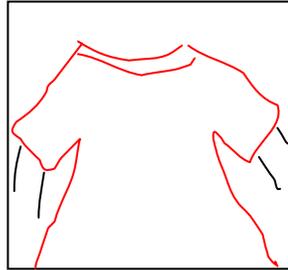
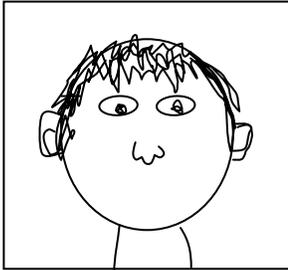
Materials:

3 larger pieces of paper

- One to draw the head (include ears, eyes, nose, and hair—but leave out the mouth)
- One to draw the torso (just draw a shirt without the arms)

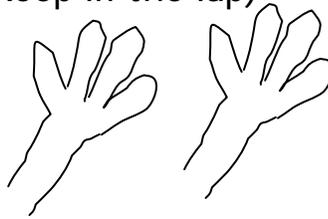
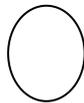
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- And one to draw the legs (preferably sitting cross-legged)



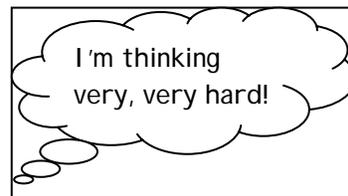
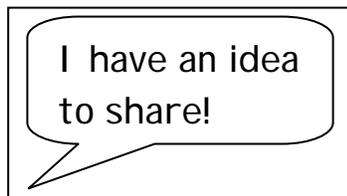
4 smaller body part pieces:

- One with a big smiley mouth (mouth closed)
- One with an open mouth (for talking)
- Two arms (to raise or keep in the lap)



2 talking/thinking cards:

- One card will indicate the P4C kid is talking.
- The other will show that the P4C kid is thinking.



Beginning the Lesson:

To start, simply line up the head, torso, and leg cards on the floor. Ask the kids which parts of the body are important for doing FEE-LA-SO-FEE. Parts like ears might be more apparent to them at first—and so, when ears are mentioned, simply color in the ears and inquire as to why ears are important. When it comes to mouths and arms (2 body parts for which we have varying positions), ask the kids what the mouths or arms should be doing

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during FEE-LA-SO-FEE. Demonstrate that the open mouth is for sharing our ideas (and try to coordinate this with the raising of the hand), while the mouths should be closed while listening and thinking (and coordinate this with arms/hands in the lap).

As your students work their way through the various body parts (mouth, ears, eyes, arms, and legs), listen for indications that they want to talk about the heart or the brain. Try to draw out and highlight their thoughts about how the brain works during FEE-LA-SO-FEE and try to stress the fact that really hard thinking goes on in our inquiry (you can use the “thought bubble” to visually indicate the hard work of the mind). The heart is also really important in P4C and is a good visual reminder of each other’s feelings. If feelings or the heart is discussed during your lesson, reinforce the ideas of safety and community and the preservation of each other’s feelings. You can either use a cutout heart to affix to your torso or just color one in when kids bring it up.

The littlest students have a lot of fun with this lesson. And it serves as a useful tool for the teacher after the lesson. If your students are being especially rambunctious, or if they are not raising their hands to speak or keeping their mouths closed when they are thinking, or their arms and legs are sprawled in every direction, you can simply remind them of the “P4C Kid’s” posture and they’ll whip themselves back to attention—if only for a minute or so.

P4C GAMES

LISTENING GAMES

One thing we noticed when working with the little pre-schoolers was even though their one-to-one communication skills are quite good, they may need more practice listening to one another when engaged in community dialogue. We came up with some games that work on listening skills for a variety of purposes. The latter ones work specifically on listening to each other in a group discussion or P4C dialogue.

TELEPHONE

Telephone is a familiar game that works on both one-to-one listening skills and practice in reaching a community goal. All participants should be seated quietly in a circle. Because the focus is on listening, stress the fact that everyone needs to be very still and quiet as the message travels around the circle (it's easy to get impatient during this game with a large group). The first few times this game is played the teacher, or P4C facilitator should think of a message to begin the game (and then later the students will be excited to come up with their own). I like to think of something that is playful and yet somewhat easy to remember. For example, "Alligators like alphabet soup" is a good starter. Cup your hands and whisper this message to a child seated next to you. Sometimes the kids get giggly, so it's OK for them to ask their neighbor to repeat the message—just make sure that no one whispers out of turn. The last one in the circle chain says the message out loud and then the community can compare it with the first message. If the message is incredibly jumbled or is totally different, perhaps you can have a dialogue

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about what happened as the message traveled around. If this happens, the students are usually excited to try it again—just adjust the level of difficulty accordingly or have the kids try making one up.

FOLLOW THE LEADER

This is another recognizable game that can be used as a technique for getting the kids ready for listening, talking in turn, and thinking. It's a really great strategy for those "high energy" days—but be careful not to escalate the energy level, but, rather, to lead it in a more focused direction. You can play this game either as Follow the Leader or, if you find it more effective, Simon Says, or maybe something that comes somewhere between the two. As you go through different movements—jumping in place, standing, balancing on one foot, sitting, tapping your head, sitting...-- try to bring them from high energy, big space, loud activities to a more quiet, less busy posture. You may want to slowly and gradually harness the energy toward the philosophy session or you may want to bring it down and then back up again. You'll probably have to follow the lead of the children. Hopefully, by the end of this practice, you and the kids will be seated in a circle, ears open, minds thinking, and hands raised to begin the dialogue.

REPEAT/SHARE

This technique can be used not only as a listening tool, but also as the organizing principle of your community dialogue. This activity begins with a very simple question that all of the kids can answer in just a word or two. One student begins and says their word (or the word within a larger sentence), then the next student must repeat what the previous kid said and then add their own thought.

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For example, we used this little game after reading and talking about a book, “My Many Colored Days,” about colors associated with different moods on different days. The question then was “What color do you feel like today?” A teacher should probably model this the first time. The first person says, “I feel like purple today” and the next repeats and then answers the question for herself: “Ashby feels like purple today, but I feel like blue today.” Surely, if this were a regular question for community dialogue, we would want to give reasons why we feel one way or the other. But the purpose of this specific activity is to get each student listening, thinking, and sharing (in that order). Perhaps after all the community participants have had a turn, you can use the game as a springboard for further reflection—by comparing student responses and asking for further explanation about what they have shared. Some may give an unusual response (such as an atypical color) or some may refuse to limit their thoughts to a single idea (e.g., by choosing a “mixed-up color day” or a blue-green day) and these will provide the perfect opportunity for further exploration.

JAMP! WHAT DID SHE JUST SAY?

This technique utilizes one of P4C’s magic words—JAMP (Just A Moment Please). JAMP is used when a dialogue is already underway and a community member wants to pause the discussion—usually to revisit an idea. At the preschool level, JAMP can be employed when someone (probably a teacher) recognizes a really interesting or thought-provoking idea in what someone has just said and wants to pause on that idea a bit longer. Because it is easy for our attention spans to lapse at times, it may prove really useful to have someone repeat that interesting idea (it doesn’t need to be reiterated in the exact same way). By JAMPing or pausing the dialogue and asking a

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student to repeat, the idea will be emphasized and the kids can work on their listening skills. If no one can repeat the idea, have the original speaker say it again. You can continue practicing the JAMP move until the kids get the idea that they need to try really hard to listen to each other. Also, after repeating you can ask what other people think about the idea—thereby focusing on listening, but then the additional step of thinking about that idea and then sharing one’s own idea in response to it. This is how we begin to “scratch beneath the surface” by thinking together as a community.

THINKING GAMES

PILES

With the young philosophers, it’s advantageous to have hands-on activities, visual reminders, or tangible objects to promote the thinking skills or ideas that are the focus of the day’s lesson. One technique that seems to have been rather successful with this group is simply called “Piles.” It’s probably best to describe this technique with an example.

After a discussion about the Hawaiian story “The Musubi Man,” the next P4C session, we, the teachers, decided to focus on the word “ALIVE” and try to sort out, with the kids, what sorts of things are alive and which aren’t. With the PILES strategy, there are usually three piles (although the kids might come up with a new one): a positive answer, a negative answer, and a “I’m not sure yet.”

ALIVE

?????

NOT ALIVE

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On the first day we did this lesson, we brought in small cards with a variety of different things drawn on each one—such as vegetables, flowers, cars, dolls, fire, a squashed cockroach, water, dirt, etc. You can either go through one card at a time and discuss each one in turn or you give a card to each kid and have her place it in the category she thinks is right. If you go with this second strategy, after all the cards are placed and you survey the different piles, ask the kids if they would like to change the place of one card. Whenever the students place or move cards remind them that they have to have a good reason for doing so. Either write down these reasons or keep a mental checklist—these are criteria that the kids are developing for the particular category—in this case, “alive.” Sometimes it’s hard to articulate these reasons when originally placing the cards and it seems they have an easier time when they want to change what someone else has done. This is also a good way to get them to engage each other and share ideas with one another. However, as they develop their criteria for “alive” or whatever, be sure to remind them of that list and to check all new entries into that pile by measuring them against this list of criteria. If it doesn’t fit the criteria, the kids will have to revise their criteria or move the card to a new pile.

The second session we worked on this lesson again. Instead of cards, we brought in a view objects for them to see and touch. For this dialogue, we seemed to get more in-depth analysis and thinking about just a few objects instead of trying to sort through a whole stack of cards. Again, we did find with the pre-schoolers that it’s better to have the lessons evolve over a few sessions, so it’s fun to try both ways.