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... they have a voice, and their voice and ideas are heard and respected.”

Italicized student comments here are in response to questions posed by *MidWeek*.

My initial expression of P for C was totally shocking because other schools I have been to never taught me how to pose great and philosophical questions. I had never been challenged to think a lot about certain things, so when I first learned about philosophical thinking I was totally shocked. I have learned a lot through philosophical thinking because it helps me pose questions for myself that I can follow back on and learn.

—Christian Kama, KHS senior, who because of time constraints was not able to ask the Dalai Lama this question in a Q&A with students: “How do you spread compassion and peace to people who don’t want to be taught?”

The real destroyer of peace of mind is fear. Fear develops frustration. Frustration develops anger. Anger develops violence ... Self-respect reduces fear. —Dalai Lama, Stan Sheriff Center, April 14

At Kailua High, Philosophy for Children began in 2005 as an after-school elective program — with the goal of increasing understanding of both your own ethnic group(s) and other ethnics, and promoting understanding and appreciation of all. It became part of the KHS course offerings the following year, and the next year Principal Honda declared ethnic studies a graduation requirement for all students, making KHS the first school in the U.S. with such a mandate.

RIGHT: Children from Kaha Aha Punana Leo O Honolulu sing a welcome song to the Dalai Lama at Bishop Museum.

“Philosophy for Children is at the core of ethnic studies,” says Lukey.

“It spread across campus and became a school-wide initiative,” says Miller, adding one of the goals is to educate young people to “be able to think and ask questions.”

And it’s required in the freshman year, to initiate students in p4c principles such as “scratching below the surface” as early as possible.

“The class always sits in a circle,” adds Lukey, who with Miller serves as Philosopher in Residence at KHS, to aid both teachers and students. In the circled “community of enquiry,” the quest for truth while peeling back layers of reality and unreality, and possibility, “became a more rigorous quest” as students adapted to the new way of teaching and learning, and as they grew from freshmen to seniors. Though conversations and questions can be lively, “it’s not a debate,” but a means to “understand themselves and others ... to be a good thinker with greater awareness.”

P4C allowed me to share my thoughts with my peers so that we could “get into the deep end of the pool” with discussions that were brought up. Listening to what everyone had to say and how others responded and interacted with each other in an intellectually safe way was the highlight of this experience ... Throughout my four years in high school, I noticed that I gradually transformed my thinking and views in order to be a better philosophical thinker. This means that I am better at challenging my thoughts and that I am able to understand “thinking about thinking.” —Sierra Kadooka, KHS senior who presented a student-made Peace Quilt to the Dalai Lama



Native Hawaiian cultural leaders Nainoa Thompson and Pualani Kanahale, Tenzin Dorjee and the Dalai Lama at the EWC. Nathalie Walker photo nwalker@midweek.com

Fear — some is realistic, some is unrealistic. My favorite word is realistic. —Dalai Lama, Stan Sheriff Center, April 15

The father of p4c in Hawaii is Tom Jackson, Ph.D., a.k.a. Dr. J. The director of the UH Department of Philosophy (and a co-founder of the Hawaii International Film Festival in another incarnation) tells the story of a Kailua student who would walk into a classroom, slouch insolently, announce he didn’t give a bleep about this class or anybody, and who may or may not have dabbled in various substances. Through his introduction to ethnic studies and p4c, his attitude and behavior changed, as did his grades, and his life for the better.

Jackson’s inspiration/mentor is Matthew Lipman, who was disgusted with what he saw in his daughter’s school and wrote a book with philosophical content for sixth-graders, *Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery*. He was subsequently fascinated to see students soak up the concepts and discuss them in depth.

“So he said, if it works for sixth-graders, let’s try fifth!” says Jackson.

He did, on down the grades, and it kept working. Thus, Waikiki El first-graders sat down at a round table recently to enquire on the subject of, “What if there were no grown-ups in Hawaii?”

Among the student questions: “What is a grown-up?”

Parents, schools and society, says Lukey, “really underestimate kids.”

Jackson emphasizes that the circles of enquiry “do not try for closure or consensus. We talk about the ‘courage to be confused.’”

Now that I am a senior, I am able to see how much of an impact P for C has had on my thinking process. Freshman year, I would barely scratch the surface on my answers to prompts, though over the years I have learned how to think outside the box. I learned how to stretch my own thinking so that when it came time to bring up my ideas in the actual discussion, we are able to take it even deeper and discover answers that many people probably would not have thought of. The thinking process that was established in me through P for C also helps me in other subjects such as math and science, because it taught me how to think deeper, to use my resources to my advantage in order to obtain the best answer that I can. This program has also helped me outside of the classroom, and through thinking deeper or ‘outside’ helped me to become a better person. For example it has made it easier for me to see from other people’s shoes when they present ideas or express

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