Gently Socratic Inquiry*

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2019

philosophy

begins

in

WONDER!

(Plato, 427-347BC)

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INTRODUCTION TO P4C

Philosophy for Children (P4C) is the creation of Matthew Lipman. The idea for P4C was born in 1969 when Lipman was teaching at Columbia University. Lipman was deeply concerned about his students' inability to reason well and make sound judgments. Realizing that college was late to begin responding to this inability, his deep concerns led to: (1) a revisioning and playful redesign of philosophical content accessible to a non-academic audience, (2) re-presenting this content in a philosophically rich K-12 curriculum consisting of 7 novels and an accompanying teacher's manual for each, (3) establishing, with Ann Margaret Sharp, the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) at Montclair University, and (4) offering regular training workshops at Montclair to help prepare educators to implement this initiative. At these workshops participants experienced for themselves Lipman's vision of transforming traditional classrooms into Communities of Philosophical Inquiry.

P4C is now an internationally recognized educational initiative in countries throughout the world. P4C seeks to develop children's ability to think for themselves and to learn to use that ability in responsible, caring ways.

In 1984, I introduced Lipman's approach to Hawai'i. Here, inspired by the specialness of these Islands and the rich diversity of its cultures, Lipman's approach to P4C has changed and evolved into "p4c Hawai'i (p4cHI)"** where it continues to develop in Hawai'I, nationally and internationally. p4cHI has found its home in the University of Hawai'i/Mānoa Uehiro Academy for Philosophy and Ethics in Education. (www.p4chawaii.org)

p4c HI – CREATING A SPACE FOR "GENTLY SOCRATIC" INQUIRY

"Gently Socratic" Inquiry recognizes that a paramount objective of education is indeed to help students develop their ability to think for themselves and to learn to use this ability in compassionate, responsible ways. It also acknowledges that much of current schooling falls short in helping students achieve this. Gently Socratic inquiry rests upon recognition that we all enter this world filled with a special, powerful sense of wonder***: Primal Wonder. From this flows an energy of deep questioning, persistence

and passion in a quest for meaning that animates our initial engagement with our world.

Sadly, far too frequently for most of us, this often exuberant sense of Primal Wonder out of which authentic thinking and being in the world develops, diminishes. Unfortunately schooling unwittingly contributes to this loss in fundamental ways. Already, early on, this loss becomes evident. Children's thinking is focused increasingly not on their wonderings, but on content the systems dictate and teachers are expected to present and children expected to learn and demonstrate this learning on standardized tests. One result is that there simply isn't time, so it seems, for the true wonderings, questions and voices of children to be heard.

This apparent lack of time is exacerbated by the fact that most educators simply have never been exposed to this type of wondering and the inquiries that can grow from this wondering. They haven't witnessed this wondering, particularly in classrooms and schools that have embraced the p4cHI approach and the changes that Gently Socratic Inquiry makes possible. It is hoped that what you read here will inspire you to learn more and even give it a try!

WHAT IS GENTLY SOCRATIC INQUIRY?

The "gentle" in gently Socratic inquiry involves highlighting both a connection and distinction from what Socrates and "Socratic Method" too often have come to represent. Socrates is often portrayed as a consummate lawyer, cleverly questioning and moving his adversary into an "Aha! Got you!" position of contradiction. Socratic Method is viewed as methodical questioning and cross-examining, peeling away layers of half-truths, exposing hidden assumptions. The Socratic Method becomes a rule-like step-by-step procedure.

Young children do exhibit a Socratic-like tenacity in their persistent "Whys?" in response to the world that surrounds them. But their persistence is both properly serious and eminently playful. If our first adult response does not satisfy, another "But why?" often follows.

Young children also share with Socrates a deep sense of "not knowing". In his exchanges, Socrates, like young children, did not have "the answer" already in mind. I think he possessed a robust sense of Primal Wonder and from this could intuit when a response somehow moved closer to a more complete answer and deeper

understanding: just the thing that young children seek. In this context it is important to remember that Socrates, as we know, was encountering adults, and, context sensitive, was not often particularly gentle in his pursuit of clarity and understanding!

Gently Socratic inquiry does share with Socrates an emphasis on dialogue. A salient feature of dialogue is not initially or primarily on questioning, but listening. Dialogue's first interest is not to counter, debate, disagree, lead, or expose, but to genuinely and simply listen. This quality of listening requires setting aside one's own thoughts in order to be truly open to what the other is saying. This is especially important because, in gently Socratic inquiry, the "other" will often be a child, and gentleness must be foremost in one's mind if one hopes to be privileged with an authentic response from a child, or anyone, for that matter.

Many factors in contemporary schooling and teacher preparation work against the kind of listening essential for gently Socratic inquiry. As Peter Senge**** suggests, we all internalize a "mental model" of what it means to be a teacher. Central to this tendency is the idea that the teacher is the one who is "in the know" and the student is the recipient of this knowledge, the "learner." Too often the teacher thus focuses her listening on hearing an expected answer or on probing the student's understanding of a particular idea or concept. "Has the student understood what I am trying to teach?" is a stance that precludes the kind of listening that is essential for the success of gently Socratic inquiry.

This focus on dialogue requires that a particular set of relationships develop among the members of the classroom community that is quite different from standard classroom practice. These new relationships place much more emphasis on listening, thoughtfulness, silence, care and respect for the thoughts of others. This setting provides ample time for students to express and clarify what they mean, to understand, to respond to what others have said, and to inquire further into what other students intended. Above all, the classroom is an intellectually safe place that is not in a rush to get somewhere.

Whenever possible, students and teacher sit in a circle during inquiry time. Students call on each other, learning to no longer rely on the teacher to carry this responsibility. Each has the opportunity to speak or to pass and remain silent. In this environment, inquiry grows.

Gently Socratic inquiry is essentially about creating a particular, special place

where these things can occur. In traditional Hawaiian culture there was a special physical place called a *Pu'uhonua.* This was a recognized place of safety, a sacred refuge, respected as such by all who were there. p4c HI takes its inspiration from this Hawaiian place and practice. The classroom becomes the setting within which to establish a different set of relationships among teacher and students. In this place the teacher becomes a **co-inquirer** in dialogue with her students, rather than their guide or sage. Over time, tools and criteria come into play, which enhance the quality and rigor of the discourse and inquiry, but always within the context of a safe place. It is in this safety that shy, reticent, or seemingly disinterested students will speak in class for the very first time.

To develop such a classroom community and the skills needed for its success, the teacher needs to deliberately commit to learning the whys and how to's of creating such a community. Over time, as students and teachers internalize these skills and practices, the strategies and skills that emerge from the inquiry sessions will appear at other times of the school day, other content areas and beyond. Students and teachers begin to ask qualitatively different sorts of questions, to listen more thoughtfully and attentively to each other. They also learn to persist in seeking to "scratch beneath the surface" of a text, lesson, or personal situation. How does one develop such a community?

ON SAFETY

Gently Socratic inquiry begins by developing a safe context within which dialogue and inquiry can unfold. First and foremost, classrooms must be physically safe places. For dialogue and inquiry to occur they must also be emotionally and intellectually safe. In emotionally and intellectually safe places there are no putdowns, no comments intended to belittle, undermine, negate, devalue, or ridicule.

INTELLECTUAL SAFETY
All participants in the Community feel free to ask virtually any question or state any view so long as respect for all community members is honored.

Within this safe place, the group comes to accept virtually any question or comment, so long as it is respectful of the other members of the circle. What develops is

a growing trust among the participants and with it the courage to present one's own thoughts, however tentative initially, on complex and difficult issues.

Anyone who knows how to pretend they understand something even though they don't, or who has been in a context where they had a question but were afraid to ask it and remained silent, has felt the impact of a place that was not safe. Safety is the bedrock upon which inquiry grows.

An important detail relevant to safety is proper acknowledgment of the diversity of views that emerge in the course of various inquiries. Safety arises, in part, out of acknowledging and celebrating this diversity. This is not the same as saying there are "no right or wrong answers" or "any answer is okay." Sometimes a student will fail to present reasons, or well-thought-out reasons, to support their answer. The group may not fully understand the implications of a particular answer, nor the assumptions that underlie them. Over time, the group begins to understand that it needs to take these criteria into account in considering a proposed answer. Mere unsupported opinion does not suffice.

Equally important is this: The goal is not to persuade anyone to any particular answer, but rather for everyone to reach a deeper understanding of the complexity of the issues involved and a greater ability to navigate among these complexities, differing points of view and disagreements; to think for oneself.

CREATING A SAFE COMMUNITY

The most favorable configuration for developing a safe community is for the class, including the teacher, to sit in a circle, on the floor if appropriate. Unlike the more traditional configuration with students in rows, the circle allows all members of the community to make eye contact, to *see* each other. In the ensuing dialogue, participants are better able to hear what others are saying and also to see how they are saying it; in other words, the facial expressions and mannerisms of those who are speaking. The circle also facilitates seeing the impact on each other of the interaction. What is the impact of acceptance or rejection? Of careful listening as opposed to inattention or indifference.

An early objective is to establish a protocol whereby students feel empowered to call on each other. One effective activity for accomplishing this is to create a "community

ball" together as a way to give shape to what will become an inquiry community. This activity is effective with groups from kindergarten through university and beyond.

Making a Community Ball

Materials needed:

- empty cardboard paper towel or PVC tube
- Skein of multicolored yarn, scissors
- One 14" zip-tie

Procedure:

1. Place the zip-tie through the center of the tube.
2. Wrap yarn from the skein around the tube.
3. When finished wrapping, hold onto the zip-tie while pulling the yarn off the tube. Zip-tie must remain in the center of the yarn coil. Loop and fasten the zip-tie pulling it as tight as possible, forming a bagel shape from the yarn.
4. Cut through the yarn at the outer edge, creating a pom-pom ball.

Typically, class seated in a circle, the very first p4c session begins with making a Community Ball. The teacher begins wrapping the yarn around the tube (PVC or paper towel), while the student next to her feeds the yarn from the skein. The teacher goes first, responding to a question or questions that each person in the circle will also answer in turn. This/these question(s), accessible and context sensitive, can be anything the teacher thinks will readily invite student responses, such as, "Tell us your name", "something about your name", "What is your favorite food or music?" or "What do you like best about school?" When the teacher finishes speaking, she passes the tube to the student beside her, who begins to wrap as the teacher takes over feeding the yarn. This process - one person wrapping and speaking, and his neighbor feeding the yarn - continues until all have had the opportunity to speak.

Once the group has made the ball, the teacher presents these three agreements: (1) the person with the ball is the speaker of the moment. That person, when finished, may pass the ball to whoever has a raised hand. (2) One always has the right to pass. (3) One also has the "right to invite". Any student with the community ball may toss it to

someone who hasn't spoken yet, inviting them to join with their thoughts. The "right to pass" rule always remains in effect so that there is no requirement to speak, although one CAN say "I need more time to think!"

Another (optional) community-enhancing strategy is to introduce certain "magic words" that members of the community can use to facilitate the inquiry. The use of magic words has been effective in developing a safe place where inquiry can unfold in a non-threatening way. Students who are soft-spoken are encouraged to speak up when someone in the group says "SPLAT" (speak louder please). It's okay to say "IDUS" (I don't understand). And when several people are speaking at once, "POPAAT" (please, one person at a time) works. The teacher and students can write these "words" on cards and display them for all to see as needed. Each group can, of course, develop its own set of words. Whatever words you use, they can be powerfully instrumental in developing a community where all members share in the responsibility for moving an inquiry forward and where the members share a common vocabulary with which to engage in this task.

Magic Words

- **SPLAT** = Speak a little louder, please. SPLAT means that what a person said just barely got out of their mouth and then went 'splat' onto the floor. In other words, we need you to speak louder so we can hear you.

- **IDUS** = I don't understand. IDUS can empower students to be able to say when they don't understand. It has proven much easier for students to say IDUS than "I don't understand." Teachers find it encouraging when IDUS begins to show up in other content areas.

- **POPAAT** = Please, one person at a time. Once students learn that during inquiry time the group is very interested in what they have to say, they often all want to speak at the same time. POPAAT is effective in this context. When people start speaking out of turn, someone says POPAAT, which means that all must stop talking. The person holding the ball then continues.

- **OMT** = One more time. OMT is a request for the speaker to repeat what he has said.

- **NQP** = New question, please.

- **LMO** = Lets move on.

- **PBQ** = Please be quiet.

- **GOS** = Going off subject. A group member can say GOS when the inquiry seems to be losing focus.
- **OOT** = Out Of Time (**AOOT** Almost OOT, **WOOT**, Way OOT)
- **JAMP** = Just A Moment Please! This indicates that what is being said is moving too quickly for some to follow. Could we pause for a moment so one or several of us can catch up?
- **MEGO** = Mine Eyes Glaze Over What is/was being said was more technical and complex with words/names some never heard such that some of us are shutting down with the "overload".

Once the teacher introduces the magic words, anyone with or without the Community Ball, may hold up a card or say the appropriate magic word. If the community seems bogged down in a topic and is not getting anywhere, someone may offer "LMO" to the community. At that moment, the community votes to see if the majority would indeed like to move on. If a minority still has interest in the topic, they can pursue it at a later time.

DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING OF p4c HI INQUIRY: FIVE CHARACTERISTICS

Perhaps most basic to any successful p4c HI inquiry is the clear and shared understanding that during this time "we aren't in a rush to get anywhere." In other content areas and parts of the day, there is pressure to cover material, to get to a next class or subject and so on. The p4cHI dialogue and inquiry sessions have a different intention and feel. Deeper inquiry requires time to develop, periods of thoughtful silence, pauses to clarify. Within this context the following five characteristics are at the core of p4cHI inquiry:

[1] The source of the inquiry: Whenever possible, the inquiry arises out of the wonderings, questions and interests of the community, begins where the community is in its understanding, and unfolds with its own, often surprising twists and turns. There are a wide variety of possible triggers, occasions, and topics for inquiry. PLAIN VANILLA***** is one strategy for finding a topic and then giving shape to an inquiry.

A salient feature of gently Socratic inquiry is its sensitivity to the wonderings, interests and questions of the community, their thoughts, and where they take the topic. Even very young children generate sophisticated lines of inquiry from deceptively simple beginnings. One kindergartner; in response to the question, "What do you wonder about?" answered: "The other night, while I was gazing at the stars, I wondered whether anything came before space." In the discussion that ensued, the children's exploration ranged from dinosaurs to God. Other inquiries, different grade levels, have explored such topics as "Could there be a greatest number?"; "What constitutes a right?" and "What is the purpose of rights?"; "What is more important- friends, fame, or fortune?"; and "If we all have those reasons to be good people (reasons to have compassion, patience, love) then why is it so hard to be a good person?", "Can I infer that it is impossible to tell the whole truth because people perceive the truth differently?".

The solicitation of questions and topics for a given inquiry can be as broad as "What do you wonder about?", to more focused, content specific questions based on content specific readings. As indicated, these questions can be further refined by stipulating using one of the Good Thinker's Tool Kit (GTTK) letters as stems in formulating the question.

Once students realize that the topics and questions can indeed come from them and be pursued along lines they are interested in, the quality of their inquiries is truly inspiring.

[2] Co-inquiry: In gently Socratic inquiry, no one, not even the teacher, knows either "the" answer to the initial wondering or question or where the inquiry will lead. Clearly, any effort to guide an inquiry to a predetermined answer or outcome compromises the process from the start. The dialogue develops its own integrity, its own movement, going where "it" wants or needs to go. At various points it may bog down and need an occasional nudge ("LMO") but in the main, the inquiry emerges from the context. It frequently pushes what Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1986; Lipman, 1996) refers to as the "zone of proximal development" of all participants, including the teacher.

Gently Socratic inquiry is co-inquiry in the best sense. The teacher is no longer burdened with needing to know "the answer". In such inquiries, the students also pose insightful questions or comments that can lead the inquiry down unexpected paths. The teacher becomes a genuine co-inquirer in the unfolding inquiry.

[3] The self-corrective nature of the inquiry: Matthew Lipman (1991), following in the pragmatist tradition of the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, emphasized the centrality of inquiry that is self-corrective. In classrooms where inquiry has become an essential and ongoing activity, community members will change and develop their thought about a particular topic. "Before I thought ...., but now I realize that . . . ." becomes an increasingly common comment in a maturing inquiry community in the course of a school year.

[4] **Inquiry Tools (WRAITEC):** Gently Socratic inquiry is more than a conversation, discussion, or sharing of ideas within a group. It is characterized by an intellectual rigor that certain cognitive tools help facilitate. These tools comprise the "Good Thinker's Tool Kit." They are an important means for giving shape and direction to the notion that, although we aren't in a rush to get anywhere, we <u>do</u> have an expectation that we will get <u>somewhere</u>.

The Good Thinker's Toolkit

Helping students and teachers internalize good thinker's tools of inquiry equips them with the ability to think for themselves and take action in responsible ways. With sustained experience in dialogue and inquiry, students become more adept at giving and asking for reasons, detecting assumptions, anticipating consequences, reflecting on inferences they draw, asking for clarification and seeking evidence and examples as well as counterexamples. They also learn to seek out alternatives and to form criteria for the judgments they make. The letters **W, R, A, I, T, E, C** represent the good thinker's tools (Jackson, 1989):

W

What is meant by...? What is the problem? What is going on here? What have I forgotten to ask? What else do I need to know?

[W] is essentially meant to capture that aspect of thinking that involves sensitivity to

complexity, possible ambiguity, and multiplicity of meanings both verbal and non-verbal and, hence, a readiness to seek clarification when needed. (Note that to some extent, "clarification" can be construed to include the other letters to follow.)

Verbal cues that one is engaging in clarification include: "What do you mean by...?" "What does the author mean by…?", "What is the key issue here?" "Is that true?" [T] "How could we find out?" "Why do you say that?" [R] "If what you say is true, would it follow that...?" [I] "How does what you've said relate to the point at issue?" "Aren't we assuming that...?" [A].

R
Are reasons being offered to support claims?

[R] reflects that to think more deeply it is not enough to simply offer an opinion. That opinion needs to be supported by reasons. In a classroom context, it is important to explore more fully in separate lessons the nature of reasons and reason giving. This includes issues such as what is a reason? Are reasons of equal force? If not, what criteria are there that might be useful in distinguishing good reasons from bad reasons?

A
Are we aware of and identifying key assumptions being made?

[A] recognizes that an important part of higher order thinking is becoming aware of and making explicit assumptions that underlie any discussion, position, argument, inquiry or presentation. It involves a growing ability to identify assumptions, to recognize how those assumptions are influencing what we are seeing and judging, and to identify other assumptions that might be made. This ability to identify assumptions is closely linked to the next "tool".

I
Are we aware of inferences being made and possible implications of what is being said?

The [I] represents an important cluster of skills, "If...thens...", inferences, and

implications. Part of becoming a better thinker involves the simple recognition of the potential power of "If...then..." thinking. IF, for example, we do, or don't pursue a particular line of action, THEN, what follows? What are the consequences? It involves the growing ability to recognize IMPLICATIONS of statements, assertions, courses of action, and so on.

Inferences basically have three parts: (1) a STARTING POINT (something seen, heard, smelled, tasted or touched), (2) an ENDING POINT (a "place" the mind "moves" to that is beyond what was presented at the STARTING POINT) and (3) a prior, more general assumption that connects the two. I may see a person sneeze (STARTING POINT) and infer that they have a cold (ENDING POINT). We are frequently making such inferences. Recognizing that we have made an inference (1) & (2) is an important step in becoming a better thinker.

Connected with this is the ability to identify inferences that are being made is the developed skill of knowing when an inference is warranted and when not. This involves (3) the underlying general assumption. Suppose I infer from the presence of a gold ring on someone's left hand ring finger that they are married. Reflecting, I now realize I also have in my mind (3) a prior general assumption that triggers "ring-on-ring-finger-of-left-hand" with "married". "People with a gold ring on their left hand ring finger are married." Once I've made explicit (1) - (3), I can examine the inference by asking: "Does it (2) follow?" For sure? Probably? Possibly? Is it safe to assume these things?

T
Is what is being said true? How could we find out?

[T] indicates that a major concern of a critical thinker is with the purported truth of what is being asserted. Is what is being asserted in fact true? How could we find out?   Lots of statements are presented to all of us in school and out. For students in school this includes science, math, social studies, and language arts classes. Clearly not all of these statements are true. What we take for truth must meet certain standards. What are the standards? Is it always? never, or only sometimes true?

E

Are EXAMPLES being given or is EVIDENCE being offered to support or illustrate claims?

[E] is one way in which clarification of a position or assertion can be accomplished. It is a way of making a general claim specific or testing a claim by presenting an illustrative example. Equally important is the offering of evidence to support assertions. What is the evidence?

C

Are there any counter-examples to the claim being made?

[C] reflects the important task of testing the limits of a claim or position by searching for a way to prove it false or at least to test the limits of the claim. It is perhaps too easy to get enthusiastic about the truth of a claim. The search for counter-examples is an important check on such enthusiasm. A sensitivity to counter-examples is also an important skill in puncturing stereotypes.

One suggested class activity is to make Tool Kits together so that each student has her own kit. Students design 3 x 5 cards, one for each letter, writing on the back of each card whatever clarifying notes will help them remember the significance of each letter. When desiring a reason from someone who is speaking, a student displays the **[R]** card. If an important assumption is going unnoticed, a student can show the **[A]** card, and so on.

The class should also devote time, separate from the inquiry sessions, to becoming more familiar with each tool. In the course of an inquiry, anyone can place a card representing a given tool in the circle when they want to use that particular tool. This can facilitate the evaluation of the session at the end, as it makes apparent which tools made their appearance in the course of the day's inquiry or in other parts of the school day.

One of the goals in developing inquiry skills is learning to think more deeply, to "scratch beneath the surface" of any topic or question. The active use of the good thinker's tools is one indication that "'scratching'" is occurring.

Four Types of Progress

There are at least four overlapping types of progress that can result from effective p4cHI session.

（ⅰ）Confusion/Complexity: This form of progress occurs when an inquiry reveals how complicated the question or topic really is. At the end of the session, things might well appear (for some!), confusing, in a muddle, more mixed up than in the beginning. This muddle is an important form of progress when participants realize that the topic was much more complex than they thought at first. Those experiencing confusion should be supported in their having the courage to experience and be with this confusion. It is a mark of a more mature thinker to be able to deal with confusion and work toward greater clarity.

（ⅱ） Connecting new ideas: In a rich inquiry session, new ideas and insights are presented and as a result, new connections can begin to emerge among the various ideas that presented themselves in the course of the inquiry. For example, an inquiry that began with the question, "What does it mean to say, 'That wasn't fair'?" led a group of 3rd graders to questions of whether it wasn't fair because someone was treated differently, and whether treating someone differently is ever consistent with being fair. Some of these students thereby made a connection between "fair" and "how someone is treated." Having new ideas to consider and integrate can contribute to initial confusion!

（ⅲ） An answer or more questions or lines of inquiry begin to emerge: For some participants, as a result of the content of the session, the shape of an answer begins to emerge. In the fairness inquiry above, "how one is treated' might emerge as a criterion of fairness such that it might be proposed that "If a person is treated differently in a particular sort of way, then that wouldn't be fair." For others, it opens up new questions and lines of inquiry to explore.

（ⅳ） A commitment to take some personal action within oneself or in the wider community with respect to some aspect of the topic or question that emerged in the course of the Inquiry.

It is important to recognize that various participants in the same inquiry will frequently experience different types and combinations of progress. For some, it may just be a muddle. For others, connections may begin to emerge, while still others may begin to have an answer in mind. This is to be expected since each participant begins in

a different place, bringing different life experiences and knowledge to the topic. p4cHI sessions are not seeking consensus on a topic or question, valuable as this might be in some contexts. In a p4cHI session, each form of progress has value and merit. A valuable exercise is to have students keep journals of inquiry sessions to promote an ongoing internal dialogue for each individual where they can continue to reflect on their own thinking, now enriched by what they have heard from their peers, as their own insights continue to develop.

Certainly there will occasions when it appears that students are not making progress in any of these ways in their inquiry. Yet there may be progress of a different, equally important kind: progress as a COMMUNITY, discussed below.

[5] Reflecting on the session: Finally, it is important that the inquiry community reflect together on how well it has done on with each session. The following criteria are suggested for use by the community in their reflections:

How did we do as a community?

- **Listening**-Was I listening to others? Were others listening to me?
- **Participation/Presence**-Were most people "present"? Did most people participate (listening attentively, speaking if moved to do so, rather than just a few who dominated?)
- **Safety**-Was it a safe environment?

How was our inquiry?

- **Focus**-Did we maintain a focus?
- **Depth**-Did our session scratch beneath the surface, open up the topic. Did I make some (1,2,3, or 4) progress?
- **Understanding**-Did I increase my understanding of the topic?
- **Thinking**-Did I challenge my own thinking or work hard at it? Follow what others were saying? Weave their thoughts/ideas with my own? Agree and/or disagree? Make use of the TOOLKIT when relevant?
- **Interest**-Was it interesting?

At some point it is important for the group to discuss more fully what each criterion

means. What, for example, counts as participation? Does one need to speak in order to participate? What does it mean to scratch beneath the surface? At an appropriate time, the teacher can introduce the notion of four types of progress and the use of the various tools as indicators of scratching or its absence.

The evaluation can occur in a variety of ways. The teacher/facilitator can have criteria listed together and posted for all to see or each criterion displayed on a separate card. With separate cards, different students can be invited to display each card one at a time. Community members indicate how they thought the community did on that criterion with "thumb up", "thumb down", or thumb midway to indicate not sure either way. As the community gains experience, it can establish a standard for what "thumbs up" means within the context of the experiences of that community.

Related to evaluation of an inquiry session is a feature that will inevitably emerge wherever inquiry has become a regular part of the classroom: Once intellectual safety is firmly in place, diversity of viewpoints will make their appearance. One way of preparing for this is to make clear that with complex topics, one can expect a number of legitimate, different points of view. Indeed, as individuals, we may have differing points of view at different points in time. Intellectual safety aims to achieve the safety to be "uncomfortable", to risk the encounter with genuinely differing, disconcerting views and experiences and an ability to respond in mature, responsible ways.

At the end of an inquiry into whether a particular action was fair, or indeed any other topic of similar complexity, it is important to acknowledge at least four possible places someone might be in their thinking at any given time. Someone might be prepared to answer, "Yes, I think it was fair," or "No, I don't think it was fair," but also, importantly, they might be at an "I don't know" or 'Maybe so" place.

Asking students and teacher to raise their hands in response to where their thinking is on the particular topic is a way of displaying to the group the diversity of their thinking on a particular issue. Asking for such a display of hands is also a way of bringing closure to an inquiry that is still ongoing but must pause because it is time for lunch, recess, or another class.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER/FACILITATOR (T/F)

In p4cHI we identify three overlapping stages in the development of a p4c HI

community: (1) beginning, (2) emerging, and (3) mature. The teacher is absolutely pivotal to the success of gently Socratic inquiry in each of these stages. In a beginning community, it will be the T/F who introduces the ideas essential to such inquiry. She will be responsible for establishing, monitoring, and maintaining the safety within the group, intervening whenever necessary <u>with or without the community ball in hand</u>. This will include monitoring the proper use of the community ball, calling on each other and seeing that members have ample opportunity to speak as well as permission to remain silent. With younger grades, for example, one problem that can appear initially is that boys only call on boys, girls call on girls, or close friends call on each other. At any grade level, speaking out of turn, especially in the beginning, is a situation that requires the T/F to intervene, reminding the community of its responsibility to listen with care to the person with the community ball.

The T/F is responsible for introducing the magic words (if they are to be used) and seeing to their proper use. In some cases, students may initially abuse the freedom offered by these words and repeatedly utter "SPLAT" (speak louder please) to someone who is shy, or "LMO" (let's move on) the moment there is any pause in the dialogue.

The T/F conducts the lessons that involve introducing and making the Tool Kit and follow-up lessons that focus on a particular tool. For most students and many teachers, "inference" and "assumption" are little more than vocabulary words. The group needs to spend time on developing deeper understanding of what these terms mean. Similarly, what makes a reason a good reason, how counterexamples function, and how one might go about finding out whether a given claim or statement is true may be areas where understanding is currently quite shallow. In early sessions the teacher should call attention to uses of the various tools and encourage their use.

Most importantly, it is the T/F, especially in a beginning community, who sets the time and pacing for the group. "Not being in a rush" depends on a T/F sufficiently comfortable with silence and "wait time" beyond what is typical in most classrooms. It requires a person whose own sense of wonder is still very much alive and who is keenly interested in what the authentic thoughts of the community are on a given topic; one who is comfortable with uncertainty, not eager to push for closure but willing to allow an inquiry to move where "it" and the community seem to want to take it. She must be willing to let go of a sometimes felt-need to know the answer and to become a co-inquirer in the quest for progress in the inquiry. This is a trust that grows with time and experience with

the process!

Initially the T/F needs to make the crucial judgments about using both Magic Words and Good Thinker's Tools. She is the one who asks for reasons, examples, and clarification, at the same time displaying letters that represent the particular tool requested, at once modeling and highlighting their use.

The T/F assists weaving threads of conversation into dialogue, asking who agrees or disagrees or has other thoughts about the topic at hand, offering a counterexample, asking "If what Tanya said is true, would it follow that ... ?" or making some other comment to nudge the inquiry along. This is especially delicate and challenging because a major objective is for the children to internalize and thus take over these skills and behaviors. They need as much opportunity as possible to try them out. Providing these opportunities is the teacher's challenge and responsibility.

It is the T/F who brings a given session to a close and sees to it that the group conducts an evaluation. How long are inquiry sessions? With kindergarten children they last from 10 minutes to more than an hour. Sessions with older students tend to be more predictable in terms of length, but also clearly more subject to the time demands of the school day and curriculum.

In this kind of inquiry, the T/F's role is to be pedagogically strong but philosophically self-effacing. She should be firmly in control of the procedures but allow the content of the inquiry to unfold, as it needs to, rather than aiming at a pre-set outcome.

As the community grows and matures it will move from a "beginning" to an "emerging" community, where the other members of the community have internalized the protocols, calling on each other, spontaneously beginning to use the toolkit letters and so on. Finally, in a "mature" community, the teacher will become, along with the other members of the community, at once teacher, facilitator, AND participant. It's an exciting, maturing, and rewarding experience for all!

It takes a lot of courage for anyone to begin and continue in this adventure! It is sometimes a bumpy journey, not inevitably upward. Like life! It can require changes in one's view of oneself, the classroom, the respective roles of T/F and students and their relationships to and with each other and education itself. It requires a supportive community of colleagues who are also practitioners at various stages of the journey. It encourages each teacher to develop her own "style" of implementation, sensitive to her

particular context, her own identity, values and goals. It is not easy, but rewarding in the changes it makes possible!

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END NOTES

*This is a revised version of "The Art and Craft of 'Gently Socratic' Inquiry", published in Developing Minds: A Resource for Teaching Thinking, (3rd edition), Arthur L. Costa (editor), ASCD (Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development), Alexandria, Virginia, 2001.

** A fuller description of this development and our use of "p4cHI rather than "P4C" can be found on our website (p4chawaii.org) under Resources, "Learning about p4c HI", first entry, "Educational Perspectives Journal" Wondering, p. 3.

*** Ashby Butnor,

**** In The Fifth Discipline, by Peter Senge,

***PLAIN VANILLA

Step 1. The Prompt – There are a variety of prompts, or ways to begin a session. You may begin simply by asking and writing down what each person WONDERS about. Or, you may read a paragraph or two, an episode, a chapter, or a whole story, look at a painting, watch a video, reading a poem, listen to a piece of music, or select a topic from a 'wonder box' into which questions have been placed. The basis of the Prompt may be content specific, such as a topic in science, math, history, language arts.

Step 2. Wonderings/Questions – Each member of the community is asked to pose a wondering and/or a specific question based on an assigned reading or other options mention in Step 1. These wonderings/questions are then displayed, read aloud, listed or posted by the teacher or the students for all to see.

Step 3. Vote - The community votes for the wondering/question they would like to inquire into first.

Step 4. Dialogue/Inquiry - Inquire into the question selected, using magic words and WRAITEC as appropriate. (See above, pgs. 9-10, pgs. 13-15)

Step 5. Reflect - Use criteria agreed upon by the community to evaluate how the session was, both in terms of community (intellectual safety, etc.) and inquiry. (See above, pgs. 17-18 for an example of criteria.)