

# Administrative Perspectives on P4C

## A Principal's Thought on P4C

By Carolyn M. Nakamoto

*Carolyn M. Nakamoto has just retired from Haha'ione Elementary School where she served as principal for the past seven years.*

I have been asked to share a principal's perspective on the effectiveness of Philosophy for Children (P4C) at Haha'ione Elementary School, a school that has utilized P4C since the early 90s. I do so gladly as this program has endured and remained a vital part of the school's curricula even with 90% of the teaching staff changing through retirements and transfers over the years.

Haha'ione Elementary is a School Community-Based Management (SCBM) facility within the affluent suburbs of East Honolulu known as Hawaii Kai on the island of Oahu. We service about 520 students with 21 classroom teachers and eleven certificated support staff, including one counselor, one librarian, one Student Services Coordinator, one English as Second Language teacher, four Special Education teachers, and three specialty teachers; there are also seven educational assistants. Our students score well-above the state average on all normed and criterion-referenced testing.

P4C was initially sought as a program to instruct students in engaging in higher level thinking skills in the early 90s. We had wanted to embark on establishing a Science and Technology Learning Center with critical thinking and inquiry skills as the primary focus of learning for our students at Haha'ione. The few teachers who were exposed to P4C recommended that the school adopt such a program to have our students be able to ask appropriate questions that lead to deeper knowledge and utilize more accurate information that leads to grounded opinions on different subject areas, including the selection of the best alternative solution that eventually resolves identified problems. We described the focus as one that emphasized the "processing of information," beginning with science instruction and ultimately applying that thinking process across all content areas, in-

cluding its application to the environmental and political concerns of society.

The early years began with full-faculty training in P4C. After a 3-5 day orientation, Dr. Thomas Jackson and his graduate students from the University of Hawaii provided additional support to students with periodic and regulated visitations to the classrooms. The application of P4C, however, could not be overtly seen for several years until students were given the opportunity to think in an environment that gave them full responsibility for decisions leading to the resolution of their own social problems. With the introduction of a conflict resolution model known to as Peer Mediation, each student was expected to settle minor disagreements with their peers by using a simple 4-step process. These steps included (1) one's willingness to resolve his/her own problems, (2) each disputant identifying what (s)he thought was the problem, (3) each disputant recommending a workable solution, and (4) finally the disputants agreeing to one solution without putting down another's recommendation and truly respecting all ideas. It was during these discussions leading to resolution that students began to ask questions that went deeper into the reasoning behind one's ideas or opinions. As a result, one began to recognize P4C at work; its elements began to be visible.

It was only after Peer Mediation had been established that P4C began surfacing in the classroom. Students began having the courage to question the opinions of their peers while others listened respectfully, trying to understand both points of view. Seeing third graders having such a discussion about a story they all read was exciting as students asked probing questions of each other's point of view, trying to separate fact from assumptions, inferences from implications, and wondering if, why, and how the pieces of information fit together. The proactive stance toward learning led to greater discourse among the students.

Throughout the years, we have intermittently received feedback from our complex secondary teachers, indicating that Haha'ione's students were distinguishable from other feeder schools'. Haha'ione students were seen as persistent in questioning and more confident in practicing intellectual inquiry while simultaneously reserving and postponing

judgment until sufficient information was received. Our students generally took a more skeptical, active stance toward learning new information rather than accepting everything that was told to them passively. The inquiring mind was needed and sought for students to take active control of their learning.

As principal of the school, I could sense that teachers felt comfortable teaching and utilizing P4C concepts with pupils as young as kindergarteners. In fact, the teachers in lower elementary are the ones who actively support P4C in their classrooms and speak highly in support of its effectiveness in energizing classroom discussions. They believe in what P4C is able to do for their students and continue to support and share P4C concepts with new teachers on grade level. With more retirements these past few years, Haha'ione has once again made certain that the remaining faculty who are new to our school have been trained in P4C. With support from the seasoned teachers on grade level, the newer teachers are mentored in keeping P4C a viable entity along with Peer Mediation and Anger Management, another program that attempts to help individuals recognize stages of their own emotional awareness. P4C, Peer Mediation and Anger Management are viewed as tools that individual students require to be able to have healthy interpersonal relationships with peers. Students also tend to find these programs valuable, as a few have taken the concepts and applied them within their own family environments, sharing their knowledge with siblings and parents and even trying to assist with family disputes.

During the 13.5 years as principal of Hahaione, I have seen P4C, Peer Mediation and Anger Management individually wane and peak within the classrooms. However, all three programs in combination appear to support one another, and we have maintained implementation of these programs for almost a decade. Why P4C works in combination with the other programs is difficult to pinpoint. It appears that P4C provides the inquiry tools, Peer Mediation provides the framework in which the inquiry tools can be applied, and Anger Management helps each individual become more aware of his/her own feelings within the context of the situation. The practice of being tolerant of individual differences through persistence and patience is continually fostered and emphasized. There is also a realization that the accuracy of information alone is not always sufficient in maintaining harmonious relationships. The learning of higher level thinking skills is subtle, but after years of con-

sistent expectations among teachers throughout grades K-6, we see positive results that contribute to the development of an intellectual citizenry for a peaceful society. P4C appears to be student-friendly as well as teacher-friendly and has become a major element in identifying the success of Haha'ione's Science and Technology Learning Center. Hence, the partnership formed with Dr. Jackson and the University of Hawaii will continue for many more years to come.

As with all successful programs, a contributing factor to the success of P4C, Peer Mediation, and Anger Management school-wide is that these programs are not utilized in isolation. They are practiced during classroom hours but are also infused throughout non-instructional times by the entire staff of Haha'ione. Whether it be the counselor working with students, a specialty teacher helping a student within a pull-out program, or the administrator, head custodian, and office staff relating to students, the expectations exercised by the adults are generally consistent.



Another contributing factor to the success of the trio is having an active student government at work with a dedicated student activities coordinator. Students are involved in major decisions made through the school's SCBM Council by being informed and polled for their opinions although they may not have an official vote on the SCBM council itself. Major decisions involving students have included the establishment of Haha'ione as an SCBM school, changing the school's year-long calendar, and changing the daily bell schedule. Students are currently defining appropriate behaviors in every possible setting on campus (cafeteria, library, computer lab, science lab, playground, restrooms, hallways) as well as community and home environments to pro-

mote positive student behaviors and a healthy school climate. The definitions of appropriate behaviors in each of the settings are being completed school-wide through the Student Council and its classroom representatives. Parental input is also included in establishing positive, student-centered definitions.

Providing students every opportunity to take control of their learning environment has motivated their love for knowledge, made them want to be in school, and encouraged their participation in non-academic events of their own choosing...which they are also responsible for planning and implementing. Being congruent in our expectations and having a clear vision of these expectations are the overarching themes that contribute to the success of our programs. The school labors at being child-centered in thought and action.

## P4C for our Dharma School

By Rev. Mari Sengoku

*Rev. Mari Sengoku is Director of the Office of Buddhist Education, Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i. She has been involved with P4C since 1999.*

*Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful. - Buddhism*

What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. That is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary. - Judaism

*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. - Christianity*

*No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself - Islam*

*Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself. - Bahai Faith (The Golden Rule)*

I came from Japan in 1994 as a Jodo Shin (a Japanese Pure Land Buddhist School minister of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii). Although the history of our temple in Hawaii began in 1889 because of a strong request by Japanese immigrants who wanted to continue to listen to the teaching of Buddha, I see many children from different religious and ethnic backgrounds in our preschools on the temple grounds. I was surprised to learn that unlike in Japan, various ethnic groups and religious denominations co-exist in the United States. How can we teach our children in the temple about Buddhist values while respecting other religions?

This is the reason I started work with Dr. Thomas Jackson, who is the Director of the Philosophy in the Schools Project in Hawaii. We have 36 Hongwanji Buddhist temples all over the Hawai'i islands and each temple has a Dharma School. As the record of 2002, we have 140 teachers and 564 students altogether. As the director of the Office of Buddhist Education, I have a responsibility to organize educational programs for ministers, Dharma school-teachers and students. My goal with P4C project for our Dharma school is that we can learn from the idea of the founder of P4C, Dr. Lipman, and skills of Dr. Jackson to develop children higher order thinking of philosophical ideas. By utilizing the sources from Buddhist stories as well as Dr. Lipman's stories, and by adopting the techniques of P4C, we can shape our Dharma school children into flourishing individuals with not only the universal values to cope with all ethnic groups, but also with Buddhist philosophy so that they can be responsible adults who understand the essential ideas of Buddhism such as causation, interdepen-

dency, impermanence, and egolessness.

Since 1999, as soon as I got my current position of director, I asked Dr. Jackson's guidance and support. Initially, as the introduction of P4C, I invited Dr. Jackson as a speaker for our annual ministers' seminar and Dharma School Teachers' biannual convention. Then, Dr. Jackson and I started to visit each district to have P4C workshops with Dharma School teachers. Approximately 30 teachers at each island participated in the workshops. I selected and translated stories from Buddhist scriptures. By integrating P4C technique and inquiry method to the stories, we had amazing discussions about preciousness and impermanence of life, love and kindness to each other, compassion and wisdom of Buddha, and foolishness of revenge. Because of Dr. Jackson's friendly and sincere character and of course the significance of the P4C, all Dharma school teachers very positively react the workshops and some of them said that the communication skills of P4C has been utilized among their family members as well as Dharma class settings.

Currently, Dr. Jackson and I are working to produce a workbook for Dharma School. My translation of Buddhist stories from Japanese into English with questions from Dharma class will be filed together with essential teaching and techniques of P4C.

In September 2003, the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i will open its Pacific Buddhist Academy as the first Buddhist-affiliated high school in the United States of America. The academy will give America its first comprehensive system of Buddhist Education, from pre-kindergarten through to Grade 12. In order to embed Buddhist values in the school life, the school will offer a "Peace Curriculum." The P4C, I believe, has a great potential to be integrated into the Peace Curriculum as a tool to guide children to live a life of peace, compassion, interrelatedness and oneness with whole universe which is essential to be taught in this chaotic world.

## Education Administrators Thoughts on P4C

Bonnie Tabor

*Bonnie Tabor (bonnie\_tabor/waikiki/hidoe@notes.k12.hi.us) was present at the birth of Waikiki School as a Mindful school and is now blessed to return to the school as principal. P4C has been an important part of her professional life for ten years.*

I am writing this to provide a brief overview of the importance "Philosophy for Children" (P4C) has come to play in our Mindful School. Waikiki School has been a Mindful School since 1990. Couched in Dr. Art Costa's model of explicitly teaching intelligent behavior to students,

Waikiki School has flourished over the past 10 years during which this reform model has been in place.

For the past two school years, P4C has been crucial in helping us develop our focus on thinking skills with increased rigor. Through P4C, students are engaged in developing their higher order thinking skills by examining questions and critically exploring the pros and cons of each point of view. The process lends itself to developing the habits of the mind, instilling a confidence in students' ability to problem solve, while fostering an increased respect, tolerance and understanding of divergent perspectives

With discussion questions initiated by the students themselves, topics hold a relevancy that promotes active involvement and participation. Students look forward to their P4C time. The P4C process reinforces the belief that all children can become creative, active, critical thinkers. Students who attend special education classes are as engaged by the P4C process as are our gifted students!

Another special benefit of the P4C model is its ability to develop the skill of empathetic listening. Students learn to focus and really "hear" what their classmates are saying. By the end of the year, students thrive within the collegial setting fostered by P4C. They learn to respect the unique ideas and contributions of their classmates and to appreciate the importance of asking questions, recognizing assumptions, and practicing critical thought.

As a principal, another component of P4C I have found truly inspiring is its benefit as a tool for staff development. At Waikiki School, 90% of our faculty is involved in weekly P4C "reflection community circles". Through these sessions, teachers challenge themselves to bump up their own thinking skills.

Through the intense process of discussion, a camaraderie develops among staff as all strive together to become an increasingly adept community of critical thinkers. This process is enlightening. As teachers develop their own thinking, it synergistically impacts on all that happens within the school.

There is no question that P4C has enhanced our school and moved us toward our vision of becoming a community of lifelong learners. Discussions routinely expand beyond the facts-leading to complex analysis and animated intellectual dialogue. Students and teachers become empowered to trust the powers of their minds. P4C has definitely played a key role in our quest to become a school, which is a "home for the heart and mind.

We are grateful for all Dr. Jackson and his graduate students have been able to add to our school through P4C.

## P4C in the Department of Philosophy

By Eliot Deutsch

*Eliot Deutsch (eliot@hawaii.edu) is currently Chair of the Department of Philosophy, UH/Manoa. He has published fourteen books and over eighty articles and reviews in professional journals. He is a past president of the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy. He is currently developing a pluralistic, cross-cultural theory of rationality.*

The Philosophy for Children program in Hawai'i has its home in the department of Philosophy at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa and, as chair of the department and also as someone involved in the development of the program since its inception in 1985, I am very pleased indeed to acknowledge the importance and value this program has had for the department as well as for the local community in general over the many years of its exciting work.

The course that director Thomas Jackson offers our graduate students interested in participating in the program is now a required course for all teaching assistants in the department. This requirement was instituted on the basis of the clear evidence we had not only of the enhanced teaching skills that the graduate students acquired but in their being able to exhibit their understanding of the genuine purposes of education by imparting to their undergraduate students an enduring sense of wonder and curiosity and the ability to think critically and creatively in all endeavors.

The process of philosophical inquiry developed in p4c, with its emphasis on forming an "intellectually safe community" for children to share ideas, celebrate diversity in viewpoints and to listen well, has become something of a model for us in the teaching of philosophy at all levels in the university. Students who have graduated with doctoral degrees in philosophy from us and who have worked with Tom testify on many occasions as to how much they have benefited from the experience in their own teaching at various colleges and universities. The program has in this sense extended its influence to adult students as well as children across the educational landscape. We are justly proud of the many accomplishments of p4c Hawai'i under the dedicated leadership of Thomas Jackson.

