

THE “GOOD THINKER’S TOOL KIT” and ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION

Using Learner-Centered Questioning and Information Gathering to Overcome Superficial and Oversimplified Thinking

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What is it? The Good Thinker’s Tool Kit” is a valuable resource for learning how to think critically and responsibly about multicultural and social justice issues. It is made up of seven letters, each of which represents a different thinking strategy.

W- what do you mean by that?

R- what are the reasons?

A- what is being assumed? Or what can I assume?

I – can I infer ____ from ____? Or where are there inferences being made?

T- is what is being said true and what does it imply if it is true?

E – are there any examples to prove what is being said?

C – are there any counter-examples to disprove what is being said?

In my classroom, my students and I use the Good Thinker’s Tool Kit (GTTK) to generate questions, dig deep during class discussions, articulate our thinking in writing, guide our research, and to peel back the layers of complexity embedded in issues related to identity, diversity, justice and taking action.

Why do it? Learning how to think in critical and responsible ways is an essential part of an anti-bias education.

How to do it? There are many ways that I’ve incorporated the GTTK into my daily classroom practice. One example is from the high school ethnic studies class that I taught. In this course my students learned how to use the GTTK to generate questions and gather information during a self-concept research project. At the beginning of the project, I provided my students with direct instruction about the GTTK. They learned what each letter stands for, how each letter can be used to generate a question or claim, and then we practiced using the tool kit by coming up with example questions/claims for each letter. After this introduction, I launched the self-concept research project by providing my students with the focus question for their inquiry, “what is my self-concept from the perspective of ethnic studies? Then I gave my students a list of previously learned ethnic studies terms (e.g. prejudice, gender, equity, migration, class, bias, race, etc.) and definitions, and I asked them to generate 15 GTTK questions about themselves that related to the terms. Next, I asked my students to respond to their questions using the methods of introspection, interviews with family members and friends, and primary document analysis. I also asked them to explain how each question and answer related to the inquiry’s focus question. A sample of this note-taking format is included on the following page. In the following stages of the project, my students analyzed their notes, wrote an essay, shared their essay, and reflected on the experience.

How does it connect to anti-bias education? The GTTK is an excellent resource for helping students and teachers overcome superficial and oversimplified thinking as they engage with the PDA Domains and Standards. In the self-concept research project, the GTTK helped me create a learner-centered/self-study approach to having my students “develop language and historical and cultural knowledge that affirm and accurately describe their membership in multiple identity groups” (Identity 2), and “recognize that peoples’ multiple identities interact and create unique and complex individuals” (Identity 3). Evidence of the impact of having the students generate GTTK questions at the beginning of the project was found in their final essays.

Sample GTTK questions from the self-concept research project: Can I assume that if my values change, so will my self-concept? What are the reasons? (9th grader) What are some of the reasons I use prejudices or epithets to be funny? (9th grader) What does it mean to be part of the middle class? Do we have more or less authority? (12th grader) If it is true that I make rude remarks about other people's biases, then does that imply that I am a hypocrite? (9th grader) Is it reasonable to assume that for me culture, race and ethnicity are all the same thing? (12th grader) What are the reasons my parents don't treat me and my brother with equity? (9th grader) Is it reasonable to assume that if I look at myself as a minority that I will be treated like one? (12th grader) What does it mean to be Hawaiian? (12th grader) Is it reasonable to infer that I need to be treated with justice from the way I try to find justice for others? (9th grader) What does it mean to be considered a biological race? What if I am dark skinned, and mistaken for an African-American, but I consider myself to be Hawaiian. What does that make me? (12th grader) Is it reasonable to assume that my view of men causes me to be sexist? (9th grader) Is it safe to assume that I have adapted to my community's culture? If so, can I also be personally diverse? (12th grader) What are the reasons I don't always feel empowered? (9th grader)

Sample notes:

F.Q. What are some examples of my self-concept from the perspective of Ethnic Studies?

Joe Sabatelli
Wikipedia.com

Questions	Answers		Relationship to the F.Q.
What are some examples of prejudices I have encountered in my life?	- Being called a tourist while in Waikiki - Talking around w/ friends - Short - Azn jokes - nerd/computers/technology - WWII Atomic Bombs "Flash" jokes		I have a sense of humor and I can just shake off the small, insignificant prejudices of ignorant people.
Can I assume I have biases towards other people?	- Yes, I think everybody does to certain points since birth (takes small hints). - White people being the "enemy": Haole - Biases to other schools: Kalaea = white recess - Castle = Home of Azns. Personal Encounters. - Other people's views	Bombarded w/ biases Kaser Girls = Sluts Complete different from	Human nature to be biased. → Culturally, growing up in Hawaii have a "bad" vibe towards white people. Everyday assumptions are taken as truths and I believe them.
If it is true that I am not mad about the Japanese Internment camps, what does that imply?	7th grade, read book about Japanese Internment could "we" do that to them? Didn't think, but to us. Maybe associate w/ being American - Complete forgiveness - Book title = Farewell to Manzanar	Camps. Thought "how could they" do that more than Japanese.	Myself concept is more American than Japanese. As an American of Japanese heritage, I have complete forgiveness for what the Americans did to Japanese citizens during World War II. "7th grade Ex." makes me think that I have lost intimate connection w/ Japanese culture.