



# A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

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## P4C CHECKLIST

### ✓ **Reflective Community of Inquiry**

#### ❖ Higher Order Fun

- Intellectually Safe Place
  - respect for persons
  - any question ok
  - can always pass
  - wait time
- Topic Selected by Community
- Circle
- Co-Inquiry

### ✓ **"Plain Vanilla" / "Ordinary Rice"**

### ✓ **Criteria of a Good Discussion**

### ✓ **Good Thinker's Tool Kit**

**W R A I T E C**

### ✓ **Philosophy as Content & Philosophy as Activity**

### ✓ **"MAGIC WORDS"**

### ✓ **STRATEGIES**

- ❖ Community Ball
- ❖ Identify Q-Q's
- ❖ Questions on Cards
- ❖ Kids call on each other
- ❖ 4 Options: YES, NO, ? (I don't know), MAYBE SO

# A REFLECTIVE COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY

As a COMMUNITY,

An Intellectually Safe Place:

fun/joyful

respect for persons

any question is ok

appreciation of diversity of viewpoints

listening as important as speaking/wait time

the community establishes its own rules

everyone feels empowered to contribute

As a REFLECTIVE community,

Explicit, "metacognitive", reflective, consciously articulated awareness of the standards and criteria that are at work in the community. For example, the criteria that define a "safe place", the criteria that will be used to decide whether or not a discussion was successful.

As a reflective community of INQUIRY,

Co-inquiry: no one in the group knows THE answer, or where the inquiry will lead. The inquiry will, however, have a *self-corrective* component.

The topic is selected BY the community, and begins where the community is in its understanding of the topic.

WRAITEC, the "Good Thinker's Tool Kit", provides the "mind tools", intellectual structure, or "process tools" within which the inquiry will proceed.

# CHARACTERISTICS OF A REFLECTIVE COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY

## THE **COMMUNITY** AS A "SAFE PLACE"

The idea of Community in the Reflective Community of Inquiry begins with the classroom as an intellectually safe place. This means that all participants in the community (students and teachers) feel free to ask virtually any question or state any view so long as the operant principle of *respect for persons* is honored. It is the community aspect of the community of inquiry that provides the context for learning the social skills necessary for inquiry; and it is the philosophically oriented inquiry that provides the intellectual tools ("higher-order" thinking skills) necessary ultimately for work beyond the memorization level in all the other content areas of the curriculum. The idea of community incorporates the importance of questioning, careful listening, and attentive participation by all members of the community of inquiry who are partners in an effort where all are "teachers" as well as "students".

Elements of a safe place include the following:

1. In a safe place, people are kind. Sarcasm, fighting, backbiting and name-calling are exceptions. Kindness, consideration and forgiveness are the usual way of life.
2. In a safe place, there is laughter, not just the canned laughter of television, but real laughter that comes from sharing meaningful work and play.
3. In a safe place, there are rules. The rules are few and fair and are made by the people who live and work there, including the children.
4. In a safe place, people listen to one another. They care about one another and show that they do.

## THE COMMUNITY AS REFLECTIVE

As a reflective community both you and your students will be explicitly aware of the standards and criteria that are at work in the community. It is important to discuss with them the conditions that make possible an intellectually safe place. The use by the group of criteria to evaluate the dialogue/discussion sessions is also intended to foster reflective awareness. Making and using the "Good Thinker's Tool Kit" is another way of making explicit the tools of the community.

## THE COMMUNITY AS REFLECTIVE INQUIRY

Inquiry, then, grows out of community interest and involvement. The members of the classroom are co-inquirers into a topic, whenever appropriate, that is of interest to and selected by the whole community, and not just the teacher. Members of the community are not, therefore, passive learners, but active inquirers, each with a responsibility to bring his or her best thinking to bear on the topic. Such a notion greatly diminishes both the roles of textbooks and the teacher as the primary source of information. The topic becomes the locus and supporting evidence is sought from appropriate sources.

Inquiry also includes intellectual rigor. As the community develops, there is a growing expectation that reasons will be given to support views, that evidence will be sought in support of claims, that clarification of meaning is of importance, and that assumptions and implications will be pursued. A willingness to probe assumptions is nurtured--"what are we assuming in this situation?" And while all this is being orchestrated, children are expected to give examples to illustrate what is meant, drawing upon their own experiences. Children are challenged to search for counter-examples to test the truth of the claims being made. WRAITEC, "the Good Thinkers Tool Kit", is used as a model to stimulate this intellectual endeavor.

As each student becomes a more active inquirer, a more reflective thinker emerges. The importance of listening to each other, of participation by more than just a few students or a teacher who dominates, is incorporated into the inquiry. Students become more sensitive to what their peers are saying as well as more reflective to what they are saying. More thought goes into what is being articulated. This reflective posture is directly connected to his/her listening.

The participation in this community of inquiry by teachers brings about changes in them, too. The reflective component connected with the insights they hear from their students prompts a reappraisal of their own training and approach. Indeed, this new approach prompts a transformation of the teacher's view of his/her role in the entire education process. An important developmental change from teacher as "transmitter" to teacher as facilitator or co-inquirer occurs.

## PLAIN VANILLA / ORDINARY RICE

"Plain Vanilla" represents one strategy for eliciting topics for philosophical discussion, and how to proceed from there. Although the discussion that follows refers primarily to *Pixie*, one of the Philosophy for Children novels, the steps themselves can be used in many different content areas. Presented below is a brief summary of the 4 steps involved in doing "Plain Vanilla." This is followed by a more in-depth discussion of each step.

Step 1:       **READ:** An episode, whole chapter, or part of a chapter from one of the novels is read aloud by the community.

Step 2:       **QUESTIONS:** Formulate, organize, and select questions in preparation for discussion.

Step 3:       **DIALOGUE/DISCUSSION:** Development of student questions using either a manual exercise/discussion plan or WRAITEC.

Step 4:       **EVALUATION:** Evaluate using the General Discussion Criteria.

### STEP 1: READ

The first time the class reads from the novel, it is recommended that the class sit in a circle formation. (The circle formation should be used whenever possible when doing philosophy.) Begin by asking someone to begin reading aloud a paragraph or five to ten lines of it. The person who reads then calls on someone to go next. (In a safe place one can always "pass". If a person chooses to "pass", he/she calls on the next person.) Reading continues (in *Elfie, Kio & Gus, Pixie*) to the end of the episode. (Later, several episodes may be read at one sitting, depending upon the preference of the community.)

Reading aloud provides the beginnings of a common experience for the developing community. It also is the first of many "invitations to speak" that will be offered to all the members of the classroom community. For some students, reading aloud may be the first time they feel sufficient safety to speak aloud in class in front of their peers. Calling on each other provides the beginning of the practice of assuming responsibility for the operation of the community.

#### VARIATIONS ON PLAIN VANILLA STEP 1: READ

##### A. "Reader's Theater"

"In Reader's Theater, character and narrator parts are assigned to individual readers. Readers each highlight the parts that they will read aloud. Then, without further preparation, the participants give a reading of the story." In the lower grades (grades 2-4) some practice of the script may be advisable. The teacher may assign parts, again, offering "invitations" to otherwise quiet students or the students themselves may volunteer for parts.

B. Smaller groups of 4-5 students can be formed, each group reading aloud the same episode. This further facilitates a more active role by more students as readers.

C. "Paired Reading" and "Say Something" are two other strategies to consider in order to give variety to the reading of the novel. In "Paired Reading", one student reads a specific amount, then stops and the other continues. "Say Something" takes this a step further by encouraging students to comment or reflect on what they have just read.

D. Other variations are encouraged.

### STEP 2: QUESTIONS

Upon completing the reading for the first time, ask the students to reflect on what they've just read and come up with questions that relate to the story. It is important to say something like: "I'd like each of you to come up with a question." rather than "Are there any questions?" The first formulation is a more direct invitation to come up with a question. (It is not essential that every child come up with a question the first session.)

Their questions can be about something they found interesting or puzzling or something they are wondering about. Write the questions on chart paper (if possible), so they can be saved and referred to.

This first time the teacher records the questions on the chart paper. It is crucial to write each question exactly as it comes from the student. There should be no effort to paraphrase or rephrase the questions. Also, it is important not to comment about the question, such as "That's a really good question." Every effort needs to be made to be non-judgmental. If a clarifying comment or question comes from another student, it's okay to deal with it.

Once the question is recorded, ask the student for the page and line number in the novel that triggered the question. Page and line number are then recorded next to the question, along with the student's name.

This recording of page and line number along with student's name is a powerful strategy to develop a sense of responsibility and ownership of individual questions. It also encourages a more careful reading of the novel in particular, but also more critical reading in general. It creates an expectation of deeper thinking by asking them to return to the novel to find the passage that stimulated their question.

Over time, asking the students to continually come up with a question connected to what they have read creates a disposition to approach whatever they read with a more active, question-posing attitude. They are less likely to be simply passive receivers of information.

For this first session, proceed with questions as long as time allows or as long as children are able to remain focused. An entire first session--reading and questions--can last from thirty to forty-five minutes, depending on the age-level.

## VARIATIONS ON PLAIN VANILLA STEP 2: QUESTIONS

### A. Index cards

Eventually, we want every student to come up a question. One effective strategy to accomplish this is to group children into dyads, giving each child an index card, and asking each child to record his or her question on the index card. The children are encouraged to help each other if need be.

This sort of collaboration helps to stimulate fluency and insure safety in raising questions relating to the novel readings. Getting children to work as pairs or in small groups of 3-4 allow this to happen.

## B. Large paper

Use of large sheets of paper on which students in groups of four can write their questions with felt pen markers encourages them to help each other and further stimulates question-asking. These questions are then shared with the larger community--the whole class.

## C. Paper strips

Another strategy that has been successful in the classroom is students individually writing their questions on large strips of paper (including their name). They can do this in the circle or at their desks alone or with a partner. When the question-writing is completed, students can (a) put their questions on the board using masking tape, or (b) if space allows, questions can be placed within the circle. Optionally, one can also have students read their questions aloud.

## WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE QUESTIONS?

Once the questions have been collected, you have a potentially rich source of activities to engage in as a community.

### 1. Look for QQ's

It frequently happens that students will ask a question like: "Why did Pixie turn herself into a pretzel?" This is an example of a "QQ" or Question in a Question. A "QQ" has both an "inside" question and an "outside" question. The "inside" question on a "QQ" is most readily found by simply covering the first word in the sentence, in this case, "Why." The inside question here is: "Did Pixie turn herself into a pretzel?" The "outside" question is "Why?"

QQ's provide an opportunity to introduce the notion of assume, since the answering of the outside question assumes that the answer to the inside question is "yes." Questions will sometimes be raised where the answer to the inside question is in fact "no", as in the example given above. Learning to recognize QQ's can save a lot of energy that might otherwise be spent trying to answer "Why?"

The lesson on QQ's can fruitfully be extended by drawing upon examples that students soon recognize, such as "Why are you always so messy?" or "When are you going to grow up?" or "Why are you so smart?" "How did the universe begin?"

A first activity to do with the questions, therefore, is to look at all the questions and see if there are any QQ's, and if yes, to check to be sure that the answer to the inside question is "yes".

## 2. Categorizing

Another fruitful activity is to look together at all the questions and see if there are similarities, themes or topics to connect certain questions together.

This is an important "higher order" thinking activity that facilitates a more global perspective on the questions. As categories are discovered by the community, an important level of generalization is reached. It is especially significant when students find that a given question or set of questions fall into more than one category. There is, in this activity, no "one right answer".

A variation of this activity is to make several sets of the questions, divide the class into several groups, and have each group categorize the questions. This can be a "cut and paste" activity where each group reassembles the questions into a set of categories they have discovered.

## 3. Selecting a question/category for discussion

You are now ready to move to the important task of selecting a topic for discussion. There are a variety of ways to proceed.

### a. Voting

In this strategy/activity, each student gets 2-3 votes, depending on number of questions/categories generated. Students (and teacher!) then get to vote for the category or question(s) with which they would like to begin. The category or question that gets the most votes then becomes the starting point for the discussion.

### b. Randomly picking a question, i.e. "card" fashion

For variety, each question can be put on a 3X5 card or a slip of paper and simply drawn randomly. This can create some pleasant surprises where a question that might not otherwise be selected is presented for discussion. This also creates another "invitation to speak" to the student to whom the question belongs, one who otherwise might not speak.

Rationale for Questions: Students become individually empowered to ask questions, to discern/discriminate kinds of questions, and then to know how to find possible answers to the questions raised.

### **STEP 3: DIALOGUE/DISCUSSION**

Once a question has been selected for discussion, there are several avenues open in terms of preparation. The first is to check the manual and see if there is an exercise or discussion plan that ties in thematically with the question selected. If there is, this provides the basis for a lesson. For example, after reading Pixie, episode 1, a question that frequently occurs involves Pixie's choosing a name for herself, i.e. "What is Pixie's real name?" In the Pixie manual there is a discussion plan on "Names". (What to do if you don't find a relevant exercise or discussion plan in the manual is discussed below on pages 7-9.)

Let's assume this question, "What is Pixie's real name?" was selected by the students for discussion. To prepare for the lesson, you could put each question from the manual Discussion Plan "Names" on a separate index card. Begin the lesson by focusing on the student's question. Ask for some responses from the students to this question. If this proves philosophically fruitful, the entire period could well be spent "unpacking" the question. (For more on "unpacking" see below...)

If the discussion doesn't seem to be going anywhere, tell the students you have a number of cards with questions that relate to the topic of names and ask for a volunteer to take the first card/question. It is crucial to make clear that the student who takes the card will read the question aloud and then have the option of responding to the question or calling on someone else to do so. (This is another invitation to speak.)

It is important to make clear that any student has the option to say "pass". They don't need to read the question at all if they choose not to. This right to "pass" applies equally to the student asked to respond to the question. Some communities make it a rule that a person can only be called on if they are raising their hand. In any case, the right to "pass" is an important component of respect for persons. In terms of who takes the first card, the problem frequently is that many hands go up. Use your judgment as to whom to select.

Particularly in the beginning, once a question is read, before proceeding further, ask someone to repeat the question. The "Kiss Game" helps make this a fun activity. It may take several tries to accomplish this, with accompanying "SPLAT"s and "OMT"s. This has proved a valuable strategy for developing listening skills.

Once it is clear that the question has been understood, the discussion of the question itself proceeds. This is an opportune time to begin to introduce the strategy of having students call on each other, rather than leaving that up to the teacher. You can have the student that volunteered to take the first question be in charge of calling on people as long as that question is up for discussion. A variation is to have each speaker be responsible for calling on who goes next.

It is fascinating to watch the inner dynamics of your class reveal themselves when you first introduce this strategy. In some cases, initially, boys only call on boys, girls only on girls. This provides a useful occasion to talk about "fairness" and to begin to allow the community to agree on certain procedural rules, such as "A boy needs to call on a girl for the next turn." Clearly, the rule itself isn't as important as the fact that the students are actually having a say in the rules that will govern their community.

The expectation of the children calling on each other during a philosophical discussion is a way of empowering the children. The focus is now on the child and not the teacher who decides who is to speak next. The student called upon always has the option to "pass", if he/she desires. Many times they do respond and bring to the fore new ideas and insights. Simultaneously, this tells each member of the community that they have a responsibility to the group to challenge their own thinking.

How long a time to spend on an individual question is a matter of judgment. The amount of time spent on a given question will vary considerably. A given question that doesn't work in one class may consume an entire period in another. The important point to keep in mind is the interest level of the community and the fruitfulness of the discussion.

Sometimes it happens that the question asked simply falls flat--it doesn't elicit any response. Another thing that can happen is that after some discussion the community runs out of energy for a particular question. The acronym "NQP" (Next

Question Please) has proved useful in such contexts. At any point in the discussion any member of the community can request "NQP"?

A vote is then taken to determine whether or not to continue the present discussion or move to the next question. If the vote is to move to the next question, it is recommended that a brief summary of the question be offered or a vote taken to determine where the individual members of the community stand in relation to the question.

It is important to include not just "yes" or "no", but additional options such as "I don't know" or "maybe so". This allows for an acknowledgement that a final answer hasn't been reached on what are very often complex issues, such as "Would I still be me if I had a different name?"

Once the discussion of a particular question is completed, a useful strategy is to allow the student who was in charge of that question to pick someone to do the next question. This is another effective way of turning power and control over the inquiry to the students.

As noted above, response to the same question will vary considerably from class to class. When working with a manual exercise that has, say, ten questions in all, one class might get through all ten questions, another might not get beyond the first. What actually defines the end of the session, however, is most often time: time for lunch, time for P.E., time to go home, recess, etc. It is important whenever possible to allow time toward the end of the session for evaluation. This will be addressed in the section on evaluation of discussion.

Let us now suppose that the students have selected for discussion their question "Is Pixie a boy or a girl?" You look in the manual and find that there are no relevant exercises or discussion plans. It is here that WRAITEC and the "Good Thinker's Tool Kit" begin to play a crucial role. The skill in the use of WRAITEC is one that develops over a long period of time. Not to worry. We aren't in a rush to get anywhere. (Which is not the same as getting nowhere!)

Initially, with such a question as this you could simply ask the class: "What do you think? Is Pixie a boy or a girl?" (A WRAITEC [T] question: "Is it true that Pixie is a boy or girl?") There are a variety of possible responses to your question. Your students might all agree that Pixie is (a) a girl or (b) a boy. You could then ask [R]

"Why do you think Pixie is a girl/boy?" This request for a reason is the beginning of philosophical inquiry. There will be an increasing expectation in the discussions that students and teacher, whenever possible, give reasons to support their statements. At this point you may begin to get some surprise responses like: "I think Pixie is a girl because 'Pixie' is a girl's name." or "I think Pixie is a girl because she acts like a girl." You could then ask in response to either of these statements: "How many of you agree?" If you see some do not agree, you might ask them why.

It is important to keep an awareness of whether or not there is "energy" for the question. This question about whether Pixie is a boy or a girl has generated considerable energy as the students began to reveal their reasons why they thought Pixie was or was not a particular gender.

Your role, especially in the beginning, is to facilitate the discussion. You can accomplish this in a variety of ways. For example, Are students repeating to be sure they've understood what is said? Are they calling on each other? Are new voices being heard? In addition, are reasons [R] being given to support points of view? Are examples [E] being given to illustrate claims. For instance, if a student expresses the view that they think Pixie is a girl because she acts like a girl, you could ask for a specific example of how she is acting like a girl. You could then ask if others agree.

Another way to facilitate arises when you ask someone to repeat what has just been said. You then ask the original speaker if the person repeating got it correct. If yes, you can then ask the person who repeated if they agree with the point made, and if so, why (or why not).

It is also useful to have in mind the [T] question: "Is what was just said true?" Here the idea of counter-examples [C] can play a role. For instance, after someone offers an example they think illustrates Pixie acting like a girl, you might ask: "Do only girls act this way?" (Here you are seeking a possible counter-example.) Chances are good that this will generate some interesting examples.

As you become more confident in the doing of philosophy, you will see more and more possible directions in which the inquiry might go. It is important not to force the inquiry in one direction or another. A good discussion will take on a life and energy of its own.

Equally powerful are either [A] or [I] questions. You can ask students if they see any assumptions in the question. For example, "Is Pixie a boy or a girl?" seems to assume that Pixie is human (and not a giraffe--are there boy giraffes and girl giraffes?).

Remember that at any point you or any other member of the community can state "NQP". If the vote at that point is to indeed go to the next question, you simply proceed to the question that was voted on to follow the one just discussed. Again, however, as suggested above, it is a good idea to get a vote from the community on where they stand on the question being discussed. They can vote "yes", "no", "?", or "Maybe so".

Proceed with the new question (assuming that there is no relevant manual exercise) in a manner similar to that just described. When you see the end of the allotted time approaching, it is important to then take time to evaluate your discussion.

#### **STEP 4: EVALUATION OF THE DIALOGUE/DISCUSSION**

An essential part of developing a reflective community of inquiry that is self-correcting is achieved by the participants evaluating their discussions using criteria that all are familiar with. A brief table of the criteria is presented on the next page, followed by a fuller discussion. Note that the criteria fall into two groups: those dealing with how we did as a COMMUNITY and those dealing with the INQUIRY itself.

In the beginning, these criteria (or other criteria that you develop) can be posted on a large sheet of paper for all to see and participants asked to vote as a group on each criterion. Another strategy is to put a short version of each criterion on a large card and to display these one at a time and vote. Younger students can vote by simply "thumbs up" for "excellent", "thumbs horizontal" for "average", and "thumbs down" for "poor".

As the community becomes more familiar with the criteria it is important to take some time to more closely examine the criteria individually to get a better sense of what the group means by voting "excellent", for example, for #1, listening. As your community develops it will have a collective memory of prior sessions to use as an emerging standard to measure how well they are doing subsequently. A real high-

powered session that ranks a "5" in listening, becomes the standard to gauge subsequent sessions.

## DIALOGUE/DISCUSSION CRITERIA

### I: HOW DID WE DO AS A COMMUNITY?

1. Was I listening to others? (and) Were others listening to me?

.....Poor..... 0 ..... 1 ..... 2..... 3..... 4 ..... 5.....Excellent.....

2. Did most people participate rather than just a few who dominated?

.....Poor..... 0 ..... 1 ..... 2..... 3..... 4 ..... 5.....Excellent.....

3. Was it a SAFE environment?

.....Poor..... 0 ..... 1 ..... 2..... 3..... 4 ..... 5.....Excellent.....

### II. HOW WAS OUR INQUIRY?

4. Did we maintain a focus?

.....Poor..... 0 ..... 1 ..... 2..... 3..... 4 ..... 5.....Excellent.....

5. Did our discussion "scratch beneath the surface" or "open up the topic", make some progress?

.....Poor..... 0 ..... 1 ..... 2..... 3..... 4 ..... 5.....Excellent.....

6. Did I learn something new?

.....Poor..... 0 ..... 1 ..... 2..... 3..... 4 ..... 5.....Excellent.....

7. Did I challenge my own thinking or "work hard" at it?

.....Poor..... 0 ..... 1 ..... 2..... 3..... 4 ..... 5.....Excellent.....

8. Was it interesting?

.....Poor..... 0 ..... 1 ..... 2..... 3..... 4 ..... 5.....Excellent.....

## 1. LISTENING

One of the more frequently heard laments from teachers concerns their students' lack of listening skills. Clearly, without good listening, a discussion simply cannot develop. There are, of course, levels of listening, but at its deepest, most profound level, listening and being listened to are at the heart of our very existence as human beings. Singling out listening as a criterion is a way of repeatedly drawing attention to its centrality.

Given the nature of contemporary media, the number of hours students spend watching television, and the absence of meaningful conversation in the homes of too many students, it is not surprising that listening is a skill is something that needs to be developed.

One strategy that has been effective in developing listening in the context of the discussions is to ask someone to repeat what another has just said. It is important to do this in a playful rather than negatively judgmental way. The "kiss" game is one such way to accomplish this.

Once a person has successfully repeated what was said, the discussion can either return to the original speaker or the one who did the repeating can be asked if they agree or disagree with what was said. This offers to that person an extension of the "invitation to speak" by simply repeating what was said.

Indicators within the group of a developing sophistication in listening are expressions like "I agree with Sarah because..." or "I disagree with what Meryl said because..." or "I'd like to go back to the point Daryl made a few minutes ago." These indicators should be pointed out to the students. At some point it is useful to spend time discussing with your students what they think constitutes an "excellent" or "5" in listening. This can then form the basis for future evaluations of listening.

## 2. PARTICIPATION

Teachers often find in the beginning that discussions tend to be dominated by several students and that "quiet ones" tend to remain silent. Creating a community of inquiry, where safety is felt by every member of the community, doesn't happen

overnight. The teacher/facilitator needs to continually nurture the idea of a safe place so that the children will sooner or later feel confident to participate in the discussion. It has been found that if one consistently does P4C, the quiet ones and the ones who have been diagnosed as having a learning disability readily contribute to the discussion with insightful thoughts and ideas.

The teacher/facilitator must be highly sensitive to what is happening during the discussion and group dynamics during the course of the discussion. Especially important is to be alert to opportunities to offer "invitations to speak" to those who are otherwise not being heard. There are a number of specific strategies that can afford such "invitations." The first occurs in reading aloud from the novel. Another comes in asking each student to read his/her question aloud. Once the discussion has begun, one can ask an otherwise quiet student to repeat what has been said. (Always in a playful, safe context.)

Participation can also be encouraged in a community of inquiry by setting up with smaller groups of students. In one fourth grade class, for example, students were grouped into groups of four. The class had decided on three questions they had formulated on "secrets" that they wanted to discuss. They were given approximately 10-15 minutes to discuss these questions. The small group concept facilitated active participation by all. At the end of the 10 minutes or so, the groups convened into a large circle. A volunteer from each group was asked to summarize their responses to those questions. It was remarkable how well they articulated what was said in the group. A variety of ideas and thoughts was heard which represented almost all of the participants.

Putting duplicate questions on a particular topic to be discussed in a basket is another way of insuring maximum participation. Each student is asked to select a question from the basket. Those with the same question are then asked to have a dialogue amongst themselves. When the community reconvenes in the large circle, participants are asked to share what was discussed.

As with listening, it is important at some point to discuss with your students what is meant by "excellent" in participation. Lively discussion of this has frequently occurred, especially in determining the relation between participation and speaking during the course of the discussion. If one didn't speak, does it follow one didn't participate?

### **3. SAFETY**

One reason cited by numbers of students as to why they do not speak up in a discussion concerns their fear: fear of being embarrassed, being laughed at, being in disagreement with peers. "Better to remain silent and appear a fool..." as Abraham Lincoln once said. Creating the safety within the community so that participants are encouraged to speak if so moved to do so is a high priority. Making "Safety" a criterion is a way of focusing attention on its importance.

### **4. FOCUS**

One of the things that can happen in the course of a discussion is that the original question gets lost, and the discourse becomes increasingly anecdotal or "stream of consciousness." There are contexts in which anecdotal conversation can be important, especially when seen as another "invitation to speak". Students who haven't yet spoken at all will sometimes add an anecdote of their own on a topic such as dreaming. These anecdotes can sometimes be seen as examples and can be skillfully linked to the larger issue. Still, it is important for the community to be aware of the extent to which it has remained focused on a given topic. This criterion is related to the next one.

### **5. SCRATCHING BENEATH THE SURFACE**

Some of the most rewarding moments in doing philosophy come as the community begins to really "unpack, open up, or scratch beneath the surface" of a question or topic. WRAITEC provides an important set of tools for facilitating this "scratching". Clarification [W], giving reasons [R] to support a point of view or seeking the reasons that support a perspective, teasing out assumptions [A] and implications [I] of a position or idea, finding how whether a particular claim is true [T], all are ways of unpacking a topic.

When scratching has occurred, new dimensions of the topic are revealed, the connections of the topic to other issues become apparent. "Scratching", however, is not necessarily the same as "making progress". The use of WRAITEC can begin to reveal the complexity of a topic. Once connections to other issues begin to emerge, and perhaps outlines of possible answers or further lines of inquiry, one has begun to make progress.

## **6. SOMETHING NEW**

This criterion facilitates each member of the community reflecting on the content of the discussion in an effort to identify some component as new to that person's growing store of knowledge. This newness can include a new understanding of a classmate's ideas on a particular topic as well as getting to know and appreciate the teacher as a person. It is very interesting for the students, for example, to learn the teacher's position on a question like "Are fairy tales ever for real?" Something new could also include opening up new possibilities that weren't seen before, such as professional roles for males or females. This could grow out of the question "Why haven't we had a female President of the United States?"

## **7. CHALLENGE MY OWN THINKING**

This criterion endeavors to highlight indirectly the fact that each individual has a responsibility to bring his or her energy and best thinking to the discussion. Students have been known to say after a really challenging discussion "Wow, that was hard work!" They hasten to add that it was indeed worth it. Indeed, some "hard" discussions have been known to continue right through recess.

## **8. INTERESTING?**

This criterion is a quick check of whether a given discussion/dialogue session was interesting to its participants.

## The "GOOD THINKER'S TOOL KIT" (WRAITEC)

One of the challenges that faces teachers is how to develop "higher order thinking" in their students, and in themselves as well! Doing philosophy is one important step toward developing such thinking. The "Good Thinker's Tool Kit" is designed to help facilitate this process, in philosophy sessions, other content areas, as well as outside the classroom context. The "Kit" consists of seven letters, W-R-A-I-T-E-C. Each letter is intended to represent a cognitive skill that is part of being a good thinker.

It is recommended that as early in the school year as possible the teacher and each student make him/herself such a kit. In the initial presentation of the "Kit", each student is given seven cards, one for each letter. As each letter is introduced, students print that letter on a card. They are encouraged to design the card in whatever way they choose, using, for example, multiples of the same letter on a given card or only a single letter, single or multiple colors, and so on. On the back of the card, they may put whatever clarifying notes they wish to help remember the significance of each letter.

As the year progresses, it is important to devote individual lessons ("Step-4's") to specific letters and the skills represented by that letter. Many students, and adults, have in their vocabulary the word "inference" or the word "assumption", yet are far from clear about what these words actually mean. What is an inference? How can you tell whether a particular inference, once made, is reliable or not? A student might come back from recess, open her desk and cry out "Someone stole my pencil!" Clearly an inference has been made. Coming to recognize that an inference has been made and how to proceed are skills that need to be addressed, practiced, and developed. Making the Kit is a first step in that direction. What follows is an elaboration of each letter.

# W

**What do you mean 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 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 for a critical thinker 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 a discussion, position, argument 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...then's...", 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 two parts: a STARTING POINT (something seen, heard, smelled, tasted or touched) and an ENDING POINT (a "place" the mind "moves" to that is beyond what was presented at the STARTING POINT. I may see a person frowning (STARTING POINT) and infer that they are sad (ENDING POINT). We are frequently making inferences. Recognizing that we have made an inference 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. Suppose I infer from the presence of a gold ring on someone's left hand ring finger that they are married. (Most probably I also have in my mind a prior assumption that links "ring-on-ring-finger-of-left-hand" with "married".) I've made an inference. Does it follow? How does one go about determining whether what has been inferred does follow?

# 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 students in school in science, math, social studies, and language arts classes. They (and all of us) are also bombarded by statements, claims, etc. outside of school. Clearly not all of these statements are

true. What we take for truth must meet certain standards. What are the standards?

## 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.

Once the "tool kit" has been made it is absolutely crucial to point out occurrences of [W]'s, [R]'s, and so on when they occur. Students are hardly explicitly (metacognitively) aware of these "tools". They need lots of practice in a wide variety of contexts to really begin to internalize and make these tools a part of themselves.

As the year proceeds, one useful strategy, particularly in the context of a discussion, is to appoint certain members of the class as "spotters" to note down when specific instances of one of the tools occurs. These individuals then report at the end of the session.

As noted earlier, it is also important, as the year proceeds, to devote time to elaborating on the various tools. Sessions can profitably be devoted to an examination of reasons and reason-giving, the distinguishing of "reasons" from "causes", criteria to be employed in distinguishing "good" from "bad" reasons, and so

on. A full exploration of assumptions, presuppositions, inferences and implications is also of key importance if students are to really internalize and deepen their understanding. They can be given the task of looking for inferences in math, science, or social studies.

One benefit of a growing sophistication on the part of students with the use of WRAITEC is the carry-over of these components into other content areas, most immediately into other humanities disciplines, but also into the sciences as well. The experiences of teachers with their students indicates that they become ever more sensitive to, for example, clarification of key terms. Instead of just accepting a definition of, say "density", they now ask, "But what does that mean?" "How does that relate to 'mass'?" In history classes they want to know "How do we know that this account is true?" "Isn't this just one person's opinion?"

In the context of philosophical discussions, WRAITEC functions in both a negative and positive sense. In the negative sense, if one has been engaged in a discussion and, at the end, finds that there has been no effort at clarification, no giving of reasons, no identifying of assumptions or inferences, no pursuit of implications, no giving of examples or search for counter-examples, one can be quite confident that the discussion did not "scratch beneath the surface". On the positive side, the more these elements are present, the more confident one can be that something philosophical was occurring.

It is important to note that not every discussion will involve all of the components, nor will they be used in any particular order. Context will dictate appropriateness. Some discussions might simply involve [W], an extensive clarification of a concept. Others might focus on [T], how can we find out if a particular claim is true or not.

## MAGIC WORDS

The use of the following acronyms has proven effective in developing a safe place where the dialogue/discussion can then unfold in a non-threatening way. Your group can, of course, develop their own acronyms. Some teachers at Koko Head Elementary and Waimalu Elementary use the acronym

**PSL** or please speak louder. Children who are soft-spoken readily speak up when the group says **SPLAT**. It's okay to say **IDUS**. And when more than one person is speaking at a time, **POPAAT** works.

**SPLAT:** 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 a little louder so we can hear you. With a child who speaks especially softly, you might, after a couple of attempts, try the "kiss" game, or ask the child if he/she would like someone sitting close to them to repeat for them.

**IDUS:** I Don't Understand

**IDUS** is meant to empower students to be able to say when they don't understand. It has proven much easier to have students say **IDUS** than "I don't understand." Teachers are encouraged when they soon find **IDUS** showing up in other content areas.

**POPAAT:** Please One Person At A Time

Once students learn that during philosophy time we are very interested in what they have to say, "they" often all want to speak at the same time. **POPAAT** has proven effective in this context. When people start speaking out of turn, someone says **POPAAT** which means that all must stop talking. The last sanctioned speaker then continues.

**LGS:** Let's Get Started

**OMT:** One More Time

**OMT** can be used when neither **SPLAT** nor **IDUS** quite does the trick.

**NQP:** Next Question Please

**LMO:** Let's Move On

**PBQ:** Please Be Quiet (A less gentle version of "POPAAT")

**JAMP:** Just A Minute Please

**GOS:** Going Off Subject