



Philosophy for Children - Best Practice Guide

The following best practice guide draws upon guidance from P4C organisations such as SAPERE as well as general Quality First Teaching strategies. It is intended to represent many of the elements which may be included in a P4C enquiry session.

Quote from an Ofsted report:

'The school is very inclusive. The school recently received its Bronze Award for commitment to philosophical enquiry. The impact of this work is evident in pupil's progress in writing as well as in their speaking and listening skills. For example, in a Year 6 class, pupils were debating the question of whether love can transform people. The thoughtful contributions from pupils showed how much they respect each other's ideas.' Alverstoke C of E Junior School, Gosport, Hampshire, December 2012

- **Organisation**
 - Is the classroom arranged so as to encourage good listening and equal participation of all children?
 - Does the learning environment promote discussion? Could an alternative venue be found?
 - Are other adults used effectively to support and extend children's dialogue?
 - Are the principles of a good enquiry promoted within the classroom? (OOPSAAT, LARTER, EETS, the four Cs)¹
- **Stimulus**
 - Has an interesting stimulus been chosen which engages and motivates the children?
 - Does the stimulus offer depth of thought, and possibilities for open ended discussion?
 - Are the children given an adequate chance to respond to stimuli and develop their own ideas?
 - Has the teacher considered concepts, dialogue and subsequent questions that may arise from the chosen stimulus?
- **Teaching strategies**
 - Does the teacher consistently model the principles of a good enquiry (4Cs, OOPSAT, LARTER, EETS)¹?
 - Are children given appropriate exposure to the stimulus?
 - Is ICT used to enhance learning where appropriate?
 - Has the teacher incorporated some thinking moves² to get the dialogue to a deeper level? (E.g. thinking of an alternative point of view, speculation about consequences, gathering similarities and differences, creating examples, establishing whether statements apply to 'all', 'some', 'many', or 'none'.)
- **Discussion and Questioning**
 - Are a range of talking settings used to give pupils time to converse, gather thoughts and rehearse arguments? (E.g. Kagan structures, pair talk, whole group talking)
 - Do children ask as well as answer questions about the stimulus?
 - Are questions discussed in order to identify their assumptions and underlying concepts? Are questions adjusted to promote a rich discussion? (The Q Matrix or Kagan grid, Question Quadrant)³ (E.g. "Why does the big, bad wolf want to eat the three little pigs?" becomes "Should animals eat other animals?")
 - Are pupils encouraged to use respectful language to make a reasonable discussion possible?
 - Are pupils empowered to examine and challenge ideas, including those of the teacher?
 - Are pupils celebrated for good articulation of thoughts?
- **Planning for progression**
 - Are the main ideas and questions recorded in collaboration with the pupils?
 - Do children evaluate the session? (EBI, WWW)¹

Sources:

- P4C.com
- SAPERE website – P4C and Ofsted
- Pocket P4C Jason Buckley
- SAPERE training materials

¹ACRONYMS:

OOPSAAT, LARTER, EETS, the four Cs

OOPSAAT – only one person speaking at a time

LARTER – listen and respond to everyone respectfully

EETS – everyone encouraged to speak

Four Cs – principles of a community of enquiry:

CARING THINKING – taking a deep interest in questions that matter; being open to changing ideas; taking an interest in other views

COLLABORATIVE THINKING – listening so that ideas are built together; encourage pupils to say how their point connects with the previous speaker

CREATIVE THINKING – using imagination, alternatives, analogies.

CRITICAL THINKING - testing for truth, clarifying meanings; evidence mode – what supports each answer?

Session review:

WWW – what went well

EBI – even better if

²Thinking Moves – for example Philosophical Moves, pp 23-24 Pocket P4C, Jason Buckley 2011

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The Q Matrix						
	A. Is/ Was	B. Do/ Did	C. Can/ Could	D. Will/ Would	E. Might	F. Should
1. Where						
2. When						
3. Who / Which						
4. What						
5. Why						
6. How						

Kagan Cooperative Learning, 1998 – adjusted by Sutcliffe, 2010

