WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS?

Children's questions play a vital role in philosophy with children. Children can reveal understanding or lack of understanding through their questions.

It teaches children to be **problem–finders,** not just solvers of the teacher's questions. Otherwise they have no autonomy in their reading, listening & thinking or in their ability to recognise bad thinking & material that is prejudiced & propagandist.

A Community of Enquiry is an ethos, not just a technique or methodology. It raises self esteem (especially in under achieving boys). It nourishes linguistic, social, reasoning, enquiry & thinking skills & attitudes of curiosity & speculation. It develops willingness to listen; to re-clarify thinking; to question first thoughts; & to be questioned on assumptions.

It depends on the teacher being positively interested in & committed to developing children's thinking; & recognising that s/he has an educational role to play in this. There is no place for judging children's thinking as 'superficial' & offering nothing to deepen it!!

WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF PHILOSOPHY WITH CHILDREN?

1. SEATED IN A CIRCLE SHARE A STIMULUS:

This might be :
 a book, a story, a poem;

 a video; a schools broadcast;

a visual stimulus – a picture; a sculpture, an artefact.

an information text; a non-narrative text – Proverb; Hadith; song, hymn;

Most frequently it is a story. Possibilities for 'delivering a story':

- The teacher tells or reads the story.

- Read around - the children take turns to read a sentence each from the text.

- Listen to a tape of the book.

- Watch a video of the story.

2. SET THE AGENDA:

Each child sits with their own thoughts in silence for a few moments of reflective time. If appropriate they can write down their own questions. Then:

- In pairs children discuss the issues that interest them, develop philosophical questions & decide on one only to present to the group. (This is the most frequently used strategy.) or:

-   Each pair collaborates with another pair to agree on one question.

-   Children in pairs or fours write questions to put in a question box throughout the week.

-   Write the story onto disk so children can add their questions to disk.

Then the teacher or the children themselves write up the children's questions on large paper.

-   Do not change children's language or put words into their mouth.

-   Do not answer their question.

-   Do not evaluate their question, especially negatively.

-   Gather all the questions.

-   Write the names or initials of the children by their question.

3.   CATEGORISE THE QUESTIONS:

This is not always done, especially if time is at a premium.

Invite the children to make links between the questions - Are some identical? Are some similar? Is one part of another? Use different colour felt pens to indicate these links.

If this has taken all the time available stop here & continue the rest of the process another day.

4. AIR THE QUESTIONS:
Either:

-      Each pair talks to the group for 1 minute about their question.

-      If someone is not sure about a question they can ask for clarification.

-      For 1 minute in pairs children talk about all the questions.
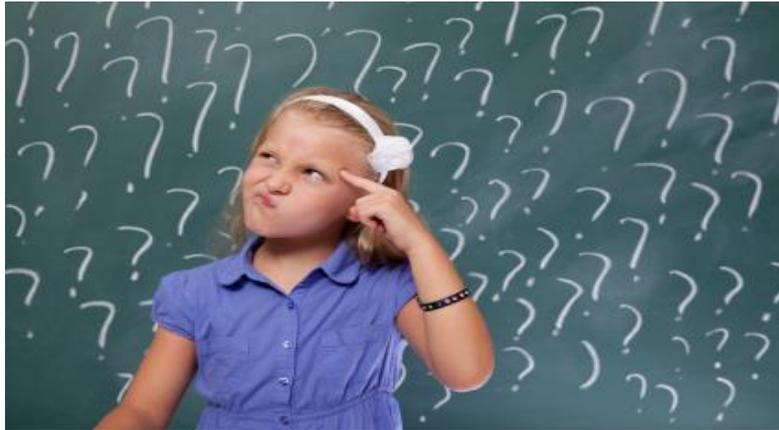
5.   VOTE DEMOCRATICALLY:

Either:

-     Omni-vote-children vote for as many questions as they want to (easier to get a majority).

-      Multi-vote-children have 3 votes each to use on 3 questions or 3 votes on one question.

-     Single vote with eyes shut (rarely get a majority vote first time round).

-      Single transferable vote.

-      Voting with a reason e.g. I like question 2 & will vote for it because....

6. **BEGIN THE ENQUIRY:**

Write out the chosen question again.

Ask the pair who originally formulated the question to express their first thoughts on it.

Before opening the discussion up to the whole group you could either:

-   In pairs or fours discuss it for 2 minutes.

-    Write down first impressions.

-   Concept map for 1 minute.

7. **FACILITATE CRITICAL, CREATIVE, CARING DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE CHILDREN:**

This is done mainly through teacher silence. Use encouraging body language & facilitative questions to help the thinking of the individual child & the group - see examples on p 14 & 15.

As the facilitator encourage collaboration & quality thinking by asking pupils:

-    to clarify what they have said (What do you mean by...? Can anyone explain that to us?)

-    to give a reason for what they have said; (Why do you say that? Can you give me a reason?)

-    what was implied; (How could we tell if it was true?)

-    to tease out assumptions; (How do you know? Who agrees/disagree with...?)

-    to give an example of something being referred to; (Has anyone got another example?)

-    for other possibilities or counter arguments; (Who else can say something about that?)

Teach children to start each contribution with "I agree with Sarah that …. or "I don't agree with Peter that….". The reference does not have to be to the immediately preceding speaker, but must be to somebody. This helps to:

-       ensure children listen to the development of the discussion;

-       prevent the discussion becoming a series of monologues in which each child is waiting for a chance to have a say.

-        encourage courteous ways of dealing with ideas as ideas instead of attacking people as individuals.

-        show that we don't have to engage in rudeness or name-calling in a situation of disagreement.
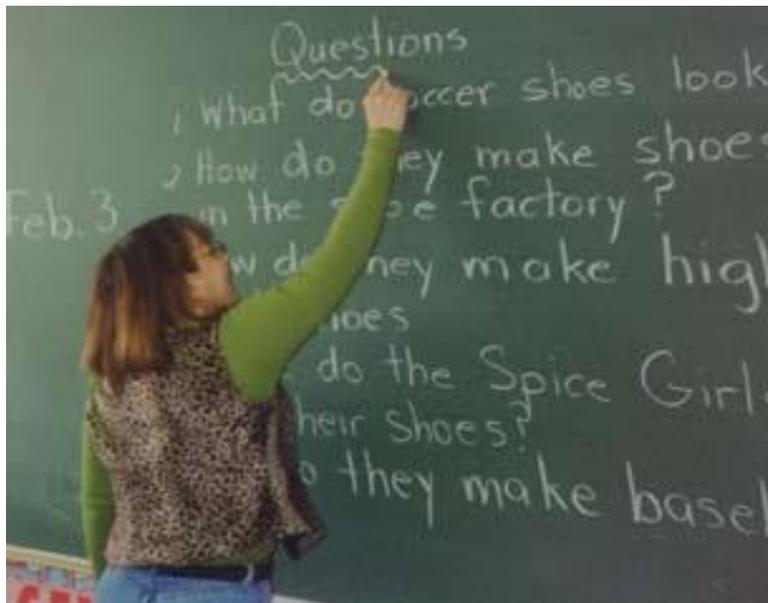
8.   ENDING THE ENQUIRY:

Either:

-      Ask for final thoughts on the question.

-      Summarise the key concepts discussed. (Who can remember some of the ideas we have said?)

-      Give thinking time then ask if anyone wants to say in what way their thinking may have changed as a result of the discussion or if anyone has any thoughts on thinking about thinking.

- Vote yes, no or not sure if their thinking has changed as a result of the enquiry.

Raise aspirations and achievements with a Creative Curriculum

Creativity is developed by making unusual connections and challenging the rules. Creativity isn't a gift 'given' to a few; it can be developed in everyone and can be taught by people with no natural flair for music or the arts.
Critical thinking techniques are easily learned and can significantly improve learning and exam performance.
"Critical" comes from the Greek, Kriticos, meaning 'judgement' and much of what is involved in Critical Thinking is in developing students' ability to make better judgements. Critical thinking also embraces logic and strong questioning skills

Everyone can be taught to be a better thinker. Not that "better" simply means "more efficient"; better also means being more effective, ethical, social, creative and deliberate. With improved thinking, one has the opportunity to be a more successful learner, a more thoughtful citizen, and a more confident person

Thinking Moves such as creating hypotheses, clarifying terms, asking for and giving good reasons, offering examples and counter examples, questioning assumptions, drawing inferences and making sound judgements

Social Skills such as sharing perspectives, listening to one another, reading body language, challenging and building on others' thinking, looking for missing perspectives Philosophy for Children is designed to develop thinking and reasoning skills and to enhance self esteem. With its emphasis on collaborative and rigorous inquiry, it serves as a powerful educational model for teachers and students at all levels.

Broadly speaking, P4C develops four key types of thinking:

1. Collaborative - *thinking with others*

2. Caring - *thinking of others*

3. Critical - *making reasoned judgements*

4. Creative - *creating new ideas*

P4C typically takes the form of a Community of Inquiry, which is characterised by:

- Sitting in a circle ready to think, talk and engage with each other

- Sharing a source of puzzlement or intrigue (e.g. picture, story, music, news, etc)

- Examining the source and creating relevant questions

- Persisting in the search for knowledge and understanding

- Giving reasons for opinions and distinguishing good reasons from bad ones

- Fostering mutual cooperation, trust, tolerance, fair-mindedness and a heightened degree of sensitivity to fellow inquirers

- Rich feedback that promotes thinking that is self-correcting and reflective

Dramatic Enquiry began as a Creative Partnerships research project bringing together Philosophy for Children (**P4C**) and Drama. The results showed that learners developed creativity, independence and key skills of thinking

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PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN