

Educational Perspectives

Journal of the College of Education / University of Hawai'i at Mānoa



Welcome to our Mindful
Waikiki School!

Philosophy for Children

Volume 44 ♦ Numbers 1 and 2

Educational Perspectives

Journal of the College of Education/University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

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Home Grown

Thomas E. Jackson

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Every living thing on these islands of Hawai'i came from somewhere else. The seeds were transported here in one way or another across vast stretches of ocean. Once here, the seeds grew and developed, adapting to the unfamiliar challenges of their new home. People also came. Pride of place in arrival and thriving in the unique setting of these islands goes to the Native Hawaiians whose way of life continues to nourish the thinking and ways of being of the other, more recent arrivals from elsewhere.

So it is with p4c Hawai'i. It began elsewhere, but it has grown in new and exciting ways—influenced by all that is best about our island home. This volume presents the richness of the living forms that P4C has taken since its arrival in 1978. In this opening essay, I will relate some of the story of those beginnings and what has contributed to the program's specialness.

P4C began in the late 1960s when Matthew Lipman, while teaching philosophy to undergraduates at Columbia University, made a connection that had not really ever received much thought—the idea that philosophy could be taught, and indeed should be taught, to children. Lipman saw that his students had a lot of passion to change the world but were lacking in their ability to reason soundly and exercise good judgment in how to go about their lives. He also recognized that college was rather late in life to begin efforts to systematically develop reason and good judgment. He wondered if the discipline of philosophy, with its emphasis on clear thinking and sound judgment, if properly reconfigured, might be presented at an earlier age. He realized that philosophy in its current academic form would be unsuitable for children but wondered what would happen if philosophy were presented in a more accessible way, in the form of a novel, perhaps. In the story that he would tell, the readers would discover, in a playful way, the rules of good thinking, while at the same time learning to think together about some of the deep, philosophical questions that have perplexed humans for over two thousand years. He set to work on his manual typewriter and soon had his first novel tapped out. He titled it, *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*,

a play on the name of the philosopher, Aristotle. First, he tried it out on his son's sixth-grade class, where he was delighted and astounded by how quickly the children were able to see the logical rule presented in the first chapter and how they were able to raise their own questions about other philosophical issues that were skillfully woven into the story.

Following that informal test, experimental trials were held that demonstrated significant gains in reading and math among the students who had engaged in philosophical discussions after reading *Harry Stottlemeier* over the control groups who had not. In the early 1970s Lipman moved to Montclair State College, as Montclair University was then known, where he joined with Ann Margaret Sharp in creating the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC). The IAPC soon attracted international attention. Each year scholars, mainly those connected with academic departments of philosophy, came for a three week workshop conducted by Lipman and Sharp. This workshop experience was an intense immersion in this new way of doing philosophy.

By the early 1980s the IAPC had developed a curriculum (now referred to as the Philosophy for Children or P4C curriculum) that consisted of seven novels with seven accompanying teacher's manuals. At the same time, there was a strong effort to promote critical thinking in the nation's schools. In response, the Federal Department of Education established a panel of experts to identify which of the programs that claimed effectiveness in developing critical thinking could actually present research-based evidence in support of their claims. If the data they presented met DOE standards, the program received "national validation". Such programs then became part of an official list that schools around the country could consult in their own search for an effective approach. Philosophy for Children was one of several programs that received this important validation. National validation also meant that the program was eligible for federal money to support costs associated with the professional development of school faculty who wanted to implement the program.

In 1984 I had just completed a doctorate in comparative philosophy at the University of Hawai'i. I had also spent three years as a cofounder of the Hawai'i International Film Festival, and I was seeking work outside a traditional academic career in philosophy. I had, by chance, the singular good fortune to learn about Matthew Lipman and P4C and in August of that year, together with a colleague, Karen Lee, I attended one of those three week workshops at Montclair. It was there that Karen and I experienced first-hand, with colleagues from around the world, the excitement of the Lipman approach—of thinking together in philosophical ways about topics that we chose from passages we had read in one of his novels and, in the process, experiencing the sense of being part of a community of inquiry. The decisive experience for me occurred in the last week when we went to a local school to observe a group of sixth graders engaging in P4C–Lipman style. I could hardly believe my eyes. Students, sitting in a circle, had been reading a passage from *Harry Stottlemeier*, and they were now coming up with their own questions on aspects of the text. Next they selected the question they wanted to talk about and, with the help of a philosopher/facilitator, they began to inquire together into the question they had selected. The students were animated, engaged, and thoughtful. They shared their personal views with each other and began to develop more penetrating insights into the question that they had selected. I had a deep sense of wanting somehow to be able to do this for the rest of my life.

When we returned to Hawai'i that summer Karen and I found that the critical thinking movement was in full swing in local schools. Hawai'i educators were looking for ways to implement this new mandate. Soon we found ourselves conducting our first workshops. These workshops mark the beginning of p4c Hawai'i. Though we achieved some success in our early workshops, we soon found it necessary to modify the Lipman approach. Teachers and students were able to read the texts together and come up with questions, but they were stymied by what to do to keep an inquiry moving once a question had been selected. In an earlier experiment in P4C on the Big Island, Barry Curtis and Nobuko Fukuda at UH Hilo, had revealed similar shortcomings. The Lipman manuals, which had been designed to respond to this difficulty, were, in practice, unwieldy and difficult to use. Our first innovation, one of many over the years that have come to distinguish p4c Hawai'i from other P4C sites around the world, was to recognize the need for in-class support

for the teacher. It was as a result of this collaboration, of working together with teachers and students, that we came to create what we now describe as an intellectually safe community of inquiry—an innovative setting in which topics that arise out of the interests of the community are pursued in philosophically responsible ways.

In-class support was at first accomplished by the addition to the classroom of a philosopher/facilitator—a person with extensive experience in doing p4c who would join the teacher as a weekly participant in p4c sessions. In the beginning this was either Karen or myself; later, it was provided by UH Philosophy Department graduate students. This innovation was almost magical in its impact. We had not, initially, anticipated the profound effects it would have on the students and the consequences it would have in developing p4c Hawai'i as a unique expression of Lipman's P4C.

The regular classroom presence of these facilitators quickly developed into ongoing, creative partnerships among participating teachers, students, and philosopher/facilitators. We realized that the pedagogical skills of the teacher in combination with the philosophical skills of the p4c facilitator were essential in order to engage the children in philosophical inquiry. The partnerships that we formed in these early years have continued to evolve.

Our model is not that of the expert who comes to work with the novice. This would harm our aim of creating an intellectually safe community. p4c Hawai'i offers a different model—one that acknowledges the pedagogical skills of the teacher. The teachers know their students, they know when they are experiencing difficulty in understanding something, and they know how to respond appropriately. Teachers who participate in the p4c circle also help to match the philosophical inquiry approach with the content for which they are responsible. Both teacher and facilitator learn from each other. The teacher internalizes the craft of the philosopher's pedagogy; the philosopher/facilitator learns the craft of classroom teaching.

Karen and I experienced great enthusiasm from teachers in this partnership, and we experienced considerable external pressure to expand p4c to other schools. In spite of this enthusiasm, we discovered that when in-class support at a given school ceased, p4c quickly ceased as well. This is an unfortunate dynamic and part of a larger phenomenon that befalls many reform endeavors in education, including the critical thinking movement. A critical need is recognized;

mandates are issued; quick fixes are sought; programs are developed; schools rush to embrace the reform, or are pressured to comply; experts are brought in; special training sessions are conducted; and in the end the reform is passed over to be replaced by the next one. Sometimes, programs that are narrowly targeted at a specific problem are legitimate “quick fixes”. p4c, however, is not a “quick fix”. p4c aims to create intellectually safe communities that nurture the ability to think for oneself in responsible, respectful ways. This work is transformative and requires sustained, ongoing support in order to bring about deep changes that cannot be accomplished in weekend trainings or through one to three year initiatives.

We worried that we did not yet have the resources to be able to effect lasting change if we cast our net too wide, and we feared p4c could fall victim to the appeal of the next big thing and disappear. So, instead of trying to expand to new schools, we sought schools where the right conditions obtained: a supportive principal with a faculty who would make a long-term commitment to p4c. We would focus on depth, not breadth; on sustained reform, not quick fixes. Fourteen years ago we had the good fortune to be invited to a school with the requisite conditions of a supportive principal (Bonnie Tabor) and equally supportive faculty—Waikī Elementary School. For several years prior to our joining them, the faculty and staff at Waikī Elementary School had made Art Costa’s Habits of Mind (HOM) an integral part of their school culture. HOM provides a natural, fertile environment for p4c Hawai‘i. Like HOM, p4c seeks to create good thinkers, and we soon found that p4c and HOM mutually reinforce each other. Our work together there has created a dynamic synergy among students, faculty, and staff and we have come to understand the impact on children who experience the cumulative effects of HOM and p4c over the long term. The results continue to be extraordinary.

Waikī Elementary School is now one of our model schools. We regularly bring visitors—local, national, and international—to these schools to witness in person what schooling can and should be. Our university students visit them to observe, do research, and work with their remarkable staff and students. Our model schools are beehives of creative, caring, innovative energy—vibrant examples of what is possible in public education.

Thirteen years ago p4c made its first appearance at Kailua High School (KHS), which has become our second

model school. KHS is another school where the right conditions have obtained: a supportive principal (Francine Honda) with a faculty who are committed to support p4c for the long term. From the beginning, two teachers in particular at KHS, Amber Makaiau and Chad Miller, have made it possible to overcome what had, to that point, been a seemingly insurmountable obstacle to P4C worldwide—difficulty in gaining traction in teaching P4C beyond the elementary school level.

One of these obstacles is a function of Lipman’s curriculum which requires, in effect, a separate class time for the use of his texts in P4C sessions. So, in spite of the existence of Lipman-authored novels for middle and high school, there is simply no room in the school schedule for implementing his program of study. Related to this is the widespread notion that philosophy is a discipline unto itself with its own content and activities. Understood in this way, philosophy is a subject that is suitable only for adults and an activity best practiced by professors in university departments of philosophy. I refer to this as “Big-P philosophy.” Lipman’s novels represent an effort to break away from Big-P philosophy but our experience with his program, even at the elementary level, revealed that his curriculum did not accomplish this end. In addition, for students in Hawai‘i, his curriculum was too limiting with its focus on Western philosophical traditions and culture. These discoveries spurred our efforts to develop p4c Hawai‘i.

In tackling this problem at the elementary school level, I developed an approach that I refer to as “little-p philosophy.” The *content* of little-p philosophy is the set of beliefs that we all possess to make sense of the world; the *activity* of little-p philosophizing is the process of reflecting on these beliefs as part of our larger interactions with the world. In important ways the content of little-p philosophy is unique to each of us. It is the result of the particularities of what some philosophers refer to as our “situatedness” in the world and our responses to them. We also differ in the extent to which we are willing to engage in little-p philosophical activity, which is an on-going philosophical reflection on our life. Socrates referred to this as living an examined life. As a result of our efforts in pursuing little-p philosophy in intellectually safe communities, and with the creative input of teachers and students, we have learned more about how to develop discussions that deepen into philosophical inquiries.

The p4c conception of inquiry captures the philosophical part of what happens in our intellectually safe communities.

The little-p / Big-P distinction has made it possible to view philosophy not primarily in terms of some specific content, but as a way of responding to content. Rather than immediately responding to content questions with an answer, little-p philosophical activity invites us first to pause, inquire into, and pose questions of the content itself. This notion of little-p activity has freed philosophy from an over-reliance on Big-P content for its sense of legitimacy by focusing instead on activities that begin with any content or topic, whether personal or public, academic or practical.

An important addition to the concept of little-p philosophy is my development of the Good Thinker's Tool Kit (GTTK). The GTTK is an important response to the concern that teachers express about what makes a question, session, or response philosophical. The Tool Kit captures what I see as essentially Big-P philosophical types of questions. The Tool Kit is composed of seven tools. I use the acronym WRAITEC to describe each of them. Each tool represents a type of philosophical question that can be used individually or in concert with others to take thinking about the initial starting point to a deeper level: What do you mean? What are your reasons? What assumptions are you making? What inferences? Do we know it's true? Can you give examples or counter-examples? Such questions can be posed in any situation or content area.

What teachers like Amber Makaiau and Chad Miller have been able to do at the high school level is to take the possibilities of little-p philosophy, along with the rich notion of the "intellectually safe community", and nurture their growth. They began by doing this in their own classrooms, and they have extended the practice to other classrooms in their departments. Amber and her colleague, Kehau Glassco, developed a nationally recognized ethnic studies curriculum that integrated philosophical content and activity. Their course rests on the four key pillars of p4c Hawai'i: community, inquiry, philosophy, and reflection. The course in ethnic studies/philosophy is now required for all students who graduate from KHS. Amber and Chad have extended the p4c Hawai'i approach in ways that have made it not only the heart of their own teaching at KHS, but also in ways that have been embraced by their colleagues in the social studies and English departments, and among the wider KHS community.

The p4c work at KHS has also been greatly enhanced by the addition, five years ago, of another p4c Hawai'i in-

novation, the Philosopher-in-Residence program. Benjamin Lukey is the current holder of that position. Ben participates in faculty meetings, assists new teachers in implementing what Amber has insightfully named the philosopher's pedagogy, and works with experienced p4c faculty in developing new ideas such as expanding the philosophers' pedagogy to new content areas. The impact and success of their efforts was acknowledged in a dramatic way by the visit to KHS in April 2012 of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama came specifically to meet with the students and respond to the questions they had for him.

The Philosopher-in-Residence position has been a powerful addition to p4c Hawai'i in creating a sustainable infrastructure for meaningful educational transformation. Any long term change, if it is to be transformative, requires the kinds of support that keeps the classroom experiences of the individual teacher in sharp focus. It is then possible to expand out from that base to include other players, individuals as well as institutions, who can give shape to lasting reform.

Over the years, p4c Hawai'i has blossomed and the seeds of these developments have been spread by former students who have carried what they have learned to other elementary, middle, and high school settings. They have also been carried further afield to schools and universities on the US mainland, Europe, China, Mexico, and Japan. Two former students in particular Jinmei Yuan, now at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, and Mitsuyo Toyoda, now at University of Hyogo, in Himeji, Japan, played decisive roles in the spread of p4c Hawai'i to China and Japan. And so, in recent years, far from disappearing, we have felt ourselves stretched almost to a breaking point, wondering how we can respond to the many requests for help that we have received.

Fortunately, new assistance has arrived for p4c Hawai'i in the person of Noboru Maruyama, a remarkable individual who is Secretary General of the Uehiro Foundation in Japan. I first met Maruyama-san in what I now recognize as a singularly important encounter in the UH Philosophy Department lounge in 2004. In that brief initial conversation, we both realized that we shared a vision of the possibilities of schooling, rightly done, for lasting human change through education. As a result of that meeting, he visited Waikiki School with me and participated in classroom p4c sessions. He talked with teachers and the school principal, Bonnie

Tabor, and he became convinced that something very important was happening at Waikīkī Elementary School. Generous financial support soon came from the Uehiro Foundation, and we began to arrange annual exchanges where Hawai'i teachers visit classrooms in Japan, and Japanese teachers visit classrooms in Hawai'i.

In May 2012 our relationship was further strengthened with a ceremony that featured the signing of a formal agreement between the Uehiro Foundation of Japan and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa whereby the Uehiro Foundation of Japan pledged \$1,250,000 over the next five years to support the establishment of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Uehiro Academy for Philosophy and Ethics in Education. The Academy is part of the College

of Arts and Humanities and is located in its own space in Sakamaki Hall. Through this generous gift from the Uehiro Foundation and their commitment to our shared vision for educational change, we recognize that a whole new era has begun for our goal of preparing, supporting, and sustaining educators, researchers and students who engage or are interested in engaging in p4c worldwide.

In this volume you will meet some of the remarkable people who are part of the p4c Hawai'i story. They represent the people who have played and are continuing to play an important role in the story that I have been relating about the coming of P4C to these islands and its transformation into p4c Hawai'i.

The Philosopher's Pedagogy

Amber Strong Makaiau and Chad Miller

“How come your students are so engaged?” “What are the reasons your students perform so well on the Hawai‘i State Assessments and Advanced Placement Exams?” “What makes the student experience in your classrooms so different?” “How do you use philosophy to teach language arts and social studies?” “The students are always talking about your class. What is it that you do in your classrooms?” “What is philosophy for children?” This short article is our best attempt to answer these questions by describing the complex relationship we see between philosophy, education, theory, and practice. We are calling this relationship the philosopher’s pedagogy, and it is an approach to teaching that builds on the Philosophy for Children (P4C) movement started by Matthew Lipman in the 1960s.

Philosophy for children is at the heart of our teaching practice. This may be due to our shared educational experiences in teacher preparation in the Masters of Education in Teaching Program (MEdT) at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa—a program that placed a high value on inquiry. It is also where we were first introduced to philosophy for children. The theories, ideas, and concepts presented in philosophy for children were attractive to Amber because of her philosophically rich childhood experiences; her father possessed a background in philosophy and would often engage her in meaningful “dinner table” inquiries, while her Deweyan elementary school instilled values of problem solving and creative thinking. Chad was initially drawn to philosophy for children because of the importance of his undergraduate philosophy degree in shaping his own education.

These experiences, coupled with a strong desire to create an engaging and meaningful schooling experience for our students, provided the perfect context to bring together our interests in philosophy and teaching. However, after seeing Thomas Jackson model his p4c Hawai‘i approach to education, we both realized that philosophy had a much greater reach than simply connecting to our own life narratives. We saw (and experienced) firsthand how p4c Hawai‘i could transform traditional classrooms into intellectually safe

communities. We soon became committed to creating ways to incorporate p4c Hawai‘i into our practice as pre-service public high school teachers. Now, ten years after Amber’s initial experiences, she continues to use p4c Hawai‘i methods to design and implement curriculum in her social studies classes, while Chad has done the same in his language arts courses. Unlike many educational reform movements, p4c Hawai‘i is not an off-the-shelf program that can be implemented directly into the curriculum; it is a transformative approach to teaching that affects the way one teaches.

To sustain commitment to improving our philosopher’s pedagogy, we have developed a professional relationship where we continually dialogue, philosophize, test new activities, and critically reflect on the role that p4c Hawai‘i has in each of our classrooms. Some of this inquiry has been in response to questions posed by others, but most of this ongoing dialogue has been driven by our interests in finding ways to rethink and adapt p4c Hawai‘i to more effectively meet the needs of our students, and our goals as teachers. The philosopher’s pedagogy presented in this article, while still evolving, represents the most current state of our thinking and understanding of this approach to teaching. It is our contribution to the ongoing dialogue concerning philosophy for children and its relationship with philosophy, education, theory, and practice.

The ongoing P4C dialogue

Our professional dialogue fits into a much larger discussion that begins with the work of Matthew Lipman (1980 with Sharp and Oscanyan, 1988, 1992, 1993, 2008), the creator of the Philosophy for Children program.¹ What began in 1969 with a single philosophical novel called *Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery* and an accompanying teacher manual, both designed “to help children learn how to think for themselves” (Lipman, Sharp, & Oscanyan, 1980, p. 53) evolved into a K–12 program composed of seven novels and companion teacher manuals. In 1970, Lipman created the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC)² to advance his call for overall school redesign and

educational improvement. By adopting an innovative approach to philosophy and education, Lipman became known as the pioneer of the movement to assist classroom teachers in engaging their students in the activity of philosophical inquiry. However, Lipman has not been alone in this endeavor. For example, Gareth Matthews' approach to philosophy for children (1980, 1984, 1994) has aimed at modeling a distinct pedagogy, while Thomas Wartenberg (2009) has created lessons and a five-step plan to help teachers use children's books to bring philosophy into their classrooms. Thomas Jackson, a professor in the philosophy department at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, is another major contributor to the philosophy for children endeavor. Dubbed p4c Hawai'i to distinguish it from Lipman's P4C approach, Jackson has devoted his efforts to experimenting with fresh approaches to teaching philosophy to children and teachers in the public schools in Hawai'i (2001, 2011).

From the beginning, Jackson has identified several limitations in Lipman's approach,³ and awareness of these issues has pushed Jackson and the teachers he works with to create a set of innovative instructional strategies that can be used effectively to bring the philosophy into school classrooms. After thirty years of work, p4c Hawai'i is a refined set of classroom conditions that promote values of community, intellectual safety, thinking, reflection, and inquiry. These values are realized in classroom practices that build a sense intellectual safety and promote reflection and respectful sharing of ideas.⁴

The conditions and practices detailed in Jackson's p4c Hawai'i provide a more flexible approach than Lipman's original philosophy for children curriculum. Jackson's approach moves the focus of classroom activity from philosophical content, as represented in Lipman's novels and teacher manuals, to the thoughts, ideas, and questions of the students. This shift in focus from text to student allows teachers to use p4c Hawai'i to teach across all grade levels and within different content areas. It also provides adaptive structures so that teachers can modify p4c Hawai'i practices in order to respond to the cultural, emotional, and intellectual needs of the students. This freedom from Lipman's more traditional and inflexible philosophy for children curriculum appealed to both of us because we teach in a multicultural high school. In addition, the courses that we teach contain specific content and accompanying standards to measure student performance. Thus, we need a pedagogy that provides

the intellectual and academic content for our students to meet state standards as well as an approach that encourages them to think philosophically about what they are studying. As a result, the last ten years have been spent on modifying Jackson's p4c Hawai'i approach to construct a method of our own. This was the birth of what we refer to as "the philosopher's pedagogy." We view it as our personal contribution to the ongoing dialogue about how to engage school-age students in philosophical reflection.

A Reconceptualized Understanding of Philosophy

The philosopher's pedagogy has been built upon a reconceptualization of philosophy that fits more appropriately into the task of doing philosophy with children. We begin with Jackson's distinction between "Big P" philosophy and "little p" philosophy (Jackson, 2010). Each approach to philosophy represents a particular orientation to philosophical content and the kind of activity associated with that content.

"Big P" philosophy

"Big P" philosophy refers to the traditional understanding of philosophy as an academic specialization. In this view, philosophy is represented in the thought and writings of the great philosophers. They include, among other illustrious names, the works and ideas of Plato, Descartes, Hume, Kant, and Nietzsche. "Big-P" philosophy also deals with the "big" questions—questions of being, truth, and justice, which are most notably represented in the philosophical sub-domains of metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. Thus, teaching of Big P philosophy is directed to the mastery of an established canon and initiation into a domain of knowledge that is the preserve of the specialist. The activities associated with this conception of philosophy concern the maintenance, examination, critique, and presentation of ideas within the canon. "Big P" philosophers engage in philosophy through the study of these canonical texts. Professional philosophers must show a certain command over these ideas and be able to converse in the language of "Big P" philosophy by engaging in critical discussions of ideas and offering interpretations of recognized texts. They conduct their work at academic conferences and publish literature in scholarly journals (Jackson, 2011; Lipman, 1988, p. 11). This activity is typically engaged as a dialectical contest between

individuals and competing schools of thought (Jackson, 2011). Philosophy in of the Big P sort is familiar enough to anyone who has taken a philosophy course at the university level.

Philosophy is an elite academic discipline, in which entrance into the field is reserved for those who have obtained a PhD in the subject and who labor to add to the philosophical literature. However, the sheer number and difficulty of philosophical texts, and the “hermetic terminology” (Lipman, 1988, p. 5) of academic philosophy, acts as a barrier to the non-specialist. Like Plato’s philosopher kings, “Big P” philosophers are members of an exclusive club, accessible only to those rare souls who have endured a long period of academic preparation.

“little p” philosophy

In Plato’s *Theaetetus*, Socrates tells us that it is the “sense of wonder that is the mark of the philosopher. Philosophy indeed has no other origin” (1961, 155d). Understood in this Socratic light, each one of us enters the world with the basic capacity to engage in philosophy (Jackson, 2011). Thanks to our natural ability for curiosity and wonder, we are born “little p” philosophers. This natural disposition to wonder is the first step in a process of making sense of our world. Dewey writes that “the curious mind is constantly alert and exploring, seeking material for thought, as a vigorous body is on the *qui vive* for nutriment. Eagerness for experience, for new and varied contacts, is found where wonder is found” (Dewey, 1910/1997, p. 31). New experiences and reflections help us shape our understanding of highly complex abstract ideas—ideas such as love, compassion, and equality; and even ordinary, routine matters, such as lunch time, the weather, and fashion often provoke deeper questioning that arises from our sense of wonder about the world. Confused thoughts and feelings of perplexity are often the first step towards reflective resolution. Regardless of the weight or depth of the belief, such ideas and experiences create the motive force for engaging in “little p” philosophy. Dewey believes that philosophical questions arise out of some confusion or perplexity when we are compelled to question our habits and beliefs. Something new, something unexpected in our world requires us to sit up and think, and it is this thinking that is the beginning of philosophy (Dewey, 1910/1997; p. 12, 13). The aim of “little p” philosophy is to nourish this incipient thinking and direct its development.

Society, culture, and, in many cases, “Big P” philosophy, shape these beliefs, but our ability to wonder, to ask questions, and to seek out answers that modify our beliefs lies at the heart of philosophical thinking. “Little p” philosophy is about our involvement in inquiries that develop out of these moments when our experiences become problematic for us, and the realization that we need to rethink our position. It is this active process of trying to figure out the world that constitutes the beginning of philosophy. We humans are philosophically active from the very beginning (Jackson, 2011). Ownership of belief, the ability to wonder, and our willingness to reflect upon those beliefs are the prerequisites for engagement in “little p” philosophy.⁵

“Little p” philosophy is primarily a way of approaching and dealing with content in order to come to a deeper understanding of it. This shift in perspective moves philosophy from canonical texts and the problems of philosophy to the activity of inquiry. Thus, as Jackson (2011) explains, the “center of gravity” of philosophy moves from the published and/or established ideas of others, to our own thoughts, questions, experiences, and reflections. The focal point of the activity resides in us and in our dealings with the world and the problems that life throws our way. “Little p” philosophy encourages individuals to examine their lives and experiences in order to come to a deeper understanding of the world and their place in it, instead of exclusively focusing on the established ideas and questions of others. Accordingly, the dominant mode of practice in “little p” philosophy is engagement in actual inquiries (Jackson, 2011). This conception of philosophy as an activity is not tied to a specific predetermined content. And this means that it can be included across the disciplines, and that it can be integrated in different school subjects. The principal task of the teacher is “to keep the sacred spark of wonder alive and to fan the flame that already glows...to protect the spirit of inquiry, to keep it from becoming *blasé* from overexcitement, wooden from routine, fossilized through dogmatic instruction, or dissipated by random exercise on trivial things (Dewey, 1910/1997, p. 34). Our philosopher’s pedagogy is built upon this understanding of philosophy as something that you do, which makes it possible for us to link philosophy with different subjects in K–12 classrooms. Thus, the philosopher’s pedagogy is an approach to teaching that helps teachers think in concrete ways about how to bring this kind of reflection into the school curriculum.

The Educational Commitments of the Philosopher's Pedagogy

In adopting the philosopher's pedagogy in our classrooms, we have found that it requires a set of six interconnected educational commitments. The first is that the teacher must live an examined life. Secondly, the teacher must see education as a shared activity between teacher and student. Thirdly, the teacher and students must re-conceptualize the "content" of the discipline as a reflection of the interaction between the classroom participant's beliefs and experiences and the subject matter being taught. This connects with the fourth commitment: that the teacher must hold, with Dewey (1916), the view that philosophy is "the general theory of education." Fifth, teachers, and students, must make philosophy a living classroom practice. And finally, teachers must be willing to challenge contemporary measures for classroom assessment. The next six sections provide a more detailed exposition of each of these commitments.

The examined life of the teacher

The first characteristic of the philosopher's pedagogy is the commitment to an examined life. In the *Apology*, Socrates' famously remarked that life is not worth living if it is void of investigation and inquiry.

Let no day pass without discussing goodness and all the other subjects about which you hear me talking and examining both myself and others is really the very best thing that a man can do, and that life without this sort of examination is not worth living (Plato, 1961, 38a)

According to Socrates, the examination of one's beliefs and conceptions of the world gives life purpose. Teachers who are committed to the philosopher's pedagogy share this belief as a fundamental value. For such teachers, the examined life pervades the work they do in the classroom, and in turn lends teaching and learning a philosophical purpose.

To bring this sense of purpose into schools, the philosopher's pedagogy requires teachers to incorporate their sense of wonder, curiosity, and critical analysis of life's meaning into the curriculum they design and into the relationships they develop with their students. The content of the classroom, in addition to the methods of instruction, are an extension of the teacher's examined life outside the classroom. The philosopher's pedagogy does not begin when we walk into the classroom; nor end when we leave at the last bell.

Instead, the art of philosophical teaching is an extension of the teacher's (and students') growth and development both within their job and beyond.

We have found that when teachers live and model an examined life both inside and outside of their classrooms their students sit up and take notice. When our students observe us engaging in genuine inquiry about life's experiences, situations, products, and people, they are more willing to engage in this process of inquiry along with us. As a result, students begin to internalize the skills and dispositions needed to thoughtfully engage in the examination of their lives; their schoolwork becomes not only a place to engage in meaningful inquiry, but a space to sharpen and hone philosophical tools of inquiry. Dewey says of teaching that the teacher's claim to rank as an artist is measured by (their) ability to foster the attitude of the artist in those who study with (them), whether they be youth or little children" (1910/1997, p.220). We claim that what is true of the teacher as artist is true of the teacher as philosopher. Leading an examined life is a contagious condition and once one experiences the engagement in the activity of "little p" philosophy, it becomes by degrees ingrained in the practice of the students.

Education as a shared activity between teacher and student

In addition to living an examined life, teachers who practice the philosopher's pedagogy conceptualize education as a *shared* activity between teacher and student. This is a departure from the traditional role of the teacher—the know-it-all who is the "sage on the stage." Based on the theories of social constructivism, this conceptualization of education "rejects the notion of objective knowledge and argues instead that knowledge develops as one engages in dialogue with others" (Palinscar, 1998, p. 347). The dialogue is characterized by mutual thinking and shared communication between teachers and students. Collectively they work to create what Lipman (1991) calls a classroom community of inquiry where students and teachers "listen to one another with respect, build on one another's ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for otherwise unsupported opinions, assist each other in drawing inferences from what has been said, and seek to identify one another's assumptions" (p. 15).

The idea of the classroom as a community of inquiry is an essential part of the philosopher's pedagogy. It is the prerequisite to all other learning (Vygotsky, 1978) that takes

place in school; it is not just a feel-good “ice breaker” activity at the beginning of a semester, but an ongoing and purposeful activity where teachers facilitate relationships, practice equity pedagogy, and design curricular opportunities for students to learn alongside their peers and their teacher. In this socially constructed learning environment we recognize that “people cannot separate *how* thinking takes place from *what* knowledge is available in the place *where* learning happens” (Oakes & Lipton, 1999, p. 77).

According to Dewey (1916), teachers need to “engage students in activities, because it is through the process of engaging in activities that he learns” (p. 168). We argue that teachers must be equally engaged in these learning activities because “learning occurs during situated joint activity” (Vygotsky summarized in Samaras, 2002, p. xxii). In this setting, both teachers and students become “self-activated makers of meaning,” (Schiro, 2008, p. 103) because they are working together in order to construct knowledge. The philosopher’s pedagogy challenges teachers to remove themselves from the center of classroom activities, and to take a seat beside their students where they can learn together as co-inquirers. In this “reflective paradigm, students and teachers query each other” (Lipman, 1991, p.14). As Freire (1970/1987) writes,

through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow (p. 80).

Teachers and students recognize they are in the process of becoming educated together. In such a classroom, teachers and students are constantly working (and in some instances, struggling) to communicate their complex thoughts, ideas, and questions, because it is necessary for both to be “in charge of their own lives and learning,” (Schiro, 2008, p. 105). Because the philosopher’s pedagogy is not simply a recipe or model to be followed (Dewey, 1916, p. 170), teachers and students must find their way together as they engage in an intricate dance between building relationships and applying good thinking to the construction of new knowledge concerning the content they study.

Content is the interaction between the participants’ beliefs and experiences and subject matter

The focus on engaging students in classroom inquiry distinguishes the philosopher’s pedagogy from typical approaches to teaching content in schools. Traditionally, classroom instruction concerned the transmission of content knowledge to students. Under this approach, “effective” teachers develop or employ strategies to help their students understand and retain a certain set of skills and knowledge specific to their content area. The teacher and the texts possess the knowledge the students must attain in order to be “successful.”

For example, in the traditional approach, students are taught F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* using a teacher-centered approach. Prior to reading each passage, the teacher supplies students with a corresponding vocabulary list and after the students have defined all of the terms, she checks to make sure the students defined them in the “correct” manner. Then as the students read each chapter, the teacher identifies the important passages that describe the key character traits, plot lines, and use of literary devices. The students take notes on specific details and perceived meanings such as Gatsby’s car, the Valley of the Ashes and Wilson’s representation of the lower class, and the symbolism of hope that was laden within the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock. There is virtually no opportunity to question the teacher’s “expert” interpretation, offer connections, or bring up ideas the students (or teacher for that matter) may have found personally interesting. Rather, the students are to “bank” (Freire, 1970/1989) all of the teacher’s knowledge before they can properly enjoy the novel and understand its meaning. Students who are successful on the quizzes and test are the ones who correctly supply the meanings and information that have been fed to them by the teacher. This is counter to the manner in which the philosopher’s pedagogy views the teaching of literature and other content matter (scientific research findings, primary documents from history, mathematical concepts, great works of art, etc.).

So what does it mean to teach a subject using the philosopher’s pedagogy. The primary content, which is the same regardless of the school subject or grade level, is composed of the beliefs and conceptions of the world that shape our “little p” philosophy. This shift in content, like the shift that occurs from the content of “Big P” Philosophy to that of “little p” philosophy, moves the “center of gravity” from the texts

of the specific subject areas (i.e., English, social studies, science, math), to the thoughts, ideas, and beliefs of the students in the classroom community. However, it is important to note this shift is not simply concerned with discussing the feelings and ideas of students, devoid of subject matter. The texts are still very much relevant and are used as a catalyst to initiate meaningful philosophical inquiry. The sensitivity of the teacher towards the beliefs of the students provides the incentive to engage the texts and to begin a conversation about their meaning.

This alternative relationship to content requires that teachers must be thoughtful when choosing the subject-specific content and materials to use in their classes (i.e., books titles, primary documents, topics for labs, art assignments, videos, mathematical problems, etc.). In fact, the content and materials of the course should be selected with the intention of engaging students in meaningful inquiry and in the examination of beliefs, experiences, assumptions, and ideas. “The curriculum should bring out aspects of the subject matter that are unsettled and problematic in order to capture the laggard attention of the students and to stimulate them to form a community of inquiry” (Lipman, 1991, p. 16). Each discipline, whether it is the performing arts or mathematics, has content that is complex, provides multiple perspectives, and is relevant to the diverse backgrounds and experiences of our students. Therefore, it is necessary for the teacher who employs the philosopher’s pedagogy to know her students and wisely choose classroom materials to stimulate students’ prior knowledge and wonder.

The central focus of the pedagogy is to engage students and the teacher in the activity of philosophy born out of the questions and curiosities that emerge from their engagement with the respective content of each course. The ideas of the students are to be considered, heard, and tested by all members of the classroom community through an ongoing dialogue.

At the heart of philosophy is...dialogue; at the heart of this discipline is therefore what is essential to education. The craft of philosophy contains itself a pedagogy—the need for dialogue, the need for questioning and a method of inquiry—which are essential characteristics of education in general. This is why education cannot be divorced from philosophy and philosophy cannot be divorced from education (Lipman & Sharp, 1978, pg. 259)

This active (and sometimes laborious) process of understanding the beliefs that emerge from our upbringing, experience, and spirit of curiosity is an ongoing inquiry to modify, correct, enhance, and deepen our views of the world. It is the process of self-correction, in which we re-conceptualize our beliefs and adapt and develop new tools of understanding that is “small-p” philosophy.

Education should be the art of orientation. Educators should devise the simplest and most effective methods of turning minds around. It shouldn’t be the art of implanting sight in the organ, but should proceed on the understanding that the organ already has the capacity, but is improperly aligned and isn’t facing the right way (Plato, 1961, Republic, 518d).

As Socrates indicated, we are philosophically active from the beginning. First, we wonder, then our wonder leads to questions, and our questions lead to possible answers, and these lead to more questions, and so on (Jackson & Makaiau, 2011). Dewey also understood philosophy to be “a form of thinking, which, like all thinking, finds its origin in what is uncertain in the subject matter of experience, and then aims to locate the nature of the perplexity and to frame hypotheses for it clearing up to be tested in action” (1916, p. 331). It is the sense of wonder that helps students remember the content they study. The object is to create learning that is personally meaningful and that engages students at a deeper level of thinking.

Philosophy as “the general theory of education”

To ensure philosophical wonder is at the heart of classroom activities, teachers who use the philosopher’s pedagogy commit to seeing philosophy as *their* general theory of education. Good teachers develop a theory or philosophy of education that centers their work and clarifies their actions and judgments in the classroom. A teacher’s theory of education provides a foundation for their practice that rests upon and directs the myriad of decisions related to teaching. One’s teaching philosophy, therefore, directly influences curriculum design and implementation, the physical structure of the classroom, and how to artfully respond to an unexpected comment made by a student. Teachers who adopt a philosopher’s pedagogy have constructed a teaching philosophy that is grounded in “little p” philosophy. In short, these teachers fundamentally believe the activity of philosophical inquiry is an inherent and necessary aspect of learning.

This commitment places teaching in a unique context. Education, in this sense, is not about test scores, performance indicators, mechanical teaching, standardization, centralization, and scientific policy rationales. We denounce teaching that reduces students to just another commodity in the market place. Instead, the philosopher's pedagogy concerns the shaping and developing of character as a means to improve the overall well-being of society.

Dewey (1916) noted that such a pedagogical commitment makes a fundamental connection between education and philosophy.

If we are willing to conceive education as the process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow men, philosophy may even be defined as the general theory of education (p. 328).

Philosophy as the general theory of education conceptualizes schools as a place where human beings, who have thoughts, feelings, cultures, and experiences, come to engage in personally meaningful learning. The person, not the content, forms the core of the philosopher's pedagogy.

The purpose of education, according to the philosopher's pedagogy, is to tackle the same philosophical task that Socrates' addressed—to lead an examined life. For him, "little p" philosophy is part of the answer to this timeless challenge, and for teachers who employ the philosopher's pedagogy, the activity of "little p" philosophy must lie at the conceptual foundation of their practice. In this light, our theory of education is identical to or, at the very minimum, resonates with our theory of life. Why else would we seek education if not to improve our life through a process of questioning it?

Philosophy as a living classroom practice

The philosopher's pedagogy does not simply require teachers to think of philosophy as an important part of teaching; teachers must also make philosophy a living classroom practice. This is a challenging task. "Due to a variety of pressures, both internal and external, the typical classroom teacher does not appear to have time for children's genuine wondering and questioning from which structured inquiries can grow" (Jackson, 2001, p. 459). We know that many teachers believe in the importance of students' wonderment and questions. However, when it comes to structuring classroom activities and assessments their practice often

does not match their beliefs about children and learning. In this current era of high stakes testing, many teachers find themselves teaching to "get through the material" because of the pressure to help their students pass "the test." As a result, the students' time for genuine wondering, questioning, and thinking are ignored, and the teacher is led to abandon their convictions about what constitutes a good education. For many reasons, theory is frequently not translated into classroom practice.

The philosopher's pedagogy represents a commitment to bringing theory into classroom practice. Not only must a teacher believe education and philosophy are inextricably linked, they must also create opportunities for their students to engage in the activity of philosophizing in their classrooms and via their assignments. We realize this is no simple task. As we suggested earlier in this paper in regard to Dewey's ideas, teaching is an art, and so is the practice of "doing philosophy" in our contemporary public school K–12 curriculum.

In many of our loosely structured "Big P" graduate-level seminar courses, it is common for the teacher to ask the class to "discuss" a reading without any guidance, structured activity, and assessment. In order to bring philosophical activity into the context of the classroom, teachers must thoughtfully design and implement organized philosophically rich classroom activities and assessments. These do not emerge organically by simply arranging students in a circle or around a table. It takes creativity, knowledge of subject matter, an understanding of human development, and the willingness to experiment, reflect, and try again. We have engaged in this process for the past decade and in our effort to translate theory into practice, p4c Hawai'i has been especially helpful.

p4c Hawai'i offers teachers a set of classroom structures and provides students with a clearly articulated set of tools for bringing philosophy to life in the classroom. From the perspective of p4c Hawaii, these structures, procedures, and tools are works in progress. How these tools can be modified and expanded to better meet the needs of their unique student populations is left to the teacher's discretion. We don't intend to limit the philosopher's pedagogy to the activities suggested by p4c Hawai'i. In fact, we constantly invent new activities and assessments to bring philosophy into our specific content and grade level. However, we have found that within the p4c Hawai'i curriculum there reside a

number of proven classroom practices and procedures that have helped us (and many of our peers) bring our general theories of education to life. Among the most important and frequently used are the concept of intellectual safety, and strategies such as the community ball, Plain Vanilla, and the Good Thinker's Tool Kit (Jackson, 1984; 2001).

Intellectual safety and the community ball

In order for philosophy to become part of the students' experience, it is imperative that the classroom be "intellectually safe." Although the idea of safety is not unique to the philosopher's pedagogy, the added emphasis on explicitly creating safe and caring communities of inquiry is primary and essential to our practice.

Classrooms must be physically safe places. For dialogue and inquiry to occur they must be emotionally and intellectually safe as well. In an intellectually safe place there are no put-downs and no comments intended to belittle, undermine, negate, devalue, or ridicule. Within this place, the group accepts virtually any question or comment, so long as it is respectful of the other members of the circle. What develops is a growing trust among the participants and with it the courage to present one's own thoughts, however tentative initially, on complex and difficult issues (Jackson, 2001, p. 460).

The importance placed on intellectual safety, as well as the strategies implemented to cultivate a respectful classroom environment, provide the context where students are encouraged to gain greater self-understanding by viewing themselves from various perspectives (Banks, 2002). In the intellectually safe classroom students learn from one another, appreciate multiple perspectives, and ultimately learn about one another. This important sense of community establishes a learning environment where knowledge is socially constructed in meaningful and responsible ways.

In order to cultivate intellectual safety, students are explicitly introduced to the concept and terminology at the beginning of the school year and are encouraged to self-correct using this vocabulary throughout the duration of the class. Quite often you will hear students in our classrooms, at all grade levels, reflect upon and identify safe and unsafe behaviors. This positive and corrective environment allows all relationships in the classroom to develop, which increases the impact the students' classroom experience has on their learning.⁶

One of the signature techniques incorporated into p4c

Hawai'i classrooms is the creation of a "community ball" (Jackson, 2001, p. 461). The community ball gives each student a sense of place and purpose that supports further classroom inquiry where the learning and discovery expands far beyond the content of the text. On our first day together we create a "community ball" to begin the process of building our intellectually safe classroom community (Jackson, 1984). However, as the year progresses, the community ball becomes a tool of instruction that is used to facilitate philosophical inquiry.⁷ By passing the community ball from person to person during class discussions, students learn how to take turns in a well-regulated group discussion. The ball gradually empowers the students to feel comfortable in calling on each other and to take ownership of their inquiry. The community ball does this by establishing and making concrete certain rules and agreements necessary for a fruitful discussion to take place: 1) only the person with the community ball can speak, 2) students and teachers always have the right to pass, and 3) the person with the community ball chooses who speaks next. These rules for engagement help teachers and students keep philosophical discussion at the heart of most major classroom activities.

The Good Thinker's Tool Kit

Equally important has been the development of specific tools and evaluative criteria to assist the students in the development of rigorous inquiry within the intellectually safe community. In order to learn, identify, and evaluate the type of thinking needed to move an inquiry to an intellectually deep level or to "scratch beneath the surface," the students are explicitly taught and given multiple opportunities to practice the seven cognitive components of the "Good Thinker's Toolkit" (Jackson, 2001, p. 463). The good thinker's tool kit consists of seven indicators for critical thinking which are:

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? and

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

Students are encouraged to back up any claim or insight, such as an inference, with relevant evidence or reasons to identify hidden assumptions and so on. In short, the Good Thinkers Toolkit is a heuristic device that is designed to promote and evaluate the student's development as responsible and critical thinkers.

Plain Vanilla

In order to engage a classroom in philosophical discussion, students and teachers need a structure for classroom inquiry that supports the practice of "little p" philosophy. Jackson (1984; 2001) suggests a "Plain Vanilla" format where students generate questions, vote on the question they want to talk about, and use a set of assessment criteria to judge the progress of their community (intellectual safety, listening, participation) and inquiry (learning something new, scratching beneath the surface of a topic, remaining focused, etc.). "Whenever possible, students and teacher sit in a circle during inquiry time. Students call on each other, no longer relying on the teacher to carry out this responsibility. Each has the opportunity to speak or to pass and remain silent. In this environment inquiry will grow" (Jackson, 2001, p. 460). Plain Vanilla discussions rely on the "questions and interests of the children and move[s] in the direction that the children indicate" (Jackson, 2001, p. 462). We have found by providing this type of structure in the classroom, along with the other activities and assessments mentioned in this section, the students' sense of wonder is valued and incorporated into each inquiry.

Challenging contemporary measures for classroom assessment

Finally, the philosopher's pedagogy requires teachers to rethink contemporary measures for classroom assessment. Over the past two decades, the American education system has created a school culture where instruction and learning objectives are driven by state and national standards and high stakes testing. Standards explicitly state what students should know and be able to do at the end of a school year or course of study, and high stakes exams measure the degree to which students have reached the goals implemented by those standards. As a result, today's schools stress the outcomes of summative assessments such as the Hawai'i State Assessment test.

The concentration on standards and high stakes testing has had a tremendous and negative impact on classroom

pedagogy. Teachers, who are under pressure to prepare students to successfully pass state examinations, have altered and developed their instruction to focus on "end products" or what their students should be able to know or do on the state assessment. In this school culture of testing, learning has become synonymous with passing "the test" and the profession of teaching has been changed. Pedagogically, educators have moved from teaching critical thinking as an integral aspect of the learning process, to efficiently providing their students with the knowledge to pass a series of exams.

For example, in Hawai'i, one of the eighth grade US history standards asks students to provide multiple factors for the outcome of the American Civil War.⁸ This standard will likely be covered on the upcoming statewide social studies assessment. Therefore, in order to prepare their students to pass the test, many teachers provide their students with a ready-made list of factors that they are required to memorize, rather than the engaging in a thoughtful discussion about the reasons for the Civil War.

This pedagogical trend is troubling to many educators who see teaching to the test as the "dumbing down" of the American school system. The solution has been to modify standards and assessments from an over emphasis on the mastery of content knowledge to a larger concentration on the students abilities to think. For example, many states (44 at last count) are moving towards adopting and implementing national standards like the Common Core State Standards that have a "greater emphasis on higher order cognitive demand" (Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011). The hope of the Common Core initiative is the establishment of new critical thinking standards that will create a new school culture that focuses on teaching students how to think. While we applaud this effort, changing standards is not enough. From the perspective of the philosopher's pedagogy, the contemporary American school system must also change the overemphasis that it places on the end product. The philosopher's pedagogy asserts that contemporary measures for classroom assessment must also account for the intellectual growth or philosophical progression that students experience while engaged in the process of learning. "Little p" philosophy, by definition is an activity. It is a learning process that places importance on students' abilities to think for themselves⁹ across contexts, and in the face of new problems. The presentation of an answer to a question is part of the activity of "little p" philosophy, but not the only part.

This is the reason that the philosopher's pedagogy requires teachers to challenge contemporary measures of classroom assessment by making the thinking process the primary focus of their assessments.

So how do we assess thinking? We start by making both teachers and students accountable for the development, progression, and methods they use to arrive at their conclusions. We recognize that when students thoughtfully engage in inquiry it often reveals how complicated a question or topic really is (Jackson, 2001, p. 463). Uncertainty; confusion; the emergence of new ideas; willingness to challenge one's thinking; increased depth of understanding; and cognitive, emotional, and intellectual connections all become indicators of growth. The process of analyzing complex ideas is a sign of progress. We ask our students at the end of an inquiry, did we see complexity in a topic that we hadn't realized was there?, did we make connections with other ideas, concepts, or experiences?, did we challenge our thinking?, and, if a possible answer did emerge from the discussion, did we use "good thinking" support our conclusions?

For example, the concept of friendship is a pervasive theme in many of the novels encountered in a high school language arts course. When these are approached using the philosopher's pedagogy, students are prompted to examine their understanding of friendship and ask about the qualities that they consider important in their own friendships. This demands that they first attempt to clarify what friendship means and identify what such relationships require. As evidence, examples, and counterexamples emerge, the concept that was so familiar to the students becomes more complex and even somewhat confusing. A similar process arises with respect to many other important concepts such as democracy in American history. Students begin with an exploration of their assumptions regarding the extent to which democracy has been realized in the United States history and then test these assumptions by gathering historical examples and counter-examples. At the end of the inquiry students begin to recognize the difficulty of defining concepts and terms without examining the historical context they are situated in.

In the process of exploring these inquiries into friendship and democracy, we provide students with the time and opportunity to reflect on their own understanding. As teachers we give students feedback and credit for their thinking process, and we evaluate the conclusions they draw (which often appear in the form of an essay, project, or test). The

intention of the philosopher's pedagogy is not to attain a unified understanding or answer; each person in the class may be at a different place at the end of the inquiry because of the specific evidence (based on personal experience or previously established information/data) they used to construct their response. The philosopher's pedagogy encourages multiple perspectives and diverse conclusions backed by sound reasoning, rather than the pre-meditated response found in most curriculum packages.

By the end of the year our students have learned that they should experience some sense of confusion over the course of an inquiry, that perplexity and confusion is an important stimulus to reflection and to "getting to the deep end of the pool." They learn to celebrate and even find comfort in uncertainty, especially if it is productive of reflection. They grow confident in the conclusions they draw because they can be articulate about the thinking process that got them to that deeper place. Our students feel prepared to face the unknown challenges ahead because they have developed some self-assurance in their practice of thinking for themselves. The reward is that our students, in spite of our not teaching to the test, regularly meet or exceed proficiency in state standards and do exceptionally well on high stakes exams.

The Philosopher's Pedagogy; So What Now?

The preceding account sets out what we understand to be our philosopher's pedagogy. We believe it is an eminently practical pedagogy that incorporates a philosophical spirit and that is directed to encouraging classroom practices that engage students in reflection on important issues. It was born as a solution to deficiencies that we experienced as classroom teachers, and it has evolved in ways that are sensitive to our students' needs and abilities, in addition to our different needs and abilities as teachers. Over time the philosopher's pedagogy has grown from a series of activities into a belief system that concerns the practice of philosophy in the school classroom.

The philosopher's pedagogy is a commitment that we have made to our own development as teachers. The pedagogy urges our students (as well as ourselves) to recognize that our beliefs come to us from various sources, and that it is good to question these beliefs. In addition, the philosopher's pedagogy is a commitment to collaboratively engage students and teachers in directed, ongoing, rigorous inquiry

concerning values. The philosopher's pedagogy, by carefully considering the relationship between philosophy and education, aims to bring back the notion that schools are places in which we can pose questions regarding our human being and work together to understand the purpose of our lives and our contribution to the world.

Quite often philosophy has been characterized and stereotyped as an activity of the mind. However, due to its connection to our lived experiences and emotions, it is also an activity of the heart. The philosopher's pedagogy works to correct some of the shortcomings of our contemporary school system by providing students with the space and tools to sharpen their cognitive abilities, as well as their growth as individuals, which is what His Holiness the Dalai Lama (1999) refers to as an "education of the heart" (p. 85–95).

...our current education system, rather than cultivating our sense of openness and engagement, instead heightens our feelings of isolation and insulation. Schooling, especially as inculturation, builds up preconceptions, expectations, and rigid notions of order and behavior. It breaks down our experience of an alive whole into an endless array of categories, taxonomies, concepts, criteria, and evaluative judgments...Through approaching the world in this fashion, with each year of schooling our spirit, and the sense of aliveness and richness of the world deflate. This should not be the case. Children and adults should continue to learn and grow throughout their lives, eventually becoming what some traditions refer to as elders or keepers of wisdom, (Glazer, 1999, p. 81–82).

In order to aid in the positive transformation of today's schools the philosopher's pedagogy is not a top-down model of education reform. It is a grassroots movement that begins with teachers and students working together to fundamentally change what happens in classrooms. This movement directly addresses, and constantly keeps in mind *the central question* that is often ignored or missing during today's educational policy discussions: What is best for students?

Teachers and students should not be the only ones responsible for answering this question, of course. The task of rebalancing schools to a place where the mind *and* heart get educated requires different voices to participate in the dialogue about the relationship between philosophy and education, theory and practice. This is a dialogue that should be shared between teachers, parents, grandparents, students, community groups, colleges of education, teacher

education programs, state departments of education, and beyond. Philosophy has an important place in schools, and only by working together in thoughtful and meaningful activity will we discover or rediscover the potential that philosophical reflection has for making us individually and collectively wiser.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Traces of the idea of a philosopher's pedagogy reach as far back as the work of Socrates.
- ² Matthew Lipman created the IAPC at Montclair State University in 1970 after he received financial support from the National Endowment of the Humanities (Lipman, 2008, p. 120). The Task of the IAPC was to systematically prepare teachers to deliver the P4C curriculum to students worldwide. Lipman hoped this training of teachers would be spread through departments of philosophy, rather than colleges of education, in order to maintain the integrity of the discipline of philosophy in the classroom
- ³ Among them were (1) the reliance of the curriculum on the presence of someone in the classroom with philosophical training; (2) the perception of K–12 classroom teachers that philosophy should be reserved for education at the college level; and (3) the cultural incongruence between Lipman's novels and the experiences of many children in Hawai'i.
- ⁴ For a more detailed description of Jackson's approach see Jackson, T. E. (2001).
- ⁵ Similarly, Dewey also argued the philosophic disposition could be found in any person who is "open-minded and sensitive to new perceptions, and who has concentration and responsibility in connecting them has, in so far, a philosophic" (Dewey, 1916, p. 325).
- ⁶ Jackson (2001) provides additional methods and strategies for establishing and maintaining an intellectually safe and caring community (p. 460–461).
- ⁷ For a detailed description on how to build and use a "community ball," see Jackson, T. (2001).
- ⁸ In the state of Hawaii, social studies benchmark SS.8.13 is, "Explain the major factors that determined the outcome of the Civil War (including leaders, resources, and key battles).
- ⁹ "The phrase 'thinking for oneself' suggests thinking that is autonomous and independent (as opposed to controlled or dependent). A person who thinks for herself is, in an important sense, free. She is able to reflect upon her own experience and upon her situation in the world. She is prepared to reappraise her deepest values and commitments, and hence her own identity...the person who thinks for herself understands that the subject matter of her inquiry can never be completely severed from herself as inquirer" (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 16).

Practicing Philosophy for Children in the Search for a Better Society

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My Belief in p4c

My first impression of the philosophy for children program in Hawai‘i (p4c) was a strong, intuitive feeling that this approach to education can be a vehicle to change the world. This feeling has not faded at all in the course of my five-year commitment to p4c. Rather, it has been growing into a deeper belief that p4c has an important role in society, not only to improve education at schools but also to develop a democratic, responsible community. Yet, as I have exchanged my ideas about p4c with teachers and researchers, I have come to realize that these beliefs are not necessarily shared by others. Some of them have expressed a serious concern that p4c might result in value relativism.

This concern might be articulated in the form of two rhetorical questions: If the cultivation of thinking abilities per se is the central concern of p4c, is there a danger in this form of education of directing children to a relativistic position that any idea is welcome as long as it is generated as a result of a careful collaborative deliberation? If free thinking is one of the values of p4c, should we let it go when children reach a conclusion that might discriminate, scorn or hurt other people? These questions become critical, especially when the focus of inquiry moves into sensitive moral areas. Inquiry, for example, might end up with the idea that it is OK to destroy the earth because nothing in nature stays the same and the earth might be destroyed by the collision of a meteorite anyway. One might argue that in this example, at least, there is no need to worry about arriving at such an extreme conclusion because, in actual dialogue, it is not likely that all children support this sort of controversial answer. Yet, it seems theoretically impossible to show that an open-ended inquiry will never generate morally problematic ideas.

As a p4c practitioner, I would answer NO to both of the above questions. I believe that not all ideas can be given

equal standing even if they are produced through the process of inquiry. There is an important distinction between “all outcomes have equal value” and “all views need to be given a fair hearing.” What, then, are the reasons for my belief that p4c does not promote value relativism? If this form of education should not be identified with moral relativism, what else do we need to emphasize in practicing inquiry other than the value of children-oriented, open-ended thinking? In this essay, I will consider a role of philosophy for children in conducting moral education at public schools, particularly on the basis of my experiences with the p4c Hawai‘i-Japan exchange program, in which I have explored the application of p4c to moral education.

A Gap Between p4c and a Standardized Moral Education

The p4c Hawai‘i-Japan exchange program, funded by the Uehiro Foundation on Ethics and Education, has been providing important opportunities for teachers and researchers to consider the possible contributions of p4c toward the improvement of moral education. I have been participating in this program as a coordinator since it began in 2006. Every summer, Hawai‘i teachers demonstrate p4c inquiries with elementary students in Japan and observe moral lessons conducted as a part of a standard curriculum. Teachers from Japan then attempt moral lessons with students at Waikiki Elementary School and participate in the p4c workshop coordinated by the p4c practitioners at the University of Hawai‘i (UH). One of the greatest benefits of this program is the advancement of a cross-cultural inquiry concerning schooling and education. Although the educational systems are not the same, it is stimulating to exchange ideas from both countries about current worries and hopes for better schooling and to promote dialogue on what they can do in order to improve the quality of education.

It has been pointed out that p4c does not necessarily fit into the framework of a standardized moral education in Japan because the latter is designed to teach a predetermined set of moral values. The guidelines on moral education developed by the government of Japan set the framework for the lessons by designating approximately twenty moral values that need to be covered within one school year. Most teachers build their lesson-plans in accordance with the governmental guidelines. Thus, even if the teacher respects students' thoughts and encourages them to think for themselves about moral issues by attempting student-centered moral dialogues, it seems difficult to conduct fully open-ended inquiry: students are encouraged to think only within a provided framework. This content-driven aspect of moral education in Japan is somewhat incompatible with a key requirement of p4c Hawai'i that we should follow the argument where it leads in inquiry. Because of this difference, some people think that p4c is not fully applicable to moral education in Japan.

I witnessed a critical gap between p4c and Japanese moral education when I observed a first-grade classroom lesson at a Japanese elementary school. In the class, students read a story about a girl massaging her grandmother's shoulders that had become stiff from her everyday domestic duties. The grandmother, being happy with this girl's kindness, promises her a small tip. But the girl says that she does not want a tip and keeps massaging her grandmother's shoulders even after her arms start to hurt. Students exchanged ideas about the grandmother's feelings—why she wanted to give a tip to the girl, and the girl's feelings—why she said she wanted no tip and why she did not stop massaging her grandmother's shoulders after her arms started to hurt. Students considered these points from various angles and broadened their interpretations of this story. Since I observed children actively participating in the exchange of ideas, I was surprised to hear the teacher say, "The class was not successful. It was supposed to be about filial piety. But most children's ideas had different foci such as familial love, kindness, and self-renunciation."

From a prevailing view of moral education in Japan, the evaluation of the class often depends upon whether students could obtain a shared understanding about a particular moral value. If the teachers have to teach twenty or more values in a limited timeframe, it is inevitable for them to prepare each lesson with a particular focus. The major difference from p4c lies in this point. One of the important aspects

of p4c is to provide an appropriate environment in which students are able to explore their own interests and to seek a deeper understanding of things. According to the educational perspective of p4c, the lesson I observed seemed quite successful because it provided the students with the opportunity to identify various moral meanings in a daily context with which they are familiar.

Moreover, the difference in the expectations about educational outcomes leads to different notions and methodologies in preparing lessons. The content and the direction of p4c inquiry cannot be fully prepared in advance: they develop through dynamic interaction in dialogues among students and teacher. In a p4c-style lesson, it is, therefore, not appropriate to determine the end point of an inquiry before the lesson. People who are not used to this style of teaching might ask, "Can we really teach morality in such an unprepared framework?" The misidentification of p4c with value relativism is partly rooted in this worry. In contrast to Japan where moral education has been included in a standard curriculum, the state of Hawai'i does not provide a statewide proposal for this area of education. However, moral growth is still regarded as an important issue in schooling, and some schools are developing unique approaches to teaching it. Waikiki Elementary School regards moral education as their highest priority and works on cultivating a morally sensitive, intellectual community through everyday school activities. *Mindfulness* is the main value that guides the philosophy of this school. Based on the work of Art Costa's "Habits of the Mind," the school identifies mindful behaviors, such as cooperation and caring, flexibility in thinking, listening with empathy, and managing impulsivity. These habits are shared with teachers and students through the use of signs that are posted around the school facility. Students are encouraged to reflect on the educational values in these signs and express their understanding of them through essays, pictures, and so on. Furthermore, p4c inquiry has been providing important opportunities for children to share ideas about moral issues, and it has helped provide ways to practice mindfulness. The sessions of p4c allow for actual moral dialogues in the classroom, which serve to integrate both critical and caring aspects of thinking.

The p4c Hawai'i-Japan exchange program has not only provided educators with an opportunity to explore the gap articulated above, it has also provided evidence that p4c does not entail moral relativism.

The Top 10 Things I LOVE about p4c Hawai'i

Jolyn Ikeda

In 2001, Dr. Thomas Jackson, or Dr. J as we affectionately call him, spoke to the faculty at Waikiki Elementary. He described p4c Hawai'i and encouraged us to try P4C if something about it “resonated” with us. “Resonate” is a great description—I felt like something deep inside began to hum as he described the program. In the beginning, Dr. J held a p4t (philosophy for teachers) after-school seminar and he, along with some graduate students, did p4c in our classes. That is how my p4c Hawai'i experience began.

Here we are several years later. I have been asked to share my perceptions of p4c. In speaking with my colleagues, I realize that p4c is many things to many people. At the very heart of p4c is safety. A safe community, a place where people feel safe to share ideas without judgment or ridicule, is the foundation of the p4c circle. That said, I want to share the top ten things I LOVE about p4c.

#1 “We’re not in a rush.”

That’s what Dr. J always reminds us. We know you can’t hurry a child’s development, but sometimes we forget. In our hurried society, with immediate gratification as the goal, many people are focused on quick results. These quick results are not always good in the long run. p4c does not always have immediate results, but it can be profound in the long run.

My start was very slow. I felt p4c was wonderful and I was excited to see it implemented in my class. We had a p4c session with Mr. Chip (a graduate student) each week for forty-five minutes. For more than half a year nothing happened! Students were not showing evidence of deeper thinking. It was getting close to the end of the year and I decided not to do it the following year. Then we had a breakthrough, a “blossoming”! A child asked if thinking ever stops. They discussed whether dreams were thinking during sleep. They wondered if and what babies thought. They wondered if animals thought because they wondered if the animals that attacked had a conscience. What about insects? Plants? Do they think? Yes and no, and all backed up with logical reasons for their point of view. That conversation

was so deep I almost wept! After that, our p4c sessions were very rich. I think I was incredibly patient to wait as long as I did. If not for Mr. Chip, I would’ve quit much earlier, but he knew “we’re not in a rush.”

#2–8 The Good Thinker’s Tool Kit uses a seven-letter acronym to help us examine our thinking, ideas, and beliefs.

I love the Tool Kit because the tools are a way of examining thinking. If I say “The moon is made of cheese,” what are my reasons? what is my evidence? can I give any examples? are there counter examples? Students make statements, then they are asked for their reasoning using the Tool Kit. Others agree or disagree and justify their comments using the Tool Kit. Students learn how to think, rather than what to think. Here are the seven tools as I understand them and love them:

W—What do you mean by that? When a person makes a statement that we don’t understand right away we use the W. We also use it to define what we are asking. We use the W to make sure we are talking about the same thing, for example, “What do you mean by *magic*?” When a person explains his or her own ideas it helps the speaker define and clarify his or her ideas. It helps the speaker focus and discard irrelevant information. The “W” also helps the listeners. Sometimes the initial statement led us to a very different assumption and the “W” helps us to get closer to what the speaker means.

R—What are your reasons? The R is my favorite letter. It is easy for a second grader to understand the request “give me a reason”, but it takes thinking to a deeper level”. A simple concept like what is your favorite toy, food, etc. is usually easy to answer. When giving a reason is attached to the question, there is a deeper understanding of what a person values or believes. It is the tool in the thinkers’ Tool Kit that most people use even before they have heard of p4c.

A—What are you assuming? Assumption is a difficult concept for second graders. I usually tells them that an assumption is something we believe to be true. It may or may not be true, but it is treated as the truth. Sometimes we use

assume to assist the dialogue. “Let’s assume Santa is real. If Santa is real can he die?” We don’t need to discuss the idea of Santa being real (although that is one of my favorite topics with second graders), to discuss his immortality. The word *assume* has a bad rap and that is because assumptions can be dangerous. Learning what *assume* means helps us to understand how assumptions can be dangerous.

I–What can we infer from a belief? Inferences ask us to think about consequences. They involve us in if...,then... thinking. I sometimes struggle to differentiate infer and assume. I use our reading response definition (as I understand it) for infer. “When we infer, we use clues, things we already know and make predictions (or guesses) about what might be true.” It is different (in my mind) from an assumption because an assumption is believed to be true, while an inference, we realize, may or may not be true. I like to use to this activity to teach inference: When a guest joins us, we look at the person and make some inferences about that person: Who is he or she? What does that person do? Are they married? Do they have children? What hobbies do they have? It’s a fun and easy way to talk about *infer*. Then the guest gets to validate or invalidate our inferences.

I used an example of if...,then... thinking in the Santa topic: “if Santa is real, can he die?” However, I rarely use the if...,then... strategy. But **if** I use it, **then** it is probably attached to an inquiry.

T–Is it true? Always? Sometimes? “Is it true?” is an interesting question for second graders because to them, almost everything is true and real. Ask a second grader if magic is real, the Tooth Fairy, dragons. It generates a really interesting conversation. Sometimes they will also talk about things that scare them: monsters, ghosts, etc. If you ask, “Is it true always?” you get them closer to discriminating between what is true and real and what is not. Also, someone may make a statement such as “Boys don’t like ballet.” If you ask if that is true they will probably say yes. Then ask if it is always true. They will start to realize that if it is not always true, it might not be true at all.

E–Can you provide an example or offer evidence? In second grade asking students for evidence is a useful task. I ask the students what evidence they have to say that the Tooth Fairy is real? The E may not change a child’s point of view, but they become quite discriminating about which evidence they will believe. The E is a most valuable tool for teaching reading comprehension. The students find evidence

in the story to support their responses. Prior to using the evidence in teaching reading, students would give me responses that were not supported in the story. Since I started using E in p4c I have noticed an improvement in their reading responses.

E also stands for example. We may ask for examples when we don’t know what someone means by... We also ask students to give examples of things that are real. Generating examples also helps us compare and understand concepts and even develop criteria. If we ask children for examples of their favorite toys, we can compare what they like about these toys. We can then develop criteria for a good toy. Example can also help disprove something. Do you have an example of a talking dog? If there are no examples, perhaps it doesn’t exist.

C–Is there a counter example? Counter examples are another way of disproving or expanding ideas. For instance, a student may make a statement like “strangers are scary looking.” Asking the students if there is a counter example: “Are there strangers that aren’t scary looking?” enables students to delve deeper into understanding a concept (in this case the concept of stranger).

The tools from the Tool Kit transfer to other content areas. One of my former students once stated, “In a paragraph we need to have examples and evidence for our topic sentence.” In our reading response, we look for evidence to support our answers. We use the Tool Kit in science, social studies, writing, and I’m sure you can find other uses. The Good Thinkers Tool Kit helps students become discriminating thinkers. They are learning to think for themselves and not just taking someone’s word on faith or without reason. It is a way to examine inquiry. For me, it is the heart of the inquiry process.

#9 p4c teaches students to effectively communicate.

In the p4c circle, students learn to take turns during a discussion. They need to listen to each other. They ask for clarification (What do you mean by that?). They also learn to disagree without arguing. Prior to using p4c in my classroom, second grade disagreements were usually of the “yes it is; no it’s not” variety, often ending with “I’m not your friend, any more.” With p4c students realize that there are a range of different perspectives. Differing points of view are valued and make the discussion more interesting. Students

can be heard saying “I disagree because...” or “I agree because...” or “Do you mean...” They also change their minds based on the discussion. I’ve had second graders say “At first I thought..., but now I think...” or “I don’t know what to think—my head is spinning (from all the different perspectives)” Wow! Perhaps our world leaders need to sit in a p4c circle.

#10 p4c Hawai‘i is student centered.

In Plain Vanilla, the students formulate inquiries based on their interests. The class then votes on the inquiry topic for discussion. The students call on each other. Many times people from the university will sit in our circle. The students do not automatically call on them, calling upon their peers instead.

p4c doesn’t preach. A former student would keep things he “found.” He told me: “Finders keepers, losers weepers.” In a p4c circle students shared how they felt when they lost something. They talked about returning things they found and how happy and grateful the person was. In the end, I noticed him returning things he found on the floor. I believe that what his classmates had shared made an impression on him. I don’t think he would have paid attention if it had come from me.

Finally, p4c “reshuffles the deck,” as Dr. J so eloquently puts it. Students use the Tool Kit and share their insights. Oftentimes we find that it is the most “philosophical” students are also the ones who have poor academic skills. How well someone adds and subtracts has little correlation with how logical or insightful they are. I have been impressed with comments from my lowest readers, autistic students, English language learners (ELL students), and every other kind of learner. p4c also gives the rest of us an insight into how these children think.

These are the things I love about p4c. I recommend you try it. It helps to have support. If it weren’t for Dr. J and Chip, I would’ve given up before I really started. It is also great to have other teachers to talk to, and share with. I always learn from watching Dr. J, Dr. Benjamin Lukey, or my colleagues who join me to facilitate a p4c session. Also, it is great to have a pair of fresh eyes. Sometimes I don’t appreciate that my students are thinking like the great philosophers until Dr. J, Dr. Ben, or a philosophy graduate student visitor points it out to me. So if any of this resonates with you, contact Dr. J or Waikīkī School.

Philosophy for Children

Angela Kim

When I was first introduced to p4c Hawai‘i, it made me cringe. I wasn’t sure what it was all about, but it reminded me of a miserable past experience of sitting in a circle. Sitting in circles is the sort of activity that I try to avoid in life. During my junior year at high school, I attended a leadership camp at the recommendation of a teacher. My parents signed me up. Leadership camp involved activities where groups spread out across the library all sitting in circles. The group I was in involved sharing what kind of person we were and how we might change once we went to college. My turn came, and I said I didn’t think I would change that much. It was clear that my response wasn’t creative enough. The senior facilitator, who was a popular girl in our school of more than two thousand students, dismissed my contribution. She explained that going to college was like starting with a clean slate and that we could be a new person—anyone we wanted to be. I wasn’t about to speak up again, but I wanted to yell, “I like who I am. Why should I change?” I felt irritated at not being acknowledged. I wanted to shout out: “This is stupid! Who cares! If we change, we change. Why talk about it?”

I have always felt that conversations like these were a waste of time, and this incident validated it for me. I didn’t see the point. We sat and talked about issues until the cows came home, but when it was over, nothing had changed. The world was exactly the same, after this supposedly “world changing” conversation. Besides being a waste of time, I felt it was a waste of emotions. On the last night of the leadership camp, everyone sat in one big circle. It was an open discussion in which everyone was free to share. Emotions began to pour out as sensitive topics were touched upon. I sat dry-eyed, glancing at the clock, while others wept. It was a painful experience for me to endure.

Now that I am a fifth-grade teacher, I have the same view about group sharing events. When I heard p4c Hawai‘i was about sitting in a circle and sharing thoughts, ideas, and feelings, the excitement it produced in me was about the same as the prospect of doing yard duty. It was not something I wanted to do. However, I am in the minority as most of the teachers at my school are cheerleaders for p4c.

When a p4c Hawai‘i course was first offered to our teachers, I was adamant about not signing up. In the lunchroom, faculty conversation turned to the topic of the course. One teacher told me it was great, and it had changed his life. I told him I liked my life and didn’t want it to change. Leadership camp all over again. I suppose I’m not a huge fan of change. But gradually, the sign-up sheet was getting filled—even by teachers who claimed not to be interested in p4c. But the course did offer three very tempting credits, and it would be taught afterschool, on our campus, which made it very convenient. I was desperately in need of credits and the price was considerably less than other classes I had taken. I began to view the course as an attractive option. I wavered a bit, and then I tried to convince a fellow teacher to sign up with me. She would be just as uncomfortable in the course, and I’d have an empathetic partner while getting my credits. I figured if I could convince her, I could convince myself in the process. We both reluctantly signed up.

I was told that Dr. Thomas Jackson, aka Dr. J, would guide the p4c discussions in my class. If I was going to give this p4c thing a try, I wanted to be sure that when I rejected it, it wasn’t because I didn’t work with the best and most expert teacher of philosophy for children. Dr. J is the best, and he is widely adored by the students at our school. When he walks through the halls, children flock to his side just to hear his Donald Duck impression and to ask when he’d be coming to their class next. He always smiles, and the children see him more as a peer than an adult. He was very genuine and was always excited about something, even if it was just chocolate. I love chocolate; so I could, at least, relate to him on that level. But that didn’t mean I approved of p4c.

A group of “newbies” gathered together in the p4c course. We were newbies, not because we were new to the school, but because we were the p4c holdouts and had never conducted p4c alone in our class. We were the skeptics—the ones who would roll our eyes whenever we heard the words, “Let’s make a big circle.” The p4c sceptics would “pass” when the community ball ended up in our hands. If any one of us shared something, the others felt betrayed. There was

never really any pressure to share, unless, of course, it was the pressure we put on ourselves. Dr. J was always pleased with the outcome of each discussion despite the level of participation.

At the beginning of the course, our newbie group all received articles about p4c printed on lovely purple paper. We all agreed to read them by the time we were to meet again. I started to read one of the articles, but then something distracted me. I don't remember what it was. It might have been the dishes or fatigue or boredom, but I never did finish it. And apparently none of the other newbies finished their readings, either. Philosophy for children was a world we were unfamiliar with. I still wasn't on board when it was time for my fifth graders first p4c session, but then I was only there to observe Dr. J at work.

My fifth grade class that year was an interesting group, to say the least. They were a class of extremes—academic as well as athletic. The personalities of the students were also quite different. Some liked to speak up in class; others did not. We even had extremes when it came to physical height. I was curious to see how p4c would work for this diverse class.

At our first p4c session, Dr. J and his college student “groupies” introduced themselves to the students. Dr. J always travels with two or three students from the university who are just as excited about p4c as he is. The students seem very typical college students—young, wide-eyed, inquisitive, and perhaps a little nervous. My students loved having these cool visitors. If they couldn't sit beside Dr. J, they wanted to sit next to one of these young philosophers. After the introductions, Dr. J started the process of making a community ball. It started with a ball of yarn and the end was slowly wrapped around a paper towel core as each child shared a little about themselves. The yarn wrapping, I realized, kept the children from being nervous and by the time everyone had shared, the ball had been made with every student in the class contributing. The end result was a community ball, which was to be used for future sessions. The rule is that if you have the community ball, you have the floor. Sharing always starts out with something simple. Students could share their name and maybe their favorite thing to do. As I observed the students, they didn't seem too nervous with this task. If a student was nervous or had nothing to say they simply said “pass” and that was acceptable. No big deal was made and, towards the end of the session, the students

who had passed were given another chance to share if they wanted to.

It all seemed harmless enough, but there was something that I found very frustrating about p4c. I love talking with friends and sharing my life and thoughts when I feel comfortable. But, when I feel put on the spot and all eyes are on me, I can't think clearly. At times like these I don't want to share, but, at the same time, I don't not want to share. I want to be able to say something that makes everyone nod and agree or laugh or even say, “Wow! What a profound thought!” But, when I get nervous, all that's in my head is, “Crap! It's my turn.” Heck! It was hard enough raising my hand in a group. I had to raise it at just the right time so I could get the community ball passed to me before my thought became irrelevant to the discussion but not so early that I was interrupting the speaker's thoughts. And here I was putting my students in this same frustrating situation, and instead of being sympathetic, I was irritated that they weren't all participating. It's twisted, I know. I'm the sort of teacher who wants my students to raise their hands to answer a question. But, I'm the type of student who would rather sit back and let others do the answering. I suppose I'm afraid I'll say something stupid. And yet, as a teacher, I encourage my students to speak up and try to give an answer or express an opinion. Maybe those high school circles left me more scarred than I realized. In p4c, I had to learn to put aside my own fears about participation and give the students the patience and acceptance that I would have wanted.

As we progressed with p4c in our class, we moved on to discuss more specific topics. The students volunteered ideas and voted on them. Eventually, after some debate, a topic would be chosen. Choosing the topic gave the students ownership over the conversation. The students became the advocates and the experts. I began to notice that the students' communication skills were improving and that I didn't have to referee as often. Students were becoming better at waiting patiently for the community ball instead of interrupting, and some of the reluctant speakers began raising their hands to share. I appreciated this positive growth in the students. The same behaviors were also occurring beyond p4c, at other times of the day. But I still harbored some doubts about the value of what was being discussed. Yet, after each session, Dr. J was always so positive. He would say, “Wow! You have an amazing group of children!” Or he would be in awe of the topic the students had chosen, and I would be think-

ing to myself, “Why did we just spend forty-five minutes discussing whether a tomato is a vegetable or a fruit?”

As we continued with p4c, in spite of my doubts, I observed a shift in the discussions. I could see the students beginning to feel more safe and free to share their ideas. I had held myself back from taking over and controlling the conversation, unless a student was making others feel unsafe by interrupting or verbally attacking them. But as the students became aware of what was acceptable and not acceptable, they began to feel secure in sharing and commenting, even the quiet ones. I enjoyed seeing this transformation, because I identified with the quiet students. I knew if they were sharing, it was because they wanted to and not because they were being forced. They were genuinely comfortable, as if they were talking to a friend or a family member. They weren’t being put on the spot. And as they grew more confident, the topics gradually became deeper and more searching. We went from “What if ants ruled the world?” to “Why do people get drunk?” Some people might say both topics aren’t very philosophical. But, the real change wasn’t just in the topic; it was how the students talked about the topic. They began to share personal life experiences. They became less inhibited and showed respect for what each person said. They realized they could learn from each other even if they had different thoughts, ideas, and experiences. The students were well aware of the fact that anything shared in p4c was never to be used as ammunition against each other. I was pleasantly surprised to see this rule respected. Perhaps the first few sessions were learning experiences in which the students could observe how their teacher and peers would react to what was being shared. When the p4c circle proved to be a safe place to talk about difficult themes, they began to open up. Soon the sessions became more about life. And I learned more and more about who the students really were and about their personal issues and interests. I began to empathize with them. It helped to guide me in my teaching so that I could target my instruction more individually.

I also noticed they were becoming good critical thinkers by using the thinkers toolkit, and I found myself learning from my students. One student might ask, “Why can’t people think for themselves?” and another student might respond with “Would you explain your question?” or “Can you give us an example of when someone didn’t think for themselves?” They wanted to know exactly what the other was asking, not what they thought she was asking. I assumed

I knew what the student was asking based on my perceptions and soon found I was wrong. The students would not only ask for clarification of questions, but of comments and even words. One discussion topic was about whether or not testing was a good idea. The word “smart” came up and someone asked, “What do we mean by ‘smart’?” I began to see why so many teachers had incorporated p4c into their weekly routine. As the students gained more opportunities to use and practice critical thinking in p4c, they began to apply it outside the p4c sessions in other lessons.

I can see now why these college students were an asset to have around. They were still very inquisitive and creative in their thinking. I remember college being the time of life when I asked the most questions, when I wondered the most, and when I was the most creative and daring in my thinking. And here were my fifth graders practicing college level thinking. Dr. J and the college students were in the same intellectual place and so they could relate to the students. I was still trying to find a balance between being a disciplinarian, a facilitator, and a participant open to sharing my thoughts and questions with my students. I found myself a little nervous even in our own little p4c circle. It was like I was in college all over again, except that I was the biggest students. With each p4c session, the discussions, questions, and comments resembled more and more a college classroom rather than an elementary one.

I can no longer call p4c Hawai‘i a waste of time. I could see that there was a huge difference between the discussion circles of my past and p4c circles. There was safety in p4c and there was continuity. It wasn’t meant for one warm and fuzzy experience. It was there to assist in building a community of inquiry. With each conversation, genuine bonds were being developed, not at a rapid pace, but at a slow enough pace so the bonds were strong.

It soon became clear that the students weren’t the only ones benefiting from p4c. I was beginning to think about things in a deeper way and ask questions about what was really being said. The other day I was reading a book and the author was trying to help me understand that there was no clear and universally accepted definition of “good.” I was with him on that, but as I continued to read I thought, “He’s making a lot of assumptions.” I was aware of this only because p4c asks students not to take questions at their face value, but to ask what they assume. So, being a participant in p4c has also helped me become a better thinker.

Philosophy for children doesn't change the world, but it has the potential to change individual worlds and assist in creating world changers. I'm learning all of this slowly but surely. I have come to a new place where I feel that I'll soon be able to facilitate sessions without the help of Dr. J or one of his college groupies. I may even remove the "newbie" label I've enjoyed for so long. But, like Dr. J always says, "We're not in a rush." I'm just settling into the idea that this p4c thing has its perks, and that's something I'd like to share at our next staff p4c session.

Critical Communities: Intellectual Safety and the Power of Disagreement

Ashby Butnor

Metropolitan State College of Denver

I was involved in p4c Hawai'i for many years during my graduate studies. It was my first introduction to "teaching," or, more accurately, the facilitation of philosophical inquiry. I cannot imagine a better way to prepare for a lifetime of such work, though admittedly, the wisdom, imagination, and openness to the world expressed by my young students then has set the bar very high for the men and women I now see on a daily basis. For this reason, I begin each semester anew with the promise of philosophy for children; the promise of a term filled with fruitful dialogue and hard thinking as well as laughter and camaraderie.

What I would call the "p4c pedagogy" has become infused into my undergraduate teaching. The Good Thinker's Toolkit, the model of reflective community inquiry, and the desire to "scratch beneath the surface" are woven into the foundation of my courses, even when p4c is never explicitly discussed. At the beginning of each semester though, there is one concept that stands out as a recurring challenge: intellectual safety.

Intellectual safety is often conflated with the feeling of being comfortable. Susan Herbst (2010), in her book *Rude Democracy*, writes that, "72 percent of students agreed that it was very important for them always to feel comfortable in class." I imagine this feeling of comfort as similar to feelings of relaxation and belonging, free of stress and doubt, while being entertained, amused, or satisfied in some way. Herbst adds to this sense by including the students' desire to remain "unthreatened intellectually." While we may all strive to maintain classrooms absent of physical or emotional threats, a college classroom without intellectual challenges is likely one of complacency and mental laziness.

It is my claim that intellectual growth, for both an individual and a community, must involve some kind of discomfort. I see this discomfort as a natural by-product of an initiation to interactive, dialogue-driven learning. A

dialogic pedagogy is one in which new ideas, arguments, and positions emerge through serious, intellectual conversation. In this approach, all participants are responsible for their own contributions and accountable to the community of inquirers. If a student is accustomed to, and thus comfortable with, learning directly from a teacher, a textbook, or a PowerPoint slide, being asked to think and talk about what one thinks may be a truly threatening experience. Thinking may be painful. Being asked to defend a point of view may feel intimidating. Having to create or change a position can be taxing. For some, even speaking seriously in front of others may be foreign and disconcerting. Fear, insecurity, and embarrassment may be completely normal reactions to a change in teaching strategy and, hence, a shift in what is expected of each student.

Even for those experienced in community inquiry, moments of discomfort may be common when engaged in dialogue. What is so exciting about interactive and dialogue-driven learning is its open-ended structure. In some sense, one must be ready for anything—for changing one's mind, becoming aware of one's own implicit assumptions, being attracted to or disturbed by new perspectives, struggling through a difficult idea, or impressing even oneself with an articulate expression of insight. Along with moments of discomfort are also these moments of excitement, discovery, affirmation, and achievement. It is these "aha moments," and their persistence and reappearance, that make the struggle and pain worthwhile. It is precisely this sense of accomplishment that comes from the thinking process itself that I want my students to experience.

I recommend that we reconceive intellectual safety to embrace something more than simply feeling comfortable. An intellectually safe place ought to be established with the recognition that *vulnerability* is a central component of the epistemic mission. We are vulnerable whenever we willingly

put our ideas and positions at risk—risk of being challenged, revised, defeated, or elevated in the course of conversation. In some sense, we are putting our very selves at risk. We truly give of ourselves in this collective, dialectical process. Not only do we openly share our own partial interpretations of the truth, but we must also relinquish our stake in those ideas in order to fully hear and be present to the positions of others. And all participants must then be invested in a quest for truth and meaning and willing to follow the inquiry where it leads. In our search for an understanding greater than our own, we seek, in the words of Hans-Georg Gadamer, a fusion of horizons. For a genuine fusion, a genuine—i.e., risky, vulnerable, and challenging—dialogue must take place. This fusion involves more than a mere merger of ideas. There's a sense of an internal debate taking place; a sense of striving to understand different positions in the process of presenting a better account of one's own and, further, supporting the best position overall.

There is, I imagine, nothing more tedious than a classroom of students who constantly agree with one another. This kind of agreement is not the expression of shared ideas, but, rather, an unwillingness to put anything at risk. In my classrooms, I want students to become fully invested in the value and power of disagreement. Thus, I engage in the formation of what I call "critical communities." The mission of a critical community is the pursuit of truth through intellectual engagement with texts, ideas, and one another. At the heart of such engagement is disagreement. With my students, I work to foster and develop the skills necessary to challenge, critique, and disagree in a constructive manner. It is the moments of disagreement that push us forward in the dialogue and allow us to get somewhere, however indeterminate that place may be. However, I dissuade them from seeing disagreement as a facile, two-sided debate. Given the prevalence of over-simplified and factionalized political debate, this model of disagreement is one that students either emulate or seek to avoid in their complacent agreement with one another. Thus, part of establishing a critical community that seeks truth and common wisdom is to show them another way to disagree. Disagreement reveals complexity, nuance, and subtlety, rather than simplification and over-generalization. Disagreement raises questions and draws people together in a search for answers, rather than drawing the lines of insurmountable difference. A critical community wants answers, but not easy answers.

The question then remains as to how we can create intellectually safe places while simultaneously elevating the value of disagreement and criticism. How can one feel intellectually safe while explicitly making oneself vulnerable to challenges? I believe a crucial first step is empowerment. Students need to come to value themselves, their community, their ability to think, and their capacity to cultivate thinking skills. I see students who are often intimidated, and even incapacitated, at the possibility of getting something wrong. This incapacitating level of self-consciousness needs to be dismantled. I begin this process in the simplest of ways; I begin each term by simply getting them talking. I will spend the first few weeks of each course with as much dialogue-driven talking as possible. My expectations for the level of discourse at this point are fairly minimal, though I try to raise the bar gradually. So much rides on a student's perceptions of her own abilities and her belief in the kind of learner she is (typically, a quiet one who prefers lectures!). If I can persuade each student to articulate her thoughts to others and to validate those thoughts and ideas with as much encouragement as possible, students may begin to gain more confidence. For students who are already accustomed to such methods, I may begin to prod them for better responses or encourage others to disagree or raise an objection to their points. I try to do this in as light-hearted a way as possible, pointing out that laughter and good fun can be part and parcel of intellectual challenge and learning. In addition to instilling useful habits in each student and modeling a form of critical engagement, this process also builds community. In a way, we are "in it together." Students begin to realize they are embarking on a journey and everyone plays a role in this expedition. The better we work together, the better this journey will become.

The analogy of a journey helps to remind all of us that we are engaging in a process. As educators, we need to instill in students the idea of learning as a process, and, even better, a communal process by which communities of inquirers can progress together. Wisdom does not come via instant gratification. It is a slow, arduous process of maturation and skill building of which we are all capable. Establishing intellectual safety requires instilling a necessary amount of confidence to recognize vulnerability as a legitimate and vital aspect of learning. Understanding that errors, misjudgments, and revisions are part of the learning process, students may be more likely to value constructive criticism, disagreement,

and challenges to their current ideas. Furthermore, with growing confidence in their abilities and progress, students will come to be even more motivated to learn, explore, and find joy in the process itself.

Intellectual safety, then, should not be understood as feeling comfortable. Rather, it should be conceived as a feeling of trust in oneself and one's community to honestly and genuinely engage in thinking together. Gadamer (1980, p. 121–122) describes shared inquiry as the activity in which we “willingly put all individual opinions to the test while abjuring all contentiousness and yielding to the play of question and answer.” Here, we see the beauty of dialogue; it is both a testing and challenging of our perspectives as well as a playful and joyful pursuit for truth through dialogue. However, it is precisely intellectual safety, the “abjuring [of] all contentiousness,” that allows for this dual identity as both critique and play. While we should reject belligerent quarrels and unproductive squabbling amongst our students, we need not eliminate intellectual “threats” or challenges. These, we have seen, are the engines of this enterprise. And lest we not forget the point of this process, Gadamer concludes this passage by stating, “shared inquiry should make possible not only insight into this or that specific thing, but, insofar as is humanly possible, insight into all virtue and vice and the whole of reality.” While this may be a bit too lofty an aspiration for our own critical communities, the role of our shared inquiries is no less important.

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Philosophy for Children in Hawai'i: A Community Circle Discussion

Benjamin Lukey

In spite of the many different “flavors” of p4c Hawai'i, one undeviating element involves the creation of a community for intellectually safe philosophical inquiry. The first step in this process is usually an activity in which the participants work together to fashion a “community ball”. It's a process that Thomas Jackson teaches in his PHIL 492 course.

The Community Ball

Lisa Widdison (UH Mānoa philosophy graduate student and p4c facilitator at Hokulani Elementary)

When I took Dr. Thomas Jackson's Philosophy for Children course, he taught us, right at the beginning, how to make a “community ball.” I have to admit, I did not get the purpose at first. I thought it was a sort of an intentional distraction to make us less self-conscious as we answered the three questions that Dr. Jackson asked us. I could not have been more wrong. What I got from the class is that I have become less fearful of being wrong and more concerned about finding out when I might not have it right. The questions we were asked that day could have been any number of different questions. By combining group interaction with the physical creation of a very likable ball of yarn, the class became a community. The yarn changed from a mere thing to a symbolic representation of the community as it was passed along. One student fed it with yarn, another student answered a question, then they passed the growing ball to someone else who fed in more yarn and so on to the next person. The result was that we had collaborated in making the ball. Why is that so special? The community ball has several functions. As it is formed, the community is formed. The community ball activity demonstrates that cooperation among individuals is necessary for the creation of a community. The ball also becomes a means of assigning the power to speak. Whoever has the ball is the one permitted to speak. This does not mean that one has to speak; it means that they can speak if they wish or choose to pass, and in passing choose who is to speak next.

When people visit an upper-elementary or high school p4c Hawai'i classroom, they come away deeply impressed with the level of thought and discourse among the students. The question arises “How are you able to get your students to do this?” Often, the first step, as David Falgout notes, is simply changing the

structure of the classroom into a circle, which shifts the focus toward dialogue and inquiry.

The Community Circle

David Falgout (UH Mānoa philosophy graduate student, HPU lecturer)

I feel it's important to point out that the goals of the teacher are reflected in the structure of the classroom. Put differently, classroom structures reveal much about the implicit aims of educators. Children, as they are habituated into these structures, become implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) aware of these expectations and react accordingly. The typical modern classroom reflects such educational aims as “following directions,” and our students frequently respond to this by assuming that their present life situations have no bearing on the content of education. In other words, the education they receive tells them that their individual interests are to be set aside for the sake of receiving a “one-size-fits-all” education, especially considering contemporary standardized testing approaches. A revision of the classroom structure, however, could remedy this situation significantly because it would simultaneously communicate to students that the teacher is adjusting routines for the students. It is revealing, therefore, to notice the reaction that new students have upon entering a p4c Hawai'i community circle for the first time. At first, many are simply giddy that the classroom offers a break from the traditional models they are familiar with. They are brought into an environment that encourages dialogue and inquiry.

Once in a circle, cultivating an intellectually safe community of inquiry requires time, patience, and a commitment to fundamental practices of talking, listening, and thinking with one another in class. From kindergarten, the groundwork is laid so that by the time children are in 2nd grade, they are already modeling the behavior we would like to see as adults.

Lydia Shigekane (Waikiki Elementary teacher)

In kindergarten, I view p4c principally as a community-building activity. My primary aims in kindergarten p4c are for everyone to feel safe enough to speak, to want to speak, to speak with kindness, and to listen with empathy to others. From the first day of school, our first group activity is to sit in a circle on the floor and introduce ourselves to each other, sharing some simple bits of information. We use a soft stuffed animal (monkey) as the-right-to-speak device, and take turns speaking. There are always a few children who are too shy to talk, and they do, of course, have the right to pass. But even shy children want to be heard, and it doesn't take long before everyone is at least saying, "Hi friends, my name is..." I rejoice when this happens. The first step toward speaking to the group has been taken by all. This is how we start p4c in kindergarten—one simple question, monkey goes around the circle, and everyone has the chance to speak.

Once the habit of sitting in a circle, passing George, and listening attentively (more or less) has been established, I break the class into two groups (random groupings) and begin introducing inquiry into our p4c circle. With only half the class (ten or so students) sitting together in a circle, children get the chance to speak more often and to listen for shorter time durations. Sometimes we start our conversation by reading a story and talking about questions that arise from the story, sometimes we just wonder about things, and sometimes I pose questions related to class or home experiences.

There is never a guarantee that something great will happen during a p4c session, especially in kindergarten, when sitting still and waiting for a turn to speak can be agonizing. Sometimes I find myself acting and feeling like a bad policeman, brutish and cranky, because my only contribution to the community seems to be repeated, stern warnings to restless, inattentive souls. On these occasions I can barely keep track of the muted, interrupted ramblings of a few devoted students who have done their best to keep the conversation moving. Do we, as kindergarten p4c participants consistently "scratch beneath the surface?" No. But we are trying to *spend a little more time than usual* on ideas. And we are practicing being a community that can think together and learn from each other.

Jolyn Ikeda (Waikiki Elementary teacher)

In the p4c circle, students learn to take turns during a discussion. They need to listen to each other. They ask

for clarification (What do you mean by that?). They also learn to disagree without arguing. Before p4c, second grade disagreements were usually a "yes it is"/ "no its not" argument, usually ending with "I'm not your friend any more." With p4c, students realize that there are many different perspectives. Differing points of view are valued and make the discussion more interesting. Students can be heard saying "I disagree because..." or "I agree because..." or "Do you mean...?" They also change their minds based on the discussion. I've had second graders say, "At first I thought..., but now I think..." or "I don't know what to think, my head is spinning (from all the different perspectives)" Wow! Perhaps our world leaders need to sit in a p4c circle.

Val Gee and Whitney Mahoney (Waikiki Elementary teachers)

When we have p4c sessions in our fifth-grade inclusion class, Dr. Jackson joins us and brings along several UH students, which adds even more variety to our truly diverse classroom. For both of us, p4c has become a valuable tool that we have been able to use not only as an avenue for our students to freely express themselves, but also as a means of promoting healthy and positive relationships among each other. It's an opportunity for students and adults to apply real world skills such as listening, sharing ideas, and learning to live together in a diverse society. It is wonderful to witness students of varying needs and abilities listen to others and speak their minds on various student generated topics, such as "Should kids be able to drive?" and "Are ghosts real?"

When teachers see the benefits of cultivating communities of inquiry in their classrooms, they also seek such communities in their professional development. The principal of Waikiki Elementary School, one of p4c Hawai'i's model schools, sees the efficacy of the Community Circle not just among the students, but among the teachers as well.

Bonnie Tabor (Waikiki Elementary principal)

As principal, I have found p4c to be of tremendous benefit to our teachers in their professional development. Our faculty meetings often become p4c circles. Within these forums, teachers challenge themselves to bump up their own thinking skills and delve deeper into the topic of concern. Through the intense process of discussion, a camaraderie develops as all strive together to become increasingly adept and effective critical thinkers whose decisions will

impact the school community positively. This process is enlightening. As teachers develop their own thinking, it has a positive and synergistic impact on everything that happens within the school. Better thinkers yield better teachers who in turn produce more inspired classrooms for our students.

Intellectual Safety

One of the defining features of a p4c Hawai'i community of inquiry is intellectual safety. Commitment to an intellectually safe classroom is a commitment to inclusivity in which all participants are valued. The importance of intellectual safety is highlighted further in classes where students with special needs are included in the classroom community. Students with disabilities often lack confidence in their value as participants and, as a high school special education teacher relates, an intellectually safe p4c classroom can help them realize their value.

Katie Berger (Kailua High School special-education teacher)

The environment of a p4c community is by nature less threatening for students, especially those with disabilities who may be more timid in a general education setting. The classroom is set up so that all students and teachers are together as one community. Teachers take on more of a facilitator role, which in my opinion gives students a sense that whatever they have to offer to the community is just as important as what the teacher may have to offer. I think this moves some of the pressure of being “right” away from the student and gives them an opportunity to say how they feel or add their thoughts on the matter without the possibility of being ridiculed for being “wrong.” The p4c classroom is built upon community, inquiry, and philosophical dialogue. In order for these three things to take place all students must agree on making the class intellectually safe. This means that all community members have the right to their own opinion and everyone has to be heard without judgment.

Students in our English class took this very seriously, and this was important in building a strong community of inquiry. Because students felt safe about participating, the discussions would quickly develop as philosophical conversations and students would “dig deeper” into the topics. All student in the class, disability or not, felt comfortable weighing in. And the more the special education students added to the class discussion, the easier it became for them to raise their hand and take risks answering questions they weren't sure about. The feedback they got from other community

members was positive; the classroom, intellectually safe.

The intellectual safety of a classroom develops gradually. There are many degrees of intellectual safety. As a classroom becomes more intellectually safe, participants are more honest because both the speaker and the listeners know that honest participation requires respect and that there is far less anxiety that one's words may be misunderstood.

Dana Finnegan (Hökūlani Elementary teacher)

“You can tell Ms. Finnegan that you hate her!” That statement out of the mouth of a six-year-old babe was a celebration of the freedom of p4c in our classroom. How could that be a celebration? What p4c has brought to our classroom and our lives is the freedom of real truth, genuine honesty (around adults no less) and the joy that freedom has triggered.

When in a child's life, or anyone's for that matter, can you look directly at someone and know that it is okay to be that honest without dire consequences? All their lives children are taught by adults not to lie, but then we admonish them if their truth is not what we expect it to be. How confusing is that?

Intellectual safety is important for its role in developing a sense of community, but it is also valued for its role in helping students to make progress in their thinking and understanding. A philosophy graduate student explains how intellectual safety came to improve her own thinking.

Ana Laura Funes Mandelstam (UH Mānoa philosophy graduate student)

One of the things that has struck me the most about the philosophy for children program is precisely its capacity to make us think anew about any topic within a safe environment, without having to worry about being wrong or right or original. When I am at a p4c session, I feel my thoughts flowing spontaneously again. They articulate themselves in an original and unique way that happens just because I am allowed to be “me.” The amazing thing is that this uniqueness springs out of the community of inquiry and because of it. This is something that I became aware of as I was working on an essay about Wittgenstein. He says that it is only after having learned language in social interactions that we can start to articulate our “inner language” of thought and not viceversa. I think my visits to Waikīkī Elementary School have helped me to better understand this idea. Having visited p4c sessions mostly with first graders over one semester made me realize

how much our thought is embedded within this social context, and how important it is for the development of our own thoughts to be part of a safe community.

Progress in p4c Hawai'i inquiries

A p4c Hawai'i inquiry is a complex process of social and intellectual interactions. Veteran p4c teachers are attuned to the many ways that students and a class may exhibit progress in and through the inquiry process. Simply being part of an intellectually safe diverse community exposes participants to different ideas and prompts explorations of one's beliefs and those of others. The initial confusion that results from the introduction of new ideas is a sign of progress in our own thinking

Catherine Caine (Waikiki Elementary teacher)

Social learning is at the core of my philosophy as a teacher. I can't emphasize enough that we learn best when we are supported within a safe community that values not only thinking but also social thinking. As a teacher it is imperative that I find systems that enhances my students opportunities to learn in social ways.

In her book *Active Literacy Across the Curriculum*, Heidi Hayes Jacob makes a distinction between true discussions and question-answer sessions. When teachers ask questions it is usually the same students who raise their hands, ready with the answer that the teacher is seeking. No discussion. Jacobs, however, points to the Latin root of the word discussion as "discutere" which means to shake apart. p4c doesn't encourage students to find the one right answer, it creates instead "discutere," a shaking up of thinking, if you will. By engaging in social learning processes students are provided with an opportunity to explore, investigate, respond, and listen to others' thoughts.

When presented with a variety of beliefs and viewpoints, it is important that participants are also equipped with the means to critically examine these beliefs and form further questions that will push the inquiry deeper. The Good Thinker's Tool Kit (GTTK), created by Thomas Jackson, provides participants with a vocabulary and strategies that develop critical thinking skills. Also referred to as WRAITEC¹, the GTTK consists of seven letters that help identify and facilitate processes characteristic of good thinking. These "tools" are often utilized throughout the process of inquiry, the most basic of which is called "Plain Vanilla." Plain Vanilla consists of five stages: 1) Participants read, watch, or listen to a stimulus together as a community; 2) each participant poses a question; 3) the participants then vote on which question they will use to begin the discussion; 4) the discussion/inquiry begins (this stage usually accounts for

the bulk of the time in Plain Vanilla); and 5) they reflect on and/or evaluate the discussion. A Kailua High School teacher who is also a Waikiki Elementary School parent relates a story that reveals how comfortable and competent her children were with the GTTK and how they were able to help her as she began to use these strategies as a teacher. Another Kailua High School teacher relates how comfortable her sophomore students were with the GTTK and how they used WRAITEC to form questions for the classes' first Plain Vanilla.

Kelley Espinda (Kailua High School Japanese Language and Culture teacher)

I am privileged that both of my children have attended Waikiki Elementary School and have participated for several years in the p4c experience with Dr. Jackson. It has helped both my son and daughter develop confidence, and it has improved their problem solving skills and compassion for others. An "aha" moment for me came about when I was brainstorming a lesson plan that included some practice questions for my students. My ten-year-old daughter surprised me, when I asked about the WRAITEC acronym that is one of the strategies that they learn in p4c. She began immediately reciting key words and example questions from a book report she was currently working on in class. I followed up by asking her what she thought about the practice questions I had written down previously. Without a bat of an eye, she exclaimed, "Really, Mom!" I almost caught her rolling her eyes at me. She was unimpressed with my questions and immediately started offering feedback on how I could make my WRAITEC questions better. The WRAITEC tool kit is extremely useful in guiding and creating questions that promote discussion and inquiry.

Jenine Hutsell (Kailua High School English teacher)

On the first day of school I sat in a circle of twenty-seven sophomores, nervously rehearsing how I would explain the community ball to the new students. My sweaty hands fidgeted with the brightly colored yarn. "What is the community ball?" I asked the class, as if I really knew what I was talking about. Instantly, hands shot up and students rang out in reply. I was relieved. Not only did students know how the community ball worked, but they also knew why it was important to the community. I was impressed with the students' confidence in their responses. They had taken the teacher's role, collaboratively explaining the concept of the ball, and I had taken the student's role as an active and supportive listener.

As much as I had learned on the first day, I was still working from bits and pieces, and struggling to pick up the concepts as we rapidly moved through the first semester. Thankfully the students were already familiar with using the Good Thinker's Toolkit and WRAITEC inquiry strategies, which guided the class discussions. Our first Plain Vanilla started about mid-way through the semester. I had put up reading response questions for the students to complete in order to review their reading from the previous day. I thought this would help students prepare for the discussion. As the students completed their responses in their notebooks, I looked over their own WRAITEC questions to make sure they were ready to share. As I read I was impressed with the depth and insightfulness that the students' communicated through their questioning. I looked back at my questions on the board and found them completely unnecessary. I realized that I did not need to give them questions to answer; I just needed to listen to the questions they already wanted to ask. My little reading response questions were killing the authentic curiosity that the students had already developed and were itching to share. That was the last time I gave the questions.

Progress in an inquiry can also be deeply personal. Two teachers at Waikiki Elementary describe the social and academic progress of one of their students as an illustration of the impact of p4c.

Val Gee and Whitney Mahoney (Waikiki Elementary teachers)

We recall one particular student. He was shy and somewhat reserved. He was fond of numbers, history, and drawing, but he rarely raised his hand or talked much in class. His contributions to discussions were usually short, one-word responses like "yes," or "no," or simply "because." As teachers, we wanted to help him to come out of his shell and achieve more of the potential that was in him. After a couple months of school, he revealed in his journal that he has aspirations to be a politician when he grows up. With his dream of one day running for office in an election, we knew that developing communication skills would be vital to pursuing his goals, but we weren't sure how to help him. To our pleasant surprise, he began slowly to emerge from his shell during p4c sessions. The open nature of p4c and the feeling it encourages that it is safe to talk, provided the perfect context for him to improve his communication skills without feeling pressure. Each week he increased the

number of times he raised his hand during p4c, and each time his answers grew in depth and complexity. By the end of the year, he was drawing from his extensive knowledge of historical facts and current events to explain, support, and define his ideas. He gradually gained in confidence as his peers listened attentively to his opinions and began to look to him as a source of historical and factual information. We also saw gains in his writing and personal communication.

Many students find themselves drawn to topics and questions that are familiar from academic philosophy.

Makana Ramos (Kailua High School alumnus)

I enrolled in Honors English trying to make my folks happy, and I didn't know what to expect. I hadn't taken a class from the teacher, Chad Miller, before, but I am very grateful I had the chance because the guy changed my life. I was allowed to speak up in class and share my ideas. This class was like nothing I had experienced before. I thought I had enrolled in an honors English class but luckily I got philosophy instead. The approach Mr. Miller took in his classroom brought everyone out of their shells and right into the action. I took an interest in the topics we discussed. Now, I actually wanted to go to school. I couldn't wait to ponder and question the different ideas that I had walked past so many times in the hallways of life. What is love? What is hate? What is enlightenment? We read book after book, and I found myself really wanting to read. Philosophical discussions fueled my appetite for understanding, and I wouldn't stop until I was satisfied. We would read short stories and discuss them vigorously. Our small class of twelve became a scholarly community like the one in the movies, like *Dangerous Minds*. p4c changed the way I looked at and came to value education. Now I want to spread the word and way to everyone. I believe introducing philosophy into schools nation wide would drastically change the lives of students for the better. Our p4c circle changed me forever and I will be forever grateful.

Ultimately, what teachers often see is all these aspects of progress come together in one classroom. In her reflection on p4c Hawai'i, a Waikiki Elementary School teacher sees personal, social, and philosophical growth interwoven together.

Nannette Ganotisi (Waikiki Elementary teacher)

Sometimes, many times, the topics start off light and fun before going deeper. The holidays always spark an interest

in topics like ghosts, or Halloween, or “Is Santa real?” These topics have a way of going deeper and students wonder if it is or is not fun to be scared. The class usually separates into those who say it is fun to be scared and those who saying it isn’t. These are times with no right or wrong answers.

p4c has really helped some of our students feel comfortable in sharing their emotions. Some have spoken about their parents’ divorce and feel safe enough to share how they feel.

I often start a p4c session with a story, song, or artifact. On one occasion we started with the song “True Colors.” A first grade girl shared that her dad “hides his true colors and that is why mommy and daddy are getting divorced.” Then another first grader shared a story about her dad texting another woman and her mom found it. Details like these make p4c so powerful and even heartbreaking at times. Four girls decided to form a sort of club at recess after learning that each of them came from divorced families. They asked if they could stay inside at recess for their club. It was a short-lived club, but it formed a long-lived friendship. After sharing their stories they wanted to play. Their friendship endured for the rest of the year. When students share stories like this it makes all of the students think more deeply—about their own families, about relationships, and about each other. They learn to empathize, to care about friends and relations, and to cooperate with each other.

What Kids Have to Say

As rewarding as it may be for teachers to be involved with p4c Hawai’i, the real reason they remain committed to p4c is because of their students. The students themselves love p4c, and they understand why it is important that they have the opportunity to take time out of a busy school-day to nurture their community of inquiry.

Matt Lawrence (Waikiki Elementary teacher)

I asked students in my sixth-grade class to answer the question, “If you believe p4c is good for kids, what are your reasons?” Here’s what some of them had to say.

p4c allows us to use our minds and think in different ways. You have to back up your reasons with evidence and examples. That can really help improve your writing skills. While doing a report I think of p4c, and then I use descriptive words on it.

Usually when kids talk they get disrupted, but p4c is a fun way to share questions and ideas about a subject without getting laughed at or criticized. If the topic involves something that you have held

inside yourself, p4c is something that allows you to say it.

In p4c we can express ourselves. We also can talk about things that you have problems with; or you can talk about things to get other things off you mind. When someone is scared about something, in p4c you get to know that other people are feeling the same way as you and then you know that you aren’t alone. There are other people in your class who are may be scared too. Without p4c kids wouldn’t be able to escape what’s going on in their heads.

p4c is a way to communicate with your classmates and get to know them better. You hear other students’ opinions and maybe change yours. When you hear others...it might have a positive effect on you such as understanding more about the topic or getting new ideas.

p4c teaches us how to respect each other’s ideas and everyone’s different perspectives. It also helps me learn how to discipline myself and listen intently to other people’s thoughts instead of just thinking about my own opinions and thinking that MY thinking is the only right way.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ W- What do you mean by?; R – Reasons; A- Assume/Assumptions; I – Infer/Inferences, Implications, If...Then; T – True; E – Examples, Evidence; C – Counterexample

The High School Philosopher in Residence: What Philosophy and Philosophers Can Offer Schools

Benjamin Lukey

The Call for a High School Philosopher in Residence

Ever since Thomas Jackson introduced philosophy for children to Hawai‘i in the mid-1980s, one of the defining characteristics of his p4c Hawai‘i program has been its commitment to working with classroom teachers in Hawai‘i’s public schools. Part of the program’s mission has been to find every way possible to support these teachers, both in their classrooms and as faculty in a school setting. This has aided the teachers to develop their own intellectually safe communities of philosophical inquiry and to grow as colleagues engaged in philosophically fruitful reflections on issues that matter to them. All this has helped to create a deep-seated commitment among the teachers to p4c as a basic approach to teaching, rather than just another passing programmatic fad. Until relatively recently, much of the focus had been on working with teachers in elementary school classrooms, where they had the freedom to set aside time for p4c each week.

At Kailua High School (KHS)¹, two teachers—Amber Makaiau and Chad Miller—began incorporating p4c into their curricula (in social studies and English, respectively). Both have achieved impressive results in their respective classrooms. Their students have also performed well in their classes and on the high stakes tests such as the Hawai‘i State Assessments, and Advanced Placement exams. More importantly, their students were engaged participants and spoke positively to other students and teachers about their English and social studies classes. Through the University of Hawai‘i, Makaiau and Miller taught a course to introduce p4c to several colleagues who had become interested. Although the class was successful in introducing the theory behind philosophy for children and many aspects of the p4c pedagogy developed by Jackson, Makaiau, and Miller, it became clear that if p4c Hawai‘i was going to become part of the Kailua High School culture, teachers

who wanted to implement p4c in their classrooms would need additional support.

Thus the p4c Hawai‘i Executive Council decided, with the support of the Uehiro Foundation and private donors, that we would provide the support of a high school philosopher in residence as a pilot scheme. I agreed to take on this role and endeavor to translate my experience and competence with p4c in elementary school settings into the high school context. The project would enable me to learn about exactly what was required in the role of a high school philosopher in residence (PIR).

What is a High School Philosopher in Residence?

When I first began working at Kailua High School in 2007, there was no job description for a philosopher in residence. Furthermore, in creating my own job description for this position, I realized that I was working against a system that predominantly views educators as subject-matter specialists. A quite natural expectation of teachers and students is that the role of a philosopher in residence is to dispense expertise on the subject of philosophy in keeping with their standing as an authority on the historical figures, movements, schools, and arguments that are studied in philosophy departments in colleges and universities across the U.S. But I saw my role quite differently and wanted to avoid the trap of becoming just another subject specialist.

I do recognize, however, that the idea of the subject matter specialist is very deeply embedded in current educational thought and practice. The idea derives from a conception of education that sees education as the process of pouring information into learners minds, from one sophisticated, carefully crafted container (i.e., the teacher) into several less sophisticated, still unfinished containers (i.e., the students). This emphasis on the transmission of information can be traced to the Taylor model of education

that has dominated education reform since the early 20th Century. In their book, *Becoming Good American Schools: The Struggle for Civic Virtue in Education Reform*, Jeannie Oakes et al. describe the Taylor efficiency model of education, which views teachers as factory workers and students as the widgets that they produce. The model likens knowledge and learning to commodities. Teachers, as subject-matter experts, not only ensure the continued production of this commodity, they also lobby to ensure that it is valued in proportion to how many widgets they can produce.

The Taylor model and its accompanying hierarchy of subject-matter specializations creates difficulties for teachers in engaging in interdisciplinary practices. It provides no space for collegial dialogue and collaboration. Pedagogical improvement is often limited to “tricks” for passing on new information, ideas, or concepts. In addition, teachers are too ready to profess their non-expertise in subjects outside their specialization. High school teachers will regularly proclaim, “I am not a science teacher,” or “I am not an English teacher.” This perpetuates the idea of distinct disciplines confined only to those who are recognized specialists. For those who are not recognized specialists, the discipline thus becomes external and peripheral to their interests. While the understanding of certain concepts undoubtedly requires the kind of concentrated effort that only specialists in a field can afford, the focus on content specialization creates the false impression that non-specialists or specialists in other disciplines can not meaningfully contribute to the pedagogy or understanding in a particular discipline.

Thus, when I began work at Kailua High School I understood that I had to overcome the entrenched view of philosophy as a content specialization and the view of the philosopher as subject specialist if I were to make any impact in my role as philosopher in residence. Over-emphasis on subject matter specialization makes it difficult for teachers to include philosophy as part of K–12 education. One of the reasons for the relative paucity of philosophy in K–12 education is the questionable assumption that children and adolescents are unable to comprehend the issues and questions that make up the discipline of philosophy or to engage in philosophical reasoning. A further reason is that philosophers have no recognized discipline-specific role within the K–12 school system.² I felt strongly that what was needed was to adopt a more collaborative and interdisciplinary approach.

Philosophy is generally regarded as a rather arcane subject—the preserve of specialists who predominantly teach in colleges and universities.³ Thus, in creating the position of a philosopher in residence at Kailua High School, I wanted to avoid the image of “philosopher” as a subject-matter specialist. There were several reasons for this. First, philosophy is not, and should not be, its own content area, separate from other content areas. Secondly because my role as PIR was to work with teachers in *their* classrooms, I did not want to act as the sage on the stage dispensing philosophical wisdom. My role would instead be to help teachers and students engage in philosophical activity in the classroom. The reinstatement of philosophy as a classroom activity serves as an antidote to the idea of the philosopher as a subject-matter specialist. Philosophy as an activity, specifically as a pedagogical activity, is something for all content areas. Therefore, philosophical activity also provides an opportunity for teachers to engage in a form of interdisciplinary inquiry.

I suggest that this reinstatement of philosophy as a dialogical activity in the classroom can become a useful addition to pedagogic practice and that trained philosophers can be helpful toward this end. However, this conception of philosophy is far removed from its current status and role in the academy. The idea that philosophy is more than the study of the philosophical canon and that it can be better understood as a dialogical activity is as old as philosophy itself. Indeed, it is Socrates who was the model for me as philosopher in residence. My role would be as a facilitator of philosophical dialogue and inquiry, not as a subject-matter specialist.

Philosophical dialogue and inquiry

Socrates comes to us in three Platonic versions.⁴ However, his commitment to dialogue and inquiry is a constant feature of his philosophy. Socrates often met with his interlocutors in the *stoa*, or covered walkways, in ancient Athens. His practice of meeting in a public space suggests the need for a philosophical meeting space for discussing ideas in schools. This idea of a meeting space is in direct opposition to the Taylor model of education reform. The Socratic alternative to Taylorist education reform begins with a rejection of the factory model. Teachers are not traders of information, their worth determined by the amount of information they have accumulated and generated. Rather, teachers and students meet in a community circle to

participate in philosophical dialogue. At times the dialogue may examine such well-defined territory as the workings of a cell; at other times it may explore perennially murky territory such as justice or love; or it may slide from the defined to the murky which occurs when we reach the limits of what we really understand about cell division and are faced with things we do not yet understand.

The idea of philosophy taking place at a meeting space where dialogue and collaboration are valued places the focus on the *processes* of understanding and the *purpose* of education. This focus on purpose is itself philosophical, as Socrates notes in his inquiry into the teaching of the idea of courage when he says, “And in a word, when he considers anything for the sake of another thing, he thinks on the end and not of the means” (Laches, 185d). This focus is not incompatible with testing, but in practice the discussion of the ends is often lost in the activity of the means (i.e., testing).

Finally, it is important that the philosophical dialogue about pedagogy not be coercively steered toward *the* right answer. The early Socratic dialogues often end with both Socrates and his interlocutors confused, in a state of *aporia*. Whether he is inquiring into piety, justice, virtue, or beauty, the Socrates of the early dialogues does not pretend to offer answers. At his defense he flatly states that he is not a teacher and “has never promised or imparted any teaching to anybody” (Apology, 33b). However, Socrates certainly thinks that he is engaged in a worthwhile activity; “discussing goodness and all the other subjects about which you hear me talking and examining both myself and others is really the very best thing that a man can do” (Apology, 38b). A constant state of *aporia* is surely not beneficial to students, and it is certainly not desirable for teachers. However, examination of oneself and others with a mind that is open to the possibility of *aporia* does help lead us to examine our lives more deeply. Allowing ourselves to admit that we do not have all the answers and, more importantly, thinking with others as we examine possible answers, is the philosophical activity that Socrates advocated and which garnered him so many admirers. This openness to wonder that is characteristic of Socratic dialogue, which is rarely practiced in public high schools, is what philosophy can help reintroduce and cultivate. Thus, I saw my role at PIT in a more Socratic sense as one who wears his or her expertise lightly—as one who seeks to learn from others

through dialogue and who is willing to enter into productive confusion with them.⁵

4. The High School Philosopher in Residence: What Philosophy and Philosophers Can Offer

Given the overemphasis on the value of information and subject-matter specialization, I have deliberately avoided trying to teach the philosophical canon to high school students and teachers. Instead, I have tried to make my value to the high school community felt not as a professor but as a co-inquirer into the practical and conceptual problems that teachers and students face. In addition, given the professional insularity that content specialization encourages, I have tried to foster an interdisciplinary community of inquiry among the teachers, where the discussion can linger on questions of the purposes and value of education rather than moving directly to devising lesson plans for content mastery. One benefit of the co-participant relationship of the PIR and teacher is that philosophy has emerged from the arcane shadows of the academy to become an activity and mindset appreciated by students and teachers. While some teachers and students develop a concurrent interest in the philosophical texts of the discipline, most acquire a confidence and appreciation of their ability to discuss philosophical subjects and examine themselves and others.

I see three main roles that a PIR can play in working with teachers and students: 1) the PIR helps keep the focus on philosophical questions of purpose and meaning; 2) the PIR helps create a community where interdepartmental discussion can flourish; and 3) the PIR collaborates with specialist teachers to think about curriculum, classroom issues, and lesson plans.⁶ The first role is to do whatever facilitates the successful performance of the other two. By discussing the question of the identification of knowledge and understanding with information and the issue of the subject matter as a specialization divorced from other subjects as philosophical problems, teachers engage their own teaching and curriculum from a more interdisciplinary perspective. In order to facilitate such discussions, the PIR must remain a philosopher, committed to the pursuit of wisdom, meaning, and understanding through dialogue. While a presentation of the full scope of these three roles is not possible in this brief article, I can offer some illustrations of what each role looks like, based upon my experiences as PIR.

School is a place of planning and action, yet as a PIR I advocate taking time to reflect and question. Recently, a high school's educational consultant organized a whole-day meeting of the English Department to come up with a list of goals that the department would work on throughout the year. The overarching goal was to create a culture of writing at the school. The teachers successfully created a list of goals and were energized by the meeting. I was fortunate to be part of that meeting because I was able to serve as co-participant in the department's activities, and I was able to identify a philosophical question that was lurking beneath the surface of the meeting. Two days later, when I met with the department after school, I prompted a discussion with the question "Why should there be a culture of writing?"⁷ After I presented several arguments against students and/or teachers being motivated by the creation of a culture of writing, the teachers had a rich philosophical discussion on the assumed intrinsic worth of writing, eventually settling on the idea that writing carries value because the individual person's beliefs and ideas carry value; to deny oneself competency in writing is to deny oneself the full potential of one's contributions to society and public discourse, at least in contemporary American society. However, the answer itself is less important than the process of teacher's grounding their commitment to a plan of action in their deeply held beliefs about individuals and education.

It is this activity of dialogue and examination that must happen across school departments. That is why I organize weekly meetings for teachers who are interested in p4c, who want to reconnect with their profession philosophically, and who want to engage in a different kind of dialogue with their peers. In a recent reflection, one teacher wrote that for her, the most valuable learning came from interaction with other teachers in the meetings, "listening to their ideas, their struggles, and their successes—that's where I found myself learning, growing, and longing to learn more." This illustrates that it is not the PIR as instructor directly transmitting the "learning," but rather a group of peers in dialogue that is most helpful in pursuing wisdom.

One of the troubling developments in philosophy becoming a discipline for academic specialists in university departments is the separation of philosopher from educator. One of Socrates' concerns was that the education of human beings had to consist of more than just training; philosophy was central to education and to living a good life. In one of

my roles as PIR, I endeavor to work with and learn from the many exemplary teachers in Hawai'i's public schools. This has included the development of lessons and units that revolve around thinking, such as lessons about inferences or problem-based learning. However, it also includes collaboration on lessons and topics with which I am far less familiar, such as modern Hawaiian history and Japanese language, where I approach the material with the fresh and inquisitive eyes of a student. In this pedagogical collaboration I serve less as a gadfly and more as a colleague. However, the focus remains on philosophical dialogue, both in the classroom and in meeting with teachers outside the classroom.

In the classroom, I have often found that students are interested in a very complex philosophical question, the depth of which may not be immediately appreciated. In one of the freshman ethnic studies classes, for example, the students were reading and discussing the novel, *The Tattoo*, by Chris McKinney. In the novel, an "auntie" is described who is fiercely protective and affectionate, but who swears at the kids continuously and yet is described as eloquent and loving. The students all wrote their questions from the chapter on the board and voted on the question they would most like to talk about (a process referred to in p4c Hawai'i as Plain Vanilla): "Can you really use the phrase fu***** little sh** as a term of endearment?" The teacher suspected that the question had received the most votes because it was about cursing and was amusing to the students (she was likely correct about several of the votes). But as the inquiry started, the complexities of the question emerged and the discussion developed into a discussion of the nature of language and the ways that meanings shift depending on context and relationships of power.⁸

My interest in the inquiry was purposefully visible, I wanted to communicate to the students and teacher that they were really digging beneath the surface. I repeatedly expressed appreciation for the students' examples and questions and occasionally provided examples or thought experiments that helped bring into focus the issues that we were struggling with. The teacher and I continued the inquiry after the class for another hour (thankfully, it had been the last class of the day), both of us grateful that the "amusing" question had gotten the most votes. On the surface, a teacher without the support of the PIR may have brushed this question off as a joke or had trouble helping the students examine their interests with intellectual rigor.

It is this type of interaction—the continuation of philosophical dialogue from inside the classroom to after school with professionals, and back again into the classroom—that characterizes the unique opportunity a PIR creates for a school community. The PIR encourages students, teachers, and administrators to move beyond content transmission and specialization and to find a shared space for inquiring into questions that are meaningful to them. While I have stepped into this role with an extensive amount of subject-matter training in academic philosophy, that training has been less relevant than the experience gained through years of experience in the classrooms of p4c veteran teachers. Looking toward the future, as more schools adopt a philosopher in residence, I do not think the position need be limited to those with graduate degrees in philosophy. Rather, anyone with an understanding of, and extensive experience with, p4c Hawai‘i and the philosopher’s pedagogy (as Miller and Makaiau have described in their article) would be able to help make philosophical dialogue and inquiry a part of the school’s culture.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Kailua High School is a small public high school (2011 total enrollment = 852) located on the windward side of O‘ahu. Ethnically, the school is multicultural, with Native Hawaiians making up the largest portion of the student body (54%). Students at Kailua High School are faced with many of the same social (domestic violence, discrimination, substance abuse), economic (approximately half of the students receive free and reduced lunch), and political issues that face other students in the state of Hawai‘i.
- ² That is, unless they also become subject-matter specialists in a discipline such as English, science, history, etc.
- ³ Notable exceptions are Lipman’s P4C movement and the numerous logic and introductory philosophy courses taught in high school.
- ⁴ *In Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (1991) Gregory Vlastos distinguishes among three different Socratic figures in Plato’s dialogues: the Socrates of the early, middle, and later dialogues. The early Socrates represents the historical figure; the middle version is a more Platonized version who proposes a number of doctrines, such as the theory of forms, that are associated with Plato. In the later dialogues the character of Socrates retreats into the background.
- ⁵ This is less of a philosopher as a gadfly than as a co-inquirer.
- ⁶ I think there is also a fourth role that be played by PIR who are faculty in a university philosophy department: the PIR can work with teachers who are interested in continuing their own education, working with those who seek their MA or PhD, offering resources for further reading and study.
- ⁷ This is a question that I think Socrates himself would have taken great interest in.
- ⁸ Though the students were not aware of the philosophical labels of their efforts, they struggled with issues in philosophy of language, such as whether the meaning of the word is objective or dependent upon the intention of the speaker and/or the perception of the interlocutor. The socio-political dimensions of language were also explored as students tried to get a clearer understanding of whether a word could be oppressive merely because of its social history, even in cases where the intentions of the speaker were benevolent.

Thinking Processes in Middle School Students

Caryn Matsuoka

The current trend in American educational reform is directed to standards-based curriculum and assessment. One outcome of this effort is that a great deal of attention is paid to the summative assessment of students toward the end of each school year. At many schools this had led to a focus on the mastery of content and in teaching to the test. At Waikīkī School, the focus is different. The school is committed to two related programs—Habits of the Mind and Philosophy for Children Hawai‘i (p4c Hawai‘i)—to teach thinking processes directly to their students. It’s not that Waikīkī School students don’t learn the relevant content. Instead, the thinking processes are the vehicle through which the content is delivered. The students learn the standards-based content by engaging in activities that provide them with opportunities to make meaning of the content and to use it to draw their own conclusions. The goal of the school is directed to processes rather than content and to encouraging students to ask questions, explore problems, and make thoughtful decisions.

As part of my doctoral program at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, I conducted a study to determine whether and how former sixth-grade students at Waikīkī School were using the thinking processes and strategies they were taught in elementary school when they were in middle school (Matsuoka, 2007). In order to find this out, I interviewed eight former students who had graduated from Waikīkī Elementary School in the 2002–2003 school year. The students participated in a total of seven focus-group interview sessions with me towards the end of the 2003–2004 school year. At the end of each session, I asked students to write down additional thoughts and ideas in a reflection journal. Of the eight focus-group participants, three were selected for follow-up interviews to provide more in-depth data. I also interviewed parents and teachers of the three students to get their input.

Effectiveness of Habits of the Mind and Philosophy for Children Hawai‘i

In analyzing the data from my interview transcripts, I discovered that the students had retained some of the p4c

Hawai‘i vocabulary that they had learned in elementary school. This vocabulary was an essential part of the problem-solving processes that we had taught in the Habits of the Mind and the p4c Hawai‘i programs. These were the concepts that had helped set the groundwork for the students to become more skillful problem solvers and decision makers.

In addition, students were able to describe occasions after they had left elementary school in which they had used the concepts they had been taught. Several related personal stories in which they had used Habits of the Mind and Philosophy for Children Hawai‘i concepts in order to think through the consequences of their actions and make informed choices. One of the participants, Adrian, described a situation when she had to make a decision regarding the issue of smoking, and she related, “we went camping and they were asking me if I wanted to smoke and stuff and so I kind of like used the STARS, I stop and I think and I acted by saying no and I reviewed what my mom told me, like consequences might happen if you do certain stuff. I was like, no, thank you” (Matsuoka, 2007, pg. 223).

An important finding of the study was that although there were times that the students used the *thinking processes* to make decisions that led to positive consequences, there were also times when they used Habits of Mind and p4c Hawai‘i concepts to excuse or rationalize negative behavior. Though the students did talk about using Habits of the Mind and p4c Hawai‘i to make informed decisions, not all of these stories demonstrated that the students were engaging in problem solving or making the right decisions about their actions. Some of the choices that participants made were unethical, immoral, or illegal. One of the participants, Conner, described a situation in which he stole a bus pass from one of his peers because his peer would not leave him alone after he told him to go away. Conner believed that taking his peer’s bus pass was an appropriate behavior because the other student had given him a reason to, and he said, “if these people left me alone, I wouldn’t be doing any of those things.” Conner believed in fairness, and he felt that he would accept the consequences if he were the one

who was causing the trouble to his peers, and he explained, “Aww, cause in that case, if I do something first, he can get back at me” (Matsuoka, 2007, pg. 225).

People often look for reasons when something has happened to provide justification for taking action. Sometimes this is an effort to rationalize the action—to make an excuse for doing something when we know it is wrong. However, both *Habits of the Mind* and *p4c Hawai‘i* require students to go deeper. They teach that simply providing a reason is not enough. Students are encouraged to ask themselves whether the reason is a good one or if it is simply an excuse for poor behavior.

The opportunity to practice inquiry with others helps individuals consider these situations more thoroughly and allows them to take their thinking to a deeper level. *Habits of the Mind* and *p4c Hawai‘i* incorporate this kind of activity into the curriculum. These discussions play an important role in helping students think more deeply about reasons for actions and about the consequences of their actions, their beliefs, and the decisions they make. When students share situations and perspectives in a community circle, they get to compare their ideas with those of other students and the discuss alternatives that they may not have considered. Through this self-corrective process, students help each other push their thinking further, and even revise them, in the light of better reasons.

I glimpsed this process during one of the focus-group sessions. At one point in the inquiry, in which we were examining what it meant to be bad, Conner made the statement, “on the street, it’s not wrong if you don’t get caught,” (Matsuoka, 2007, pg. 292) and several of the other participants were not content with his conclusion. They replied that certain behaviors were wrong regardless of whether the individual had been caught. They provided reasons explaining why they felt that the conduct was wrong and provided examples which took into consideration the law, knowledge of right and wrong, and what they had been taught by their families.

Brooke described a situation in which her friends had broken the law and had shoplifted from a store when she was not with them. She explained to the other participants, “I told them it was wrong, and they shouldn’t have done that” (Matsuoka, 2007, pg. 292). Adrian felt that people should just know right from wrong, and she said, “I think that doing something that you’re not supposed to be doing without

getting caught is wrong because . . . I don’t know! You just know it’s wrong” (Matsuoka, 2007, pg. 292). Later in the inquiry, Adrian made reference to learning what was right from wrong from her own family, and she explained, “I’m thinking that if you’re raised good, you would know the difference between right and wrong” (Matsuoka, 2007, pp. 293–4).

Students grow ethically by coming to see that their reasons and actions are not narrowly confined to self-interest, but that they must take into consideration the views and interests of others. Thus, they learn to reexamine and reevaluate their own beliefs in terms of an increasingly larger and broader social context—not just through their own eyes or their peer group at school but from a wider social perspective.

Internalization of Habits of the Mind and p4c Hawai‘i

An important goal of teaching and learning is the internalization of thinking processes and skills and their transferability to novel situations. By practicing activities in social situations, students come to internalize these processes so that they become more natural to them and even habitual. But what is more important is that these processes don’t become automatic and invariable, but that they are adapted for use in novel situations.

In my study, I wanted to learn if there was evidence that these students had taken the thinking processes they had learned in elementary school and had applied them in their lives as middle-school students. In the interviews and reflection journals, the students shared several examples of times that they had used many of the thinking processes to think through situations and make well-informed decisions.

During one focus-group interview session, for example, a student recognized that she had been employing the thinking processes in her life without consciously thinking about using them. She remarked, “When I do stuff, I do it just cause I think it’s right, but when I come here and I see the mindful behaviors, then I realize that I do use them, but I don’t realize that I was using them before. So I never think about using them, I just do it” (Matsuoka, 2007, pg. 229). She commented that she might have been using *Habits of the Mind* all of the time, but that she had only come to this realization after attending the focus-group sessions. Her reflections were one example of how students often used the

thinking vocabulary to describe situations they encountered and to explain some of their behaviors. But at another level, they appeared to have internalized the vocabulary necessary to reflect on their behavior and decisions and that the processes that the vocabulary described had become internal to their thinking.

The business of approaching challenging situations, solving problems, and making informed decisions requires that students think through these issues before taking action. Rationalizations are reasons that come after the problem, not before. Students grow ethically by learning to withhold preconceived judgments, work cooperatively with others, and ask questions of themselves and others. Habits of the Mind and p4c Hawai'i teach students to pose problems, listen with empathy to other points of view, and show persistence in seeking a solution.

I found that the participants in my study used p4c Hawai'i by creating and maintaining an intellectually safe community where they could practice inquiry on relevant and interesting topics. The students employed the Good Thinker's Tool Kit to assist them in the inquiry process. They encouraged each other to ask questions, provide examples, give reasons, test truths, and look at assumptions being made. As we discussed p4c Hawai'i further, the students realized that they had not forgotten the lessons they had learned in elementary school and that they had been using p4c Hawai'i strategies to think all along about some of their personal issues.

Throughout our seven weeks together, the participants used thinking tools from the Good Thinker's Tool Kit as we dialogued together. The participants consistently gave reasons, examples, and counterexamples. They asked each other to clarify questions, such as "What do you mean by . . . ?", "What are they assuming?", and "Is that true?" Their intuitive use of the Good Thinker's Tool Kit provided the students with a means of philosophically digging deeper into the ideas they shared with each other. They did not simply accept each other's beliefs and ideas as truth, but questioned each other in the systematic ways that they were familiar with from their elementary school program. They took the time and persisted with issues so that they could achieve a deeper and more meaningful understanding.

In summary, my study concluded that both the Habits of the Mind and Philosophy for Children Hawai'i programs had become an integral part of the students thinking processes—so much so that the participants no longer appeared to be aware of using them. Their Philosophy for Children Hawai'i thinking processes had become habits of their minds.

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Philosophy for Children Kenyan Style

By Rebecca Odierna

"For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Paulo Freire, 2000, p. 72).

It was the last day of Philosophy 492, my college course dedicated to teaching the principles and strategies of p4c Hawai'i. I stood up in front of the class and presented part one of my final project—a philosophy for children travel kit. The green, suitcase-looking container was packed tight with yarn, popsicle sticks, paper, glue, fabric tubes, Good Thinkers' Tool Kit, and other pertinent p4c materials. At the time of my presentation, I had no idea what lay ahead in my future, nor was I even remotely aware of the great significance my final project would have in the course of the next three months of my life. What I did know was that I was heading to Kenya for the entire summer as a volunteer for an organization dedicated to educational projects throughout the rural areas of the country, and I was nothing but giddy at the prospect of introducing philosophy for children to impoverished African children.

Months before I joined the Philosophy 492 class, I was asked to join Emerging Humanity—a non-profit organization based in Honolulu, Hawai'i—as a volunteer in a project that focused on enhancing the classroom environments at the organization's partner schools throughout the Nyanza Province of Kenya. My role during my Kenyan adventure would be to work with teachers and students to strive to improve the quality of learning and the internal relations within the classroom. Combining the knowledge I learned from scholarly texts and from my initial classroom observations in Kenya, I soon realized that the majority of the Kenyan school systems are still entrenched in the old, British-colonial style of learning: The teacher stands up in front of the class and dictates the content that is presented. The desks are lined up in perfect rows facing the front of the classroom. Students are not encouraged to interact, participate in activities, or ask questions. Their duty is to sit politely, listen, and strive to keep up with the teacher while also attempting to take

quality notes. Discussions are rare, and the learning style is based on nothing even remotely resembling dialogical, hands-on and/or experiential learning. The whole system promotes rote memorization.

p4c Travels to Kenya

Upon learning about the Kenyan approach to education, it came as no surprise to me that there were non-profit organizations dedicated to improving the quality of education for these Kenyan children. It was also not shocking to hear that many of Kenya's rural students are failing school. To offer some insight into the problem, the class's grade average when I arrived at the girls' high school that I spent most of my time at was 37 percent. I was astonished. However, my initial dismay soon turned to motivation. I was determined to help improve the test scores of the students and to make learning more fun and meaningful for these children, who, as a result of their education experience, were bored and stressed in equal measure. Luckily for me, I had spent the entire spring semester before my trip learning a different approach that, I felt, offered an antidote to the students boredom and stress: p4c Hawai'i. Words cannot give full justice to the impact that my p4c experience had on my life and on my educational outlook. As an aspiring teacher I was intrigued by the educational philosophy of p4c that focused on student dialogue in communities of inquiry. Throughout the semester, I participated in p4c communities in college level classes and joined in p4c discussions at a local high school. The experience provided clear evidence to me that this kind of instruction worked in practice.

As a result, I saw no better way to approach my summer project in Kenya than to bring what I had learned from my college philosophy class and apply it to my efforts with Kenyan students. After all, it seemed clear to me that the problems disrupting their education could

be overcome, as they were problems that arose from the reliance on outdated educational methodologies that stressed memorization and the authority of the teacher. p4c Hawai'i, on the other hand, regards teachers and students as co-investigators in inquiry. It promotes the idea that they should be mutually responsible for mindful exploration and individual and collective growth. In this sense, education can and should connect the kind of student-teacher opposition that existed in the Kenyan schools.

An education that promotes memorization above all else fails to challenge students to practice such worthy activities as critical thinking and problem solving. According to the ideals and aims of p4c, students shouldn't be docile listeners; they should be investigators who consider and reconsider, question and re-question, assess and reassess. Dialogue and inquiry are the means to achieving these goals. Paulo Freire has written that, "the fundamental goal of dialogical teaching is to create a process of learning and knowing that invariably involves theorizing about the experiences shared in the dialogue process" (2000, p. 17). This concept of dialogical learning is embedded in p4c. Another approach of p4c is that reality isn't a finished story with only one version—it is open-ended and makes allowance for many avenues of interpretation. In this sense, teachers shouldn't be the know-it-all, end-all authority figure. They shouldn't be imposing their opinions on students. Instead, they should encourage the students to think through and discover their own view based on all the information available.

Confident and determined to inspire change, I grabbed my philosophy for children travel kit and began making the rounds at Emerging Humanity's partner schools—the very schools where I had done my first observations. My initial endeavors were exhausting, and I found myself losing hope in my goals. I went from school to school and sat down with every principle, trying to convince him or her of the promise in adopting the learning methodologies that are embedded in p4c. I explained the concepts until I was blue in the face, but no one was biting my bait. "Sit in a circle?!" one headmaster gasped. "Have every student participate?" another principal stuttered, with a shocked look. "Encourage the teacher to consider herself another student?" a second principal said in disgust.

I begged them to give it a try, to let me facilitate some classes, to invite the teachers to sit down with me to

discuss alternative ways of educating their students. Most of my clients gave me a flat out "no": others' expressed skepticism. No matter what their immediate responses were, I heard over and over again that "that type" of education wasn't possible: "that's not the Kenyan way." I pleaded for them at least to try it out first, and if the teachers and students didn't like it, then they could forget about it, and I'd move along. Nothing I said convinced them it was even worth considering. I soon realized that "the Kenyan way," which seemed more to resemble the entrenched colonial-British way, was neither flexible nor open to new ideas.

Two weeks passed, and I had accomplished nothing. In spite of their students' failing grades and their students' apparent indifference to their own education, I had yet to find one school that was willing to try anything beyond the prescribed traditional methods, far less than show any openness to my "outsider," p4c ideas. Frustrated and sad, I was on the brink of giving up. The following day, I was asked to accompany some of my fellow volunteers to one of Emerging Humanity's two private schools, which was located in the heart of the rural district of Ugenya. Emerging Humanity had established Lifunga Girls' Secondary School (LGSS) as a unique learning institution for underprivileged girls. As a result of LGSS being completely run by Emerge, the projects and ideas of our volunteers were more likely to be welcomed and more easily implemented.

Upon my arrival, I was disappointed (but not surprised) to see that none of the girls spoke a word or cracked a smile in their classes. The energy in the classrooms was intense and rigid—and for the most part deeply uncomfortable. I found it extremely hard to stay engaged. I also failed to keep up with what the teachers were regurgitating, and unlike the girls, I was not required to write down every other word the teacher said and to compose legible study notes. If I had tried to take notes, I know I would have failed miserably. As I sat and listened, I was convinced that LGSS needed to experience something different, even if it refused to embrace p4c. Whatever the change would be, it was clear to me that it was necessary for the sake of the girls and the education provided to them. It was at that point that I decided to do whatever I could to make that happen—to promote change by introducing new and alternative methods of teaching and learning.

Embracing p4c

The reason that I had attended LGSS on that first day was to interview candidates for a new health and language teacher position. After three disappointing prospects had come and gone, I felt a sense of nervous excitement when a woman named Gillian Wafula spoke in her interview. She was a young, progressive teacher who talked of the need to break the British education mold that was so widely embraced by Kenyans, and to reach out to the students in new ways. Her assured demeanor was uplifting and I began to form the opinion that Gillian could very possibly be my project gateway. It was clear from her responses to the interview questions that Gillian would bring a new and fresh perspective, and positive energy to LGSS. We hired her on the spot. Gillian, I hoped, would be a way to bring p4c to Kenya. So, instead of resuming my old routine of trying to persuade an unyielding principal to allow me to talk to the teachers, I went directly to Gillian. I pulled up a chair at her lunch table and made my pitch. “I have some ideas.... I think they could help the girls perform better, and they would certainly make for a more enjoyable classroom experience. What do you say? Want to have some fun?” Gillian looked at me with serious eyes for a short moment before a large grin covered her face. Highly enthusiastic, she blurted out, “Yes, I’m in! What do you have in mind?” It was at that moment that “p4c Kenyan Style” truly began.

For several weeks, Gillian and I worked together to put our plan into effect. It took barely a month, and soon I was proud to see that her language and health courses had become fully functioning p4c communities. The transformation was not easy. The students had never before been encouraged to empower themselves and become active agents in their learning. Getting them to participate in inquiry-based discussions was like pulling teeth. Initially, the girls were confused and timid; they slumped down in their chairs and hid their faces, apparently too embarrassed or bashful to talk or even write in their new journals. But with time, things began to change and our community began to form.

We started off with easy and comfortable discussions, like, “What did you do this weekend?” and “What’s your favorite hobby?” or, more searchingly, “As a girl in a patriarchal community, how does it feel to have been given the rare opportunity to attend secondary school?” Slowly each girl began to open up and contribute to the inquiries,

and within a month Gillian and I were able to steer the inquiries towards subjects that specifically related to the class and its required course content. The intellectual depth of discussion that we were able to reach was inspiring. By the end of my time in Kenya, the girls had explored topics such as teen pregnancy, female empowerment, literature, colonization, and poverty. They talked about the benefits of waiting until you are financially stable to have kids, the correlation between poverty and teenage mothers with multiple children, and the effects of European imperialism and globalization on the survival of indigenous languages and cultural practices.

By the end of the first month, the students were smiling and eagerly waving their hands in the air, hoping for their turn to speak out or give their opinion on a matter under discussion. During this initial phase the girls were also introduced to the concepts of intellectual safety, collaboration, inquiry, community, and respect. It took hard work, but they soon gained the wisdom to be engaged listeners and respectful but assertive contributors. Their daily evaluations and journal entries conveyed their sentiments of excitement and privilege in acquiring a new sense of agency and responsibility in their learning. One girl reflected, “It feels good to feel like I matter in the classroom. I’ve never felt this way before, and it actually makes me excited to learn.”

The change in the classroom dynamic and the shift in the girls’ attitudes during my stay was enough to satisfy me and leave me with the feeling that my time and efforts in Kenya were all worthwhile. When I learned of the incredible improvement of the girls’ grades in Gillian’s classes, I was overwhelmed with pride. Not only had I introduced p4c to Kenya, but it was also proving to work—and work very well—as an alternative educational method and philosophy. By the time I left Kenya in the middle of August, the girls had increased their scores by an average of 10 percent in the courses in which p4c was implemented. I later learned that after continual application of p4c in three-quarters of the LGSS classrooms, the class’ average grade went from a 37 percent in May to a 56 percent in late November.

p4c Kenyan Style

I am sure my educational endeavors in Kenya would not have been successful without Gillian. It was her open

mind and desire to create positive change that enabled p4c to function and grow, first at LGSS and later at other schools. It was Gillian who called her teacher friends and convinced them to invite me to their schools and share p4c with their coworkers and students. Once Gillian embraced the basic philosophies of p4c, she went above and beyond her teaching responsibilities to encourage other schools and teachers to do try p4c. As a result, during the month of July, I successfully introduced p4c to eight classes in six different schools, four of which were elementary schools and two of which were high schools. Whether or not these classes are still operating as p4c communities to this day is unknown, but I am confident in the fact that the mere act of introducing and practicing p4c changed the way several teachers and schools think about education.

My p4c experience in Kenya was first and foremost a learning process. I quickly came to realize that p4c works in different contexts, and that the same approaches I had used in the U.S. were not always viable in Kenya. This is why the term “p4c Kenyan Style” has so much meaning to me. p4c literally had to be molded and adapted to work in the Kenyan context. The fact that p4c was able to adapt to its unique setting conveys the beauty in its remarkable flexibility. It underscores the fact that there is no right or best way to do p4c—its functions and approaches are relevant to the particular community.

For example, in the area of Kenya that I was working, it is not always culturally acceptable to share your feelings in open spaces. As a result, self-reflections and daily evaluations were designated to journals; they were rarely communicated within the group. The one reflection that did stay in the interactive realm of the community was the thumbs-up/thumbs-down evaluation at the end of each discussion. Also, classroom activities such as Plain Vanilla were executed differently. I found in Kenya that students are not as willing to share their questions on the board, and many have no desire to identify themselves with their ideas for that day’s inquiry. To adapt to this value, Plain Vanilla became an anonymous game. Questions and thoughts were written on small pieces of paper, folded up, and put in a bucket to keep the author’s identity confidential.

Other cultural issues such as the language barrier forced me to think about and facilitate discussions in new ways. While Kenyan teachers teach their classes in English, English is, for many of the students, the second and weaker

language. Thus, finding the right words to explain concepts like intellectual safety and the Good Thinker’s Tool Kit proved especially challenging. As a result, I was forced to get creative and use pictures, models, and sometimes songs to generate clarity and understanding. I found the best way to provide an explanation, however, was to show the students through praxis. Rather than try to define intellectual safety, I pointed out the moments in which I thought it was achieved or being implemented at various points in our community development and discussions. Overall, what I came to realize as an important truth about p4c is that it has a different face in every classroom. But, while the approaches and methods may be slightly different in each setting, the fundamental principles and philosophies are still the same.

Due to the incredible social and cultural experience of my summer in Kenya, as well as the success of my educational endeavors, I accepted an offer to return in 2011 for an entire year. I had few expectations for my return, but I certainly hoped that I would be able to see p4c communities in schools in the province where I worked. My goal remained the same for 2011: I was going to strive to increase the quality of education that is offered to underprivileged children in rural villages, and I intended to do so through the implementation of p4c philosophies and ideologies. Upon my return to work in Kenya, I was thrilled to see p4c was still active in several of the schools I had introduced it to the summer before. Moreover, the students and teachers in these communities seemed genuinely happy; not only in their classroom interactions, but also with their overall educational path, and the ways in which that form of education was positively generating knowledge, increasing productivity, and enhancing community relations.

With the collaboration of my Emerging Humanity co-workers, p4c program evaluations were conducted within my first few months back. These evaluations were based on interviews with teachers, students, and the students’ families, as well as on student productivity and test scores. As expected, the results of these evaluations overwhelmingly showed a positive correlation between p4c and educational outcomes. The program had shown a boost in attitude, enthusiasm, and overall morale among both students and teachers. Students who participated in p4c communities had improved their test scores and

class attendance over the five months in which p4c was being implemented in their classrooms. As a result of these findings, I used these evaluations to make a case for p4c in schools that had not already adopted or tried the program. Again, my efforts were not always fruitful, but by the time I left Kenya in November of 2011, p4c was being employed in fourteen different schools in the Nyanza province. I can only hope that p4c will continue to have a positive impact on education and will gain further momentum in Kenya. I have faith in p4c's ability to enhance education, and I am confident that the people of Kenya will highly benefit from its use, just as any classroom in any part of the world surely would.

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“What Do You Want to Talk About?” – p4c Lessons in the Family

Tamara Albertini

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I was attending a conference in Los Angeles a few years ago, and, as is my habit, I called home as soon as I checked in at the hotel. My son Peter picked up the phone. After asking me what kind of plane I was on and what the time difference was, Peter, quite out of the blue, said “Maman, what do you want to talk about?” I remember being surprised by the question. My son had never asked me before whether there was a subject that I might be interested in. Typically, he would shower me with all the things that he had on his mind and expect me to comment on them. After I had hung up the phone, I thought: “This is the first time my son is inquiring about something that I would like to share with him.” Then a few months after our telephone conversation, my husband, who was traveling in Europe, rang us up, and Peter asked him the same question: “What do you want to talk about?” From then on that question has become part of our family routine whether we travel or just sit around the kitchen table in our Makiki apartment. No matter how often I hear it, it always makes me smile. It isn’t just the question. It’s also the very earnest face that Peter wears when he puts the question to us. He has a way of conveying to my husband and I that he is genuinely interested in what we have to say. He fixes his eyes on the person he is speaking to and won’t let them off the hook until he has an answer. Frankly, there have been days when Peter’s question has helped my husband and I turn away from our day-to-day worries and think for a moment about subjects we really want to tackle.

It was only last year that we realized where Peter had learned to ask, “What do you want to talk about?” Peter was telling us one day about an exciting P4C session he had at his Waikiki School. The subject was whether ghosts exist. Peter told us what his classmates’ thoughts were: that ghosts were invented to scare children and therefore were not real; that some were good, others weird; that one needed to make a distinction between ghosts (bad) and spirits (good), that ghosts were different from angels... We got a whole lecture presented to us about all the things one should consider when

speaking of ghosts. Peter was just about to ask us whether we thought ghosts existed, when we interrupted him. We wanted to know how he and the other children in his class found their topics. Peter smiled at our silly question and just said, “We ask what we should talk about.” And as he went on to tell us how he and his classmates collected subjects, took a vote, and how it just never happened that one of his topics was chosen (sigh!), my husband and I finally understood where that “What do you want to talk about?” question came from. It came straight out of the P4C sessions at Waikiki School, and Peter had adapted it to our family conversations!

This year Peter is in a school in Sofia, Bulgaria where he gets to perfect his Bulgarian and learn much about the history and geography of the Balkans. The school climate is highly competitive. School children challenge each other with questions related to Bulgaria. The names of past tsars and their accomplishments flow easily from their lips. They know the location of the smallest towns and the courses of all major rivers. Every child plays a musical instrument, and even English grammar is a required subject. One day when Peter arrived home from school, there was something about his expression that made him look as if enveloped by a thick, grey cloud. Something was on his mind. It finally burst out of him—“You know, I don’t think children talk here.” Children obviously do talk in Peter’s Bulgarian school, and they are smart and knowledgeable beyond their ten to eleven years. What Peter had meant to say was that there was no time allocated in school for sharing stories and hearing what other children thought. Peter could never hear their stories: how they spent their weekends and what they liked to do in their free time. There was no way to find out what ideas and opinions they had. You could also say they are never asked ‘What do you want to talk about?’

Tamara Albertini (Waikiki parent and philosopher on sabbatical with her family in Sofia, Bulgaria)

Raising the Bar: Love, the Community of Inquiry, and the Flourishing Life

Thomas B. Yos

I've been working at the same elementary school in Hawai'i for nearly twenty years. First I was the school's philosophy for children (p4c Hawai'i) teacher, then I was a reading and special education teacher, and for the past decade I've been doing counseling. Throughout these years much has stayed the same. Some things, however, have changed dramatically.

A decade ago a lot was left to the individual judgment, initiative, and creativity of each teacher. "We may smile and nod our heads at what you say," I remember one teacher explaining to me in my moment of frustration as I struggled to convince a couple of her peers that philosophy for children was a really good thing, "but sometimes we just take what you give us and stick it in the bottom desk drawer." Back in those days each teacher had a fair amount of discretion about what to embrace and what to politely file away (never again to see the light of day).

The teacher's freedom to do such things has, to a considerable extent, been curtailed. Many things, nowadays, cannot be stuck in the bottom desk drawer. A set of state standards have been created and are not to be ignored. Nor can one simply file away the calls for "accountability," the demands that our school must "raise the bar," or the consequences of the high-stakes tests which define our success. The educational climate at our school, and I suspect at many others, has indeed changed.

Nearly ten years ago, I argued in my doctoral dissertation that philosophy for children and its pedagogy of the community of inquiry is good for kids. I spoke a lot about Vygotsky, philosophical inquiry, and how empowering children to think well is vital to the essential task of cultivating good judgment.¹

In some ways I think I got it right. I still whole-heartedly believe in the power of philosophical inquiry. But I've also come to realize that there is a very important something else that makes the "community of inquiry" approach so valuable. What's so important about the idea of community of inquiry,

especially in this day and age, isn't just the *inquiry* part, it's the *community* part.

My thesis is this: In today's American educational climate, with its laser-sharp focus on "accountability" and "raising the bar," the *community* aspect of "community of inquiry" is more important than ever. It is so important because it purposefully cultivates what many of today's schools are unwisely leaving too far on the fringe: the loving, caring, fun-filled human relationships which are at the core of human flourishing.

In order to support this thesis I will endeavor to establish four points. First, I will argue that loving human relationships are at the heart of a well-lived life. Second, I will contend that schools properly ought to concern themselves with the cultivation of such relationships. Third, I will propose the controversial claim that schools aren't doing a good enough job of addressing this concern. And finally, I will assert that P4C's "community of inquiry" approach is an effective means for cultivating such relationships.

BELIEF #1: Loving human relationships are essential to a flourishing life.

Oftentimes I begin my college ethics course with a single quote: "It is remarkable how many people sacrifice the really good stuff for that which is not as important."² Do you think, I ask the students, that this is true? Most of them believe that it is. Then I raise another question: But what do you mean by "the really good stuff"? What is at the heart of a well-lived, flourishing human life?

I have, over the course of the past years, heard numerous answers to this question. Many of them are very wise responses, for nearly all of my college students are military folks who not only have overcome substantial hardships in life but have also gained the nearly unimaginable insight that comes from facing death in war. There is, of course, considerable variety in the answers that I hear from so many voices. But there is a common thread; a single, pivotal

answer which arises again and again and again. What is the really good stuff? Quite simply, most of my students respond, it is *love*.

By “love” the students do not simply mean a sort of romantic or sexual love. Rather, more broadly, they mean the caring sort of love that a parent shares with a child, a spouse shares with his or her partner, buddies share over a beer, or even the kindness that is exchanged by near strangers. Sometimes they cite Morrie Schwartz: “Love,” he says, “is so supremely important... Without love, we are birds with broken wings” (Albom, 1997, pp. 91, 92). Knowing how to give love and, so too, knowing how to receive love, they contend, is among the very best of stuff.

This view is certainly widely accepted. It is also an idea that enjoys a long and varied history of philosophical support. Buddha speaks much of the ideal of cultivating loving-kindness (*Mettā*). The Christian Bible commands: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”³ Kant speaks of treating others never as means but always as ends. And even Sartre tells us that others are subjects and never objects. Many philosophers, like most other people, tell us that treating others with love—be it a passionate love or at least a less intense good-willed respect—is essentially connected to the business of living well.

BELIEF #2: Our schools ought to purposefully cultivate loving human relationships.

“We parents,” a father once told a gathering of counselors, “want our children to be smart.” “But even more than this,” he continued, “we want them to be good.” This dad, I think, has got it right. Our schools should help our children to *be* good. They should also help our children to *live* good lives. They should equip and empower our children not just to live, but to *live well*.

Love, we argued, is inextricably bound up with living well. This being the case, then, schools should—if they are to follow this father’s advice—strive to purposefully cultivate loving human relationships.

But not everyone would agree with this contention. Many people believe that, while there are certainly some children who do not experience enough love, it shouldn’t be the job of the school to address this emotional deficit. Let the family, the church, and the social services people deal with that; the proper business of the schools ought to be simply to teach kids the facts and empower them with academic skills.

I agree, to a certain extent, with this counter-argument. Giving love is a global responsibility. It ought not, by any means, be the responsibility of the school alone. But from this fact it does not follow that our schools should have *no* responsibility in this area. Indeed, I see three compelling reasons why our schools ought to be seriously concerned with the cultivation of loving relationships.

The first reason is because cultivating such relationships will help schools to achieve their academic goals. Abraham Maslow theorized that there exists a hierarchy of human needs. If an individual’s underlying physical, social, and emotional needs are not met, she will not be fully ready to grow, learn, and actualize herself.

Oftentimes these underlying needs of students are not met. One such student who I’ve encountered in my counseling work is Carolyn. “Carolyn,” as I’ll call her here, was a curious, intelligent, and strong-willed kindergartener. She had, it was readily apparent to anyone who met her, a world of talent. Unfortunately, however, she also had a big problem. The adults in her life were a mess. Struggling with the effects of violence, homelessness, addiction, and not being loved themselves, Carolyn’s caregivers were in no position to give Carolyn the full dose of love that she so desperately needed. I’ll never forget Carolyn’s eyes gazing into mine and her words, too full of significance to be coming from a five-year old, to me: “We need help.”

Carolyn felt stressed out, worried, scared, and unloved. How, in such a condition, could she keep her mind on her studies and be fully ready to learn? She couldn’t. Academic success rests, in no small part, upon a firm social and emotional foundation. Wishing that schools didn’t have to work on this foundation won’t change the facts; many children are not loved enough and structures built on shoddy foundations will eventually topple. The purposeful cultivation of loving relationships is a patch that should be liberally used.

The second reason why our schools ought to be concerned with the cultivation of loving relationships is because it contributes to the creation of a safe and harmonious society. There’s a name for very intelligent, very well-taught, but unloving people: clever criminals. Angry, hurting, unloved, and unloving people who have been armed with the power to act effectively are not good for society. Such individuals, as Jackson puts it, are likely to employ what they’ve learned not as useful *tools* but rather as harmful

weapons. Our schools have a societal obligation to try, as best as they can, to ensure that this does not happen.

The third reason why our schools ought to be concerned with cultivating loving relationships is because we owe it to each individual child. I put a lot of time and energy into helping Carolyn. After some months, one of my co-workers said to me, not unkindly, that I was spending *too* much time and energy trying to help her. You need to move on, he said. She's a lost cause. I certainly see the logic in his point; when there are limited resources, you have to make hard choices. But ultimately I'm more convinced by the counter-point. What if Carolyn was *your* daughter? What if she was *you*? Behind the No Child Left Behind policy, whatever its faults, is the admirable notion that you should never give up on an individual. Never mind the calls for accountability and high test scores, the bottom line is this: Regardless of whether the problem is a broken heart or an uninformed mind, our responsibility is still to help children to live flourishing lives. Our duty to cherish others demands that we meet each child where he or she is at.

For these reasons, then, I contend that one of the first and most important aims of our schools ought to be to deliberately create environments which are splendidly replete in caring, loving interpersonal relationships. We ought to purposefully strive—especially for those children who suffer from a deficit of love—to fill each student's school day with numerous opportunities to receive and, so too, to give love.

Belief #3: Our schools are not focusing enough on the cultivation of loving human relationships.

There is, at my elementary school, considerable discussion about the high-stakes test scores. The scores, broken down by grade, and even by teacher, are projected up onto the screen. We take note of where the scores are high and where they are low. We wonder why one grade, or teacher, has higher scores and another has lower scores. We brainstorm about what we can do to get the borderline students to pass.

This recurring exercise saddens me. I look around the room and I see so many smart, caring individuals. Couldn't we be applying all this talent, I wonder, to other things? Yes, I get it; it is important for students to develop the sorts of literacy and mathematical skills that these tests measure. But isn't there much more to living the flourishing life than just this? Aren't we focusing all of our energy on a very narrow

set of skills and, in the process of doing so, ignoring much of the really good stuff?

Admittedly, my experience and knowledge is largely limited to my school. But, based on what I've read and who I've talked to, it seems to me that this narrowing that I'm observing is a typical consequence of our nation's emphasis on high-stakes tests. It seems to me, to evoke Freud and to recall a peculiar condition which once plagued philosophy, that the American educational system has developed an acute case of "physics envy." Wanting to satisfy the increasingly deafening cries for accountability and measurable progress, educators have turned to high-stakes exams and the "hard," pseudo-scientific data which such tests provide. Validation, then, becomes largely dependent on good test scores. Fueled by the oftentimes immense pressure to be "successful," the desire for this validation influences, often heavily so, educators' choices about what to teach and how to teach. It is, as Jackson puts it, a classic case of the tail wagging the dog; the means of assessment determine the content and form of instruction.

The problem with all of this, of course, is that many of the most important virtues—such as being able to give and to receive love—cannot be measured by a standardized test. And so the search for validation becomes an exercise in *narrowing*. As I have observed at my school, educators focus with laser-like precision on certain skills and, precisely in so doing, leave much of what is really important out on the fringe.

In saying this I am not claiming that educators teach only to the test. Being good and caring people, most educators naturally take time to address the broader set of skills and dispositions which are essential to human flourishing.

Nor am I claiming that educators have no awareness that there is more to life than what shows up on a high-stakes test. I remember attending a complex-wide training. The theme for the day, we were told, was to consider the importance of "rigor, relevance, and relationships."⁴ Then a half dozen high school students stood up to address the hundreds of gathered teachers. Each spoke, in his or her own way, about the importance of their relationships with caring teachers; this, to them, was at the core of education. But there was one problem: I'm not sure if anyone really heard them. Throughout the rest of the day I heard *a lot* more about rigor and relevance. I didn't, however, hear another single

word uttered about the importance of relationships. We make mention of the good stuff, but then, in our preoccupation, we forget about it.

What I am claiming, then, is that our preoccupation with accountability, validation, and test scores distracts us from many of the most important ingredients of the flourishing life. It narrows the scope of our moral imagination and leads us to ignore much of what matters most. Ironically enough, by trying so hard to “raise the bar” we are, in fact, lowering it; we’re doing a really good job of shooting at a lesser target.

This needs to change. We need to aim ambitiously and squarely at equipping our students to live love-filled, flourishing lives. This is a moral imperative because, as I observe most every day, our current state of preoccupation is causing significant pain to both teachers and their students.

Even if they can’t always articulate it, I think many teachers, in their hearts, are aware of this gap between what our schools are doing and what they should be doing. One day a veteran teacher looked at me, gave a weary sigh, and said “I got into teaching because I care about kids, but now I feel like I don’t have time to do that.” Many teachers would like to aim higher, but they lack the freedom to do so. Depersonalized by expectations that they do what everyone else is doing and harried by too many tasks, they feel discouraged because they’re being pulled away from what they were called to do.

Students, I’ve found, have less trouble articulating their distress. Their problem, however, is getting anybody to listen them. “You have no idea,” a student recently wrote to me, “how hard my life is.” She’s right; we oftentimes, in the hustle and bustle of the day, see children as objects to be instructed rather than subjects to be heard. But if you listen carefully, you’ll hear their voices, surprisingly unified and loud: “It’s very nice that you want to teach us all of these things. But you grown-ups are so busy preparing us for tomorrow that you’re forgetting that we need your help to make it through today.” In our preoccupation, in our quest to “raise the bar,” we are failing to hear the cries of those, like Carolyn, whose concerns go far beyond higher test scores: “We need help,” they say.

BELIEF #4: Philosophy for Children is an effective means to cultivate loving human relationships.

I think that our approach *should* change. I also think that it *can* change. We can broaden our focus and teach in a way that deliberately cultivates not only loving relationships

but also the other virtues that are essential to living well. *How* can we do this? Once again, my answer arises from an experience with a student.

“Ann,” as I’ll call her here, was a fourth grader who is one of the most talented people I’ve ever met. She was a top-notch student and was good at just about everything. Except, she too, had a problem: She felt so sad and alone because she was surrounded by family members who were altogether preoccupied by their own anger, grief, and pain. One day, as we sat talking, I observed that, for all her strengths, she wasn’t a very kind person. She looked at me and said with a quiet and thoughtful voice: “How am I supposed to be kind if I don’t even know what kindness is?”

Ann raises the million dollar question. How do you cultivate skills and dispositions in an environment—be it a home or a school—that is at odds with such an effort? The answer, quite simply, is to change the environment. Ann will learn kindness not by us telling her to be kind, but by being immersed in an environment where love is consistently practiced, expressed, modeled, and thereby learned. It’s the idea of the hidden curriculum: Children learn not only from *what* we tell them, but, perhaps even more significantly, from *how* we relate with them.

Now I loop back to where I began a decade ago. Thinking, Vygotsky argued, is internalized speech (1978, pp. 56,57). You can cultivate intellectual skills and dispositions, P4C founder Matthew Lipman realized, by creating a community of inquiry where these skills and dispositions are consistently expressed and modeled through speech.⁵ The same thing, I now argue, goes for social, emotional, and ethical capacities. As the generations-old advice to choose your friends carefully attests to, one can create a culture which leads children not only to be smart but also to be kind, loving, happy, and good.

The implications of this point are both simple and profound. You can prepare a child to live well tomorrow by living well with them today. Certainly, if the good life sometimes calls, as it seems to do, for diligently buckling-down and doing what you don’t want to do, then we should put students in an environment where this sometimes happens. But just as surely, and this is the part that we seem to be forgetting, if being able to give and to receive love is part of the flourishing life, then children need to spend time in loving, laughter-filled places. We need to purposefully create loving places—with the same amount of forethought and care that

we devote to designing other instructional strategies—for all children and especially for children who do not experience love often enough.

There are, to be sure, a variety of ways to craft such an environment. Perhaps the simplest and most effective strategy would be to provide teachers with the freedom to be true to themselves. I do believe, however, that an exemplary example of such a way is P4C's Community of Inquiry. The Community of Inquiry is, as Jackson puts it, "a safe place" "where people care about each other and show that they do" (1998).

That the Community of Inquiry can be a place that not only sharpens the mind but purposefully cultivates loving relationships is a truth that my experience has repeatedly affirmed. Certain, as we say in Hawaii, "chicken-skin" moments stand out in my mind; times when I witnessed, in awe, the loving power of the community of inquiry.

I remember doing p4c with a class of sixth graders. Whenever they had p4c, the students would close all the windows and doors. "Philosophy time is our time," they would say, "we don't want anyone to bother us." One week the students decided to talk about the following question: Should you hang out with your boy/girlfriend or your friends? Of course, they laughed, you should hang out with your boyfriend or girlfriend. That is, most everyone agreed, the cool thing to do. Then a girl who hardly ever spoke raised her hand. "I think that you're better off hanging out with your friends," she quietly said, "because of domestic violence and stuff."

You could have heard a pin drop. "Uncle," the other students perhaps knew, beat up the girl's mom. Maybe he beat her too. The tone of the inquiry changed. No more joking. No more trying to seem cool. You could feel their love and support wrapping around the quiet girl like a warm blanket. In a genuine community people care about each other and show that they do.

I vividly remember another discussion. This one was a college class full of military folks. It was the last class and we were nearing the climax of a movie that the students had been eagerly anticipating. Then one of my students walked to the back of the darkened room and sat down next to me. "Sorry I've been absent," he whispered. "Do you know," he said, "the tsunami that hit American Samoa?" Yes, I said with a sinking feeling because I knew that the soldier was from there. "Well," he continued, "my 5 year-old niece was

killed by it." Then his voice cracked: "Dr. Yos, I have a question: Why would God let such a beautiful, innocent child die? Can we talk about it in our community of inquiry?"

We stopped the movie. We got in our circle and got out our community ball. The soldier, his voice again cracking with pain, asked his question. Some students were quiet. Some gently cried. And then, one by one, they began to give their answers. Some talked about God having a plan, some talked about heaven needing a new angel, some said that, sadly enough, is just what life dealt us, and some said they simply didn't know.

What the community answered, in each of these cases, wasn't necessarily clear. The students didn't arrive at definitive solutions as to why men beat women or innocent children have to die. But there was no doubt about *how* the community members were relating to one another. The giving and receiving of love was being lived, experienced, modeled, and most powerfully taught. "This class," one of my university students wrote on her evaluation, "is my salvation." She understood what many of us forget: Education is, in large part, about relationships.

Fun, it sometimes seems, has become a dirty word in today's schools. Spending time caring for one another and appreciating each other's company is oftentimes considered to be "off-task" time. But it is only "off-task" if we define the task too narrowly. Giving love to one another, receiving love from one another, having fun together, and the rest of the really good stuff: These are not superfluous things but are, indeed, essential pieces of the flourishing life. If we are to take seriously our task of preparing our children for such a life and to truly "raise the bar," then we must purposefully strive to create environments, like P4C's Community of Inquiry, where these valuable qualities are lived and, so, taught.

A decade ago I argued that the "community" in the Community of Inquiry has tremendous instrumental value. Community precedes inquiry. Far from being at odds with intellectual rigor, the genuine relationships of the community make such rigor possible. Now, what I realize is that this aspect of community is not only of instrumental value. It is, in and of itself, of great intrinsic value. Indeed, forming caring and loving relationships with people does not merely *lead to* the good life; it, in part, *is constitutive* of the good life. As Mahatma Gandhi said: you must be

the change you want to see in the world. If our children are to live well, if our society is to be harmonious, then our schools, most definitely, ought to be places full of love, joy, and laughter.

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ENDNOTES

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 - ² This is my modification of a quote that I heard on Todd Wilson's *Help! I'm Married to a Homeschooling Mom* (audio book). www.familymanweb.com, 2007.
 - ³ See James 2:8. *The Holy Bible (New King James Version)*, Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1982.
 - ⁴ These terms, it seems, originate from the research of the International Center for Leadership in Education. See <http://www.leadered.com/rrr.html>.
 - ⁵ See, for instance, Lipman, Matthew. Natasha: Vygotskian Dialogues. New York: Teachers College Press, 1996. pp. 104–105.
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Community in the Classroom: An Approach to Curriculum and Instruction as a Means for the Development of Student Personal Engagement in a High School Classroom

Tammy Jones

Curriculum for Community

[C]oncepts and values will be meaningful to children only to the extent that they can relate them in some way to their own experience (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p.164).

In this age of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the school curriculum risks becoming scripted, distant, and impersonal. More and more, it is controlled by professionals outside of the classroom who are unfamiliar with the particular needs and learning style of students and what they are interested in and curious to inquire about. As Freire points out, the curriculum, which includes the classroom environment, should aim to “create possibilities for the construction and production of knowledge rather than [engage] simply in a game of transferring knowledge” (1998, p.49). Unfortunately, it is the students’ individual scores on one specific high-stakes assessment that has become the focus of attention in our country; and, as a result, it has limited the extent to which students are able to interact with each other and inquire into matters of interest.

NCLB has created a climate where teachers feel increasingly pressured to ensure their students pass the test, with the result that they allocate less time for purposeful and authentic learning experiences (Kohn, 2004). Thus, rote memorization is favored over inquiry, and there is no room to personalize the curriculum in order to fully engage, motivate, and invite students to become active participants in their own learning. This approach to teaching and learning, as Freire says, “turns [students] into ‘containers,’ into ‘receptacles’ to be ‘filled’ by the teacher, and the more completely she fills the receptacles, the better teacher she is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are” (1998, p. 71).

I reject this approach to teaching and learning and argue that the goal of education should be to create thoughtful, critical, curious, confident, personally aware, independent students. “Something must be done to enable children to

acquire meanings for themselves. They will not acquire such meanings merely by learning the contents of adult knowledge. They must be taught to think and, in particular, to think for themselves” (Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan, 1980, p. 13). The curriculum that I carry into my classroom and present to my students reflects my understanding of them as individuals and what I have come to learn about their interests and abilities. I want to challenge them to go beyond their present understanding and try to “think outside the box.” I want them to engage their own sense of wonder and natural curiosity and to create meaning for themselves.

School is a place where students should feel safe to engage intellectually, socially, and emotionally in the act of learning. It is the school’s responsibility to provide knowledgeable teachers and promote a classroom climate where all students are heard and where they can learn from one another. It is a teacher’s responsibility to implement a curriculum that challenges students and empowers them to become problems solvers who can take what they learn in the classroom into the world outside. Teachers must aim to create a classroom environment that recognizes and values students’ genuine thoughts, questions, and ideas. They should aim to provide them with opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings and to learn to work with others in a constructive way. As Kohn (2004) writes, “all of us yearn for a sense of relatedness or belonging, a feeling of being connected to others” (p. 119). Students must also be able to connect, in some way, to the material as well as to one another. Lack of engagement is what causes students to tune out and turn off.

Teaching specific topics or skills without making clear their context in the broader fundamental structure of a field of knowledge is uneconomical...such teaching

makes it exceedingly difficult for the student to generalize from what he has learned to what he will encounter later. (Bruner, 2003, p. 31)

Students need to have opportunities to apply what they are learning and understand the reasons behind the content in order to internalize the material and fully *learn* it. The content needs to become a part of them, moving from external content to internal knowledge. As Jerome Bruner (2003) contends, “the best way to create interest in a subject is to render it worth knowing, which means to make the knowledge gained useable in one’s thinking beyond the situation in which the learning has occurred” (p.31). Therefore, what a student experiences in the classroom should be applicable to life outside of the classroom. Experiences should be provided for students to practice the skills needed for independent thinking, instead of inviting them to respond to questions on pre-determined topics. Only with the implementation of such educational experiences can we hope to create interested, independent, intellectually engaged members of society.

Though there are a variety of tools that can be used to encourage, promote, and foster engagement, more powerful factors, such as a lack of self-confidence, poor self-concept, fear, and apathy, often stand in the way. Participation in class activities can be threatening to some students, although more worrisome is the fear that their contribution may be judged as trivial or incorrect by their peers. Conditions have to be properly established and maintained for many students to get involved:

When students need close affiliation, they experience a large depersonalized school; when they need to develop autonomy, they experience few opportunities for choice and punitive approaches to discipline; when they need expansive cognitive challenges and opportunities to demonstrate their competence, they experience work focused largely on the memorization of facts. (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 122)

My main concern, therefore, is getting students to recognize their ability to learn and, more importantly, to communicate with and learn with others. I believe the “key” to achieving success in advancing and improving their self-concept and confidence is to work to build relationships within an intellectually safe classroom community.

Community as Foundation

Education is, or should be, a cooperative enterprise. An atmosphere of mutual respect and positive regard increases the likelihood of cooperation and student success in school (Purkey & Novak, 1996, p. 43).

From the first day of school I work to create a classroom environment where students are engaged, both on their own and in dialogue with each other. My classroom becomes almost entirely student-directed, allowing students to explore their own needs, wants, questions, thoughts, and ideas. Furthermore, I strive to create a classroom that allows students to develop good thinking skills that they can use when they are at school and that they can take with them when they are engaged in the world outside of the school. As Haynes (2002) comments, “Dewey argued that schools should be participatory communities, a meaningful part of society where young people could develop as citizens” (p.46). I view my ultimate goal as one of creating independent, confident, responsible learners who can fully participate in community life. Of course, I am aware that this is a process that takes time and relies heavily on the collaboration of the group.

There are three stages of community development, which I identify as the beginning, emerging and mature stages (Jackson, 2001). It is essential to begin laying a foundation for a community to emerge and develop from the first day of school; the initial experience must reflect the need for and importance of forming a classroom community. For example, I begin by facilitating an inquiry into the meaning of “community” by viewing a film about relationships within penguin communities and asking students to compare and contrast aspects of the bird’s community to that of a classroom. During this early stage students are often hesitant and may even reject the idea of community due to their unfamiliarity with it, or they may simply be unwilling or unable to listen due to all the views and concerns that have been presented (Splitter & Sharp, 1995). That is why I present the topic within a structured format they are familiar with (i.e., viewing a film, taking notes, constructing a written response) as opposed to leading a more advanced, open discussion on the idea. The teacher must remain true to the process and gradually invite students to direct their own learning. At the same time, the skills of critical thinking, formulating questions, and taking part in discussions must be modeled and practiced in a structured way before the students can be asked to implement these skills within a guided inquiry. “To develop the class-

room community and the needed skills, the teacher needs to deliberately set aside time for both” (Jackson, 2001, p. 460). Student-generated questions “provide a doorway for children to enter into the realms of an inquiry which is...in their own hands. To bypass this part of the procedure is to risk undermining the egalitarian and democratic nature of the entire enterprise” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 140). Since these skills are new to students, such questions may not initially lead to a very elaborate or productive inquiry; however, it is not the outcome but rather the process that is important at this stage in community development.

In the school year 2009–2010, I conducted a self-study in my classroom to examine the impact of using a community-centered approach to curriculum on student identity. I wanted to gain an understanding of the students’ levels of cognitive, social, and emotional engagement during the collective learning process over the course of an entire school year. The project allowed me to examine all three phases of community development, which included, interestingly, a community “break down” that occurred during the emerging stage and threatened to prevent all learning, engagement and any further community development. Fortunately, the breakdown was temporary, and I was able to use it as a lesson on community. By relying on the initial sense of community we had established prior to this incident, I was able to use it as the stimulus for reflection and self-correction. I reminded students that their voices and feelings were valued. “Caring classrooms... enhance opportunities for student engagement by developing supportive relationships, increasing opportunities for participation in school life, and allowing for the pursuit of academic success” (Zins, et al., 2004, p. 62).

Communities of Inquiry

There are...thinking communities and unthinking communities, communities that are reflective and self-corrective and communities that are not. What education requires, obviously, are communities of inquiry (Lipman, 2003, p. 94).

In developing a sense of community in the classroom, it is necessary also to establish clear parameters for the conduct of inquiry and classroom dialogue. The creation of a community of inquiry “makes it possible for children to see themselves as active thinkers rather than passive learners, as discoverers rather than receptacles, and as valuable and valued human beings rather than resources or commodities” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 21). There is a distinct and observ-

able difference between the student engaged simply in listening to directions and completing assignments, and a student who is internalizing the knowledge, connecting and relating it to other knowledge, and expanding individual thought into collaborative inquiry. John Dewey (1930) spoke to the importance of being a member of a classroom community:

[B]eing a unique member of a meaningful group is important for both the individual and the group...the more democratic a group is, the more the group experience builds on the unique perspectives and interests of its members, and this the more the group experience becomes a source of educational development for all involved. (cited in Purkey & Novak, 1996, p. 50)

It is in a student’s best interest to engage in the learning process in order to improve the level of inquiry for the group. However, students seldom have this perspective when entering the classroom; therefore, it is the task of the teacher to create an inviting environment that encourages students to participate in group inquiries in a safe way.

Matthew Lipman (2003) identifies fifteen key features of communities of inquiry. As a seasoned elementary school teacher, something Lipman was not, I consider the first three to be the most essential to emphasize at the initial stages of community development:

- A. INCLUSIVENESS.** Within a community no one is excluded from internal activities without adequate justification.
- B. PARTICIPATION.** Communities of inquiry encourage but do not require participants to participate verbally as equals.
- C. SHARED COGNITION.** In a private reflection, an individual will engage in a series of mental acts aimed at penetrating and analyzing the matter at hand. In shared cognition, the same acts (wondering, questioning, inferring, defining, assuming, supposing, imagining and distinguishing) are engaged in, but by different members of the community. (p. 95)

The additional characteristics that Lipman identifies and explains emerge and become more effective as the community grows over time, but are not readily applicable or possible at the beginning. These characteristics include seeking meaning; creating a sense of solidarity; promoting individual thinking; and being impartial, challenging, reasonable, reflective, and curious through discussion.

Within a community of inquiry, students participate in intellectual and social activities respectfully. In Richardson's (2003) social constructivist perspective, meaning is individually constructed as a result of "opportunities to determine, challenge, change or add to existing beliefs and understandings through engagement in tasks that are structured for this purpose" (p. 1624). A community of inquiry provides a space for students to actively participate in learning both by building shared meanings and through the processes of internalization. Such participation provides students with opportunities to gain confidence in expressing their own views. "Through taking part in thoughtful, reflective discussions, children gain confidence in their ability to think on their own" (Lipman, et al., 1980, p. 131). As students come to understand and appreciate that there are few, if any, "wrong" answers and possibly more than one right answer, the community provides them with a safe forum in which they can exchange and develop ideas and learn to respect the ideas of others. "The purpose of a community of inquiry is to...bring participants into deeper and more significant relationships, to shake them free of their complacency, their false convictions and to make them available for more comprehensive understanding" (Sharp, 1993, p. 340).

When students feel they are valued members of the community and that their opinions and contributions are important, there are fewer distractions from the work of the classroom and fewer behavior problems (Allender, 2001). It is therefore essential that the teacher develop lessons that invite students to learn within a safe, inviting environment. "Learners must be active participants in the creation of a caring classroom community" (Zins et al., 2004). These beliefs are at the core of my teaching philosophy. Thus, as a teacher-researcher, I am interested in the way that students' emotional connection and responsibility affects the level of cognitive and social engagement within that community.

Intellectual Safety

Students choose to learn, just as they choose not to learn in the face of ridicule, embarrassment, or coercion (Purkey & Novak, 1996, p. 45).

Matthew Lipman (1993), the founder of Philosophy for Children (P4C), believes that "children hunger for meaning, and get turned off by education when it ceases to be meaningful to them" (p. 384). Jackson (2001) advises that in order to promote and develop a classroom environment where

students are trusted, willing, and able to engage in responsible dialogue and inquiry and to create meaning, "a particular relationship must develop among members to the classroom community that is quite different from standard classroom practice" (p. 459). He recommends that these relationships should be those that place more emphasis on listening, thoughtfulness, silence, and care and respect for the thoughts of others:

Essentially, the classroom needs to become an intellectually safe community; a place where students do not have to worry about being put down, belittled, teased, or ridiculed by their peers or teacher when they offer their personal insight, experiences or questions, so long as these comments are respectful to all members of the community. Within this place, the group accepts virtually any question or comment, so long as it is respectful of the other members of the [community]...Intellectual safety is the bedrock upon which inquiry grows. (p. 460)

Jackson describes an intellectually safe place as one that is free of put-downs, where no comments are made with the intent to "belittle, undermine, negate, devalue, or ridicule" other community members (p. 460). In order to create an environment where students feel secure enough to participate in inquiry, all members first need to trust one another with their personal thoughts and questions. Intellectual safety creates a classroom community where students do not fear the response to their contributions, where they know they will not be put down by the teacher or teased by the other students. Greely (2000) speaks to the importance of respect in developing and maintaining a safe classroom community:

When students feels safe, when they feel respect from both their peers and their teachers, and when they trust the people around them, they become free to learn. They are able to engage in the practices that lead to authentic intellectual growth. They become more willing to say what they think, more willing to share their work and invite feedback, more willing to experiment and try new things, more willing to try again when they don't get it right the first time, and more willing to invest in their own learning. And, because of this, they become better readers, writers, and thinkers. (p. xiv)

In order to foster an environment where students are able to carry on responsible dialogue and inquiry within the community, it is necessary for students to feel safe enough to take risks. Without the element of intellectual safety in place within a community, students will not take

educational risks and will not recognize the importance and benefits of doing so.

I begin to build an intellectually safe classroom at the very beginning of the year through modeling, extending low-risk invitations to share, and acknowledge all contributions as valuable. During the first few days of school we do not engage in a formal inquiry. However I do endeavor to facilitate inquiries with each of the students as well as introduce the idea of community. The initial class meetings focus on the unique identities of each student. I believe that this is crucial due to the fact that my class size is often forty or more students. Each individual needs to feel welcomed and recognized within my classroom. In order to generate authentic, even if brief, discussions with each student I have them complete an informational sheet asking questions about their background and interests. I use the information on these sheets to take attendance for the first few days and to help me make personal connections to each of them.. For example, I note that “You are the one who takes Judo,” or “You can speak four languages.” This provides a way for me to connect with each student while sharing aspects of their identity with the rest of the classroom community, and do it in a safe way.

It is not just the building of a yarn ball and the circular seating arrangement that makes Philosophy for Children work. It is the establishment of an atmosphere that recognizes that learning is risky, and that what we are asking our students to do is often a more difficult thing than it was for us. It is the acknowledgement of the “basic human need for positive regard from both others and from oneself” (Purkey and Schmidt, 1987). In order for this type of learning to occur, classrooms must become a place where students feel intellectually safe and therefore choose to participate cognitively, socially, and emotionally in educational activities.

Philosophy for Children

Likewise, philosophy—when embedded in the context of the community of inquiry—cultivates habits based on reflection and self-correction, rather than inculcation and rote learning (Lipman, et. al., 1980, p. 179).

I have observed numerous instances where students were asked to *learn*, rather memorize, information only to spit it back on a multiple-choice test and never return to it again. The information never related to their own lives and their comments were seldom welcomed, especially questions

that might lead the class “off topic,” which seemed to be the equivalent of the discussion going beyond what the teacher might know or want to discuss. The curriculum was organized with content as a first priority and student interests second. Students were expected to repeat this information on a test to show that they had ‘mastered’ this material. “Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat” (Freire, 2005, p. 72). Freire’s statement suggests a different approach—that children’s questions and thoughts on the material should be included in the way in which they are assessed. Tests should not simply be about their ability to repeat what the teacher or textbook has informed them.

Philosophy for Children (P4C) is at the core of my approach to teaching. P4C is a curriculum approach created by Matthew Lipman, a professor of philosophy at Columbia University, as an attempt to “improve children’s reasoning abilities by having them think about thinking as they discuss concepts of importance to them” (Lipman, 1989, p. 146). P4C has grown into a worldwide movement that has expanded beyond Lipman’s original approach, emerging as a researched-based pedagogy that has been built on the assumption that learning is socially constructed. The P4C curriculum aims to give priority to student interests and independent judgments over the memorization and presentation of content. P4C has become an important part of my teaching philosophy and allows student to engage thoughtfully and regularly within an intellectually safe classroom community. It is an approach that promotes a sense of classroom community while developing skill in critical thinking. The concept of community advanced by P4C changes and challenges the model of traditional teacher/student roles and relationships—one that moves the teacher from information-giver to co-inquirer. P4C is “based around the notion that [the students] must construct meanings for themselves, rather than simply accept those which are handed down to them” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p.99). In addition, P4C strategies help teachers construct a safe classroom environment where all ideas are welcomed and valued equally.

One of the goals of using P4C is to allow students to view the classroom as one in which they feel safe and respected, as well as excited to enter and eager to learn:

Philosophy for Children is an attempt to reconstruct (not water down) the discipline of philosophy, to make it accessible and attractive to children who will then be able to appropriate it and thereby acquire the tools, skills, and dispositions they need in order to think for themselves. (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 99)

P4C leads to the creation of a student-centered environment, which ultimately leads to the improvement of self-confidence. Students raise their own questions, discuss possible answers with one another, listen to one another's responses, consider alternative points of view, and form their own ideas based on the evidence presented by themselves and their peers. P4C aims to create independent, self-directed thinkers who are challenged to discover more about the topic under discussion. "Philosophy for Children's egalitarian nature, commitment to varying viewpoints and insistence on the inherent value of all participants helps foster empathy and pro-social behavior as an essential basis for values education" (IAPC, 2003).

Role of Teacher as Facilitator

I think of teaching as if I were directing a play – an improvised play in which there are no lines for the players to read...There is, however, a specific structure that allows for and encourages all of the players, the teacher, and the students towards goals... the teacher's predominant role is that of director. (Allender, 2001, p. 5).

Teachers must be proactive in making the necessary adjustments to the classroom environment that allows for authentic engagement to take place. "From the outset, her efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization... efforts must be imbued with a profound trust...they must be partners of the students in their relations with them" (Freire, 1998, p. 75). In addition to being a partner in inquiry, the teacher-facilitator has to continue to provide the structure that offers opportunities for student participation and engagement with content; "...invitations must be sent and received; they cannot merely be wished for. People do not reach their potential because others simply wish them well" (Purkey & Novak, 1996, p. 50).

In terms of instruction, the teacher-as-facilitator must encourage students to discover meanings on their own. "The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thought on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower

isolation, but only in communication" (Freire, 2005, p. 77). The use of a "gently Socratic inquiry" method (Jackson, 2001) allows for the teacher to develop relationships with students that go beyond the information-giver-to-information-receiver affiliation. As Dewey says, "In such shared activity, the teacher is a learner, and the learner is, without knowing it, a teacher—and upon the whole, the less consciousness there is, on either side, of giving or receiving instruction, the better" (1916, p. 160).

Carl Rogers (1980) presents the concept of empathic understanding to explain the way in which a teacher connects with students in this type of environment:

When the teacher has the ability to understand the student's reactions from the inside, has a sensitive awareness of the way the process of education and learning seems to the student, then again the likelihood of significant learning is increased.... [Students feel deeply appreciative] when they are simply understood—not evaluated, not judged, simply understood from their own point of view, not the teacher's. (as cited in Smith, 1997)

The development of empathetic understanding takes time. The teacher should not abandon the approach if they do not have immediate success in establishing a deep connection with students. Yet, staying true to my role and purpose by becoming a trusted co-inquirer has proved to be a challenge and the most challenging part has been in creating a sense of community with the students. However, continued reflection and adaptation has given me a renewed sense of purpose and aided in my success.

The teacher who adopts and implements a P4C approach plays a role that is different from that of the traditional educator:

The P4C facilitator sees her/himself as a co-inquirer with the children, as interested as they are in exploring philosophical concepts, improving judgment and discovering meaning. However, when it comes to the procedures of inquiry, the facilitator both guides the children and models for them—by asking open-ended questions, posing alternative views, seeking clarification, questioning reasons, and by demonstrating self-correcting behavior. It is through this kind of modeling that the children eventually internalize the procedures of inquiry. (IAPC, 2003)

Dewey argues that education should be considered as a form of social activity. "When education is based upon

experience and educative experience is seen to be a social process, the situation changes radically. The teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities” (Dewey, 1998, p. 66). Taking on such a non-traditional instructional role is challenging; it demands a lot from the teacher, especially if she or he is a novice. It is hard work to stay true to the process and to her or his own beliefs about education especially if other teachers are unsympathetic. This is why it is more empowering to be part of a recognized program like P4C.

Conclusion

Students’ curiosity, their eagerness to engage in inquiry, and their natural sense of wonder needs “a place to grow, breathe and make sense. [T]he authentic ‘Aha!’ experience requires risk on the part of the learner, and a climate of trust and safety is essential for all of these things to happen” (Bluestein, 2001, p. 210). Trust is a fundamental component of learning process—students are “most likely to thrive in an atmosphere of trust...This involves maintaining a warm, caring relationship with students, one in which teachers can be ‘real’ with themselves and others” (Purkey & Novak, 1996, p. 50). Teachers in a constructivist classroom act as a guide in discovering areas where the student lacks understanding or is simply mistaken and in need of assistance from the teacher. The utilization of a P4C approach is what allows me to create the type of intellectually safe community environment that I know is crucial to my students’ cognitive, social and emotional development, and is therefore an essential aspect of their educational experience and growth.

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