



How to use lesson templates

ask it

Fact sheet

Communities of Enquiry
SAPERRE 

Introduction

These enquiry templates are designed to help teachers who are relatively new to P4C. They give examples of stimuli, questions, voting techniques and other ingredients that can form the basis of an effective Philosophical Community of Enquiry.

While they may look prescriptive, they contain suggestions rather than a definitive lesson plan. This fits with the overall approach of P4C which acknowledges the importance of teachers' personal, professional and present (i.e. "in the moment") judgment. So, please modify and adapt them in ways that work best for your students. For example, you may have a number of warm up activities that you know work well with your class and prefer to use these. Sometimes we have suggested warm up activities that remind children of the previous enquiry. So, if you aren't running through the enquiries sequentially you may wish to use an alternative warm up activity.

We hope you find these templates helpful as you develop as a P4C facilitator. We haven't put timings on the sheets as we feel it is best for each teacher to decide on the appropriate amount of time to spend on each element. As a rough guide the "main enquiry" element comes under the step called "building". Depending on how the enquiry is going you may want to begin an enquiry in one lesson and continue it in another. A good place to break, if this is the case, is just before the "building" step.

We have suggested a number of activities within each enquiry template and we hope you will be happy to use the ideas flexibly - reflecting the pace at which you and your class feel comfortable working.

The templates

Each template is based on the following 10 steps which form part of our Level one training course for P4C facilitators

1. Preparation
2. Presentation
3. Thinking time
4. Conversation
5. Question making
6. Question airing
7. Choosing
8. First words
9. Building
10. Last words

More details on each stage are available in the Level One handbook.

Using the 10 steps

You don't have to use all steps in every session, though we recommend you don't miss out one repeatedly because they all help to develop separate inter-related skills.

Occasionally we have provided templates that slightly deviate from the standard 10 steps.

These templates are a resource for you to use as suits your particular class and so we have made suggestions rather than give a definitive set of instructions.

Encouraging the four Cs

We have designed the templates to support the students in different modes of thinking (what we call the four Cs: Critical, Creative, Caring and Collaborative Thinking). These are attitudes or approaches rather than specific skills that the students can develop over time.

So the thinking mode or attitude to bear in mind for the first enquiry is Caring Thinking, which is exemplified by the skill focus on Good Listening. The thinking attitude behind the second enquiry is

Critical Thinking, exemplified by the skill focus on Good Questioning. And so on.

Teachers are not expected to make a “big thing” about the 4Cs in the early stages of developing a community of enquiry in their classroom: the focus should be on the particular skills. But, over time, the children should begin to think of themselves, not only as “thinkers”, but more precisely as “critical, creative, caring and collaborative” thinkers.

Effective facilitation

There is a saying amongst P4C practitioners and educators that a P4C facilitator needs to be “pedagogically strong” but “philosophically self-effacing”.

What this means is that teachers need to bring to bear all their accumulated skills in structuring the lesson, and “managing” the group/community. On the other hand, as the process unfolds, teachers generally need to hold back their own views about the thinking and “philosophy” that the children are

coming up with. This enables you to encourage and support children in developing their own views and mental resources.

For this reason the templates include no indication of the substantive concepts/questions that the children will create, choose for discussion and proceed to enquire into. In other words, the essential freedom to enquire, just like the essential freedom for teachers to set up enquiry as they see fit, is preserved.