

# Early Years Sessions - Activities to promote thinking and dispositions for enquiry

## Aims:

To introduce the language and begin practising skills for philosophical enquiry

## Skills:

Speaking and listening   Observation and memory   Turn-taking and patience  
Respecting

Making choices   Offering reasons   Making connections and distinctions and categorising

Asking open questions

## Activities: sample first session

Small groups – 5-6 children

Choosing – from pictures – favourite – and offering a reason why

Making a link or connection with another picture – giving the reason

Looking at 'Would you Rather' – giving reasons for choices

Making up our own Would you rather –

- i.e. have a magic lamp, a magic carpet or a magic fairy
- have a real live .....        .....
- climb a .....        .....
- dress up as a .....        .....

## Follow up activities: Turn-taking

- Pass the ----- crisp sheet of paper, sleeping Smarties, delicate object
- Pass a handshake, squeeze of a hand, smile, funny face, body wiggle
- Stand up in order – then stand up whilst person next to you is halfway up – (really hard) – progress to Mexican wave!
- 1,2,3 game – in pairs, opposite each other, - each says a number, keep repeating 1,2,3,1,2,3 – then replace 1 with a clap, repeat for a while, 2 with a nod, repeat until able, then 3 with a jump. Progress up to using 5 numbers, substituting other actions for each number

## Observation

- The 'look at me game' – then look away, change something, look back, - can you see what has changed?

- Memory games, - Kim's game, I went shopping and I bought..... game,
- Name games – with beanbag, throwing and catching with names, - order, then reverse it. Dracula – walk slowly towards an other, in rhythm with others swaying, say his/her name before you get to them, swap if correct, - go on if not. Once names known, - have favourites round – then play Dracula using favourites

### **Choices and Reasons**

- from collection of items – which do you like best and why? Pictures, toys, buttons, flowers, cars, - mixed up items
- from stories – which characters you'd most like to be – what would you then be able to do?
- from colours – which is your favourite – and what would you make that colour (clothes, room, toys, the sky, grass, streets etc)
- From 'You Choose' and other picture books

### **Connections and Distinctions**

- word association game 2 rounds connections then 2 rounds not connected
- random items – connections and describe them
- toys – and the stories we know about characters they might be

### **Categorising**

- Using toys how could we group them – lots of different ways – pretty/ugly, scary/not scary, strong/weak, real/not real, in stories/not in stories, girls/boys, for older children/younger children,
- Expression photos
- Houses/homes pictures
- Themselves – into groups – boys/girls, hair colour, long/short hair, eye colour, tall /short, shoe size, name order, age order, - others?

### **Questions**

- Passing the object – what questions might we ask it if it could talk?
- Questions from the book ASK ME
- Hard questions and easy questions / question quadrant exercise
- Types of questions – from a story – the ones we can answer – and answer them, - those we need to think about – 'make our mind up questions'
- Statements and questions – how we change one into the other – question words

## Introducing Language and Dispositions of Dialogue

**Key Words:** Links and connections, differences and distinctions, agree disagree, describe, clarify/make clear, refine, reasons, because, why? example, concept/big idea, theme, possibility, questions, group/category, hard/difficult, easy, all, most, many, some, a few, a couple, one, none.

The children will look to you to model the use of language in P4C sessions. You'll need to explain and describe words so they become part of the children's vocabulary. Whenever there is an opportunity to offer an example or clarify language, make it as clear as you can and then ask the children later in the day to remind themselves what the words meant – repetition will be necessary.

**Much of the language work you do will encourage children to think about concepts. It is therefore thinking work as well as language work.**

A display of the words with the activities works well – one class I've seen recently sorted their photos of a trip they went on according to their own criteria, then displayed them in the categories: a trip to the farm – inside and outside pictures. This was their choice, from a series of their own criteria including pictures with words on them, (they'd photographed lots of signs and instructions) photos with wood in them, (the fences, pens and buildings featured in many of their photos) ones with animals only, children only and children and adults – were some of their other criteria.

So, the heading Questions, with lots of moveable examples could allow children to show different groups of questions, - they could choose the groups (hard, easy, ones with 'right' answers, ones you need to wonder about, ones about the story, ones you can look up, etc. ) A concept line, (with fair → unfair, good → bad,) or powerful → not powerful, and lots of examples to place on the line (president, child, mouse, teacher, parent, king/queen, servant, slave, factory worker, company director, doctor, lawyer, criminal.....)

Reasons – strong, medium, weak - with a selection of reasons and a selection of statements, matching them for relevance is a good exercise – I eat my breakfast because 1) I like the colour of the bowl, 2) I am hungry, 3) it is my favourite cereal, 4) I don't like my lunch. I come to school to .... 1) play with my friends, 2) learn, 3) wear my uniform, 4) do PE, 5) because my Mum says I have to

Work with statements – All statements, Most statements, Some statements, No(ne) statements.

All cats have 4 legs? Most? Some? No?  
Some? No?

All children are happy? Most?

All people are good? Most? Some? No?

All rules are fair? Most? Some? No?

All adults tell the truth? Most? Some? No?

**Some Dispositions to encourage:** Patience, willingness to listen to (all) others, willingness to think/engage, valuing listening and speaking with other children, valuing reasons, interest in the world and 'big questions', respect for difference, curiosity/sense of wonder, willingness to regulate (or try to regulate) own behaviour, an interest in reflection, playfulness with ideas

Most dispositional work is done implicitly. Within the rules we are encouraging children to think about what is good behaviour for discussion – much of this is to do with being patient, valuing others, listening to everyone and wondering. This can cross out into the rest of the classroom ethos through your regular reinforcement.