

3rd PFC

Materials Interview

Interviewer: The instructional materials that you use for this lesson?

Teacher: For this lesson, I have the Good Thinker's Toolkit, individually each letter is on its own card, and each letter is on its own card. Since our school's only been doing P4C for about two to three years, depending on the teacher, we're still rolling out each part of the toolkit. Today I used the letter E for examples and evidence, and the letter R for reasons. I had those pre-made for us to throw chips on every time we did it. The kids like to see, oh, we were really good in reasons today, or we were really good in examples. I also had our expectations pre-made for the circle, which the kids came up with, we came up with together. I printed it out to have it ready so they can see the visual expectations. By now, we don't necessarily need them, but it's nice to have them there if we need a reminder.

We normally have a community ball that we made, but the other day I let them use the silver one, and they're really into it, so we used that. That's another resource. We have "What is a philosophical question?" that's on the question box itself also, so it's kind of criteria to check off before they turn it a question. That's already made. What other ...

Our "talk, think, and listen." I like to review those cards every time. It's kind of a nice reminder, especially for the "listen," because it's difficult. Even I catch myself once in a while. I'm listening, but I'm not showing I'm listening. I'm kind of zoning out and listening. Just reviewing that helps everybody remember the expectations by having those materials ready.

Interviewer: I like the ball.

Teacher: Yeah. They like that ball better than the yarn ball that we made. It almost helps them, when they're playing with it, it gives the kids something to focus on. The ones that are a little more shy, to sit and do that ball instead of ...

Interviewer: Speaking of the yarn one, I looked at it in the other class, and they do something with it, too.

Teacher: Yeah, they're usually throwing it.

Interviewer: Something's definitely happening there, and it's probably good.

Teacher: Yeah, I think so.

Interviewer: They're safe, and they don't have to concentrate on whatever people are ...

Teacher: I think if they had to sit there with nothing in their hands, that they'd be a lot more nervous. Or just feel like everybody's staring at them. They don't have to have that pressure. Kind of takes it off a little bit.

Interviewer: Why did you consider choosing these materials?

Teacher: The Good Thinker's Toolkit was presented to us through Chad Miller, who does the Philosophy for Children. Personally, with third graders, some of the things come naturally because we do accountable talk in here, like agreeing to disagree, so we get the counter-arguments naturally. Having it out helps me learn the toolkit and helps the students learn the toolkit. It gives us the reminder of making sure we're having that good philosophical discussion if we're hitting all those aspects. Having that pre-made is a reminder for everyone, and it's nice to have it out so I remember we need to focus on something new today, or review something and the students have it visually in front of them. I guess visually, for all the tools that we use.

[00:04:00] The question box, we do the plain vanillas once in a while, where the students can come up with a question on the spot, but the question box relates it to the curriculum a little better. We're doing a book right now and they are really into the book, so some of the questions in there today had to do with the story we've been reading. It's nice to have that connection to curriculum also. Having that box pre-made gives me a time that if, we may have ten extra minutes one day, and I can just go to the box, pull a question, and we can do a quick P4C. Having that resource ready gives me a go-to when there's extra time, and it also gives them a place to put in wonderings throughout the day, instead of an on-the-spot wondering.

Interviewer: I want to incorporate these in my classroom. What is it you like about these materials?

Teacher: Kind of what I said before. I like the question box because it gives them the opportunity, at all times, to be thinking of questions and wonderings, instead of on the spot. Having the visual, some kids need that as a reminder, or need the visual to keep them on task sometimes. The ball designates a speaker, which helps. Even I find myself sometimes wanting to say something to them after they've done their spiel, but having the ball designates somebody who gets to speak, and designates a focus area, so that's a good tool.

Interviewer: Are there any changes you would make to these materials?

[00:06:00] Teacher: I have changed the ball, just because the kids saw it over by my desk, and I use it for distracted kids sometimes, and they were like, "Can we try using that?" It was another student-directed part to the P4C, and they like it. I've made changes. Last year I didn't do the Good Thinker's Toolkit that way, I just let it flow more naturally and related it to opinion writing. I did it a little today, but I didn't have the letters out. It was only these kids' first year, that I had last year. It was more setting the "talk, think, and listen." That and the expectations were the only thing we had out. I didn't want it to be too overwhelming because they were just learning it. Whereas this year's class had it last year, so it made more sense to then put in the Good Thinker's Toolkit this year. Didn't want to overwhelm the kids.

Interviewer: How would you describe these materials as meaningful or relevant to the students' lives?

Teacher: They're meaningful because it gives a focus, even though it is a student-led activity. It still keeps it to meet that critical thinking that we're hoping to get, ultimately, out of it. Even though it is a student-led activity, the resources I lay out help me, as a teacher, make sure that there is still some sort of a purpose to it. It's not just talking story. It's making it philosophical. Helping them stay directed ... What was the question?

Interviewer: Relevant and meaningful.

Teacher: It's meaningful and relevant, the question box, because the students get to come up with their own ideas. It's 100 percent student-based. Usually if one kid is interested, there will be at least a few more kids interested, if not the whole class. It's not me asking, what was the story about today? And them regurgitating what the story was about today. It's thoughtful wonderings that kids that are eight and nine years old have. Some of them I find interesting, but some I'm like, I wouldn't have thought about that wondering, or I already have an idea about that wondering, and that's what I think. When they come up with them, it makes it more kid-friendly.