Flexible Philosophy in 5th Grade

By Danica Wolfe, 2021 CTI Fellow
Oakhurst STEAM Academy

This curriculum unit is recommended for:
Fifth Grade Standards Based Philosophical Discussions

Keywords: philosophy, collaborative philosophical inquiry, critical thinking, morality, ethics, reasoning, speaking and listening, mathematical practices, transferable skills, flexible, inquiry, reflective discourse, literacy

Teaching Standards: See Appendix 1 for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis:
Over the course of a school year, elementary students will explore philosophical questions that connect to topics and standards embedded in the 5th grade curricular standards. They will engage in collaborative philosophical inquiry to develop their critical thinking and collaboration skills. Teachers and students who participate in these discussions will strengthen their ability to build meaning through a community of inquiry. This unit will take texts and topics that are already interwoven into the CMS selected curriculum and NC state standards and provide questions and instructional strategies that foster philosophical discussion and allow teachers the opportunity to understand their students' thinking rather than simply communicating what students are "supposed" to be thinking and learning.

Students will use accountable talk strategies and reflective discourse to understand their own thinking about philosophical questions that connect to the EL literacy curriculum. They will develop their writing skills by recording their thinking before, during and after classroom discussions about the given question. They also have the opportunity to engage in philosophical discussions that relate to the math, science and social studies content they are responsible for understanding in 5th grade. It is the hope of the author of this unit that teachers who read this unit might gain a vision for the value of communities of inquiry as it relates to students' cognitive and social skills as well as how philosophical discussions can happen in any grade level with any content area.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to (**76**) *students in* (**GRADE 5**).

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Introduction

Across CMS, teachers and principals are grappling with a distressing problem. Literacy scores continue to show little to no improvement despite best efforts to provide standards based instruction. Student reading abilities have shown little growth despite a variety of different instructional methods, new curriculum and increased teacher professional development in best practices. Even more concerning, this problem is not just localized to Charlotte Mecklenburg schools. Across the country, about two-thirds of students are scoring below proficiency on reading tests. Not only do students seem to be losing the ability to carefully read and comprehend texts, students are also increasingly showing less understanding about the world around them and less ability to engage critically and respectfully with a variety of different opinions. We see this struggle increasing particularly in the realm of social media and the current climate of wondering how to differentiate between real and fake news. With a variety of inputs easily accessible at our fingertips, it is crucial that students have the ability to engage well with seeking out answers to their questions about what is true.

As Natalie Wexler remarks in her book *The Knowledge Gap,* "The stagnation in reading scores isn't the only distressing feature of the education landscape: many American students lack basic knowledge about the world. On the most recent nationwide test of eighth graders, only 18% scored proficient or above in US history, as did only 23% in civics and 27% in geography - the lowest scores on national tests in any core subject areas" (p.9). It seems clear that teaching to test is not equipping our students to read and understand complex text or understand core content. The drive to improve reading scores by focusing on reading standards out of context from a core body of knowledge has also reduced the time and attention given to social studies and science, two important subjects we must equip students to understand if we hope to have an informed and thoughtful citizenry ready to take on the challenges of the 21st century.

In light of these concerns, I believe educators need to be asking two important questions. First, "How do I equip students to find meaning in their reading and be willing to think critically about their learning?" and second, "How do I ensure that I am adequately providing students the opportunity to engage in productive and reflective dialogue that allows for the discussion of meaningful topics and the opportunity to modify and/or adjust their thinking as they hear the different perspectives of their classmates?" We know that children are trying to understand their world and make sense of their place in it. Students are naturally curious and have many deep and thoughtful questions burning in their minds. However, oftentimes, the curiosity and wonder of our students gets rubbed out as teachers desperately try to teach them how to find the "right answer" to a question on a reading test.

I believe that if we truly want to see change in the literacy rates in our district and across the nation, as well as, and more importantly, see students become true lifelong lovers of learning and reading and critical thinking, elementary schools need to be strongly evaluating how their curriculum supports students in being adventurous in their thinking, taking respectful risks in conversations with peers, pushing back against the status quo, and changing their mind if and when the information provided might require modification of thought and opinion. That means teachers must engage in instructional practices that allow students those opportunities. This unit is intended to inspire CMS teachers with a vision for how incorporating philosophical discussion into the K-5 classroom is not only necessary but also completely doable within the structures that are already in place across the district.

Rationale

As a teacher within Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, I believe that it is important that the work I do as a teacher align with the mission and vision of the district. Otherwise, I should probably find a new district to work for that aligns with my own values. Fortunately, I believe that CMS' vision for their students does in fact align with my own personal beliefs as well as with a vision for incorporating philosophical discussions into the K-5 classroom. The vision of CMS states that they intend "to lead the community in educational excellence, inspiring intellectual curiosity, creativity, and achievement so that all students reach their full potential."[1] This unit is a direct reflection of a CMS teacher who desires to see students inspired in their intellectual curiosity and creativity and who believes that collaborative philosophical inquiry across the curriculum is an excellent way to accomplish that goal.

CMS has adopted both a literacy and a math curriculum that have a specific drive toward fostering creative inquiry but they have their limitations and unfortunately their more philosophical bent is curtailed in favor of providing sit and get strategies that teachers believe will lead to better test scores. For the good of our students and their engagement in intellectual curiosity and creativity, this has to stop. We have to learn better ways to teach our students HOW to think, not just what to think. We have to focus on the art of thinking itself. In the world of literacy, we need to spend more time teaching speaking, listening, and writing, collaborative thinking skills. In our day to day math instruction, we need to spend more time strengthening our focus on the standards of mathematical practice which include constructing viable arguments and critiquing the reasoning of others as well as making sense of problems and persevere in solving them. In Social Studies, we need to make sure that we are finding creative ways to teach the inquiry strand that is being rolled out in the revised NC state standards. In Science, we need to encourage creative risk taking in experimentation and a willingness to grapple with complex ideas that require careful thought processes.

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[1] CMS Webpage https://www.cms.k12.nc.us/communications/strategicplan/Pages/default.aspx

I believe that a simple, straightforward approach to these needs is to consider where to incorporate guided philosophical discussion into the K-5 curriculum. If we can work as teachers to build critical thinking and collaboration skills, I believe that we will see improvement in student achievement across the curriculum. In the current research surrounding Philosophy for Children, there is much evidence to suggest that better reasoning skills does in fact lead to higher achievement and improves student motivation, engagement, and investment in their studies.

Demographics
I teach at Oakhurst STEAM Academy, a public, Title I, partial magnet school in Charlotte, North Carolina. Oakhurst was the first school to reopen as a STEAM magnet school in 2015. Oakhurst has a student population of about 550-600 students with an 80% minority enrollment. 44% of students are Black, 28% of students are Hispanic. 19% of students are white. 5% of students are Asian or Pacific Islander. 44% of students are female and 56% of students are male. The school enrolls 100% economically disadvantaged students. Test scores at Oakhurst show that only 32% of students are scoring at or above proficiency in mathematics and 32% of students are scored at or above proficiency in reading. This is significantly behind the district average for both subjects. The district average for proficiency in math is 43% and in literacy it is 42%. In Science, Oakhurst's proficiency level for 5th grade science is 40% as compared to the district proficiency rate of 48.9%. I am responsible for teaching the literacy block to our entire 5th grade class. There are currently 76 students in 5th grade and I teach three ninety minute blocks over the course of the school day.

Objectives
The aim of this unit seeks to provide a model for how philosophical questions and discussions can find a home in every subject of study for students in the K-5 classroom. Because I currently teach 5th grade, the lessons in this unit will focus on philosophical questions that may arise over the course of 5th grade units of study. However, teachers in any grade level should be able to take the ideas presented in this unit and tailor them to their specific grade level and content. The CMS scope and sequence has provided flex days through the year that allow teachers to incorporate supplemental instruction based upon the needs of their students. What better way to use those flex days than to provide instruction that fosters creativity, critical thinking and social engagement? This unit will take texts and topics that are already interwoven into the CMS selected curriculum and NC state standards and provide questions and instructional strategies that foster philosophical discussion and allow teachers the opportunity to understand their students' thinking rather than simply communicating what students are "supposed" to be thinking and learning.

It is my goal that these lessons can be used flexibly in either whole group or small group discussions depending on the needs of the particular classroom and group of students. It is my hope that these lessons will provide students the opportunities to grapple with thought provoking questions, engage in collaborative philosophical inquiry (CPI) and be able to explain how their thinking may have been challenged, changed, and/or expanded over the course of the discussions. I want students to leave these times of discussion with the ever-growing capacity to hold on to more than one idea at a time without shutting down or becoming frustrated with their peers and/or teachers. As Aristotle is famously and frequently misquoted to have said, "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it." That is my desire for both teachers and students throughout every philosophical discussion that might be had in the classroom. My hope for all participants is that we would leave our lessons together having become more thoughtful, reflective, considerate and reasonable individuals...individuals who are able to "entertain a thought without accepting it." The skills of critical thinking and collaborative discussion will serve our students well in every classroom they enter and in their lives beyond the doors of Charlotte Mecklenburg schools.

Content Research
The research for this unit took many different twists and turns over the course of our seminar. I have been teaching for thirteen years and one of the most distressing things I have experienced is seeing students struggle to find meaning in their reading and meaning in their schooling. Unfortunately, the research largely confirms that what I am seeing on a small scale is quite true across the nation. We have a problem on our hands when it comes to our literacy instruction.

What is the problem?
 Let me introduce you to two startling statistics about the educational and social/emotional landscapes of our country. The National Commission on Adult Literacy recently released its final report, Reach Higher America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce, revealing that between 88-90 million adults are not prepared to meet the demands of today's global economy or secure a family-sustaining wage job. Of the 88-90 million adults who have at least one educational barrier to economic success, 18 million Americans do not have a high school diploma, 51 million have not gone to college, and 18 million aren't proficient in their English language and literacy schools. Already beyond the reach of schools and lacking adequate education and skills to obtain a good paying job, our nation's 25-34 year olds are the first generation in U.S history to be less educated than their parents and unless we do something about it, they face the prospect of a lower standard of living."[2]

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[2] Reach Higher https://www.huffpost.com/entry/reach-higher-america-over_b_111640.

It is important to note here that the goal of this reference is not to specifically focus on that particular problem but to rather draw a connection between this statistic and the connection it may possibly have to the push for high stakes standardized testing and the gradual loss of content based instruction that began with the No Child Left Behind Act that passed in 2001. It is my belief that the emphasis on standardized testing and the pressure to perform on math and literacy assessments has led to the decontextualizing of literacy strategies and the loss of overall meaning and content in the classroom. If you think about it, our nation's 25 year olds were approximately six when NCLB passed and they have experienced the ramifications of a decade's worth of destructive pressure to teach to the test instead of fostering creativity, collaboration and inquiry based instruction.

Not only has the push for high stakes testing had a negative impact on our students but so has the implementation of standards and skills based instructional practices instead of content-based instruction. Natalie Wexler has written an excellent text on this particular topic entitled *The Knowledge Gap*. I highly recommend it for further reading to teachers who are interested in this topic. She believes that our nation's struggle to make progress in quality education is due to the focus on decontextualized reading comprehension skills at the expense of actual knowledge. Wexler writes, "All American elementary schools, regardless of student demographics, prioritize reading and math over other subjects. And...the universal approach to reading is to focus on comprehension skills. Even teachers in one of the most affluent counties in the nation often frame lesson objectives in terms that are generic and vague: 'Examine text features of information texts...ask and answer questions about text...etc.'" (Wexler, p.20).

Even more concerning than this statistic is the fact that this approach is even more pronounced at schools serving low-income children. Wexler writes, "A 2007 study found that about half of all children serving students who were middle class or above were subjected to repetitive instruction in basic skills, but in schools serving low-income children that proportion soared to 91%" (p.20). Yet despite the intense focus on test preparation, the achievement gap continues to widen and Wexler believes that the answer is found in turning our focus to meaningful content-based instruction in areas such as history and science. As we fight against inequity and inequality in the public school system, it is my belief that Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools has a responsibility to our students to turn our attention to how to foster meaningful engagement with core content and bodies of knowledge. This can be accomplished through philosophical discussion connected to core content and literacy standards.

Second, consider this troubling statistic. "In a national sample of 148,189 sixth to twelfth graders, only 29%-45% of surveyed students reported that they had social competencies such as empathy, decision making and conflict resolution skills, and only 29% indicated that their school provided a caring, encouraging environment" (Durlak et al., 2011). Durlak et al. sum it up nicely

when they report, "A key challenge for 21st century schools involves serving culturally diverse students with varied abilities and motivations for learning" (2011).

These thoughts are not new to our day and age. John Dewey, a popular philosopher and educational theorist believed strongly in breaking the barrier between the walls of the classroom and the outside world. Dewey knew that active learning and collaborative participation in creating meaning played an important role in academic achievement. For a long time, there has existed a barrier between what happens inside the classroom and what happens outside the classroom. It is of crucial importance that we as educators find a way to break that barrier. It is my belief that in order for that to happen students must have the ability to gain wisdom, not merely knowledge during their time in the elementary classroom. Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied in any given situation. In order for students to gain wisdom, it is important for students to be able to think critically and solve problems. This will not happen if we spend the majority of our time in the classroom teaching to standardized math and literacy assessments.

However, I do believe that our students can be better equipped with both knowledge and wisdom if we spend time diving into the potentially unsettling yet deeply fascinating world of philosophy. So the next phase of my research time was spent considering three important considerations. First, I was interested in learning more about what exactly philosophy is and what constitutes philosophical discussion. Second, I was interested in learning about the benefits of philosophy as a practice to deepen collaborative thinking and inquiry. Third, I wanted to know how philosophy could be transferred to the elementary school setting and what work was already being done around this particular topic. The remainder of this section will be organized by those topics of consideration.

What is philosophy?
Philosophy critically examines the validity of knowledge and beliefs. It is the study of the why behind the why we ask questions of knowledge. Philosophy seeks to answer the question "What can we know and how can we know it?" It is an attempt to figure out what we do not know and it takes critical thinking and the ability to sit with the tension of questions that may not have one specific knowable answer. In our seminar discussion, we learned that philosophy is thinking about thinking, the quest for meaning, conversation as dialogue, asking open questions, creative thinking and value-laden thinking (Millet & Tapper, pg.551). You might be wondering at this point how philosophy connects to education. In our time discussing the purpose of education in the seminar, one of the ideas we landed on based on our discussion together is that education should be an enlightening experience that ties together knowledge, experience and good judgement thus equipping humans to better understand the world and act in it for good.

Why incorporate philosophy into daily life and the classroom?

Philosophical discussions allow the opportunity to engage with others constructively and come to conclusions that are warranted by the premises. These discussions provide students with opportunities to practice constructing arguments, utilize communication skills, reason and think well and listen to others perspectives. Incorporating philosophy into the classroom is a way to teach students that others' opinions and thoughts have value in their own education and that meaning can be found through learning together and listening to each other instead of in isolation. We want students to have agency and advocate for themselves. We also want them to be able to transfer knowledge gained from previous experiences to new circumstances and apply their learning to unfamiliar situations so that they can adapt to changing dynamics well. As Matthew Lipman writes in his book *Philosophy in the Classroom*, "Something must be done to enable children to acquire meaning for themselves. They will not acquire such meaning merely by learning the contents of adult knowledge. They must be taught to think, and in particular, to think for themselves. Thinking is the skill par excellence that enables us to acquire meanings" (p.13).

A recent research study was conducted that analyzed thinking skills programs that included collaborative philosophical inquiry. They concluded that such programs "are effective at improving pupil's performance in cognitive and curriculum tests when they are researched in school settings' and…their effect is relatively greater than most other researched educational interventions. Analyses of these studies indicate that thinking skills approaches are effective in improving pupil's learnings and that they have a positive effect on pupil's attitudes and beliefs" (Millett and Tapper, p.554). Wexler speaks to this idea when she says, "While it may be true that our education system hasn't done much to reduce inequality, the fact is that we've never attempted to provide a content focused, knowledge building elementary curriculum on a large scale. And opponents of reform have overlooked the cognitive science on the importance of knowledge, just as reformers have" (p.117).

What does this have to do with the importance of philosophy? Consider this question "One way to appreciate the importance of incorporating collaborative philosophical inquiry into classes is to ask: Where else in the school curriculum do we teach students how to deal with open intellectual questions?" (Millett and Tapper, p.552). Teaching students HOW to think and not merely WHAT to think may be an important piece of the puzzle in addressing inequality in our education system. From here, let us turn our attention to the components of collaborative philosophical inquiry and how it can be done in the school setting.

What are the components of Collaborative Philosophical Inquiry?
According to Dave Littlewood's article Collaborative Approaches to Philosophical Discussion, "collaborative learning refers to forms of learning in which the learners collaborate with each other...they work, and so learn, together." Millett and Tapper believe that "Philosophy is a

discipline that enriches and improves the effectiveness of the school curriculum, while also providing important social benefits in the lives of students and schools" (p.548). In the classroom, "the key idea behind the P4C movement is that philosophy in the classroom should be based on a distinctive pedagogy, commonly known as 'community of inquiry. In engaging with CPI, each class reflects on its own processes and behaviors in discussing a text and students are encouraged to evaluate critically the performance of themselves and of the class (p.548). The central point to well executed philosophical inquiry is a climate of reflection and respectful dialogue.

In a collaborative philosophical inquiry session there are five main parts. First, a prompt is given that requires thinking. Second, time is given to allow for reflection. Then there is the emergence of questions that arise from the prompt. Fourth a discussion is had around one of the questions. Finally, there is a time of closure where students can reflect on the ideas that were brought forward in the discussion. It is important to remember that an effective CPI will be structured and focused on the topic at hand. Ideas and thoughts should build upon each other and be relevant to the discussion. The teacher helps guide students through this process but does not insert his/her ideas as the main focus. Participants in the discussion should keep an open mind to the thoughts of others and being willing to demonstrate "epistemological modesty." That is a fancy way of saying that my own opinion may or may not be correct and I am willing to hear other's ideas on the matter. Participants in a CPI should also refrain from excessive use of technical jargon that could derail the conversation in confusing ways if not all participants know the terms being used. Finally, it is crucial that the discussions are arenas of intellectual safety. Class rules that may be developed to help guide students that include the following - Listen to other people, build on what others say, respect other people's ideas, there may be no single right answer, and be prepared to think (Millet and Tapper, p.552).

What is already being done in the elementary landscape to promote Philosophy for Children?
I would be remiss in my content research if I did not share what is already being done across the nation to promote Philosophy for Children in elementary schools. Philosophy for Children is a pedagogical approach developed by Matthew Lipman. His model forms the basis of the community of inquiry and can be used in any content area. Three key players in this field include the Center for Philosophy for Children out of the University of Washington, the P4C Cooperative, and Montclair State University's Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC). Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp are the cofounders of the IAPC. The IAPC supports schools in implementing a Philosophy for Children curriculum by supporting a cohort of teachers who are interested in hosting philosophy sessions for their students throughout the year. They also published Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children. The IAPC website would be an excellent site to visit if you would like to know more about the research on the cognitive and affective impacts of philosophy for children.

University of Washington's The Center for Philosophy for Children is an excellent resource for teachers who are interested in building their own elementary philosophy program through the use of children's literature. One key feature of The Center's work is the lesson plans they have built around picture books that foster philosophical discussion. They have a library of over 100 philosophical lesson plans that complement popular children's books already read in elementary schools all around the nation. Thomas E. Wartenberg also has a very thoughtful book entitled Big Ideas for Little Kids that also focuses on how to use picture books with children to teach philosophical thought processes. He outlines a discussion framework that includes establishing a story matrix that "takes the book's narrative and puts the events into a logical structure involving the fundamental categories that children will have to use in order to have a philosophy discussion" (p.49). In essence, the story matrix provides the necessary background of the story that children will need to refer to for an evidence based discussion. From the story matrix, a concept map of big ideas can be created that will help generate the philosophical questions related to the events in the story. In the lesson plans provided in this unit, I will use the generic version of Wartenberg's discussion framework form to guide the planning of the discussions related to the EL module mentor texts.

Finally, the P4C Cooperative is a collaborative effort between Steve Williams, co-founder of SAPERE, the Philosophy for Children network in the UK, Roger Sutcliffe and Dialogue Works, Jason Buckley, founder of OutSpark, Grace Lockrobin, founder of Thinking Space, James Nottingham, Kay Williams and Sapere, A P4C Charity. The P4C Cooperative website provides teachers with a wide variety of resources to help get Philosophy for Children started running in the classroom.

Instructional Implementation

*Important Note – The intended implementation of the lessons and strategies included in this unit should be used over the course of the school year during flex day instruction. The instructional strategies I have chosen to include are helpful at any point in time during the year and were purposefully selected to support student discourse and critical thinking. I highly recommend reviewing the philosophical discussion questions with your students prior to beginning an EL module so that students can be on the lookout for evidence to support or disprove thinking over the course of the unit. It may even be beneficial to post them around the room so that students have the opportunity for self-reflection prior to beginning a specific discussion.

The sample lessons that I provide after the teaching strategies are connected to the discussion questions from the first 5th grade EL Module (Stories of Human Rights) because it is

important to build the community of inquiry early in the year and establish the rules and procedures for respectful dialogue and discussion. Once you have created and practiced the norms of philosophical inquiry with your students, it will be easy to apply those expectations to new conversations in any content area. It is also important to note that I have purposefully kept the lessons general in their outline because with every different group of kids you may find the conversation going in different directions. Keep in mind that the goal is not a specific understanding of right or wrong but rather a developing ability to engage in meaningful discussion that promotes personal development of understanding and a growing ability to interact well with peers.

Teaching Strategies

Accountable Talk Stems
Accountable talk stems may be crucial at the beginning of your efforts to help students grow in the ability to dialogue with each other well. Students often have difficulty entering into conversations and talk stems give them the means to do that. Accountable talk stems come in a variety of formats and phrasing. Frequently they fall into six main categories - agreement, disagreement, clarification, confirmation, confusion or extension. It may be helpful to teach a lesson on how to use accountable talk stems prior to having them engage in collaborative philosophical inquiry. Accountable talk stems are helpful for all students but they are particularly helpful for students who are learning the English language, are qualified as exceptional children with individual education plans, or who may simply be less confident in their abilities to engage in group discussion.

Anticipatory Sets
Anticipatory sets are crucial in building up to philosophical discussions because they provide opportunities for students to experience wonder and excitement and personal connection to the ideas about to be discussed in class. Often referred to as hooks, these can include thought provoking images, photos, quotes, questions or unique connections to previous lessons. The intent of the set is to build the anticipation of new learning and increase intrinsic motivation to engage with the upcoming lesson in meaningful ways to answer personal questions about a topic.

Comics and Cartoons
Comics and cartoons are excellent ways to help students have a visual hook for the topic that is being discussed. Comics and cartoons are also particularly helpful for drawing English Language

Learners and students who may have reading difficulties into conversations without having to do extensive reading.

Fishbowl Discussion

In a fishbowl discussion, half of the class is arranged on the outside of the discussion circle, while the other half sits in a circle facing each other. The half of the class on the outside of the circle silently observes the dynamics of the group discussion. They keep track of who has the opportunity to share and how often they share. They also keep track of the ideas that were brought to the table and whether new ideas were contributed or existing ideas built upon, extended, modified or enhanced. The students inside the fishbowl participate in a discussion about a particular topic voicing their opinions based on their reading and research and dialoguing with their peers to draw meaningful conclusions about the ideas presented during the exchange.

Reflective Dialogue

The goal of reflective dialogue is to allow students the chance to listen to their peers, exchange ideas and grow in their understanding of a topic through the conversation that occurs. In these interactions, the teacher should serve as a gentle guide to the group. It is important that students understand that the goal is not to defend existing suppositions but to provide individual students the opportunity to reflect and clarify their thinking as well as build trust within their classroom community. The teaching strategies that are listed below are a sampling of ways that you can encourage students to think critically about their learning as well as to reflect on what they have heard their peers contribute to the conversations. These strategies can be used throughout the year in any philosophical discussion in any content area.

Small Groups

Small group discussions are particularly helpful if you have a group of students who have not yet internalized the norms of a philosophical discussion or collaborative philosophical inquiry process and are not ready for a whole class discussion. Small groups can also create climates of safety and provide the teacher the opportunity to hear the voices of students who may be too shy to speak up in front of the whole class.

Traffic Light Protocol

The traffic light protocol is an excellent way to probe for understanding students' thinking after the conclusion of a philosophical discussion. It also allows students to monitor their metacognition. The red light stands for something that stopped their thinking during the discussion. The yellow light stands for something they considered during the discussion - this could be a question that arose, a new idea, or a new perspective. The green light stands for

something they understood or learned. There are two ways this protocol could be implemented in the classroom over the course of the year. First, it could be a simple exit ticket you provide students with at the end of a discussion time. Second, you could create a Traffic Light in the classroom and have students contribute their thinking on sticky notes. This would easily provide you with a pulse check of the overall class stopping points, thought developments and understandings. It might also generate new directions for reflective dialogue.

Whip Around Protocol
The Whip Around protocol is intended to get many ideas out into the air in a quick amount of time. Students record as many ideas as they can about a given topic. Then students begin by sharing one idea. The following student must share a thought that has not yet been shared. As students listen to their classmates, they cross off the ideas on their list that were already shared. If students are not sure of an answer, they are welcome to pass their turn. This procedure requires students to pay careful attention to what their peers are saying and think critically about whether their own responses are similar or different.

3-2-1 Protocol
The 3-2-1 protocol can be used in a variety of ways to support philosophical discussion. Students could record three ideas they heard in the discussion, two that they agree with and one they disagree with. Alternatively, they could record three opinions about the question, two they disagree with and the one they agree with. Another way to incorporate the 3-2-1 protocol would be to work backwards. Students would provide one answer to a philosophical question, then provide two opposing viewpoints, and finally provide three points of support that also take into account rebuttals of the two opposing viewpoints.

Classroom Lessons/Activities

Philosophical Discussion Questions for EL Modules

Module 1: Stories of Human Rights **Mentor Text:** Esperanza Rising	*Module 2: Biodiversity in the Rainforest* **Mentor Text:** Seeds of Change: Planting a Path of Peace	*Module 3: Athlete Leaders of Social Change* **Mentor Text:** How Jackie Robinson Changed America	*Module 4: The Impact of Natural Disasters* **Mentor Text:** Eight Days: A Story of Haiti
Can money buy happiness? Is it ever ok to lie?	Do humans have a responsibility to care for the environment?	What makes a person successful in life?	Is it ok to make money when helping people through a natural disaster?

	Do we own the earth? Do we just live on it? Who gets to decide what we do with the earth?	Do humans have a responsibility to respond to injustice?	Is beauty the same for all people?
Is it better to be poor or rich? Should you try to be friends with your enemies? Is job security more important than standing up for what you believe is right? Is it possible for two people to disagree with each other but both still be right?	Do we have a responsibility to care for non-living things? Is it ok to cut down trees and destroy the rainforest for human profit or gain? Have humans had a positive or negative impact on the environment? What rights do animals have?	What qualities make someone a good leader? What does it mean to be a good leader? Is it more important to be respected or liked? What is intelligence?	If you were not specifically affected by a natural disaster, do you still have a responsibility to make it better? Are governments responsible for saving people's lives if they know a natural disaster is coming? Can events have both positive and negative impacts?

Sample Lesson 1:

Objective: Students will utilize accountable talk stems to engage in respectful discussions

Standards: RL.5.1 SL.5.1 W.5.1   **Time Frame:** 20 – 40 minutes

Teaching Point: Explain to students that there are many different ways to enter a discussion but that one of the important pieces of any philosophical discussion is that students listen to one another and build upon ideas. Share with students that accountable talk stems are like different doorways into conversation. You can agree, disagree, ask for clarification, confirm an idea, express confusion, or provide an extension of an idea. Make sure the accountable talk stems are posted on anchor charts around the room for students to reference. You could also print out a one-page reference for students to keep in a binder or glue into their journal.

Student Engagement: Present one of the questions from the EL Module 1 Philosophical Discussion options for student reflection. Have students take 2-3 minutes to reflect on the question and jot down their initial answer. Then, ask students to pair up with another classmate and discuss their answers. Encourage them to practice using an accountable talk stem. Provide at least 3-4 minutes for discussion depending on level of engagement and conversation. At the conclusion of the time, ask students to find a different partner and try to use a different accountable talk stem to continue the discussion. Provide another 3-4 minutes worth of discussion time. If conversation is healthy and flowing, you could give a third rotation for

continued practice. If students are struggling to engage with the stems, bring them back together to model the use of the stems with a student you observed using the stems well.

Closure: Bring students back to a whole group setting. Invite a group discussion where students can share which accountable talk stems were used in their discussions. Allow at least 3-4 students to share their thinking. Remind students that these talk stems help promote healthy discussion and will be used over the course of all group discussions. Encourage students to review the stems they have not used yet and invite them to try a new one the next time they engage in a partner or group conversation.

Sample Lesson 2:

Objective: Students will understand how to participate in a fishbowl discussion

Standards: RL.5.1 SL.5.1 W.5.1   **Time Frame:** 20 – 40 minutes

Teaching Point: Explain to students the basics of the fishbowl discussion. Present another question from the EL Module 1 philosophical question. If students are not ready for a new question, utilize the question that was previously used when practicing accountable talk stems. The familiarity with the question may promote deeper dialogue and thoughtful discussion between students. Ask for a set of volunteers to be the fish and set up a circle for their discussion. The remaining students will gather around the outside of the circle to observe the discussion and record their noticings and wonderings.

Student Engagement: Students will have ten minutes to engage in a discussion around the question. Students should use their Esperanza Rising texts, student workbook, and accountable talk stems to help them share ideas and discuss the given question. If students get stuck, encourage them to refer to their talk stems to help them move in a different direction. Remind students on the outside to be paying attention to how the discussion does or does not move forward to new thinking.

Closure: When you observe the discussion beginning to peter out, bringing students back to the whole group setting. Ask the observers to note glows and grows that they observed during the lesson. A glow would be something they saw that helped the discussion, clarified a student's confusion, or brought a new idea into the discussion. A grow would be something that they saw that stopped the conversation or discouraged another student from speaking or did not relate to the topic being discussed.

Sample Lesson 3:

Objective: Students will understand the importance of the Rabbit Rule in a philosophical discussion and the necessity of having evidence to back up their opinion in a discussion

Standards: RL.5.1 SL.5.1 W.5.1   **Time Frame:** 20 – 40 minutes

Anticipatory Set: Display an image of a magician pulling a rabbit out of a hat. Ask students to generate any questions they might have about magic or how a rabbit could come from a hat if it was not there in the first place.

Teaching Point: Explain to students that in philosophical discussions the Rabbit Rule means that you cannot pull an idea out of thin air. You have to have some idea or reason to back up your thinking. Refer to the last lesson's fishbowl discussion and provide an example of a student who made a claim and had evidence to support their claim.

Student Engagement: Ask students to think of an idea they believe to be true about a character in the text Esperanza rising. Using the 3-2-1 protocol, ask students to review their text to find three pieces of evidence that supports their opinion. Then encourage them to write two ways that the evidence supports their opinion. Finally, have them jot down one reason why they think someone might disagree with them. Provide at least 15 minutes for this reflection and writing time. Once the personal reflection time has finished ask students to find a partner and exchange their work. Partners should read their classmate's 3-2-1 sheet and provide feedback on the strength or weaknesses of the evidence given based on their own understanding of the text.

Closure: Bring students back together and ask for 1-2 volunteers to share the work they did on their own and with their classmate. Encourage students to share any agreements, disagreements or new thinking they experienced during the work time. Remind students that sharing evidence is an important part of respectful dialogue and so is the willingness to reconsider an opinion if the evidence does not support the claim.

<u>**Sample Lesson 4:**</u>

Objective: Students will understand how to monitor their own thought processes using the Traffic Light Protocol

Standards: RL.5.1 SL.5.1 W.5.1   **Time Frame:** 20 – 40 minutes

Teaching Point: Explain to students that sometimes during philosophical conversations our minds can act like traffic lights. Invite students to turn and talk about what they think it means

for their minds to act like traffic lights. After 1-2 minutes of discussion, bring students back together and ask a few volunteers to share their thinking. Then explain to students that sometimes our minds act like a red light. Something is shared that stops us in our tracks and derails our thinking. The yellow light stands for something they considered during the discussion - this could be a question that arose, a new idea, or a new perspective. It slowed them down and made them reconsider how to move forward. The green light stands for something they understood or learned. It kept their thinking moving forward at the same speed and connected well to their initial thinking. Explain to students that today during their discussion time they will keep track of those ideas. Distribute a handout with a green, yellow and red circle on it or ask students to draw a green, red and yellow circle in their notebook and record their thinking next to the appropriate color.

Student Engagement: Ask students to get into groups of 4-5 depending on the size of the class. Pose a new question from the list of philosophical questions provided in this unit. This lesson could be used with any of the additional philosophical questions or from the EL Module question list. Allow students 10-15 minutes to engage in their discussion. Circulate among students providing gentle reminders to use accountable talk stems, remember the rabbit rule and ensure that they have are practicing using evidence to support their thinking. Encourage students to be open to new ideas and willing to consider the opinions of their classmates. Once the discussion is over, ask students to spend 5-7 minutes in quiet reflection on their stop light. Were there any red, yellow or green light moments in the discussion?

Closure: After giving students some time to reflect, create a group traffic light together on anchor chart paper. Invite students to use sticky notes to post green, yellow and red light moments on the anchor chart and discuss any ideas that seemed to show up more than once.

Sample Lesson 5:

Objective: Students will engage in philosophical discussions based on questions developed during a read aloud

Standards: RL.5.1 SL.5.1 W.5.1   **Time Frame:** 20 – 40 minutes

Teach Point: Display the text "The Three Questions." Explain to students that we can come up with many different philosophical questions when we read picture books. Read the first page of The Three Questions. Stop where the boy asks if he could only find the answers to his three questions. In the story, Nikolai wonders how to be a good person. Ask students the following question – "If you could ask three questions to help you be a good person, what three questions would you ask?" Use the Whip Around strategy to generate a list of questions that students think

the boy will ask in order to help him be a good person. Record all questions that students generate on an anchor chart. (Side note…save this anchor chart to help develop other philosophical discussions during the school year.) Once you have finished the Whip Around Protocol, continue reading the story. Pause after you have read Nikolai's friends' answers to all three of his questions.

Student Engagement: Work with students to create a story matrix where you identify Nikolai's friends' answers to all three questions. See the chart below for an example of the completed matrix. Provide students time to study the chart and come up with a few questions they would like to discuss in collaborative inquiry sessions about what Sonya, Gogol and Pushkin the dog believe about how to be a good person.

Story Matrix	Sonya, the heron	Gogol, the monkey	Pushkin, the dog
When is the best time to do things?	"To know the best time to do things, one must plan in advance."	"You will know when to do things if you watch and pay close attention."	"You can't pay attention to everything yourself. You need a pack to keep watch and help you decide when to do things."
Who is the most important one?	"Those who are closest to heaven"	"Those who know how to heal the sick"	"Those who make the rules"
What is the right thing to do?	"Flying"	"Having fun all the time"	"Fighting"

Closure: Choose one question from the list of student generated questions and explain to students that during the next lesson they will participate in a fishbowl discussion to discuss their thoughts. Encourage them to be thinking about the question at home and invite them to discuss the question with their family.

Extensions: (Note…these lessons do not have to be executed in consecutive order nor do they have to be done in a whole group setting. They could be completed over the course of a unit of study or in small groups.)
Day 2: Put students into groups of 4-5 and allow them 10 minutes to discuss the question generated from the previous lesson. Allow students the opportunity to write a brief response to the question "Which animal do you think had the best answers to how to be a good person."

Day 3: Finish reading the story and work with students to Leo the Turtle's answers to the story matrix

	Leo, the Turtle
When is the best time to do things?	"There is only one important time and that time is now"
Who is the most important one?	"The most important one is always the one you are with."
What is the right thing to do?	"And the most important thing is to do good for the one who is standing at your side. For these dear boy, are the answers to what is most important in this world"

Day 4: Provide students the opportunity to engage in a community of inquiry to discuss the question "Which animal do you think was right about how to be a good person?" You can use a variety of instructional strategies to support this discussion. Encourage students to reflect on other books they have read and personal experiences to support their thinking about this question.

Day 5: Present the students with the following writing prompt, "Which animal do you think was right about how to be a good person?"
Ask students to answer the prompt in three ways.
"At first I thought _____ had the best responses because_____. After our first discussion, my opinion changed/stayed the same because_____. Once we finished the book, I now think_____.

Additional Philosophical Questions for 5th Grade [3]		
(Use at your own discretion throughout the year)		
Literacy	**Mathematics**	**Science**
- What is education? - What is more important? - Intelligence or wisdom? - Who is the most important one? - When is the best time?	- What is math? - What are numbers? - What is time?	- What is intelligence? - What rights do animals have?

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[3] https://parade.com/1185047/marynliles/philosophical-questions/

Social Studies	Social/Emotional	Other
- Is there an alternative to capitalism? - Do we have to better ourselves? - Are there limitations on free speech? - Are there universal rights? - Can money make you happy? - What is better? To spend, borrow or save? - Should we have a government? - Have humans had a positive or negative impact on the environment? - Is there a cause for every event? - What is the common good?	- Is it more important to be respected or liked? - What is true friendship? - Can achieving nothing make a person happy? - Can we have happiness without sadness? - Is lying ever ok? - What defines you? - How do you know who your friends are? - Should you let little things bother you? - Will having fun make you happier than studying? - Should you always listen to the opinions of others? - Should you criticize people or the opinions people have? - Do two wrongs balance out and make an action right? - How real is what other people think of you?	- How do you know perceptions are real? - What makes you you? - Does studying philosophy ever lead to answers or more questions? - Does social media boost confidence?

Assessments

The primary goal of this unit is for students to have the opportunity to engage in critical thinking and reflective dialogue and to expand their ability to entertain multiple points of view while strengthening their own point of view on the topic. Thus, assessments of this unit will focus less on whether students get a question "right or wrong" but rather on their ability to effectively communicate their ideas and how they have changed or grown over the course of the discussions. Therefore, frameworks for assessment are simple and can follow a simple rubric scale based on speaking/listening and/or writing responses as outlined in the EL curriculum. See the EL Resource page https://cms.learnzillion.com/wikis/2441844-grade-5-rubrics-and-checklists/.

Sample Speaking and Listening Rubrics (Taken from the EL Module Unit)

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Comprehension and Collaboration				
Comes to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material.				
Explicitly draws on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.				
Follows agreed-upon rules for discussions and carries out assigned roles.				
Poses and responds to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion.				
Elaborates on the remarks of others.				
Reviews the key ideas expressed.				
Draws conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions.				

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Speaking and Listening Comprehension				
Summarizes the points a speaker makes.				
Identifies the claim(s) a speaker provides to support his or her points.				
Explains how each claim is supported by reasons and evidence.				

Appendix 1: Teaching Standards

RL.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text
- In all interactions in a CPI discussion, it is incredibly important for students to support their thinking with evidence from the text. This standard could be used in any philosophical discussion lesson plan where students have to refer to the text to support their opinion.

RL.5.6 Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described
- Engaging in collaborative discussions provides students the ability to hear their classmates' points of view and begin to distinguish between a speaker's point of view and their own point of view through real life peer to peer interactions.

RI.5.6 Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.
- This will be a crucial standard that is addressed in the research time leading up to the philosophical discussion. Prior to developing a personal point of view, students will need to read and analyze different accounts to gain background knowledge for a discussion.

RI.5.7 Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question or to solve a problem efficiently.
- This is also a prerequisite standard to some of the philosophical discussions that may be had over the course of the year.

RI.5.8 Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s).
- By engaging with the ideas of their peers in collaborative discussion, students will be better equipped to determine how authors use reasons and evidence to support opinions

RI.5.9 Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject
- This is another standard that is beneficial in the preparation for any philosophical discussion.

W.5.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information
  a. Organize information and ideas around a topic to plan and prepare to write

b. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose
c. Provide logical order reasons that are supported by facts and details
d. Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases and clauses
e. Provide a concluding statement
f.   With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, with consideration to task purpose and audience knowledgeably.
    ● This standard could be considered the assessment standard following a philosophical discussion and could be used to create a rubric for assessing student writing.

SL.5.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one on one, in groups and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
a. Come to discussions prepared (having read or studied require material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion
b. Follow agreed upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.
c. Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others
d. Review the key ideas expressed and draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions
e. Summarize the points a speaker makes and explain how each claim is supported by reasons and evidence
    ● This standard could be considered the assessment standard during a philosophical discussion and could be used to create a rubric for assessing student participation during philosophical discussions.

Materials List

● Anchor Chart Paper
● Colored Paper
● Notebook paper
● Pencils
● Pens
● Sticky Notes
● Mentor Texts as outlined in student resources
● Graphic Organizers as needed

Student Resources

- Ryan, Pam Muñoz. 2000. *Esperanza Rising*.

This is the mentor text for the first EL module unit in the 5th grade literacy curriculum. The title of the unit is Stories of Human Rights. Esperanza Rising is a historical and fictional account of a young girl who flee Mexico after a tragedy and settle in a camp for Mexican farm workers. Esperanza has to find a way to adjust to a life of poverty and hard labor after living a life of wealth and privilege in Mexico.

- Cullerton Johnson, Jen. 2010. Seeds of Change: Planting a Path of Peace

This is one of the mentor texts for the second EL module unit. The title of the unit is Biodiversity in the Rainforest. This story is the account of Wangari Maathai, the first African woman, and environmentalist to win a Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts in Kenya to promote the rights of women and help save the land through planting trees.

- Robinson, Sharon. 2004. Promises to Keep: How Jackie Robinson Changed America

This is the mentor text for the third EL module unit. The biography is written by the granddaughter of Jackie Robinson and shares how he broke the color barrier in baseball. Students use this text and others throughout the unit to understand and evaluate the characteristics that make a good leader.

- Danticat, Edwidge. Eight Days A Story of Haiti

This is the mentor text for the fourth EL module unit. The title of the unit is The Impact of Natural Disasters. This text recounts the experience of a child who survived being caught under the rubble for eight days after the earthquake in Haiti.

- Muth, John J. 2002. The Three Questions

In this insightful and colorful children's book, a young boy named Nikolai goes on a search to discover the answers to the three questions he asks about how to be a good person.

- Accountable Talk Stems

Accountable talk stems should be posted around the room for students to reference or written down in their notebook or on a bookmark for easy reference during conversations.
https://practices.learningaccelerator.org/strategies/accountable-talk-stems

- Traffic Light Graphic Organizer

- 3-2-1 Graphic Organizer

Teacher Resources

"Accountable Talk Stems." Resources & Guidance from The Learning Accelerator. Accessed
    November 23, 2021.
    https://practices.learningaccelerator.org/strategies/accountable-talk-stems.

    If you need a refresher article on accountable talk stems and how to use them, this is an
excellent site to visit. They provide an overview of what the stems are as well as printable
posters you could print and hang up around the classroom.

Costa, Arthur L. 1985. *Developing Minds*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and
Curriculum Development.

    This is an excellent comprehensive resource for teachers who are looking for the best
strategies for teaching thinking in the classroom. Sections of the book include the importance of
teaching thinking, how to build a common understanding for teaching thinking, thinking in
school subjects, techniques for teaching thinking, strategies for teaching thinking, how to
incorporate technology, and how to assess thinking.

"Home - PLATO - Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization". 2021. *PLATO*.
    https://www.plato-philosophy.org/.

    PLATO exists to help bring philosophy into the elementary and secondary classrooms.
PLATO is unique in that it offers an extensive philosopher's toolkit organized around the
categories of arts and aesthetics, epistemology, ethics, existentialism, logic, metaphysics,
philosophy of mind, philosophy of religion and social/political. You can also sort the categories
based on grade level. This website provides additional resources such as a blog, newsletters,
radio and podcasts and videos all related to philosophy in the classroom.

"Homepage - P4c.Com". 2021. *P4c.Com*. https://p4c.com/.

    This subscription website offers resources and information on understanding Philosophy in
the Classroom. Right now, they are also offering some free access to materials as a result of the
pandemic. This is a good website to peruse to see the different groups working towards an
increase in K-12 philosophy discussions.

"Institute For The Advancement Of Philosophy For Children". 2021. *Montclair.Edu*.
    https://www.montclair.edu/iapc/.

    The IAPC states that they are the world's oldest organization advocating for children's
philosophical practice. They support educational programming connected with P4C, advocate
and disseminate information about P4C, as well as conduct research into the effects of P4C.

"Philosophy For Children - Teaching Times". 2021. *Teaching Times*. https://www.teachingtimes.com/knowledge-banks/philosophy-for-children/.

  This web page provides a succinct and helpful overview of P4C. Teaching Times offers many different educational articles on a variety of topics. The article itself is free. For a small fee, you can purchase the knowledge bank that provides a variety of resources on P4C.

"Philosophy For Children (Stanford Encyclopedia Of Philosophy)". 2021. *Plato.Stanford.Edu*. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/children/.

  This webpage is an excellent entry point for beginning to understand what Philosophy for Children can look like in the classroom. If you are looking for a one stop shop to help beginning teachers understand the importance of P4C, I would highly recommend printing this entry out and working through the various topics in your professional learning communities.

Vista, David. 2021. "Strategies For Teaching Metacognition In Classrooms". *Brookings*. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2017/11/15/strategies-for-teaching-metacognition-in-classrooms/.

  If you are looking for more information on how to help students think about their thinking, this article is an excellent springboard into that discussion. It also provides the background information on the Traffic Light graphic organizer used in Sample Lesson #4.

Wartenberg, Thomas E. 2014. *Big Ideas For Little Kids*.

  Thomas Wartenberg's book is an excellent easy read to understand how to teach philosophy through children's literature. Not only does he provide a fascinating background on the importance of helping children work through tough questions, he also provides an elementary school introduction to philosophy and explains how to prepare for, facilitate, deepen and extend a philosophical discussion. The last section of the book provides 9 already made philosophical lesson plans for stories such as Dragons and Giants, Frederick, The Important Book, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, and the Giving Tree just to name a few.

White, David A. 2001. *Philosophy For Kids: 40 Fun Questions That Help You Wonder About Everything!*.

  David White's book is another great way for teachers to get their feet wet in understanding how to bring philosophy into the classroom. The questions are divided into the following categories – values, knowledge, reality, and critical thinking. I would highly recommend the questions in the critical thinking section to jump start philosophical discussions in the classroom

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Wexler, Natalie. *The Knowledge Gap: The Hidden Cause of America's Broken Education System-- and How to Fix It*. Avery, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2020.

White, David A. *Philosophy for Kids: 40 Fun Questions That Help You Wonder ... about Everything*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press, 2001.

"Why Philosophy for Children?" Center for Philosophy for Children, December 15, 2020.
https://www.philosophyforchildren.org/about/why-p4c/.