

OKLAHOMA MEETS HARRY STOTTEMEIER

Sixteen months ago my husband's job required that our family move from Fort Worth, Texas, where we had lived for the past seven years, to Edmond, Oklahoma. At the time of this transfer, I was teaching English and analytical thinking to seventh graders at a small private school in Fort Worth. I had taken teacher training in analytical thinking while a student at Texas Wesleyan College; additionally, I had been a graduate assistant in Wesleyan's analytical thinking program. Therefore, my interest and involvement in the program were extensive. Waiting for me in Oklahoma was a job teaching seventh grade English at Sequoyah Middle School. Sequoyah was then the only middle school in Edmond, a conservative, quickly-growing bedroom community north of Oklahoma City. However, analytical thinking had not been introduced into any Oklahoma schools, and I was reluctant to move from Fort Worth and from opportunities to use this course in my teaching. I was skeptical that the district and the administrators in Edmond would be receptive to a totally new idea in curriculum.

After the initial trauma of moving and adjusting to a new school had subsided, I very much missed being involved in analytical thinking and decided to approach my principal, Sandra Brothers, with some of the materials, handouts, and statistics I had brought from Texas about the course. To my delight and surprise, Mrs. Brothers was not simply open about the possibilities for the program in her school; she was enthusiastic. She envisioned the program as a possible elective subject for gifted students in the Edmond School District. In the middle school, the gifted program had consisted of pulling selected students from regular classes once or twice per week; students then worked with a special teacher doing problems and exercises from critical thinking workbooks. The prospect of a gifted class was losing its appeal to many gifted students. Mrs. Brothers looked at a videotape of my Fort Worth class doing philosophy, read the text, *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, and assigned to me the responsibility of the seventh grade gifted class, an elective called Analytical Thinking.

A major problem arose immediately following Mrs. Brothers' decision. With the opening of the 1982/83 school year, Edmond would have another middle school, Cimarron. District policy states that whatever courses are offered at one middle school must be available to students at the other school. Analytical Thinking would have to be taught at Cimarron, and there was no teacher trained to teach the course there.

I shared my enthusiasm for the course with fellow teachers at Sequoyah, one of whom was scheduled to be teaching at Cimarron during the 1982/83 school year.

Donna Pierce, an English teacher, caught the contagion of my excitement about analytical thinking. After consulting her principal at Cimarron, Mrs. Pierce arranged to take the analytical thinking teacher training course offered at Texas Wesleyan College during the past summer.

It has been a decided joy to help launch the program of analytical thinking in Oklahoma and to once again do philosophy with students. The program seems to be off to a roaring start here. In my class of twenty-nine students, fifteen have been identified as gifted. The balance of the class is made up of high achieving students who applied for the class as an elective. About fifteen other gifted students at Sequoyah chose to take another accelerated elective, Exploratory Reading/Creative Writing.

Making a circle of thirty desks requires the entire room, but it is worth rearranging the furniture each morning before and after class. Parents who attended open house about two weeks after school began were curious, cautious, but hopeful about the course's potential to hold their children's interest and to teach them critical thinking skills. The students were pretested one week into the course and will be posttested in the spring. Because these children are so bright and imaginative, it is no small task to challenge them and to increase their critical thinking skills. The class goes well, not without hitches, but full of lively discussion and exciting ideas. A goal of personal interest to me is to also provide the class to non-gifted students in Edmond schools.

By late November Mrs. Brothers and I felt it important to survey students' reactions to the analytical class. I devised a questionnaire for this purpose. The students' anonymity was assured; I hoped this guarantee would elicit honest responses to questions about the class — about content, format, value, etc. In addition to choosing an appropriate available answer to each question, students were encouraged to add comments to any question. Often students qualified their choices by explanations. Other times they chose not to use available answers, but supplied their own. Although these random comments may invalidate the scientific value of this evaluation, I felt it more worthy to give students an opportunity to comment than to require them to stick to pat answers. A copy of the evaluation results is included at the end of this article.

An interesting addendum to the apparent success of introducing analytical thinking to this area is that a fellow teacher, a doctoral student at the University of Oklahoma, mentioned analytical thinking to her doctoral class in education. The professor, as well as the other educators enrolled in the class, showed great curiosity about analytical thinking. She then showed them the videotape of my Fort Worth class doing philosophy, and they have expressed interest in learning more about the program. Perhaps the far-reaching possibilities for analytical thinking in Oklahoma have just begun.

Caroline Nickel

OKLAHOMA EVALUATION
ANALYTICAL THINKING
Student Evaluation Results

1. I find this class:

a. Difficult	<u>3</u>
b. Average	<u>15</u>
c. Very easy	<u>2</u>

Comments: It is not difficult because I knew what to expect.
Easy at times, hard at others.
Challenging.
Difficult in some topics.
It's very difficult sometimes, but other times it's just average; it's never very easy.
I feel at ease in this class.
Between difficult and average.
Pretty easy.
I think that this class is all of these at times.
Difficult at times; average at other times.
Sorta easy.
Extremely difficult.

2. Compared to other classes I feel I am learning in this class:

a. Very much	<u>12</u>
b. Some	<u>9</u>
c. Little	<u>2</u>

Comments: You don't learn logic in other classes.
More than some, yet less than very much.
I know I'm learning. It's just this kind of stuff doesn't stick in my head unless it's gone over several times.
It is not like we learn out of a text; we think.
I really don't understand.
Pretty much.
I feel I am really learning how to think better.
Things I need to learn.

3. This class is as I expected it to be from the description I read or heard about it:

a. Exactly	<u>1</u>
b. Somewhat	<u>19</u>
c. Not at all	<u>6</u>

Comments: It said in the description that we would be doing other things.
I thought it would be harder.
It is better.
Everyone said it would be boring all the time.

4. Analytical Thinking is different from other classes:

a. Very	<u>22</u>
b. A little	<u>4</u>
c. Not at all	<u>0</u>

Comments: Because you don't get this challenge in other classes.
Very much at times.
No homework — not difficult — fun learning.

5. The differences (if any) are:

a. Great	<u>14</u>
b. O.K.	<u>8</u>
c. Bad	<u>1</u>

Comments: Pretty good.
Needs improvement.
Not good, but not bad.
Very great.
We have a lot more freedom (such as how we think and what we say).

6. Answer "how?" to your response to question #4.

We don't do logic in other classes.
It seems that in other classes, I have written work quite often, yet I don't seem to learn as much in other classes as I do in this one.
It is a thinking class which you do not do paper work in. You learn twice as much in half the time. I could go on and on and on.
The topics we discuss.
The way we have our discussions. The rules.
It's not as controlled; sometimes rude things are said that normally wouldn't be allowed.



Charles

It has hardly any work.
 We don't have to raise our hands every time we want to say something. There is very little, if any, homework in this class.
 Don't have many rules.
 It doesn't make you do busy work like most of my other classes make me do. We are allowed to talk but right, not out of turn or in response to a person's view point.
 We don't do hardly any written work. You have to think critically.
 We don't do philosophy in other classes. We don't read *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* in other classes.
 We don't usually sit down to a text and read. We rarely have homework assignments and tests. Most importantly, we are allowed to discuss things and voice our opinions much more than in an "average" class.
 Freedom.
 All we do is talk, I'd like assignments.
 It's different from the things we do in other classes. We don't just sit and talk. We sit and think about thinking. We sit and talk about talking. It's a very interesting class.
 We sit in a circle. Hardly any paperwork. We don't have to raise our hand to talk.
 Well, we can say exactly what we feel. We don't have to raise our hands when we speak. And we don't have so much homework. And we say what we think is correct, even if it's not the best answer.
 We sit in a circle most of the time. You encourage us to speak without raising our hand first.
 Because you're in here to learn about thinking, not the multiplication table.
 Because you are more free to talk and you're not pressured.
 We usually don't discuss things like we do in this class.
 Because in other classes you don't really have a chance to discuss your feelings or comments about whatever you're talking about. Also, all the other teachers care about is getting homework in and doing written assignments. In this class, we have a chance to express our feelings.
 You usually have written assignments that you really don't discuss well. But in this class you try to let us figure out things with others. I'm more of a group person.
 We get much more accomplished than other classes.

7. I speak of this class to other kids in school:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| a. Often | <u>4</u> |
| b. Occasionally | <u>16</u> |
| c. Never | <u>3</u> |

Comments: Once in a while when they mention it.
 It's not really a big subject because all my friends are in it,
 Hardly ever.
 Never unless it's an insult.
 More than occasionally, but less than often.
 Some.

8. I talk about this class to my family.

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| a. Often | <u>10</u> |
| b. Once in a while. | <u>14</u> |
| c. Never | <u>2</u> |

Comments: Once in a while but only when my mother asks.
 Never unless it's an insult.
 Once in a while but most of the time my mother talks to me about it.
 When they mention it.

9. I enjoy reading *Harry Stottlemeier*:

- | | |
|---------------|-----------|
| a. Very much | <u>5</u> |
| b. Somewhat | <u>17</u> |
| c. Not at all | <u>3</u> |

Comments: Very much, but I like discussing it more.
 It is kind of boring.
 For a kid supposed to be on our grade level and still uses "pop" as in "pop" me in the head, HE IS OUT OF IT.
 Some parts don't seem real — likely to happen in life.
 Sometimes.
 Very much except for the stupid sentences.

10. Answer "why?" to your response to question #9.

It seems the kids think about thinking more than I ever did, making it seem not so realistic.
 It is a big change from last year's critical thinking.
 I like his "senseful" thinking. But I guess it depends on the mood I'm in as to liking the reading.
 It challenges my imagination and my mind.
 Because sometimes I would rather discuss things than read a chapter.
 It is not very realistic, no action.
 It's not very realistic, and there is no real action or excitement in the story.
 It doesn't have many realistic things.
 He brings on some pretty heavy ideas and the grown-ups that wrote that book would never get it published as

a real kid's book. But the ideas are easy to comprehend.
 Spend too much time on one chapter.
 Not a very realistic book.
 Sometimes the characters in this story are like me.

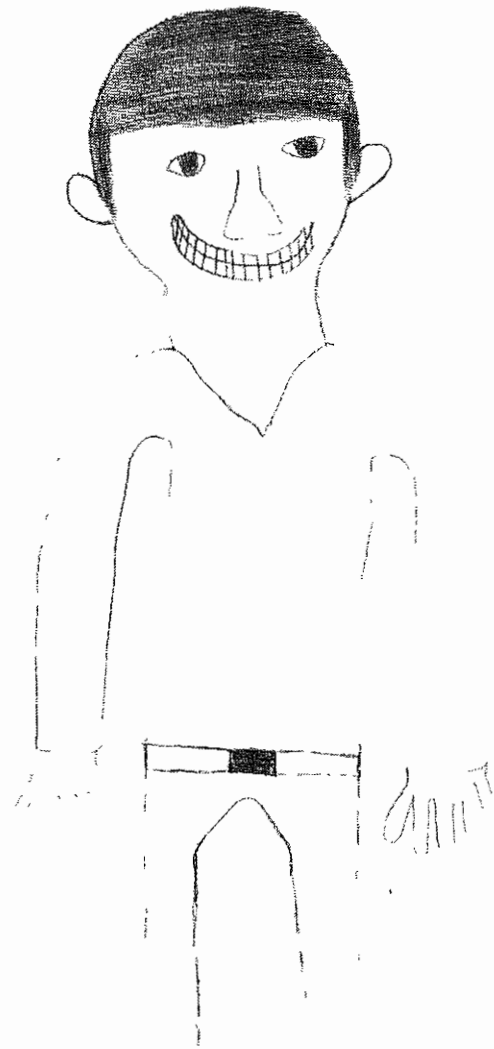
10. Continued

To me it's a little unrealistic. Plus, some of the things in it are hard to comprehend.
 Sometimes it gets over my head and sometimes it's like it's for third graders.
 I wish we could read the whole thing. I think we spend too much time on a chapter. The reason I say this is because we might not get done with this book and I would like to finish it.
 Sometimes they have interesting stories and I like to listen to things people say and tell about it in class.
 I like to think. I like to read. It is exciting.
 I like the conversation the story leads up to, but I really don't enjoy the story all that much.
 I think I would enjoy the book more if I could have read it or gone through it faster.
 Because I like reading about new things and also I'm a reading freak.
 It is an interesting story that I think is more "true to life" and also a text to have a good conversation over (having to with logic).
 Harry is weird.
 Because it's kind of boring. It's written untruly. I mean, 12 year old kids don't sit around and talk about "Do we have a mind?" or "How many pieces of green candy we'll pull out of a bag."
 It's not as exciting as I would like, but it shows things I can relate to.
 I enjoy reading it, but it is somewhat stressing strange points.

11. I enjoy discussing ideas which are brought out of the reading of the story about Harry:

a. Very much	<u>11</u>
b. Somewhat	<u>13</u>
c. Not at all.	<u>1</u>

Comments: It is fun.
 I would rather discuss other subjects, though.
 Hardly.
 I think some ideas are dumb.
 A lot.



12. I would be interested in reading another, more advanced novel and continuing discussion like this next year:

a. Very much	<u>13</u>

b. Somewhat	<u>8</u>
c. Not at all.	<u>3</u>

Comments: It depends on what happens through the rest.

Very much because I have learned very much from this.

I would die if I couldn't attend a class like this.

Very much, but not novel discussion, just discussion about different things brought up by the class.

Not really, but possibly.

Somewhat, it depends.

Very, very, very much.

Between very much and somewhat.

13. One thing I really don't like about this class is:

The way that when my friend talks it's said that she must be talking to someone in our group.

It gets boring sometimes.

The way others put down people like "2 names." But I also don't like the way the people who are put down react.

They put down the people who put them down which makes it worse.

Some people think this is a talking time which prohibits my learning.

I don't like how it's not controlled nor are the comments.

Some of the talking among the girls.

Sometimes it is boring and/or confusing.

There are too many people in this class to do good analytical thinking.

Sitting in rows, even though we don't do that often.

It's not very interesting.

Fixing up the desks and then someone rearranges them.

When we discuss the basics and logic about a chapter. It's boring.

We sit by the same people every day. I mean the same two people.

Sitting in chairs — we would feel more like a group if we sat closer together on the floor.

The way some people act.

I don't.

Sometimes the talking gets out of hand. I think we, the class, could do better.

The circle, I wish it was smaller. I wish that there weren't so many people in this class.

Sometimes I daydream in this class for about 1 minute and then I get extremely lost.

We don't get chairs in rows quick enough.

You can't kill bugs.

When you talk, people always interrupt or disagree and make a big deal about it. It can also get off on boring subjects.

Everybody talks out of line.

14. The thing I like best in the class is:

Some of the topics and explanations brought up.

It produces a challenge.

Everyday I learn something.

The way we talk and feel friendship in the class is neat.

We have a lot of fun discussing things.

No homework.

No homework.

We discuss interesting things.

We discuss a great many things.

No homework.

Freedom of speech.

The philosophy.

Freedom.

Reading the novel and some of the discussions.

Mrs. Nickel

You're never really pressured.

That we discuss things; it's in the morning.

Freedom of speech.

My best friends are in it. The discussions are interesting. I like the easy relaxed feeling in the discussion class.

Mrs. Nickel is a good sport with things that I do.

Pretty much everything.

The poster of the hamburger on the wall.

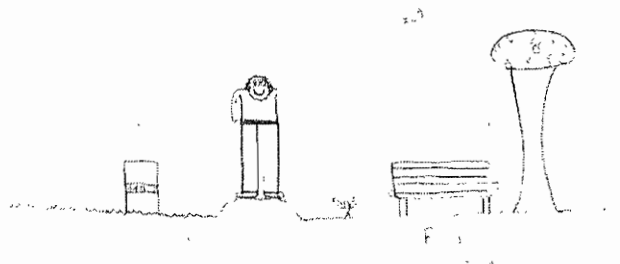
Being able to express and discuss feelings.

I have fun and am able to say what I want if it does not disrupt anyone else.

Sitting in the circle.

15. Analytical Thinking class is:

a. Valuable	<u>9</u>
b. Interesting	<u>16</u>
c. Boring	<u>2</u>
d. A waste of time	<u>1</u>
e. Exciting	<u>5</u>
f. Just okay	<u>10</u>



(SOME STUDENTS CHOSE MORE THAN ONE ANSWER)

Comments: Interesting because it is not in black and white. We discuss more.
Valuable, interesting, and exciting — all three.
Sometimes interesting — sometimes just okay.
Sometimes interesting — sometimes boring.
 $\frac{3}{4}$ interesting — $\frac{1}{4}$ boring
Sometimes interesting - other times just okay.
Interesting and exciting.
Both a & b.
Both a & b.
a, b, d, & c
a & b
Can be interesting at times, others just okay.

16. I agree with Harry that "thinking about thinking" is important:

a. Strongly	<u>8</u>
b. Somewhat	<u>10</u>
c. Not at all	<u>4</u>

Comments: Strongly, because if you don't, scientists would not understand the mind.
Somewhat, but not all the time.
Sort of, but not really.
Somewhat sometimes.
Half and half somewhat and strongly.
Somewhere between somewhat and not at all.
Quite often.
Between a & b
Not at all — I'm sure we're going to go around all day and say, "I'm thinking about thinking" or something unuseful like that.

17. I would recommend this class to students for next year:

a. Strongly	<u>12</u>
b. Somewhat	<u>9</u>
c. Not at all	<u>0</u>

Comments: For certain kids. Not all of them.
Somewhat, as far as class has gone so far.
Strongly, because it is challenging.
Some students.
Depends on what kinds of person he/she is.
Between somewhat and strongly, and it would depend on who the student was.
Strongly for seventh graders. I'm not too

sure about eighth graders.
It depends on the student.

18. The circle seating arrangement is very important to our discussion:

a. Strongly agree	<u>17</u>
b. Somewhat agree	<u>6</u>
c. Disagree	<u>0</u>

Comments: Strongly agree so you can see that person.
Somewhat agree — sometimes I don't feel it is, but most of the time I do.
I agree cause we don't have to look behind us to see who's talking.
I don't see what affect it has on the discussions.
Just plain agree.
It gives us a better chance of communicating — No one has to shift around in their seats to listen.
Somewhat agree — I think we need to be by people we like. It enables us to see who we are talking to, which is very important.
So you know what is going on — you can see each other.
Not very important, but fun.

19. This class should meet every day just as other electives:

a. Agree	<u>18</u>
b. Doesn't matter	<u>5</u>
c. Disagree	<u>0</u>

Comments: It does.
Since we do anyway.
It is just as important.
I think for a semester course.
Maybe not every day, but often.
Important to discussion.
What else are we going to do first hour?
Strongly agree.

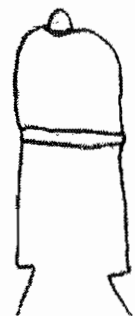
20. As a result of this class I am learning to think more carefully:

a. Very much	<u>13</u>
b. Somewhat	<u>10</u>
c. Not at all	<u>0</u>

Comments: In between very much and somewhat.
Somewhat — I am a slow learner sometimes.
In some areas.
Somewhat, but it doesn't help in other classes except maybe math once in a while.

21. When people ask me what we do in this class I say:

Comments: I think it does not matter, but I think and I tell them it's nothing to do with a



Latricia
Grade 4

book; it is the frame of mind.
We talk about different subjects and this keeps us thinking better.
Logic and reasoning.
We think about thinking.
Lots of things we don't do in other electives.
Discuss Harry Stottlemeier and try to answer some questions on why we think as we do.
Talking about thinking how we think and what a mind is and if we have one.
Talk about thinking analytically.
I don't know. Nobody ever asks me that.
We analytically think.
We mainly discuss logic and philosophy.
Anything and everything.
We read this logic book and we discuss it and do philosophy and stuff like that.
It's hard to discuss unless you've been there.
We discuss and do logical thinking. We read a book and discuss it.
We learn how to think more carefully and we learn how to treat others with respect.
We talk about problems. We learn how to think better.

We think, because talking is thinking.
Almost everything we do has to do with thinking.
We learn to think clearly and carefully.
We learn logic and good thinking habits.
We mostly sit and talk.
We read and discuss in detail what went on in the book.
We discuss different things having to do with our text and also everyday subjects.
We learn how to learn how to think better.
We learn logic and how to think for ourselves better.

22. Any additional comments, write on the back, please.

Comments: I feel that Analytical Thinking is a real joy.
I don't think this class is helping me very much, but it probably is in my brain.
I think we should not spend so much time on one chapter. It gets so boring. I think we ought to do other things also, like maybe play games and do puzzles, worksheets.
If I didn't have this class I would still be making ridiculous assumptions about everything. I'm not saying I don't now, but I do 200% less. This class needs to be part of everyone's day. This class has caused noticeable improvement in the way I think. My parents have also noticed it.
I like analytical thinking because in here everyone's treated equal. No peer pressure in here. Sometimes it's boring, but then we get into a discussion. Those are fun because we have 28 different opinions.
I hope there will be an analytical class for eighth graders next year.
I love this class. I wish it wasn't an elective. I wish it was recommended (required?) like English. I want to have it next year if I could.
I wish I had an assignment every day so the hour would go faster.
You need to be a little more strict on certain people that can't be quiet.
I hope the kids next year will have the opportunity to have this class because to me it's worth it.
I enjoy listening to our conversations as well as joining them. I hope to have a similar class next year!