August, 1983

Philosophy for Children Workshop

Overview, Participant Evaluation, and Projected Outcome

INTRODUCTION

A workshop in Philosophy for Children was offered this summer at Viterbo College with generous support from the Wisconsin Humanities Committee. Dr. Ronald Reed and the author conducted the week long workshop. The workshop was promoted primarily by distribution of brochures to regional schools. Four questions were addressed in the brochure: What is Philosophy for Children?, How will Philosophy for Children work in your classroom?, Why teach Philosophy for Children?, and Who should attend?. This approach was taken as part of an effort at making teachers, principals and parents informed about the basic nature of a Philosophy for Children program.

The training format was typical of Philosophy for Children workshops, with many opportunities for participants to become involved in teaching the material and to receive feedback on their teaching. The workshop instructors/facilitators also taught appropriate lessons.

An evaluation of the workshop was conducted on the last day. Participants were asked to evaluate course objectives, organization and the extent to which the program met participant expectations. On a scale of 1 to 4, with 4 being strongly agree, and 1 being strongly disagree, the following averages were tabulated:

The objectives of the program were clearly stated	*3.8*
The program met my expectations	*3.8*
The program was well organized	*3.6*
The length of the program was adequate	*3.3*
My overall impression of the instructor was	*3.6*

As a part of the evaluation, participants were asked to include comments, plans and the kinds of help they might need during the year. What follows is a verbatim account of those comments organized into four categories: plans, general comments, applicability, and recommendation.

Plans:

1. I will start a small group at school on *Harry*. If successful, try to get local school district interested. Also, try to add Philosophy for Children as an ed course at MSL. Philosophy for Children will be my source of relating to others meaningfully for a long time in the future. The seminar experience has confirmed and enlivened my plans to attend graduate school in whatever way I can. I will be working hard to bring the program to many different organizations and people in Minnesota.
2. I plan to make a conscious effort to incorporate materials and techniques from the Philosophy for Children series in my college classes. I also intend to do something similar in the area of interactive computer programs, exactly what remains to be determined. It is also my intention to make the Philosophy for Children series known to members of the education department at the college and to area educators whom I know personally. There also exists the possibility of offering a Philosophy for Children course to local teachers and/or children. If so, it would have to be offered, at least initially, as one of our non-credit courses.
3. I will use *Harry* in my G/T program with my 5-6 grade students. I would like to see Mort come to my district and plug into the writing curriculum. I hope to see the writing curriculum proposal going again, and plug into that. I would also like to see us plug into the College for Kids at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

General Comments:

1. I had a good time and found the course helpful. For me, it would have been better to do several different novels. Mort, your comments are good and I think you should take an equal role with Ron in the presentation. This is not a negative comment on Ron. You two bounce off each other well. So bounce.
2. *Philosophy in the Classroom* — optional reading. I found many ideas in the course most interesting. One book we read, *Philosophy in the Classroom* by Matthew Lipman, *et al*, has a wealth of practical suggestions for making classroom discussion more philosophical — more beneficial for the students. I also found interesting the philosophical themes that can be dealt with in ethical inquiry, which is a great concern of mine since I teach in the public school system and am limited when dealing with the spiritual aspect of my students. I plan to use *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, the students text, and the related activities in the teacher's manual in a structured program each week. I hope that I will be able to incorporate philosophical thinking in other subjects, as I become more familiar with its usage.
3. What did I learn? Everyone makes "rules." Our attentiveness and willingness to the rules we have made in light of experience is crucial.
4. I found a social setting that confirmed my belief about the possibility of finding something where I could be what I most want to be, *i.e.*, questioning and inquisitive with others. This seminar has been a life setting type of experience for me. The program met my expectations and then some!

Applicability: List two or three ideas from this program which you might use:

1. People make rules about their endeavors, *i.e.*, language/logic + many other areas.
2. Use of games in classroom, character analysis, and letting discussion "go."

3. Everything!
4. I found the discussion about language very useful. I see myself using the program in the elementary school.

Recommendation: I would recommend this program to others:

1. You bet I will!
2. Positively!!
3. Yes, highly.
4. Yes.

The most exciting part of the workshop occurred on the last day when we began making plans for the 1983-84 school year. The first step was to begin an embryonic organization with the ambitious title of Midwest Center of Analytic Teaching. Our first meeting will be on October 13, in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Each charter member will invite two or three new members to attend. A preliminary survey indicates that as many as 30 persons will be in attendance. A brochure outlining the organization's purpose, goals and objectives, membership requirements and activities is in preparation. (It should be available by the time this publication reaches you.) We plan a full day with ½ day presenting and discussing works in program and ½ day on organizational details (How to become in fact a Midwest Center).

The involvement and commitment of the participants is reflected in the series of articles which follow.

Richard Morehouse

Plans to Revitalize Sixth Grade Social Studies

It is exciting for me as a teacher, with twenty years of experience in elementary or junior high, to be introduced to a thinking skills program that can help children discover that reasoning learned in one class carries over to reasoning in other classes, to playground activities, and to out-of-school functions as well. Philosophy for Children, the Viterbo College workshop I attended in June at La Crosse, Wisconsin, holds out that possibility for us. As Matthew Lipman says in *Philosophy in the Classroom*, "Philosophy for Children is serious about encouraging children to think for themselves, and it will help them discover the rudiments of their own philosophy for life. In so doing, it helps children develop a more secure sense of their own identities." I welcome the assistance this approach has to offer, for I see poor self-image, lack of identity, and *thinking* as grave problems for many children today!

So I am excited about implementing Philosophy for Children this fall with my twenty-five sixth graders here at Lomira Community Schools, Lomira, Wisconsin. The program received approval and encouragement from both my principal, Mr. Pete Runds, and superintendent, Mr. John Mason. One of Mr. Mason's opening comments displayed delight that here was a program that also held out possibility for improvement in the academics as well. Research studies have shown significant student improvement in mathematics and reading when this program is properly taught by competent teachers trained to teach Philosophy for Children. Our high school principal, Mr. John Phillips, is also interested and wants to be kept informed how the new program is progressing. The positive support by Lomira's administration will help move this new addition to my sixth grade curriculum along smoothly and profitably.

After a couple weeks into the new school year, my class will be introduced to Harry through the student novel, *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*. We will be using the novel to follow Harry and his friends, discover the formal rules of thought and demonstrate how their discoveries aid them in understanding their own world. Two forty-minute periods will be worked into each week so that there will be time for reading the novel, sharing ideas about the novel, and developing leading ideas in each chapter.

The teacher's manual which accompanies *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* stresses philosophical inquiry. Some appropriate manual suggestions for discussions and activities will be used as we move through the novel. What I appreciate so much about this thinking skills approach is that many of the teaching suggestions can be applied directly to other subjects in the curriculum. For example, in chapter one of the manual there are exercises on discovery and invention and a critical thinking questions exercise that I can relate to my beginning chapters in social studies. I don't expect each chapter to fit into my other areas of study so neatly, but this program will provide me with tools to guide a good philosophical discussion in any subject.

It doesn't take long to discover that it is an art to get students to engage in philosophical dialogue. This program has reviewed and taught me new prerequisite knowledge the teacher should possess. To elicit productive discussion there has to be a feeling for which sort of question is appropriate to the situation, the proper sequence of questions, and even when to intervene. If the classroom discussion begins with the interests of my students, then, one might hope teacher-student interchange will be augmented by student-student interchange. As the school year progresses, I look forward to becoming better at encouraging my students to not only think more logically, but to give good reasons, and to act rationally.

I realize that the longer one practices and uses this thinking program correctly, the better one becomes. But even as a newcomer to the Philosophy for Children ranks, I hope for noticeable improvement in my students' thinking skills, for this is what first got my attention when I heard about this program. Mr. Mason suggested using our second sixth grade class as a control group, while both classes will be tested using the *Analytic Test* and the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills*.

During the school year, Dr. Mort Morehouse, professor at Viterbo College in La Crosse, Wisconsin, will visit our Lomira School to observe and offer suggestions of use of the program in my classroom. He will also demonstrate teaching methodology for any other interested faculty members. We look forward to Dr. Morehouse's sharing of the aims and methods of Philosophy for Children with the Lomira teachers.

I hope that a Lomira Board member will also be present at Dr. Morehouse's demonstration. At the September Board of Education meeting the members will be introduced to Philosophy for Children and how it will be implemented in my sixth grade classroom this fall. Mr. Mason has asked me to explain briefly both items to the Board of Education.

The Task Force on Education for Economic Growth declared some months back that "a real emergency is upon us." Knowing that quote is taken out of context, I would like to change the quote. Speaking from twenty years of teaching experience and now after learning about this thinking skills approach, I am optimistic that Philosophy for Children can be a valuable approach for us in education. So I dare to say, "one real potential remedy is upon us!"

Rita Witkowski

"Action Plan" for Implementation of a Philosophy Program in the School Curriculum

My interest in a philosophy curriculum for the elementary schools began as a result of a presentation I attended by Mr. Peter Shea at St. Thomas College, St. Paul. The session was presented to a group of graduate students enrolled in a topics seminar related to gifted/talented education. As a result of my follow-up to that session, I became aware of the Teacher Training Workshop that was being offered at Viterbo College in La Crosse this past June (1983).

I have been interested in the concept of philosophical inquiry for quite some time. As a result of the Viterbo workship, my "action plan" regarding implementation of philosophical inquiry is outlined below.

My first goal is to use the book, *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* as a basis for philosophical inquiry with a small population of students. I am employed as a resource teacher for students in the high potential program at an elementary school in the community of River Falls. I work with students in grades four through six who are involved in a pull-out program for part of their academic day. With at least one grade-level this includes pull-out from their reading program. I would like to use this population to pilot the program in our elementary building. The population of students will be sixth graders (a total of five in number) and I intend to use *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* on a one-day per week basis.

All students in our sixth grade are involved in a literature program using the Junior Great Books. I would like to expand the program — assuming that all goes well — and expose all kids to philosophic inquiry through the Great Books program.

A second goal for this first year is to do some type of evaluation related to the effectiveness of the program, particularly as relates to its application in the Great Books literature class. Such an evaluation might relate to the ability to generate interpretive questions, support one's opinions with material from text, follow "logical" sequences of ideas, etc.

I also feel that it is critical that future teachers be exposed to the concepts of philosophical inquiry. The local university in River Falls sponsors a "College for Kids" program each summer. (This is the second year of the program.) Carol LeBreck is the director of the program. Carol offers a for-credit class in conjuction with the College for Kids for teachers. We would like to offer philosophical inquiry as a mini-course during the College for Kids Program next summer. This will give an opportunity to offer a two-week teacher training workshop, and to expose kids to philosophical inquiry. Carol has been very enthusiastic about the prospects of such a program/mini-course.

Judith Freund

Pulling Things Together in the Twin Cities

I have some information to pass on to you concerning the Philosophy for Children program in the St. Paul/Minneapolis area. There are developments on several fronts. On July 29th Peter Shea, project director for the Philosophy for Children program in St. Paul/Minneapolis held a year ending seminar. The purpose of the seminar was to meet with those he worked with through the year, as well as other interested parents, teachers, and philosophers, to think about the results of the year's work and to think about future work in the Philosophy for Children program. The participants were directed to discuss, from a variety of perspectives, the uses of philosophy in elementary education, and to plan ways of continuing and expanding the work of the Philosophy for Children project.

A summary and some conclusions reached during the seminar will be published and sent to all interested people in the Twin Cities area, as well as other interested persons. Other workshops planned will be announced later. The workshops will be held at accessible locations in downtown St. Paul.

My immediate plans are to work in the Grants Section of our library. I hope to find some potential givers for the overall program in St. Paul/Minneapolis, and to obtain some funding for my upcoming work in the high potential program and the alternative education program in the White Bear Lake School District. In addition, I am seeking funds and am in the beginning stages of determining what interest the Girl Scout organization may have. Also, I am interested in offering the Philosophy for Children program as an after-school and Saturday class. I am looking for a funding source to help pay for classroom space and printing costs for announcements to inform interested students and parents of the extracurricular philosophy classes.

The St. Paul / Minneapolis area is beginning to look seriously at Philosophy for Children and other ways to aid students in analytic thinking. The network which we are building will, I hope, allow the many, at present, diverse forces to come together with a common commitment and effort. This is a beginning.

George Ek

Harry Meets Some Red Tape

This summer I had the distinct pleasure of participating in a workshop offered by Viterbo College in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever imagine myself taking any sort of a philosophy course; however, when I spotted the brochure on the wall in the faculty lounge, it somehow sparked an interest that was about to lead me down a rosy path to the very doorstep of Harry Stottlemeier and friends.

Two of Harry's staunchest supporters were leading the workshop in the persons of Dr. Mort Morehouse of Viterbo College and Dr. Ronald Reed of Texas Wesleyan College in Fort Worth, Texas. Under their astute guidance, we were inspired even when the thermometer rose to 96° and patience became thin. With a teacher-student ratio of 2-7 there was ample opportunity for give and take. Animated discussions were abundant and the room at times seemed to be virtually charged with electricity as thoughts flowed from all present.

Upon completion of the workshop, Mort challenged us to implement the program of Analytical Thinking, Philosophy for Children, or whatever you care to call it, in our respective schools. Thus, armed with my burgeoning red teacher's manual and a certain zeal, I approached the principal of Onalaska Middle School, Dr. Robert Weber. After giving him a brief synopsis of the program and expressing my desire to teach *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* to my 5-6 class in Pod 5, I was met with an unexpected reaction: "I don't mean to squelch your enthusiasm, but you'll have to have it approved by a committee, presented to SPC and approved by the Board." I felt as if the weight of the world had suddenly come down upon my shoulders. What began as a simple desire to teach a new and what I hoped would be motivating topic to my class had abruptly turned into a momentous untertaking, or so it seemed. My meeting with Dr. Weber was in the beginning of July, shortly after the workshop had ended, but nearly two months before school would resume and any of the curriculum committees would be meeting. Dr. Weber was helpful, however, and after some brainstorming we decided that I should present my proposal to the language arts Curriculum Committee and try to have it accepted as an optional unit since this area in the curriculum seemed to have the most flexibility.

Yesterday was our first in-service day and curriculum committees were out in full force. I attended the language arts meeting and met with much favorable reaction, from lower grade teachers as well as from those in high school. Though I haven't received 100% approval as yet, I anticipate it within a week or so. After that happens, procedure dictates that I present the program to SPC (System-wide Policy Committee) which is a group through which all curriculum decisions must go. SPC is made up of adminstrators and teachers from all levels of the school district and it is one of their functions to examine new curriculum areas and either approve or disapprove them. If the program receives approval from SPC, it will be put on the agenda and presented to the Onalaska Board of Education, which of course has the final decision as to its implementation and thus the allocation of funds necessary to purchase materials needed for the program.

As of this moment I am optimistic and don't see many real barriers except that the unraveling of the red tape will delay the time at which I will be able to begin the program. However, I remain confident that eventually, the intonations of Harry Stottlemeier and friends will resound among the hallowed halls of Pod 5 and perhaps throughout the entire school.

Anita Jenson

Harry Moves to Ladysmith

Both of us teach at Mount Senario College in Ladysmith, Wisconsin. Mount Senario is a small independent liberal arts college with about 400 full-time students. The college has a large number of Native American students mostly from the nearby Lac du Flambeau Reservation. We also have many local students from the Rusk County area. The teaching techniques we acquired at the Morehouse seminar at Viterbo College have already been useful in our courses in applied logic and basic studies, but our major project is to disseminate Philosophy for Children in the local school system.

The principal of Our Lady of Sorrows Parochial School in Ladysmith, Kathy Halstrand, was very enthusiastic about our proposal to do philosophy with her students. We will be working with fifth and seventh graders twice a week this fall. Our game plan is to demonstrate the virtues of the program by successfully implementing it in a local school. We have picked two different grade levels for studying Harry so that we will have an idea of what local age group is most appropriate for the program, and also to give us a demonstration base for appealing to local teachers at different grade levels. Harry will be taught as a regular subject at OLS, with standard tests and marking.

Over the coming year, we plan to invite teachers from the area to OLS to see Analytic Teaching in action. Then, next June, as part of Mount Senario's College for Children we will offer a course in philosophy for local fifth and sixth graders. At the same time, we will offer a workshop for teachers in Analytic Teaching carrying graduate education credit. The concurrent workshops and college for children will allow teachers the chance to observe *Harry* in action and to gain hands-on experience.

So we hope that within a year Philosophy for Children will be actively pursued in the Ladysmith area by teachers in the school systems. If we meet with success at these grade levels, the next steps we would like to take is to attempt to use *Rebecca* with younger children and formal logic with high school students.

A further implementation of the techniques learned at the seminar will be in the Developmental Studies Program at Mt. Senario College. The students who must take basic writing often lack the ability/skill to think critically, and are also weak in language skills. The lessons which deal with reversing sentences can be used to encourage students to look at language more carefully. The overall thrust of the method can be used to force students to think about what they are saying, and to question their basic assumptions about various issues. It would be unrealistic to expect college-age students to respond positively to a book which is directed toward younger children; there is a matter of pride involved. However, these students desperately need some sort of method for approaching studies, and traditional educational methods have not worked for them. If they can be motivated to think critically, we feel that they will have a far greater chance of success. Even though this program was not designed with this group in mind, these students, too, need a different approach to education which we feel *Harry* will serve.

Although it would be difficult, if not impossible, to test the gains made by using this method in an objective way, we feel that a personal evaluation is valid. If the method is successful, perhaps the approach could be modified and expanded formally to include a text to be used in a developmental studies program.

We're very excited about what we've learned at the Morehouse seminar. We hope to spread the word to Northern Wisconsin and the upper Midwest.

Anthony Graybasch
Mary Fleming