A REPORT ON PIXIE

My class of gifted and talented eight- and nine-year-olds is located in an elementary school in River Oaks. The class is a self-contained gifted and talented pilot program in its second year. Most of these children came to my class from a second grade gifted and talented, self-contained class. Philosophy for Children was initiated with this group, during the second week of October with 21 children. By January the group had been reduced to 16 students. Three children were removed from the pilot program and two others moved out of town. For the Philosophy for Children discussion, the novel Pixie (Lipman, 1981) was selected.

Within the class, three well-defined categories were established as interesting factors in the Philosophy for Children conversations before the classes began. These were intelligence, emotional versus logical reactions and personality types. The criteria used for the first category, intelligence, were standardized test scores, performance in class, grades, and gifted and talented test scores. The second category, emotional versus logical reactions, was judged through months of observing the children. Personality types such as extrovert, introvert, and those continually exhibiting some of each trait were judged through observing the students in many situations over a period of months.

There are three distinct levels of intelligence in this class. One level is the intelligent child who is gifted in many areas, has several talents and thinks differently from most other children. These children do complicated, high-level math problems in their heads and learn so rapidly that sequential steps are often not needed. They have one or two passionate interests that last for sometimes days, sometimes years. These students are curious and self-motivated for the most part and have amazing long term memories. These intelligent third graders usually follow directions perfectly, but if they are not interested in the subject being taught they simply do exactly as told and no more. When they are interested in a topic they attack it with enthusiasm and glee and throw their whole mind into the project. In a Philosophy for Children conversation the very intelligent either sit back, and take no part, at least verbally, or they try to dominate the conversation.

Another group in this intelligent classification is intelligent in every subject, gifted in a few and somewhat talented. They are my "middle" group in most subjects except for the areas in which they are gifted. In these areas they overlap the upper group. This group is similar to the first in traits, but their responses are not as intense, their memories are not as acute nor do their impressions last as long. They can sometimes skip certain steps in learning but need more sequential guidance than the first group. In a Philosophy for Children conversation these children are the most consistent and persistent in the discussions as a whole.

The last intelligent group includes three children who are very intelligent, but, in my opinion, not gifted. Since these three passed the criteria for my class, gifted in three areas tested, they are considered gifted. However, I have seen no evidence of giftedness in the seven months I have taught them. They have struggled several different times, during periods of certain kinds of learning and must have each step thoroughly taught in order to learn the next step. In a Philosophy for Children exercise, these three participates vary, one from the other.

Another category in this class is the degree to which the student's reactions are influenced by emotions versus logical thinking. This category is subdivided into three groups with one group reacting emotionally almost all of the time, a second group thinking and expressing their ideas logically and a third group using both means of expression.

The third category that I feel has a strong influence on the children's behavior in class is their basic personality. The children who are basically extroverts do

most of the talking during Philosophy for Children discussions. Every outgoing, verbal child volunteers to talk and enjoys talking a great deal in these conversations. The introverts, with one outstanding exception, seldom volunteer. They appear to follow and enjoy the discussions, but rarely want to take an active part. Two introverts did wish to talk during any exercise. One acted interested and appeared to follow the discussion from beginning to end, but the other, through body language and comments, was clearly bored with the whole process and did not participate. He continued throughout the year with this behavior and every day, exactly at three o'clock, he would raise his hand for the first and only time and tell me it was time to stop.

This class has some other unique characteristics. First of all the class is self-contained. I have them all day for everything except Physical Education. It is easier to see growth and changes in the children as a result of certain things because I know them so well. Also philosophical topics can be discovered and related to other subjects because we are all together every day. I also get to know the children while having them all day under all different circumstances. This helps me to be a better leader during Philosophy for Children discussion and to suggest literature that will be of interest to the majority of students.

A number of these children are very good friends with each other. I have never before had a class in which the girls liked the boys and the boys liked the girls in an overall friendly acceptance. Most of the children have close friendships within the class and there is very little rivalry or sexism. We are a family and a team and that is a great advantage in any conversation.

There is, however, a negative aspect given these circumstances. The children have never tried to exert any discipline on group members who break the rules, change the subject, tell long rambling stories or act silly just to get attention. This leaves it solely up to the leader to exert pressure on those who will not cooperate with what we are trying to do.

Since the majority of these children came from the same second grade class last year they, for the most part, were already a cohesive group when they came to me. Because of this, the basics of a good conversation were quickly absorbed and bonding to the leader and each other took place easily and swiftly.

I have encountered many problems with the Philosophy for Children program this year. The greatest problem lies with my inexperience in leading philosophical discussions. While enjoying reading about philosophy, I have never, before the Analytic Teaching class, had an opportunity to participate in a philosophical discussion. My Analytic Teaching class was conducted all day for two and one half weeks. It was so intense, exhausting, and at first overwhelming, that few skills were acquired. Thus, I felt very apprehensive and inadequate when I began leading these discussions. Also leading discussions with adults, or just being a member of a group of adults discussing philosophy is very different from that of leading children holding philosophical conversations.

Another difficulty arose from my role as a leader in a Philosophy for Children conversation being so different from my role as a teacher.

Another problem was the lack of communication with the two professors from Texas Wesleyan College. I knew their time was limited, so I did not seek their help as much as I should have and my time was so limited I could not spare much for getting help. During one visit to my class, a professor was 10-minutes early. Since my students are at Physical Education before Philosophy for Children, I used this time to ask him questions. I had a list of eight questions and we only had time for four of them. This 10 minutes was the most valuable time I had spent so far in preparing myself to be an efficient Philosophy for Children leader. The professor said he would get back to me and help with the other four questions, but was unable to reply.

Time taken for me to solve some of these problems by myself is good experience. However, I still feel that some of my problems required an immediate guiding hand and specific advice. I feel so much time was spent on solving problems that it reduced time spent on good philosophical conversation.

Another personal problem was the necessity to prepare several lesson plans for one, 30-minute class. I did not have time for one extra lesson plan let alone multiple plans which were never used. I often spent a large amount of time planning an interesting topic or direction, only to have the children unwilling to discuss it. Since a great deal of my non-school time is spent on lesson plans, working out whole units and other school projects already in existence, I did not have the time to spend on Philosophy for Children that I felt was needed or that I wanted to as a leader of the group. Extra energy, stamina and time are needed to prepare adequately for regular subjects and Philosophy for Children discussions with gifted children.

There were three distinct problems concerning time: the time of day, the amount of time allowed for this special class and the timing of each class. The time of day scheduled to hold Philosophy for Children discussions was a problem, as it was only possible to hold discussions during the last period of the day, twice a week. By 2:30 everyone was tired, thinking was slower and not as sharp. This was as true of the teacher as it was of the students. As the leader I had to be alert for the complete conversation and this was difficult this late in the day.

The second time problem was one of too little time. By the time the selection was read and a decision made as to the topic of the day, only half an hour twice a week was spent in actual conversations. I feel more time each week was needed, but because of Texas Education Agency's requirements, principal requirements and third grade curriculum, no more time was available. We would often be in the middle of a good discussion when it was time to stop. This caused bad feelings for children who had been very involved and wanted to express ideas that were important to them. We found 30-minutes too short a time to really explore a topic and completely think it through to a place where most of us were willing to stop.

The third problem concerned timing. As we progressed and grew in philosophical discussions, we often discovered a topic we had discussed or one that Pixie would like to discuss. Most were found in literature during reading class and in social studies class about early Americans. Because of schedules and lesson plans, we could not stop right then and have a Philosophy for Children conversation. I would often postpone the discussion until the allotted time but the spontaneity and enthusiasm were gone. I also found myself asking questions as if leading a philosophical discussion only to have to stop because of the clock.

Some problems were with individuals. One child consistently created the same problem daily by attempting to dominate the class. When not called on over a period of time he would interrupt whoever was speaking, usually with a smart or silly remark designed to get the attention he craved. He was quite often successful because he got the attention, the conversation was interrupted, and it was difficult to get the conversation going again.

Another child caused a problem in the same way during Philosophy for Children discussion as she did in regular classes. She very seldom contributed thoughts that had anything to do with what we were talking about. She also wanted to tell long stories about things that had happened to her or that she had seen or heard. These examples had nothing to do with what we were discussing and were so long and disjointed that the flow and interest in the conversation were invariably lost. No other child would say something to her about not following our rules.

Several children would contribute only by giving examples from their own convictions. For a long time this stopped the conversations rather than stimulated them to further exploration. When asked to explain why they disagreed, they would

usually say "I don't know, I just disagree." The child with the original thought was left hanging with nothing to build on.

Other conversation stoppers were the children who often forgot what it was they wanted to say when finally called upon to speak. It embarrassed and upset them because it was difficult for the rest of us to think back and continue. Also, these children became reluctant to participate again. It was very difficult for these eight- and nine-year-olds to listen to others and at the same time remember what it was they wanted to add to the conversation.

It was also difficult for these students to remain on the subject and to build upon one another's statements. With eight to ten members actively participating, by the time it got around to the fifth and sixth person's turn to speak, the subject had usually changed and what they wanted to say did not fit any more. Some would tell it anyway. Some would say never mind. Either way it was a problem. The subject changed much to often either by accident or on purpose. This way of learning and interacting with one another was so new to these students that they wanted to participate so much and did so without thinking through their statements. Thus, the conversation jumped from one place to another with very little connection or cohesion.

What to discuss during a Philosophy for Children time became a problem when several children found several different topics they wanted to pursue. Some children became angry when their topic was not chosen and would not participate but sat and pouted. We often had a long list for a 30-minute period. Usually only one topic per 30-minutes was possible to explore, with many subjects left dangling. Sometimes a topic would be presented that had nothing to do with the reading that day. Sometimes a few children wanted to continue talking about the subject begun the session before, and the others wanted to go on to a new topic. This caused hurt feelings with one group or the other. One child wanted to talk about dreams month after month no matter what old or new subject was brought to light.

Another problem originated with the novel itself. The children often commented on the fact that the novel we read was silly or stupid. This lead me to believe they found the material too young and immature for them. They did not seem to relate to many of the thoughts and situations concerning Pixie and her friends. They usually found a topic to discuss within the story, but they were much more enthusiastic when given another choice from an alternate source.

Another difficulty arose early in the discussions when the children would ask me what the topic meant, or when I would interject thought contrary to what they were thinking about. This upset several kids who wanted to know "the answer." When told that maybe there was not one answer, or several right answers were possible, some became reluctant to continue. Some complained that there should be a right answer and did not like it when it was not discovered right then.

The first session of Philosophy for Children was held the third week of October on a Tuesday during the last period of the day. I began the session by explaining that we were going to read stories about a little girl named Pixie, and her friends, then we would talk about the thoughts and ideas brought up in the stories. All of the children smiled and looked pleased. They were then told that we would have to have some rules so that everyone would get a chance to participate. I asked them what rules we would need to be able to talk. One child said we would need to raise our hands so we should not interrupt each other. I wrote that rule on the board. Another said we should listen to the person talking. That rule was written on the board and I added that we should also look at the person talking so as to give them all our attention. I said we would place our desks in a circle so that we could see each other. No one else had suggestions as to additional rules, so I added no laughing at another's thoughts or ideas and no name calling. The pupils were asked

if they thought these were good rules and if they would abide by them. They agreed. I knew we would need more rules soon, but I wanted to have a discussion the first day and time to spend on organization was limited. Also I felt after having a few discussions, I would ask the class if we should add any more rules. I hoped that restrictions made by the members would mean the members would really think about the importance of certain specific rules and that they would be more likely to follow them. My goal for this session was to simply introduce the concept of a class conversation and to enjoy the time spend with Pixie and each other.

We then put our desks in a circle, with my chair in the circle, and read page one of the novel. We read to the end of the first page, each taking a paragraph to read. I asked the class, when finished, what on this page interested them. One child said that Pixie gave herself a nickname. I wrote this idea on the board. Another thought the fact that Pixie could put her feet around her neck and walk on her hands was funny. He also said that the fact that Pixie did not know what vinegar was was funny. Another wondered why Pixie said she had to wait so long to tell her story. Four other students raised their hands and said that those same three things interested them. I explained first about why Pixie had said she had to wait for others to tell their stories. I explained that the two books before Pixie were for younger children, but that Pixie was for children their age. One child noticed that Pixie said she was the same age as the class, but he commented that some of the kids in the class were nine and some eight. "How old is she?" he asked. I said I didn't know but we might think about it as the story went on and see if we could tell. Another child noticed that if a child of five or ten read this page and asked, would Pixie then be five or ten or whatever the age of the person reading the story. The class was asked if anyone would like to answer that. A boy said he thought the person who wrote the story probably did that on purpose so that whoever read the story would feel like Pixie was their age. Several children nodded their heads to indicate they agreed. I then asked the person who said that, why did the fact that Pixie could cross her legs and put them around her neck at the same time interest her. She said she thought it was impossible, but wasn't sure. She asked me if it was possible and I asked if anybody knew? Several children volunteered that they didn't know but thought it impossible. I asked if any one would volunteer to try it for homework and report back tomorrow. Most all raised their hands, laughed, agreed to try and report back.

It was then suggested that we talk about other things that can happen and can't happen. I gave each child a copy of the exercise: "What can happen and what can't happen," found in the teacher's manual. We had an interesting discussion of the first four exercises. Some children became frustrated easily when they couldn't express what they could visualize or think. One child gave a good definition of a circle and explained that the reason it couldn't have corners was because of the definition of a circle. The ideas expressed were individual and personal with each child stating their views without building on others. Only seven children took part verbally in the discussion, but most of the others looked interested as if they were listening. Only one child looked bored and took no part in what occurred. When time was up several had their hands in the air wanting to continue. Many expressed their disappointment when told we must stop here.

The next three sessions went pretty much the same as far as degree of interest and manner of dialogue. A rule was added and another modified. I asked the children to raise only their fingers instead of their whole arm since I could see them well and not to raise their fingers while another was talking because it distracted the speaker. I also added that if someone disagreed with what another said they could certainly say so as long as they did it in a nice way.

On those three occasions, most of the students were eager to begin. The same

seven children who talked the first time also talked during these discussions and two more volunteered their thoughts in the third session.

The interest shown in the second class was in nicknames from the previous class list. Each child wanted very much to tell their nicknames and how they got them. We found out that none of the children had given themselves their nickname, but that other members of their family had given them their nickname. Some liked their nickname; some did not. I then asked them some questions such as "Do you use your name when you talk to yourself" and "If you had a different name, would you be a different person?" The discussion that followed was lively, interesting and fun. One child said, "I disagree with Sam," but when asked why, he couldn't say. A few children had given reasons for their answers, but only if I asked why. We finished with this question, "If people wanted to, could they rename everything in the world?" They all very quickly agreed that it was not possible. I then asked, "If we wanted to could we rename everything just in this room?" One child then thought we could, if we all agreed that it would be called something different. Others agreed. The class was asked, for instance, "Could we rename homework, 'drudge'?" I laughed and said, "Sure." My third grade class now does drudge every night instead of homework.

The conversation concluded with most children agreeing that we could change the names of things, if everyone in the group agreed and then learned the new names. One child said just before time to close "What about different languages? They name things differently than every other language." We agreed that that was an excellent point.

I began the next session with reviewing the rules, thanking the children for adhering to them so well and said that two new rules were needed. One was that if someone began a subject and another was called on next he or she should continue with the same subject, not completely change it. Another rule needing to be included was, not to give an example or illustration, but to tell what you found out or learned because of the incident. Because I felt the pupils needed a clearer idea of what we were trying to accomplish, I asked if anyone knew what a conversation was. The first child said he thought it was talking. The group was asked if anyone could add something to what George said. The next child said he agreed with George. I again asked if anyone could add something. A few things were added such as talking to someone, and speaking to someone about something. Then a girl said, she thought a conversation had to have at least two people talking about the same thing. Each person took turns talking. Everyone liked that definition. It was then brought up that not only talking was going on. The same girl said that both people had to listen, too, so they would know what to say next. When asked if a conversation could be between a whole class trying to find out something, several saw that that was what we were trying to do in our conversations. Next the question was posed: "What happens if one person changes the subject?" "It makes the first person mad," was one response. Another replied that the conversation stops. Another quickly said "But a new one can start on that subject." We agreed that for our conversations we would not find out much about the topic if the subject was constantly changed, but that the subject could be changed after a while.

The next session a valuable lesson was learned by the leader. An interesting exercise that was the subject of a topic in Pixie was runoff, complete with many answers to choose from. The conversation never developed, because each child had a copy of what they thought were "right" answers they simply read all or most of the answers for each child to have a copy. The leader had copies of exercises pertaining to subjects that might come up for discussion.

Just before the next session began, a tearful little boy asked if we could talk about divorce today, instead of whatever topic we found in Pixie. He said his parents were getting a divorce and he would like to talk about it. Several children

who had overheard Jamie's request said they, too, would like to talk about it. We began by finding out how many children had gone through a divorce. Five had besides Jamie, one twice. Others volunteered that they were very much afraid of their parents getting a divorce. Only one boy, John, said he was not afraid of it because his parents had promised him they never would divorce.

Jamie began by stating several fears he had, some of which he was experiencing now and some which he feared would come in the near future. Most of the session was a stating of fears and doubts. All the other children, except John, wanted to ask the five who had experienced divorce, questions which took up the rest of the period. Because of the real fear and unhappiness in each child's dialogue I felt a need to end the session with three statements I had learned in counseling children. One, your parents will never stop loving you. Two, none of the divorce is your fault and three, there will always be someone to take care of you. We talked about each of these points a short time and then closed.

Because of the great need I saw in the last session for the students to talk about their fears, I made a list of some other worrisome topics the kids wanted to discuss. The next three classes were spent in discussing four of the eight topics chosen. The topics included friends, school work, "nothing I do is right," unfair adults and "things I don't like about myself."

The session on friends was begun by breaking up the class into pairs and having them work together on a list of what qualities they would like to have in a friend. When we came back together in 10 minutes, an interesting discussion resulted. We discussed at length what a friend was, and how to be one. They saw the parallel between the traits wanted in their friend and the traits needed to be a friend. In this discussion, the conversation moved smoothly with only two children trying to give examples instead of ideas. The subject was not changed but rather flowed from having a friend to being a friend. Excellent thoughts were shared.

The next two sessions were not good conversations at all. Most of the time spent was on examples of personal grievances, and long explanations of repeating the same original topics over and over. No conclusions were made, no definitions worked on and definitely no building resulted.

Because of the poor discussions in the last two sessions and feeling we had strayed too far from our philosophical purpose, I tried something new in the Philosophy for Children class. That morning in reading we had a very interesting story, rich with philosophical topics. During oral reading and discussion of the tale, three discussions were naturally entered into. These discussions were put on hold because of the necessity of finishing reading the story and doing the required comprehension questions. I told the children, eager to discuss the topics, that we would finish our discussion in Pixie class that afternoon. This was our first time of selecting topics from literature. The next two sessions were spent on this story.

Both sessions were lively and fun and almost everyone participated at least once. More importantly, snatches of real philosophical discussions took place with people listening to one another, building on one another's ideas, disagreeing with someone and supporting their views with logical, well thought out reasons.

Three children came up individually after the class and said how much they liked doing Pixie using a story such as the one we had done. One said it was just a lot more interesting this way.

On another occasion something very interesting happened. We were discussing the differences and similarities between reasons and excuses found in Pixie, Chapter 4. Some people felt that the two words meant the same exact thing. Some believed that they definitely were not the same. We had also discussed "bad" and "good" reasons and excuses. One child said that he thought reasons and excuses were like something we had discussed in science, recently. In striving to understand how all rocks were

minerals, but that minerals were in other forms than rocks, he decided that all rocks were minerals, but not all minerals were rocks. He said he thought the same thing applied: all excuses were reasons but all reasons were not excuses. This statement was written on the board and briefly discussed. Since the time for Philosophy for Children was over, we concluded.

The next conversation was begun by studying more thoroughly the logic statement proposed in the previous class about reasons and excuses. I asked if anyone could think of any more things that would fit these kinds of sentences using the "all are" and "all are not" pattern. No one could, so I wrote a few from Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery. We discussed them but most of the children said they did not understand what was going on. They became very confused and frustrated trying to reason using these sentences. Because of this, I did not try formal logic with the class again. I decided to try again in April and May. I hoped to do some further study on the are-are not statements and try some no statements then.

Since I had been reading The Wizard of Oz (Baum, 1931) to the class for two weeks, I decided to try the interesting concepts found in the story in my next Philosophy for Children class. On the day before I asked each child to decide on one attribute the three main characters in The Wizard of Oz were seeking. They could choose only one of the three: a heart, which the Tin Man wanted; courage, for the Lion; or brains, which the Scarecrow wished for. I then had them sign a poster by each character and his attribute. I began the Philosophy for Children class by asking what they thought courage was. Five children said in slightly different forms, that they thought courage was doing something that you were not afraid to do. The sixth child said she disagreed. She thought that courage was being afraid to do something but doing it anyway. One of the original five added that other people would be afraid to do it but they would not. When asked if she could think of an example of this idea she could not. Several others tried to state examples of fearless courage, but each time used the words "I was afraid but. . .." A child caught the inconsistency and pointed it out. After several more minutes of discussion one of the children who were originally on the side of courage without fear said she changed her mind. When asked why, she said it was partly because of not being able to think of an example and partly just thinking about it and talking about it and hearing others tell their ideas. Several others agreed that they, too, had changed their minds. Then the children who chose courage as the attribute were asked why they chose it over having a heart or possessing a brain. Most of them said that they already had a heart and a brain but did not have courage to use for specific tasks that involved a fearful situation. They all needed courage to face some fear in their lives. The last to talk about his need of courage said it was a stupid fear. When asked what was fear, one said a feeling inside that they could not help but should be able to. Another added that fear was a feeling like an upset stomach that made you want to run away. Another added that something caused the feeling. One child thought fear was all of the above, but also a feeling that danger or harm would come to you. When asked why were some fears stupid and some not, most felt that their fear was stupid because others were not afraid of what they were. Those that wanted then named a stupid fear. I asked the class, after each time someone named this kind of fear, if anyone else felt fear when placed in that child's situation. Every time many hands went up including mine. Then a girl said she did not think that there was such a thing as a stupid fear because people could not help being afraid. Just because someone was afraid of something that another was not, did not make it stupid.

The next session was opened with the question, "Are fears ever good?" The following discussion was an excellent one. We switched after a thorough discussion of good fears to talking about the heart the scarecrow wanted. An excellent

conversation resulted when we discussed the meanings of figures of speech using the word heart. The pupils thought of many phrases such as a heart of stone, the keys to my heart, having no heart, having a broken heart, and others. We then thought about the possibility that if someone had only one of three attributes could that person then acquire the other two. Some thought brains would get the other two and some believed a heart would lead to courage and brains. These sessions using the concepts in The Wizard of Oz were by far the most fun and interesting to the children and leader.

Philosophy for Children augmented four traits that are important to the learning process of each child. Raising the self-esteem in students is important in many aspects of education. Philosophy for Children gave each child who participated a greater sense of their own worth and developed a self-confidence within most of the children that I have not seen evolve in any other method of education.

Emotional maturity was also evidenced as a result of Philosophy for Children conversations. Many children who reacted on a simple emotional level at the beginning of the sessions showed much more control of their volatile emotions as the discussion progressed. They were able to think the problem through and logically state a case for or against a particular point.

As more and more conversations were held, a clear indication of growth in intellectual skills of logical thinking, listening for understanding and drawing conclusions was observed. This growth was evidenced in all subjects of the third grade curriculum.

The communication skills of the members were greatly increased because of the Philosophy for Children classes. More exact vocabulary was used, interruptions were fewer, listening was more evident and conversations showed improved thinking with depth. Reasons for thinking as they did were given as part of their statements and logical thinking was observed more often than emotional outbursts. The talkative children learned to restrict their talking and to conscientiously listen to others, showing an increased respect for others opinions. The less talkative grew in self-confidence as their willingness to talk grew.

The students exhibited increased interest in a search for deeper meaning and relationships throughout the subjects learned each day. In math, a child noted that unlike Pixie's answers, math answers were exact and could not change with each child's opinion. Another child said that although this was true there were different ways to arrive at the correct answer. Vocabulary and spelling words were examined more closely as a result of Philosophy for Children discussion. Meanings were scrutinized and discussed more thoroughly by the children. Social Studies was the subject most influenced by Philosophy for Children. The group studied United States History from the explorers to the Civil War. Topics within Social Studies lessons began to be examined and several excellent philosophical conversations resulted using subjects such as slavery, rights for women and war. Individual words were examined and discussed while the pupils searched for meaning with these unfamiliar terms.

Another fact determined during Philosophy for Children conversations was that the topics chosen by the students were almost always emotionally related topics not intellectually related ones. The children consistently wished to talk about subjects that were emotionally involved.

All of the students, except one, tried to follow the rules set by the class. If reminded of a rule they were not following, the children would stop and begin again, attempting to express their opinion within the framework of the conversation agreed upon.

Every pupil, except one, looked forward to every Philosophy for Children discussion. Interest, enthusiasm, and participation were high when discussing topics relevant to the children. Interest was low when Pixie was used as a spring board for

conversations.

Some interesting observations were made concerning the three students categories as stated earlier. The extroverts participated the most in the discussions with the most enjoyment and growth noted. An outstanding exception was an introvert who was very verbal during Philosophy for Children discussions only. She consistently added ideas that showed deep thought and thorough perceptive expression. She was often the one to express just the right definition, to turn the conversation to focus on the heart of the problem or to point out another facet of the subject. In my opinion she was the best philosopher.

In the intellectual category the students who participated the most and grew in communication and thinking skills were found almost equally in the high intellectual group and in the medium intellectual group. Again the exception was a girl who participated a great deal and was in the lowest intellectual group.

The following isolated, inconclusive results are noted for interest only. One girl who wanted to take part in every conversation was never able to express herself within the framework set for the Philosophy for Children discussions. One child chose to break the rules constantly, forcing the leader to take disciplinary action with increasing severity. This student would then no longer take part in further conversation. Two boys never verbally took part in any conversation. One strong Christian girl always replied using Christian terms and phrases.

CONCLUSIONS

The strongest conclusion to be drawn from six months of Philosophy for Children with this class is that it meets a definite need for these children. These conversations raised the self-esteem and self-confidence in those students who took part. In order to participate in the discussions, a child must learn to control his emotions. Therefore, Philosophy for Children improved the emotional maturity of almost every student who participated.

Philosophy for Children improved the growth in thinking skills, logical reasoning and communication skills, of participants which transferred to other subjects in the curriculum. Students imaginations were stretched in a search for deeper meaning. Through Philosophy for Children, philosophical horizons were expanded.

The topics used in discussion must show a relevance and be of interest to the student. These topics may be taken from life experiences, literature or current studies. The rules and regulations governing the conversations should be selected or approved by the members so that they will follow them. The scope of the conversations must be flexible enough to allow different students to participate who may not be able to express themselves through normal studies.

This age group of children enjoys expressing itself in many forms. Through Philosophy for Children, they are able to carry on a good conversation while exploring the meaning of words. Philosophy for Children provides fun and excitement to most students because it presents challenges on many levels.

Gifted and talented students, as a whole, are quick thinkers, unusually curious and often seek challenges. They love mysteries, plays on words and exploring the unusual or exploring the usual in an unusual way. Philosophy for Children allows these students to use these traits.

Most children have a need and desire to express their opinions and to have those opinions listened to with respect. In Philosophy for Children discussions, these needs and desires are met. Time for expressing thoughts and ideas and conversing with one another is needed in every school day and is often not available in the regular curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A final conclusion is that more specific training would be a definite benefit to all concerned. Along this line, I have a few recommendations for new leaders of Philosophy for Children conversations and for professors. First, I would like to recommend taping with a tape recorder several sessions. Perhaps to tape them all and keep only those outstanding, typical of others and the very bad ones. These tapes would be a very useful tool for both the leaders, the professors and the classes. The leaders could listen for specific indications of problems and growth and criticize his or her skill or lack of it as leader as the year progressed. It would greatly aid the leader's memory when searching for questions to ask the professors.

The professors could listen to some of the tapes and give specific suggestions as to what to add where or what should or should not be done at that specific point. I do not think the personal visits should be stopped, but perhaps the tapes could be reduced to help the Doctor's time factor. The notes following and evaluation were not specific enough so that I often did not know how to improve my leadership nor exactly what I did wrong. Also, accompanying criticism should be tied to things to try in the next conversation and an explanation of the reasons the technique should be changed. With tapes all this could be done with a maximum of understanding on both sides. The conversation could be listened to over and over if needed by the leader to improve technique.

A period or two of discussing possible problems and suggestions of how to deal with them if and when they surface, in the Philosophy for Children training class should be added. Phone conferences would be valuable every month or so apart from evaluation time, but close enough to it for fresh insights. Because of the professor's time being so limited it is difficult to get help with a problem within a short limit of time.

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