

Lesson Plans 14: “Doing” philosophy
The Civic Knowledge Project: Winning Words

Time: 1 hour

Abstract: Students will discuss and formulate a formal process for Socratic interrogation, work on their final presentation, and discuss the effect

The philosophical process; explaining “why” (15-20 minutes)

Ask students to think about the Socratic method as something that can be turned into a process independent of its progenitor. What sort of question initiates it, and how does the dialogue progress?

Ask students to come up to the board and work together to diagram the process. Offer them some assistance in the form of a few items, which must fit into the process at the appropriate location

-Think of a question or idea, and say your opinion about it

-Say “why” you think what you think!

-Think of general ideas that have to do with this point

-Induction

-Deduction

-Think of specific ideas that have to do with this point

Final presentation work (30 minutes)

Work with students for a half hour or so. A note: in order to permit students to formulate somewhat complicated arguments (particularly with younger students) it is good work closely with them on the final presentation. Steer them away from bad ideas, and coach them on sharpening up clarity and hitting important points. Play the part of in-house pedant, ensuring that students remain focused on a point long enough to contemplate it meaningfully, and apply a certain amount of careful thought to it. Push them to interrogate themselves and to apply their powers of reason and investigation to their own actions and opinions. Ensure that all “behind-the-scenes” workings of opinion and expression are articulated by students.

Mr./Ms. Infallible (10 minutes)

Ask individual students to come to the front of the room, and proclaim them “infallible.” Whatever they say is completely true, no questions asked. What would they make true, and why? What about the limitations of the real world are frustrating, and why can the philosophical process be so boring. Ask students to debate whether the world would be better or worse if each of them was infallible, and could proclaim things to be as they wished.