The Socratic Seminar in the Elementary Classroom

Facilitated by
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NYC RBE-RN, Fordham University

PS 140, The Eagle School
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Purpose for Today’s session

- Introduce the Socratic Circles/Seminar strategy
- Present a rationale for implementing the Socratic Circles/Seminar in your classroom
- Introduce the steps for its successful implementation with a mini-interactive experience
- Share and discuss how you plan to introduce the strategy of the Socratic Circles/Seminar to your students
Benefits of Socratic Seminars

- Offer opportunities for student voice
- Demonstrate the power of open-ended questions
- Often mimic how intellectual discourse occurs in real life
- Support providing evidence-based arguments
- Reinforce close reading
- Build active listening skills
- Hone critical thinking skills
- Approach real world solutions as having multiple perspectives
- Emphasize the importance of critical reflection
- Build oral communication skills
The redefinition of literacy in the revised standards. The NYS Next Generation P-12 Learning Standards have been revised to ensure that all students develop competences in Advanced Literacies.

Advanced literacies denote a set of skills and competences that enable communication, spoken and written, in increasingly diverse ways and with increasingly diverse audiences in today’s global and interconnected society.
NYS Next Generation Language Arts Standards

Grade 3: 3SL1: Participate and engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse peers and adults, expressing ideas clearly, and building on those of others.

- 3LS1a: Come to discussions having read or studied required material; draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
- 3SL1b: Follow agreed-upon norms for discussions by actively listening, taking turns, and staying on topic.
- 3SL1c: Ask questions to check understanding of information presented and link comments to the remarks of others.
- 3SL1d: Explains their own ideas and understanding of the discussion.
- 3SL1e: Consider individual differences when communicating with others.

See handouts

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NYS Next Generation Language Arts Standards

Grade 4: 4SL1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners, expressing ideas clearly, and building on those of others.

- 4LS1a: Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
- 4SL1b: Follow agreed-upon norms for discussions and carry out assigned roles.
- 4SL1c: Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.
- 4SL1d: Review the relevant ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding of the discussion.

See 4SL1 about working with diverse partners. Also see Introduction and Practices for guidance around the importance of different perspectives and cultural backgrounds.
Grade 5: 5SL1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners; express ideas clearly and persuasively, and build on those of others.

- 5LS1a: Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
- 5SL1b: Follow agreed-upon norms for discussions and carry out assigned roles.
- 5SL1c: Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.
- 5SL1d: Consider the ideas expressed and draw conclusion about information and knowledge gained from the discussions.

See 5SL1 about working with diverse partners. Also see Introduction and Practices for guidance around the importance of different perspectives and cultural backgrounds.
Life Long Practices in Language Arts, Math & Science

Math

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard for Mathematical Practice</th>
<th>Student Friendly Language</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.</td>
<td>I can try many times to understand and solve a math problem.</td>
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<td>2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively.</td>
<td>I can think about the math problem in my head, first.</td>
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<td>3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.</td>
<td>I can make a plan, called a strategy, to solve the problem and discuss other students' strategies too.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Model with mathematics.</td>
<td>I can use math symbols and numbers to solve the problem.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Use appropriate tools strategically.</td>
<td>I can use math tools, pictures, drawings, and objects to solve the problem.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Attend to precision.</td>
<td>I can check to see if my strategy and calculations are correct.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Look for and make use of structure</td>
<td>I can use what I already know about math to solve the problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.</td>
<td>I can use a strategy that I used to solve another multi-problem.</td>
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Lifelong Practices of Readers and Writers

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<tr>
<th>Lifelong Practices of Readers</th>
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<tr>
<td>Think, write, speak, and listen to understand.</td>
<td>Think, read, speak, and listen to support writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read often and widely from a range of global and diverse texts.</td>
<td>Write often and widely in a variety of formats, using print and digital resources and tools.</td>
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<td>Read for multiple purposes, including for learning and for pleasure.</td>
<td>Write for multiple purposes, including for learning and for pleasure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-select texts based on interest.</td>
<td>Persevere through challenging writing tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persevere through challenging complex texts.</td>
<td>Enrich personal language, background knowledge, and vocabulary through</td>
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Dimension 1: Science and Engineering Practices

Dimension 1, Science and Engineering Practices, describes (a) the major practices that scientists employ as they investigate and build models and theories about the world and (b) a key set of engineering practices that engineers use as they design and build systems. The term “practices” is used instead of a term such as “skills” to emphasize that engaging in scientific investigation requires not only skill but also knowledge that is specific to each practice.

Similarly, because the term “inquiry,” extensively referred to in previous standards documents, has been interpreted over time in many ways throughout the science education community, part of the intent in articulating the practices in Dimension 1 is to better specify what is meant by inquiry in science and the range of cognitive, social, and physical practices that it requires. As in all inquiry-based approaches to science teaching, the expectation is that students will themselves engage in the practices and not merely learn about them secondhand. Students cannot comprehend scientific practices, nor fully appreciate the nature of scientific knowledge itself, without directly experiencing those practices for themselves.

The eight science and engineering practices mirror the practices of professional scientists and engineers. Use of the practices in the performance expectations is not only intended to strengthen students’ skills in these practices but also to develop students’ understanding of the nature of science and engineering. Listed below are the eight science and engineering practices from the Framework:

1. Asking questions and defining problems
2. Developing and using models
3. Planning and carrying out investigations
4. Analyzing and interpreting data
5. Using mathematics and computational thinking
6. Constructing explanations and designing solutions
7. Engaging in argument from evidence
8. Obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information

See handouts

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In a few words,

The Socratic Seminar builds Student competences in Advanced Literacies

It is a stimulus, the jumping off point for creating an engaging learning environment that offers opportunities for student voice.

➢ It is a practice that requires all language skills:
  • Builds active listening skills
  • Reinforces close reading and note-taking
  • Builds and enriches oral communication skills and vocabulary

➢ Hones critical thinking skills and reflection
  • Embraces the power of open-ended questions
  • Approaches real world solutions as having multiple perspectives
  • Helps develop conflict resolution skills

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Preparing Your Students for a Socratic Seminar

Planning:
1. Establish routines for attentive listening and good behavior, procedures, and expectations. At the beginning of every discussion, do the same. Hold students accountable for demonstrating respect for each other.
Preparing Your Students for a Socratic Seminar

Planning, cont.:

2. Choose a rich text that offers cross-content area and real world connections. Practice reading and listening to the text so that students are ready to engage in discussion.

3. Practice academic vocabulary, asking and answering open questions as well as expressions to indicate surprise, enthusiasm, support, deep thinking, and wondering.

4. Collaboratively create anchor charts that can be used as cues during the seminar.

See handouts
Preparing Your Students for a Socratic Seminar

During the Seminar:

1. Be sure that students have a text that they know well
2. Make the purpose clear to all the students (statement/question)
3. If necessary, use a physical tool, such as a ball or another system to facilitate student-to-student questions
4. Remind students that the anchor charts around the room are a sources of ideas and language cues
5. Allow each student enough time to begin and finish his/her though
Preparing Your Students for a Socratic Seminar

After the Seminar:
1. Students summarize the content of the seminar (writing or drawing)
2. Students reflect on the process and self-assess (scale, rubric, other)
3. Students set goals for improvement. You may ask students to respond to a question, a prompt. If necessary, students respond using a language frame.
A mini-Experience: Using the Socratic Seminar “The Snail and the Whale”

- After the read aloud and individual reading practice, decide on the purpose for your seminar (Note: The seminar may focus on a particular picture, a spread with text, a segment of the story, or the entire book.
- Write a few open questions based on the purpose.
- Think how you would prepare your students for this seminar, and what you have students do after the seminar.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0kSTA-ma90
Why is the Socratic Seminar a highly recommended school-wide protocol?

What Standards and Practices are addressed through the use of a Socratic Circles/Seminar?

What is the first step you will take to introduce the Socratic Circles/Seminar to your students tomorrow?
Please complete Evaluation and Reflection.

Thank You!

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