



Tutoring Foundations

Tutor Training Classroom Workbook: Level I – Basic

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I. Basic Forms of Questioning and Thinking

Tutoring is similar to other professional educational disciplines in that there are several professional methodologies available to practitioners. In other words, there are several ways to approach your work with students. We believe that using Socratic questioning in conjunction with an andragogical approach is the most effective way to conduct a tutoring session.

The Socratic Method

Socratic Method (also known as Socratic teaching or questioning) is probably the most ancient of all teaching methodologies. In its original form, the master tutor questioned the student until the student actually became confused about what he knew regarding a particular subject. Then slowly the master tutor asked open-ended questions that not only reintroduced subject knowledge to the student, but also raised the student's level of thinking to a higher level of synthesis and creativity. The historical goal of Socratic questioning was to create an independent thinking student who could grasp subject knowledge, visualize themselves within the subject, analyze the information, manipulate the information internally and externally, and then synthesize the information into a larger, possibly more challenging concept. This dialogue was not a simple one and often continued for months on a single thought.

Today, Socratic questioning has come to mean the use of open-ended questioning to bring a student to realize an answer for himself rather than just giving the answer to the student. If the student doesn't seem to be finding the answer, ask a different question or ask your question in a different way.

According to Dr. Richard Paul, Director of the Foundation for Critical Thinking at Sonoma State University, there are several universal standards for how questions should be formulated in order to keep students stimulated by and responsible for their own thinking. The following are examples of questions for the most significant standard as outlined by Dr. Paul.

- **Clarity:** Could you elaborate further? Could you give me an example?
- **Accuracy:** How can we determine if that is true? How can we verify your statements?
- **Precision:** Could you be more specific? Could you provide more details?
- **Relevance:** How does that relate to the issue? How does that align with the question?
- **Depth:** What are some of the complexities of this question? What factors need to be considered?
- **Breadth:** Do we need to consider another point of view? Do we need to look at this from a different perspective?
- **Logic:** Does what you say follow from the evidence? Does all of this make sense?
- **Significance:** Is this the central idea? Is this the most important issue to consider?

(Paul, 2007)

Andragogy vs. Pedagogy

At this point, a brief discussion of pedagogy versus andragogy is applicable. Typically classroom instruction is pedagogical. In other words, the teacher is in control of the class, all information, the

method of delivering that information and all class activities. The teacher is driving the class toward specific goals as outlined by the teacher, usually as prescribed by the school districts' or institution's curriculum committee.

Tutoring, on the other hand, is essentially andragogical. In this scenario, the student and the facilitator (the tutor) are equal partners in the learning experience. While the tutor structures the tutorial session and always has an outline in mind for what needs to be accomplished during each session, the student has an equal say in how the session progresses, at what speed and in how the information is delivered.

An andragogical approach is often more effective for many students. So why don't teachers use andragogical methods in the classroom? The truth is that many do at the upper levels of education, but the classroom size, time constraints, curriculum requirements, and overall K-12 structure are more conducive to the pedagogical approach and as such, that is the major philosophy of much of our education system.

This is why tutors play a vital role in the academic success of a student. The tutor is the only member of the student's web of support who can easily maneuver between the pedagogy of the classroom and the andragogical needs of the student. Thus, because of the androgical nature of the tutor/student relationship, the tutor has the ability to help the student realize and repair whatever disconnect is causing that student's academic challenge or distress.

Assignment: Using the Socratic Method

After joining the partner designated by your instructor, jointly develop a simple 10 question dialogue that a tutor might have with a student on a concept. Write a brief description of the questions and answers, using the space below. Make sure that you include at least one of each type of Dr. Paul's question standards as described in the preceding reading. Remember, you may be asked to share your dialogue with the rest of the class!

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Critical Thinking

To think differently and critically tutors and students need to...

- Ask Questions
- Rely on Facts not Assumptions
- Be Honest and Ethical
- Let Your Mind Wander
- Interpret Information Accurately to Prevent Conflicts
- Discuss Issues with Others

Ask Questions

Asking the right question guides effective tutoring sessions. The hope is always that the right question will ignite the desire to learn, no matter who the question comes from, the tutor or the student. Questions direct thought, and thought directs actions. Questions of fact, like who, what, when, how, and where direct students to identify the process they need to take to reach academic goals.

For example, a student may ask the tutor "What do I need to do to get an A on this paper in my English class?" There might be many responses to this question ; however, it may be more appropriate for the student to answer his own question through the process of the tutor steering the answer through the use of factual questions.

The tutor might say "What is your understanding of your teacher's expectations for this assignment?" "How do you think you can achieve an A?" "Where do you think you should begin to start the research for the paper?" You may remember this method of questioning from an earlier course - the Socratic Method.

Once you ask students to ask fact based questions the tutoring sessions will be more focused. Next, questions of interpretation can be used to increase critical analysis of the learning situation. "Why

do you believe that you should use APA and not MLA source citations in this paper?"

Rely on Facts not Assumptions

Evidence, facts, and statistics should be the foundation of communication and critical thinking. In general, people learn to disrespect individuals who make false assumptions or statements without research to back up these statements. As a tutor, it is important to encourage students to think, rethink, and evaluate the meaning of their words before they speak. Tutors must help students understand that being fooled into believing or repeating everything they hear or read is not a good use of their thought processes. Teach students that they should challenge and research information before they believe it.

Be Honest and Ethical

Pretending to know is not using critical thinking. Sometimes you are right and sometimes you are not; critical thinkers know when they are not. Simply stated, honest and ethical individuals do not pretend to know information that they do not in fact know. Would you want to be treated by a surgeon who pretends to have attended medical school?

Let Your Mind Wander

Encourage students to take time daily to let their minds wander. Wandering minds are more open to creative solutions to problems and are less likely to think in narrow, assumptive ways. Reflection of new ideas will help students to create and attain goals because they are able to look at new ways to make their dreams come true. A wandering mind lets you find solutions to problems that you may not have been able to tap into before.

Interpret Information Accurately to Prevent Conflicts

Critical thinking can be deterred by inadequate interpretation of information. Sometimes students are frustrated with their teachers because they believe that the teacher is not teaching them adequately. On the other hand, teachers feel that students should be led to information not spoon fed. This conflict in pedagogy is one that tutors deal with constantly. Accurate interpretation of communication, readings, body language, and feelings is paramount when tutoring students ; therefore , your challenge is to think about ways to teach students this skill so that they can learn to resolve conflicts on their own.

Discuss Issues with Others

Each of us is the creator of solutions to problems and is responsible for the choices that we make. However, asking others for advice can help us discover ideas that may never have crossed our mind s before. Other's thoughts can help you become a more effective tutor.

Thinking Ruts and Procrastination

Think differently.

Think critically.

By opening your mind to new ideas that you might normally reject, you are learning to evaluate information within new frameworks of thought. New thought directs new and usually more effective behaviors and choices.

Evaluating your decisions, actions and choices in depth before you act opens potentially new positive life experiences. Creating limited solutions limits your ability to solve simple and complex problems adequately which can lead to thinking ruts.

Thinking ruts are the behaviors and choices in your life that prevent you from solving problems and moving forward into the life that you wish you could live.

Think differently!

Critical thinking provides the ability to dissect information through reasoning, questioning, challenging facts, problem solving, and rethinking. It helps students make sense out of confusion; create a plan to stop chaos, and to differentiate fact from opinion while creating new thoughts for success (Hjorth, 2000).

As a tutor you may find that students sometimes make decisions that are not based on reality or make decisions based on false assumptions. You know first hand that this kind of thinking can prevent academic success because decisions without facts or correct information can cause students to become stuck in repetitive non-action oriented choices.

Thinking ruts are problematic; students solve problems the same way even though the solutions don't work. An example of a thinking rut is procrastinating; if a student that you work with in a tutoring session doesn't study for a test he could receive a poor grade or fail. Procrastination is a behavior that is caused by thinking ruts – acting in the same way without success.

This section is designed to help your students use critical analysis to prevent acting in ways that could keep them from attaining their goals in life.

Thinking ruts prevent you from making choices that could have a positive impact on your life. Without critical thinking your dreams could become stagnant even before you start to achieve them. Think differently!

Other Reasons Why Students Procrastinate:

- Lack of self-esteem
- Need for attention
- Lack of time management skills
- Fear of failure
- Avoiding the unpleasant
- Perfectionism
- The thrill of it all!

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2. Balancing Your Roles as a Tutor

Ethics

According to Webster, “ethics” is defined as a standard of morals. Perhaps more simply explained, “Ethics in plain words means studying and analyzing right from wrong; good from bad” (Ethics, 2006). This seems simple enough, but of course everyone knows that there is a lot of gray area between good and bad!

As a tutor, you will sometimes be confronted with situations in which you will need to decide between right and wrong. For example, if a student asks you to do his/her homework, or to help more than would be acceptable on a paper or written assignment you will be confronted with a decision between what is all right as a tutor and what is beyond what a tutor should do.

What if the requesting student adds to the question, the fact that if he doesn't do well on this paper or homework assignment he will fail the course and lose his scholarship? What if you have become friends with the person you are tutoring? In fact, is it okay to become friends with the person you are tutoring? Clearly, all tutors need to have some sort of code or moral compass that will help them navigate these difficult situations

To assist tutors, The National Tutoring Association Organization (www.ntatutor.org) has developed the Tutor Code of Ethics which is on the next page. Tutors who hold themselves to these standards will find themselves in fewer sticky situations and if they should arise, will have a means of working out an answer for themselves.

NTA Tutor Code of Ethics

1. I understand that my role as a tutor is to never do the student's work for him or her.
2. I will give honest feedback to the student I serve and will not insult my student with false hope or empty flattery; I will always demonstrate faith in my student's learning abilities.
3. I understand that my relationship to the student is professional and not personal.
4. I will show respect for my student's cultural background and personal value system.
5. I recognize that I may not have all the answers to student questions. In this event, I will seek assistance in finding answers to the student's questions and/or direct the student to an appropriate resource for the information.
6. I will maintain accurate records of tutoring sessions as expected and required.
7. I will respect my student's personal dignity at all times.
8. I will be on time for tutoring appointments, not only out of courtesy, but to be a good example for my student to follow.
9. I will keep all information about the student whom I am assigned confidential.
10. I understand that my ultimate goal is to assist my student in learning how he or she best learns and to help my student develop the skills to achieve his or her best, most efficient learning.
11. I will share any concerns I have with my supervisor.
12. I expect to learn along with my student.

13. I will keep current in both my subject area(s) and learning methodologies.
14. I will remain flexible to my approach to student learning, respectful of the various learning styles.
15. I will share techniques for improved study skills with my students.

Assignment: What Would You Do, Ethics?

Tutors sometimes find themselves in complex and confusing situations where it may be difficult to decide what the ethical thing to do is. The scenarios below are examples of some of the types of situations that might arise. This is a small group exercise. After you have joined the group designated by your instructor, read each scenario, reflect on what the issues are and determine what action the tutor should take. Discuss what you feel the tutor should do, and why that is the proper course to take. Please use a separate piece of paper, and as many pages as you would like to record one or more courses of action as proposed within your group.

1. Carmen is a tutor at a large college. A student she has been tutoring all semester tells her that he has an important homework assignment that he must turn in tomorrow. He has barely begun this very complicated assignment and is already having a great deal of difficulty completing it. Unfortunately, his grades thus far in the class have been borderline and he will only pass the class if he does well on this assignment. To make matters worse, if he does not pass this class he will lose his scholarship and will not be able to continue at the college. The student asks Carmen to complete his homework for him, “just this once”, to help him out of this bind. How should the tutor handle this situation? Why should she make this choice?

2. Jack has been tutoring Mary for several months. Over this time they have gotten quite friendly and seem to share a lot of the same interests. Jack and Mary have run into each other several times by coincidence at social events on campus, generally just saying a quick hello and going on about their own activities. In spite of their friendliness, Jack has been able to maintain a strictly professional relationship with Mary. However, last Saturday night Jack and Mary were at the same party where they spent most of the evening together talking and dancing. Jack has now realized that he is romantically interested in Mary and would like to ask her for a date. Would it be ethical for Jack to date Mary and remain as her tutor? Why or why not? What should Jack do?