



(continued from previous page)

Questions Editorial Board

Betsy Newell Decyk
Lecturer, Philosophy, California State University, Long Beach
Executive Director, American Association of Philosophy Teachers

Sara Goering
Assistant Professor of Philosophy, University of Washington

Ashraya Gupta
Student, Columbia University

David Heise
Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Humboldt State University

Rory E. Kraft, Jr.
Assistant Professor of Philosophy, York College of Pennsylvania

Jana Mohr Lone
Director, Northwest Center for Philosophy for Children
Affiliate Faculty, Department of Philosophy, University of Washington

Megan Mustain
Assistant Professor of Philosophy, St. Mary's University, San Antonio

Michael S. Pritchard
Willard A. Brown Professor of Philosophy, Western Michigan University

Alison Reiheld
Assistant Professor, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

David Shapiro
Faculty Member, Cascadia Community College
Education Director, Northwest Center for Philosophy for Children

Hugh Taft-Morales
Teacher, Edmund Burke High School, Washington, D.C.

Wendy Turgeon
Assistant Professor of Philosophy, St. Joseph's College, and Adjunct, State University of New York at Stony Brook

Questions is published annually by the Philosophy Documentation Center with the generous support of its subscribers, the Northwest Center for Philosophy for Children, and York College of Pennsylvania. If you would like to receive more information on how to obtain copies of *Questions*, please contact the Philosophy Documentation Center, P.O. Box 7147, Charlottesville, VA 22906-7147; phone: 800-444-2419 (U.S. & Canada) or 434-220-3300; fax: 433-220-3301; e-mail: order@pdcnet.org; web: www.pdcnet.org/questions.html.

If you would like to subscribe to *Questions*, please see page 12 of this issue.

© 2010, *Questions: Philosophy for Young People*

Junior Great Books—take the “efferent stance,” encouraging students to raise questions about the meaning of the text and to work out careful interpretations, by which they “acquir[e] information from the text” (374–375).

- Three other programs—*Collaborative Reasoning*, *Philosophy for Children* and *Paedia Seminars*—take the “critical-analytic stance,” which encourages students to “interrogate or query the text in search of the underlying arguments, assumptions, worldviews, or beliefs” (375–376, 378).

Of course, all three of these attitudes or approaches to a story come up in most classroom discussions, whether about a history book, a news article, a film, a scientific report or a piece of poetry or literary fiction. But this distinction of three different ways to discuss a text is an interesting and instructive part of the report.

The purpose of the evaluation study was to find out to what extent these nine programs use “discourse features” that have been shown in previous research to characterize quality discussions, in terms of “high-level thinking and comprehension” (372). The first task of the researchers, therefore, was to examine the research literature on classroom discussion and to pull from those studies a list of features associated with the highest-quality discussions. For this evaluation study they used the five “discourse features” they took to be the most important (see below). Next, the researchers created a system to identify or “code” these five features in the discussion transcripts they had requested from each program. The researchers evaluated *Philosophy for Children* very highly on each of the five discourse features:

1. **Teachers’ and students’ use of authentic questions, uptake and questions that elicited high-level thinking (generalization, analysis and speculation).** The data showed that all of the programs used these kinds of questions and uptake (taking up something that has already been said rather than saying something unrelated to what has been said), but that in programs taking the “efferent stance” these questions were mostly asked by teachers. In P4C the incidence of these questions was both high and nearly equally divided between teachers and students.
2. **Teachers’ and students’ use of questions that elicited extra-textual connections (affective, intertextual, and shared knowledge).** P4C students had the highest incidence of making connections of shared knowledge, and P4C discussions elicited more affective responses than any other program.
3. **Students’ elaborated explanations.** Students in the critical-analytic approaches gave more elaborated explanations than students in the other approaches, students in *Philosophy for Children* and *Paedia Seminar* discussions gave the longest elaborated explanations, and P4C students gave more of these than students in any other program.
4. **Students’ exploratory talk.** Episodes of exploratory talk were most frequent (though not the longest) in *Philosophy for Children*, *Paedia Seminar* and *Book Club*.
5. **Use of “reasoning words” such as “because,” “so,” “if,” “I think,” “dis/agree,” in contexts of verbal reasoning.** The highest percentage of these words used in contexts of reasoning occurred in *Philosophy for Children* and *Grand Conversations*.

In addition to looking for evidence of these five discourse features, the researchers counted the number and length of turns in each transcript, and found that students in the “expressive” programs contributed to the discussions more than teachers, that teachers in the “efferent” programs contributed more than students,

Correction:

Stephanie D’costa was the author of “Adventures with the Wonderful Mr. Potato Head.” Her name was unfortunately truncated in the last issue.