

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE PROGRAM FOR CRITICAL THINKING

This program is intended to give tomorrow's adults — our children — the critical thinking skills they will need to ~~construct~~ build a better world. These thinking skills include the ability to solve problems, to distinguish ^{disregard} which inferences are supported by ^{available} evidence, to read critically and take into account the ~~sources~~ ^{and their} internal consistency ^{and sources} of one's information, to analyze arguments ~~both~~ for their logic and ~~of~~ their unstated assumptions, and to question the beliefs and ideologies to which one is exposed.

We cannot predict the exact historical situations ^{our} children will face or the specific responses they will ^{choose} ~~select~~. We can, however, give our children the best thinking tools we possibly can for coming up with creative solutions to tomorrow's problems.

OUTLINE

speculative thinking

discussion of philosophical issues such as:

If there were immortality, would that be a good thing?

Are thoughts real and what causes them to happen in your brain?

If you could change exactly one thing about the world, what would you change? etc., etc.

reference books: teachers' guides for Philosophy for Children program

definitions and analogies

how to come up with precise definitions ("the definition game")

how to distinguish good from poor analogies

reference books: How to Think Straight by Robert Thouless

logic, ~~and~~ common thinking errors, and techniques of manipulation

common thinking errors: faulty analogies (see above)

sampling errors

errors of extrapolation

post hoc fallacy

inconceivability

wishful thinking

undefined language (see above)

ambiguity, shift of meaning

circular argument

confusing "some" for "all."

"tabloid thinking" (thinking in oversimplified catchphrases)

special pleading

techniques used in advertising and politics

- appeal to numbers (the "bandwagon appeal")
- status, prestige, degrees and titles (nob appeal)
- folksy appeal
- misleading statements
- misleading appearances
- degrees and titles sex appeal
- repetition
- technical jargon
- flattery
- bargain appeal
- appeal to sentimentality or warm feelings (for nature, children, old people, pets, etc.)

additional misleading tricks in argument

- selected reporting of facts, proof by selected instance
quotation out of context
- ad hominem
techniques of diversions
- attacking a straw man, disproving a minor point, changing the subject completely

emotionally "loaded" language

"loaded" question, complex question

ridicule

appeal to prejudice

empty language

appealing to support of the "middle position" vs. "the extreme"

begging the question

sophistical formula (attempting to refute an arguer

with a snappy slogan rather than with facts and logic)

references:

- How to Think Straight, Thouless
- The Propaganda Game, Allen & Green
- The Complete Thinker, Anderson

critical reading (and watching) of media, textbooks, encyclopedias, etc.

use of emotional and "loaded" language (e.g. in the press)

selective reporting of facts

discerning opinions of writers

"objectivity" = opinions and views of editors, owners, writers

discerning assumptions of writers