



Thinking Routines and Throughlines in a Preschool/Kindergarten Classroom

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This year I continued my Project Zero work in class with further developing throughlines and introducing Thinking Routines. In the past my throughlines each had two parts and I felt became too much for the children to easily remember and instantly know and refer too. I used the same ideas and pared them down to one line each except for the last ones.

Where are patterns in our lives?
How are we all friends in a community?
How do we learn? When are we learning?

I added: What kinds of questions help us learn? with my coworker as her throughline in the class for me to emphasize as she is supporting me with mine. I know that I discussed these throughlines at home when my daughter who is 7 asked me if Vahlee (my coworker) would think she was asking questions that help you learn? when we were having a very in depth discussion one night. It was important to me to include my coworker in the Project Zero work because team teaching involves a lot of give and take and respect for each others passions and ideas.

The concept of thinking routines was totally new for me this year. I realized that I have many behavioral routines in the class which makes classroom management flow easily. There are 38 children from 3-6 years old and classroom management is essential so learning can happen. I wanted to have children be trained to think automatically and stretch themselves with their thinking. I came upon two routines:

Picture, Say, Do
How did you figure that out?

The first one involves children planning their work in an active way as opposed to a more random walking around the room and looking at what peers are doing or what is right in front of them. Less wandering; more thinking was my goal. This routine was internalized by the two older groups of children. If we asked children to picture, say, do they knew to stop and think (and at that point verbalize the idea) to one of us. We taught the routine during circle and started using it as we excused children from circle. Later we used it when children were not focused on work during the day and asked individuals to picture, say, do when they were not making any choices and were wandering in the class. My evidence of understanding and thinking was the response of the children to the statement picture, say, do.

The second routine was asked during a group time and related to how children figured out the day of the week or the number of days until the next given number. For example if we had been in school 45 days “how many more days until 50 days?” was asked. It became a routine as children knew to start thinking about these things and would prepare their answers as we started talking about the number of school days. The oldest children (kindergarten age) would then model for the younger children their methods of thinking as they verbalized their ideas. I wanted the children to understand that there is more than one way to come up with the answer as well and pointed this out frequently. I also wanted even the youngest students to

feel comfortable trying, which they did. Later on at other times during the day as students showed me their completed work I would sometimes ask the question, How did you figure that out? The children began to answer this question with more ease as the year went on. The oldest children clearly understood the expectations and had more language to express their ideas.

I made a video as a culmination project to show to other educators about the work in the classroom. This was a much bigger project than I originally thought it would be (having never made a video before.) It includes work on the wall to show their thinking, using the thinking routines, asking individuals questions about the throughlines, viewing children talking to one another, how they think with movement out in the yard, and a few spontaneous moments when I had the camera in hand and children just started talking about things like patterns.

The video was taken in one week during the year but shows what all of the year might look like and evolve to. As in all learning it shows work in progress. We are all lifelong learners; and I hope to develop that in these children by action and modeling myself as a learner. I am lucky to be one of the first teachers in these children's lives. I get to have a fresh start in creating lifelong learners, thinkers, and future adults in our world.

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