

# Philosophical Inquiry and Drug Education

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In a typical EPI session, the role of the teacher is not to provide answers but to create a context of inquiry. The key steps to this are:

- x creating a safe and warm dialogue atmosphere where children can speak without fear
- x letting go of the “banking” reflex whereby teachers provide the “approved truth”
- x re-evaluating their own biases, beliefs and convictions in order to facilitate a more authentic dialogue

In other words, the teacher is more a *facilitator* of the learning process. Often the teacher/facilitator and the children sit together in a circle. They read a storybook, watch a video clip, engage with a newspaper article or in some other way stimulate their interest in a subject. Then the teacher engages the children in an open discussion in which the children pose questions and explore ideas. If the class is large, they may split into small groups or pairs to discuss questions before they come back together for a whole-class discussion. The role of the teacher in an EPI discussion can be described as follows:

- x to be comfortable with uncertainty or not knowing since they are not the source of all knowledge
- x to allow the *community of inquiry* to direct the discussion
- x to create a space where everyone has the opportunity to ask genuine questions
- x to encourage children to engage in deeper thinking and further questioning
- x to listen to the ideas shared by the group and help participants see how those ideas connect to each other
- x to help children reflect upon what is shared and constantly re-evaluate and revise their own ideas
- x

