



## COPI: Community of Philosophical Inquiry

Follow the guidelines  
below to implement this  
method in your classroom



### Description of the method

Community of Philosophical Inquiry (COPI) is an educational method rooted in the philosophy for children (P4C) movement. It is designed to foster critical thinking, communication skills, and ethical reasoning in students. COPI creates a communal space where participants engage in open-ended philosophical discussions, exploring complex questions and dilemmas collaboratively. The emphasis is on the process of inquiry rather than reaching a predetermined conclusion. COPI aims to develop a community of learners who respect diverse perspectives and can articulate and defend their own viewpoints.

### What will you need

#### Practical organization

**Groups:** min 8 – max 16 students, can be organized in parallel or complementary groups in split classroom.

**Duration:** 50-60 minutes

**Materials:** chairs organized in circle

## Implementation in the Classroom

- 1. Select a stimulus:** Begin with a stimulus, such as a short story, a piece of art, a video clip, and/or a philosophical question. The stimulus should be thought-provoking and able to generate a range of responses/questions. Media articles can also be used to start the inquiry.
- 2. Introduction of the method:**

COPI dialogue happens in a fixed format that is moderated by the teacher. Follow next steps to organize the dialogue:

  - a) Pose a question for the inquiry (can also be formulated by the pupils). For a fruitful dialogue a yes/no-question (but both answers could be argued) is the best option.
  - b) Provide silent thinking time.
  - c) First a learner provides an answer in the form: Yes/ no/ I agree/ I disagree because... .
  - d) Next learners always start from the contribution of the previous learner: I agree/disagree with ... when he/she says that (repeat the previous input)... because (formulate own argument)... .
  - e) Be alert for pupils who agree and disagree at the same time. This is often the moment a new insight or fact/opinion comes into play. It is possible to renew the departing point at this stage.
- 3. Let pupils summarize the conversation and have a meta-conversation about how the dialogue was executed.**

## Tips & Tricks

- **Establish Ground Rules:** Set clear ground rules for respectful communication. Emphasize the importance of active listening and valuing diverse perspectives. Also limit your students to the format of the dialogue. In the beginning it feels very artificial or strict but after a while these feelings will change, and experiences will be more fruitful.
- **Rotate Facilitators:** Assign different students as facilitators for each COPI session. This empowers students to take on leadership roles and ensures everyone has an opportunity to guide the discussion.
- **Diverse Stimuli:** Use a variety of stimuli to keep discussions engaging and cater to different learning styles. This could include literature, media, art, music, or real-life ethical dilemmas.
- **Flexible Time Management:** Be flexible with the time allotted for each session. Some discussions may require more time, while others may wrap up quickly. Allow for natural flow.
- **Reflection and Documentation:** Encourage students to reflect on their personal growth throughout the COPI sessions. Consider documenting key insights and observations to track progress over time.
- **Encourage Metacognition:** Prompt students to reflect not only on the content discussed but also on the process of thinking and learning. This metacognitive awareness enhances their critical thinking skills.



## Examples

- [Community of inquiry in science education](#)
- McCall, Catherine. (2014). *Transforming thinking*. Routledge
- Old video with Catherine McCall practicing COPI:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPzQJ379TIU>



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