

Running Head: Usefulness of Seminar Library

Usefulness of Seminar Library to Influence Effective Socratic Seminars

Advisor's Signature

Date

By: Jennifer Wegwerth

Plan B Paper

Required for the Degree of Masters of Science in

Education

University Of Wisconsin – River Falls

Spring 2015

Abstract

This research project revolved around the importance of Socratic seminars in Montessori middle schools. The goal was to establish an online seminar library for the teachers at Parkway Montessori Middle School, which included texts, questions, rubrics and other useful tools to help teachers hold effective seminars in their classrooms. The research looked at which tools were useful and how the library needed to be modified in order to better meet the needs of the teachers. Data was gathered by monitoring of the seminar library, observing seminars and surveying teaching staff at the beginning the school year and the end of the 3rd quarter. Results show that the seminar library is supported in the sense that staff helped create the library by supplying many of the tools needed to hold a successful seminar but not supported in the day-to-day grind of teaching. The teachers who are already doing seminars often in their classrooms aided in the creation of the library but not the maintenance and the teachers unfamiliar with the seminars were insecure about attempting them. The results showed that electronic supports do not replace the need for human assistance.

Introduction

When I was asked to take this journey of participating in the beginning of the first Montessori Middle School in Saint Paul, I took a long time before deciding to leave

Usefulness of Seminar Library

my comfort zone and jump into this alternative universe. Beginning a school from the ground up is more of a challenge than I have ever undertaken in my educational career. As I entered my training program, I began to really change my philosophy on how students best learn. I began to leave my world where I made the decisions and learn to let the students take the lead. It was in this process that the Socratic Seminar intrigued me.

As Montessori teachers, we learn many different techniques and important principles to support our craft in order to move our students through the planes of development. As middle school Montessori teachers, we are inspired to help guide our students through the transition between the second and third plane and offer experiences as they begin to explore adolescence. It is our responsibility to introduce activities and lessons that will give our students the opportunities to struggle and develop through the third plane and find their place in the world. The third plane of development categories a time in the lives of children ages 12-18 where they develop critical thinking skills, their moral compass and go through great growth, physically and mentally as they attempt to find their place in the world. We must challenge them to understand how to become critical thinkers who has a set of social and moral values. As public school teachers, we are also held to content standards that we must ensure that our students meet. Marrying the two expectations is often difficult.

Usefulness of Seminar Library

I believe that the method that addresses these needs the best is the Socratic seminar. We want our students to understand concepts, read challenging texts, as well as develop their own moral compass. Socratic seminars are the answer to the lesson design questions on how to address all of these demands. I will provide evidence that Socratic seminars, when constructed correctly, are able to motivate students to address many of the keys of this intense plane of development. I will discuss why providing teachers with well-designed tools to create engaging seminars is essential in their effectiveness. I strongly believe that when done well, seminars provide opportunities for our students to practice the skills that they need maneuver through this emotional time in their life.

Literature Review

My research was based on the belief that middle school students learn best by discussing, questioning and thinking and that belief grew from the articles that I read. I want to support Socratic seminars in my school and support the teachers in the areas needed to plan and execute effective seminars. I am hoping to implement the use and growth of a seminar library that will include all of the integral tools found in my research.

WHAT IS A SOCRATIC SEMINAR?

“Socratic seminars are structured conversations about selected texts and the important ideas imbedded within them” (Mangrum, 2010).

Usefulness of Seminar Library

“Socratic seminars are high level discussions that help focus thought, encourage questions and develop critical and creative thinking skills”(Le and DeFillippo, 2008).

Socratic seminars can revolve around a multitude of mediums such as research articles to picture books to pieces of art or music to video clips and news segments. They can be used to understand topics such as stem cell research, genocide, and the Salem Witch Trials, and broaden understanding of racism, social justice and the civil rights. A seminar gives students the opportunity to learn from each other and forces them to be responsible for their contribution to the discussions.

ADDRESSING ACADEMIC STANDARDS THROUGH SEMINARS

One goal of Socratic seminars is for students to obtain a deeper understanding of a selected text and participate in an educated discussion with their peers (Keegan, 2013).

Before tackling a difficult text, educators often will use a seminar to provide students with prior knowledge so that they may better understand the higher-level concepts in the challenging text (Keegan, 2013). This is an excellent way to prepare all students to understand concepts, vocabulary and inferences that may be included in many challenging pieces that they are expected to tackle as they move forward in their education. One educator in the Keegan study worked with the librarian to select pieces in order to provide a basis for understanding of a difficult reading by using non-fiction texts based on the current lesson. They then created 5-8 open-

Usefulness of Seminar Library

ended questions to guide small group discussions (Keegan, 2013). This allowed the students several chances to understand the background information needed to comprehend the assigned text. Providing schema is critical in order for many of our students to be successful and seminars are an effective way to accomplish this.

Socratic seminars give multiple ways of differentiating instruction (Coke, 2008). Working with students in small groups prior to the seminar provides opportunities to discuss annotations and point out statements that would be great to include in the seminar. Collecting annotations are a great way to help students connect their thoughts prior to the seminars to help certain students feel more prepared.

DEVELOPING ETHICS THROUGH SEMINARS

One of the most challenging aspects of the 3rd plane of development is guiding students through the construction of their social and moral values. Teachers often feel that in order to have students develop their own moral compasses; they must teach them what to believe. In looking at several studies that talk about essential ways to address this aspect of the 3rd plane, during this period, students struggle to develop their social and moral codes. I have found the best way to get students to begin considering their own value system is to introduce them to moral dilemmas. Teachers end up isolating students by inculcating them with their own personal beliefs. Instead of telling students what they should believe, they should help them analyze ethical issues by discussing their multiple facets. This is very difficult for some to do without structures in place. One researcher stated that, "I have learned

Usefulness of Seminar Library

that students can explore profound ethical questions in literature on their own and can do so while modeling ethical behavior” (Wiggins, 2011, p. 34). This makes me understand the importance of the lack of intervention by the facilitator during seminars, which is often very difficult for educators. They often leap to aid in rescuing students when they stall; in reality, the struggle is one of the most important steps and often results in deeper understanding and connections. Incorporating ethical considerations into interpretive questions during a seminar is a strategy many teachers use.

One case study that I looked at analyzed a school and seminars with teachers. The authors discussed how if administrators wanted to encourage teachers to work collectively instead of in isolation, they need to develop opportunities for effective dialogues. The authors also discussed the need to build trust and make students comfortable by openly discussing their beliefs, biases, successes and struggles. The same is true with middle school students. With the hope that students will have deep discussions on very personal topics such as morals and ethics, trust is critical. Socratic seminars are strong structures for building openness and trust and for establishing productive conversations. (Roberts and Billings, 1999) During seminars, participants get to know each other on a very personal level by opening up and discussing important topics and as a result relationships in the school community are made even tighter.

STEPS TO CREATE A SUCCESSFUL SEMINAR

Usefulness of Seminar Library

In researching this topic, I found that there are 6 steps in creating a successful seminar.

1) Teachers must identify the topic of study.

2) After determining the topic students will need to learn, teachers will need to locate several pieces that give multiple perspectives on the topic (Keegan, 2013).

The text selection is very important in ensuring a successful seminar. It is essential that you select a text with rich ideas imbedded in the reading that are open to diverse interpretations. The selection must include the powerful ideas and values that relate to the “big” ideas that they are studying. There is much debate on the reading level on the text. The reading level needs to be determined by the goal of the seminar (Chowning, 2009).

3) Scaffolding pre-seminar activities are very important to safeguard students so that they feel they can be active participants in the seminar. I found a multitude of ideas in my research to support this area. They range from annotating the article to using anticipation guides to small group discussions prior to the seminar (Magnum, 2011).

4) Setting goals for the students is critical. Behavior goals will help the seminar run smoothly and content goals will help keep the discussion focused. In addition, the class should set a group goal based on prior performance (Magnum, 2011). My personal thought is that group goals will help continue to move your class forward in their seminar growth.

5) The facilitator needs to write open-ended questions that are broke down into 3 types: opening, core and closing. The role of the facilitator is to probe for deeper

Usefulness of Seminar Library

understanding, connect ideas and move the conversation forward. To be effective, facilitators must guide the discussion to be balanced where both shy and loquacious students have equal contributions. They must encourage students to cite from the text and they must help build and raise everyone's understanding of the text.

Creating strong questions should not be overlooked when planning the seminars. Facilitators must have an outline of a path for the seminar with carefully written questions. One article spoke about writing follow up questions as the seminar progresses that would continue the seminar in an unexpected but welcomed direction (Billings and Roberts, 2006).

6) Assessment and post-seminar activities are very important in discussing whether or not goals were met and also allows students to discuss what aspects they need to develop more (Mangrum, 2011).

Classroom environment is essential in creating a successful seminar. Students need to be able to look at each other. In the Wiggin study, students were placed in a U-shaped design. Having the students be able to look directly at each other helps promote the thought that they are in a discussion where everyone's voice is valued and that they should be prompted to speak to each other and not to the teacher (Chowning, 2009).

TOOLS TEACHERS NEED TO SUPPORT SEMINARS

Anticipation guides are an item that was discussed in my research and one that I found very useful. In the beginning, when students are reading the texts that will be

Usefulness of Seminar Library

used for seminars, they often need direction when annotating. Providing questions initially may help them in the early stages of their seminar experiences. Anticipation guides build on those questions and encourage students to think deeper by asking students to agree or disagree with statements such as, “It is wrong to question society’s beliefs,” and “The end justifies the means” (Wiggins, 2011).

Assessment of seminars is always a lively discussion among the educators in my circle. As in many different aspects of this career, the research is not consistent on which is the best way. Most agree on using the process of practice seminars and feedback after each one to build understanding of expectations. “The real point here, however, is not the assessment – that’s just a means for achieving quality seminars- but rather the ethical culture that naturally develops out of a Socratic seminar” (Wiggins, 2011, p. 35). Post seminar reflections are important in analyzing student growth. Having students self-identify where their seminar strengths lie and barriers to their success occur is critical (Billings and Roberts, 2006).

CONCLUSION OF LITERATURE REVIEW

A school where students are able to learn from each other is an essential part of the Montessori philosophy and in my opinion is why seminars are so important and why my research took me down this road. In creating a seminar library including all the essential tools that were mentioned in this paper, my hope is that every teacher feels prepared and supported to try this method in their classroom. I could go on and on using article after article supporting the effectiveness of using seminars in

Usefulness of Seminar Library

achieving high academic standards as well as in allowing students the opportunity to explore the world of ethic development but if I cannot get teachers to feel comfortable in using them in their classroom, I have failed. I need to create a library that is easy to access, one that has all necessary tools and one that I can convince teachers to not only use but also help grow. I am concerned that this will be one more thing on teachers' plates that they will not be able to help maintain. Moving forward, I hope to inspire teachers to use and build the library that I began and hope to see the growth I spoke about in this paper with our students.

Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of my action research project is to analyze the effectiveness of the seminar library that I have created for our school with significant input from current teaching staff. My hope is that I can increase the use of seminars by our staff for our students by aiding in the access to seminar pieces and tools. The seminar library is a living document designed to grow and modify as our needs change. The library is a Google document that all Parkway staff are able to edit, add to and from which they can download items.

Research Question

What is the usefulness of the seminar library in increasing seminar discussions?

Subsidiary Questions

What tools helped in developing leadership, which in developing ethical discussions, which in helping a deeper understanding of higher level texts?

Usefulness of Seminar Library

Which tools do we need to add?

Which tools were not effective?

What role does staff play in the usefulness of the library?

Participants

Classroom teachers at Parkway Montessori will participate in my research project. The participants' knowledge of seminars is quite varied based on training levels. I began the study with 29 staff members. 15 teachers had been part of Cohort 1 that finished their Montessori courses prior to the beginning of the 2014-15 school year. Four of the staff members had completed one year of training prior to the 2014-15 school year. 10 staff members had little or no Montessori training prior to the 2014-15 school year. (See Figure 1). Teaching experience ranges from 25 years to first year teachers. The participants also included general education, special education and English Language Learner teachers. Two teachers in Cohort I and II left Parkway during the school year. Five members of the teaching staff identified themselves as being very familiar with Socratic seminars. 10 members identified themselves as having facilitated a few seminars. Five members of the teaching staff identified themselves as understanding seminars but they had never facilitated one. Nine of the staff members who had not been through formal Montessori training acknowledged not knowing anything about Socratic seminars, all of which have not been through formal Montessori training. (See Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 1. Participants' Montessori training

Usefulness of Seminar Library

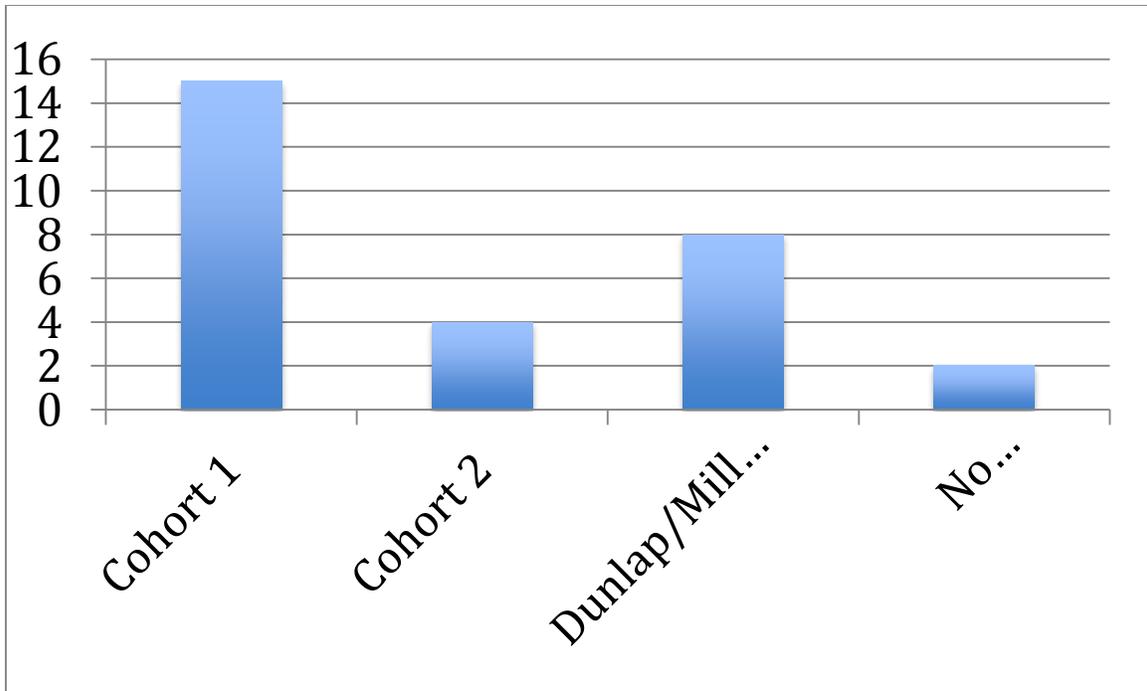
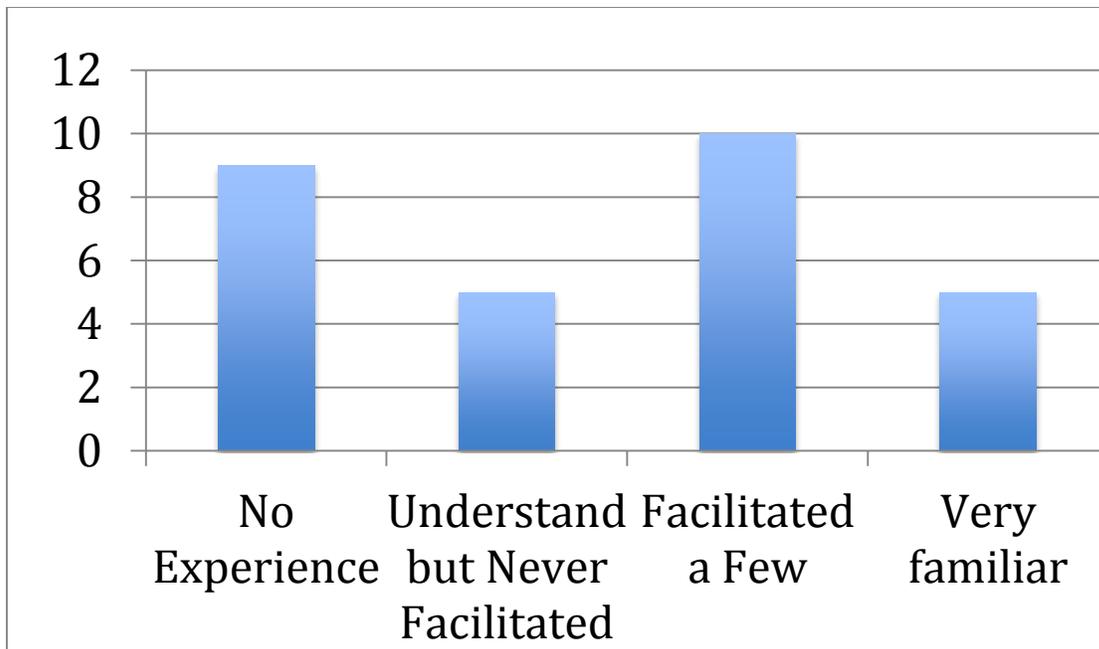


Figure 2. Familiarity with Socratic seminars

Usefulness of Seminar Library



Setting

The study will take place at Parkway Montessori and Community Middle School located on the east side of Saint Paul, Minnesota. Parkway has approximately 500 students from 6th through 8th grade, with age ranges from 11-15. Parkway is a large, urban middle school with a diverse population of students. Our current population of students who have come from a Montessori elementary school is 39% and 25% of our students are comprised of special education students, which is the highest percentage in the Saint Paul Public School system.

Materials

- Seminar Library (Google doc)
- Permission Letter to participating staff
- Pre-Survey
- Post-survey

Usefulness of Seminar Library

Procedure

In August, I created the seminar library as a Google document as part of the Structure and Organization course for my Montessori certification. I was given an extensive spreadsheet from our CMstep professors that included a list of varied pieces that have been used for seminars in the past at Clark Montessori in Cincinnati, Ohio. I began by looking online for PDF files of the textual pieces on the spreadsheet. I began with approximately 20 pieces. I also uploaded discussion questions for several pieces that we used as part of our training. I set a goal of adding two pieces a week throughout the school year. I was unable to keep up with that goal.

I collaborated with my cohort and collected many tools that they have used in their classes to introduce, run and reflect on their seminars as well as the tools that were presented to us during our CMstep training. Staff contributed a significant number of tools. As a new school with a specific mission, our staff is committed to adding more aspects of the Montessori philosophy as we continue to grow as a school. They have a resolve to stay true to our training, and as a result, they continue to look at seminars as an integral aspect of middle school education. They have developed many of the tools that they use in their classrooms as there are limited resources already created, especially in the music and art departments.

As the school year began, I visited each of our school's Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) and introduced them to the seminar library and asked them to

Usefulness of Seminar Library

participate in a study on its usefulness. At this time, I handed out my permission letter and initial survey to each participant. (Appendix A & B) I also went through all of the components of the library and the procedure of uploading items to the Google Doc. I told them that if they did not have time to upload the items as the year progressed, to please let me know and I can put them on the Google drive.

The library is comprised of a spreadsheet listing roughly 200 pieces of text that could be used for seminars including key words that would help teachers select a piece based on its content. The library currently holds 20 of the actual documents and corresponding questions for many of the pieces. The library has a “tool” folder which holds many rubrics, PowerPoints, checklists and reflections.

As the school year continued, I observed and participated in several seminars in a variety of content areas at Parkway and uploaded documents and tools that were used as well as items that hung in classrooms that were used as reminders. (See Appendix C, D, E) After I observed a seminar, I would send the link for the document to the teacher and ask them to upload the materials that they used. Rarely would they find the time to do so.

As the research project came to an end, I sent out another survey to evaluate the effectiveness and usefulness of the library. (Appendix F)

Method and Procedure for Data Collection

Qualitative

Observations during seminars

- I observed 10 seminars throughout the school year and collected any tools that were used during the seminar if they were not already part of the library.

Interviews

- Each teacher went through an orientation to the seminar library with me explaining all of the facets as well as procedural information on how to upload items.
- Throughout the study, I did informal interviews with teachers after I was able to observe their seminars regarding which tools they used and whether or not they feel the tools influenced their seminar.

Quantitative

Surveys

- I gave the participants surveys in the beginning of the study to note their current level of Montessori training as well as their previous knowledge and familiarity of using Socratic seminars in their classroom.

Usefulness of Seminar Library

- I used a final survey asking how often the library was accessed, whether they contributed to the library, and which tools need to be added or deleted based on necessity.
- The final survey also asked for information regarding why they did or did not use the library. (Appendix G)

Data Analysis and Results

To analyze my data, I will use the surveys to make modifications to the library and use the surveys to drive the direction the library will take in the future as well as whether or not, the current staff feel the library's impact was beneficial to their classrooms. I handed out the final survey at the end of the 3rd quarter, March 27th, 2015. In the end, I could only get 17/27 remaining teachers in the study to respond. Of the 17 teachers who responded, they reported completing 54 seminars through the end of March. 32 seminars were done in elective specialist classes, 11 were done in English language arts classes, nine were done in science classes, six were done in social studies classes and two were done in math. (See Figure 3) 13 teachers participated in the creation of the library, all of which were in Cohort I. Seven teachers reported accessing the seminar library during the school year.

Usefulness of Seminar Library

Figure 3: Seminars Held by Discipline

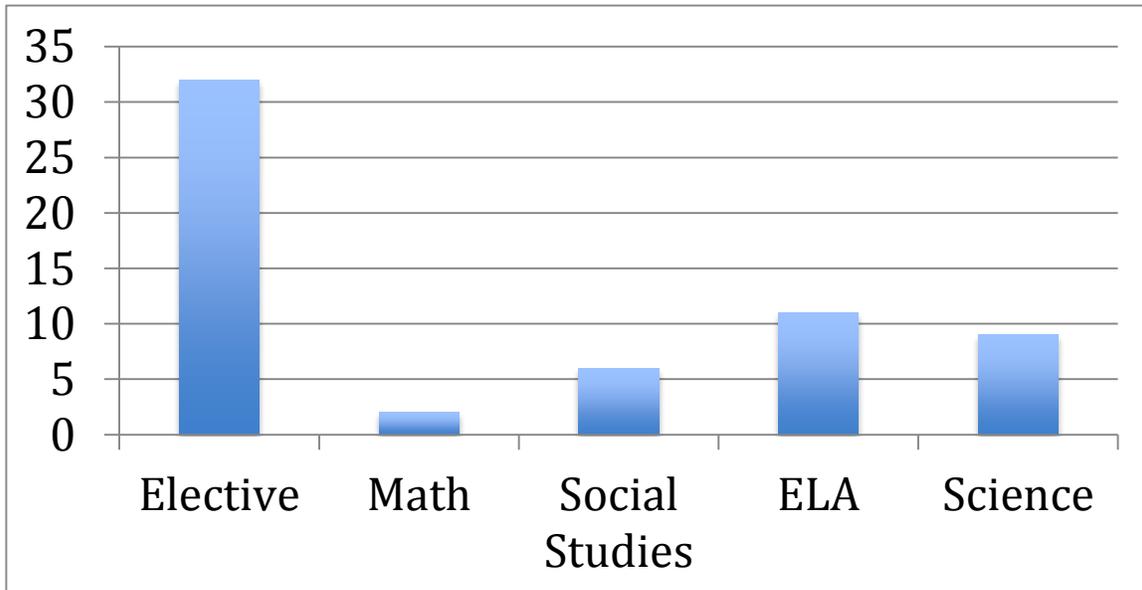
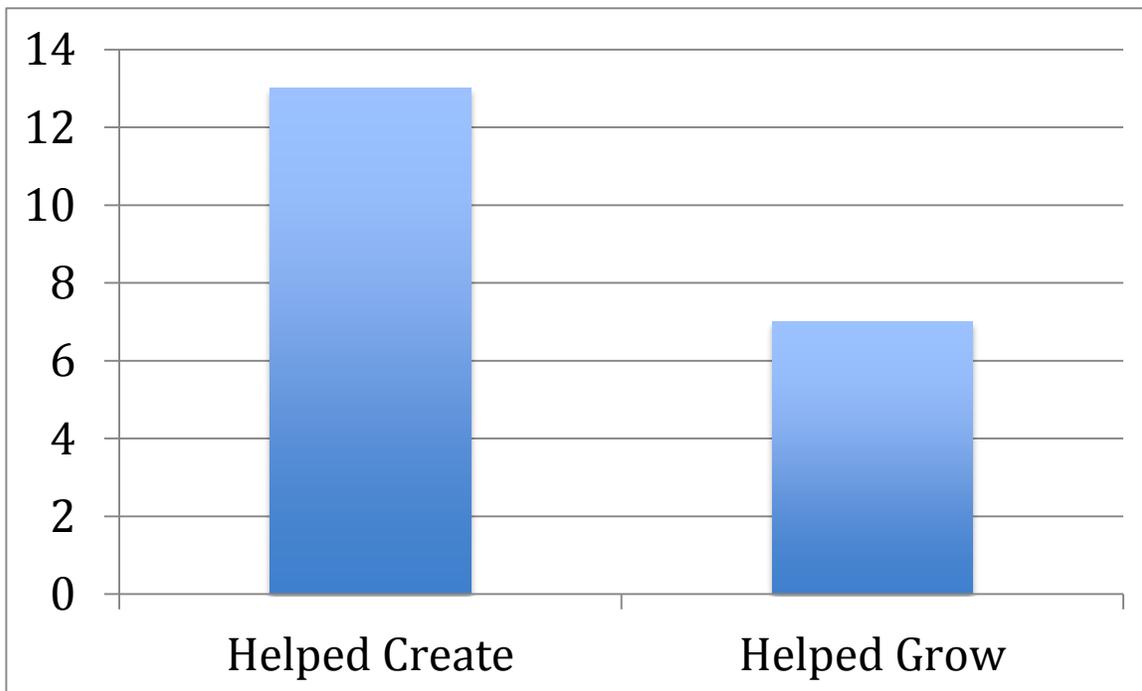


Figure 4 Teachers Participated in Seminar Library



In responding to the survey, not one teacher responded negatively toward the library and all participants felt like it was valuable. Three teachers acknowledged

Usefulness of Seminar Library

fear of technology as a stumbling block for them uploading or accessing the library. Three people that they did not access the library because it lacked pieces that they would need. All of these teachers are math and elective teachers. Three teachers credited lack of training on seminars as their reason for not using the library and asked for more personal support on how to begin their seminars.

Limitations

The limitations of this research were based on the level of engagement by the staff. There are so many factors that were in play throughout the course of the year. Over half of the staff members who participated in my study were also completing their own research and has little time to add to the library. That being said, during the creation of the seminar library (Summer 2014) Cohort I staff members were very generous in the initial stages of development but that level of engagement faded as the reality of an academic school year set in. One of the teachers in the end-of-the-year survey summed it up best by saying, “Although I did not use the seminar library this year, I think it is more a reflection of the still hectic nature of starting up the school and finding out just what and how I want to teach things in a Montessori way.”

Another limitation is the lack of understanding and training surrounding Socratic Seminars. 14 participants have never facilitated a seminar and nine participants have no training at all in Socratic seminars. As we see more of our staff being Montessori trained, I feel the number of seminars will increase. Because of the lack

Usefulness of Seminar Library

of familiarity, I believe that an electronic resource is not enough to increase seminars. Those who are untrained noted that they needed more support. Several staff members reported needing someone to come in and offer suggestions on which tools may be most useful.

Future Action Plan/Discussion/Conclusion

As I come to the end of my formal Montessori training, I realize that this project is far from over and in actuality, I feel like it has only just begun. There are many changes that need to take place to ensure that the amount of Socratic seminars continue to increase. I would like to create a “Data Dump Day” where all staff would upload what seminar tools/pieces/rubrics that they have used during the semester or year. It could be done yearly as a check out system at the end of the school year. Another idea is that as part of our monthly department meetings, each department would take time to talk about seminars that were held and upload any items at that time. It is not a realistic to ask teachers to do one more things in the heat of the school year. It is too overwhelming.

There is not one participant who considered that the seminar library had no value. Most of the participants believed that in actuality, it would be very helpful especially as time goes on. Part of our staff participated in Cohort I, which trained them extensively in the art of Socratic Seminars. Because of this high level of training, many of them did not need to access the library as they have designed their own tools. That being said, Parkway Montessori is still only in its second year of

Usefulness of Seminar Library

operation and as a school, we still have one more year of curriculum to write before many of our teachers begin to teach the same topics again. I strongly believe that as we circle back around to themes that they have taught before, teachers will look toward the library to help enhance what they are doing in their classrooms. As far as schools go, we are still a newborn. We have so many areas that we continue to grow. Teachers are constantly looking on how to become more Montessori and how to implement more techniques that makes their classroom less teacher focused and more student centered.

One additional downfall of the project is that it didn't reach the new, inexperienced teachers who needed the most support in the area of Socratic seminars. My thoughts are that as they begin or continue their Montessori training, it will be a supportive tool as they begin to explore the world of seminars. I think, based on the teacher feedback, that there needs to be on going training regarding the library and seminars. Having the library, whether electronic or physical does not appear to be enough. There needs to be the human contact guiding teachers through this new teaching technique. If, as a school, we want to make this a priority, then we need to make sure that we nurture the library and look for ways for it to continue to grow.

I also want to work on the format of the library. I would like to make the library more interactive and include how-to videos to help teachers see some of the tools being used. I would like to make the spreadsheet more organized and less overwhelming. I would like to make the entire process more user-friendly. I would

Usefulness of Seminar Library

like to work with our technology integration staff member to really help with the technology piece.

In conclusion, I think there are many positive aspects to my research project. In creating the seminar library, it allowed a central location for a multitude of tools to aide teachers with varying levels of seminar familiarity. The library can guide a teacher from the introduction of what is a seminar to the annotating of the piece. It continues to aid a teacher through rubrics designed to encourage deep understanding of texts and ending with reflections on their moral discussions. Yet, in spite of all of the tools that the library contains, it is clear that technology will not take the place of human support. The library needs to work in conjunction with on going training, collaboration and personal encouragement.

References

- Banville, D., & Rikard, L. (n.d.). Observational Tools for Teacher Reflection. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 46-49.
- Billings, L., & Roberts, T. (2012). Think Like A Seminar. *Educational Leadership*, 70(4), 68-72.
- Billings, L., & Roberts, T. (2006). Planning, Practice, and Assessment In the Seminar Classroom. *High School Journal*, 90(1), 1-8.
- Chowning, J. (2009). Socratic Seminars in Science Class. *The Science Teacher*, 76(7), 36-41.
- Coke, P. (2008). Uniting the Disparate: Connecting Best Practices and Educational Mandates. *English Journal*, 97(5), 28-33.
- Keegan, N. (2013). Socratic Seminar and Creating Prior Knowledge. *Library Media Connection*, 32(3), 50-51.
- Le, K., & DeFlippo, C. (2008). Little Philosophers. *Educational Leadership*, 66(2), 66-69.
- Mangrum, J. (2010). Sharing Practice through Socratic Seminars. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 91(7), 40-43. Retrieved September 15, 2014, from

Usefulness of Seminar Library

<http://pdk.sagepub.com/content/91/7/40.abstract>

Parker, W. (2006). Public Discourses in Schools: Purposes, Problems, Possibilities. *Educational Researcher*, 35(8), 11-18.

Pullen-Sansfacon, A. (n.d.). Virtue Ethics for Social Work: A New Pedagogy for Practical Reasoning. *Social Work Education*, 402-415.

Roberts, T., & Billings, L. (1999). *The Paideia classroom: Teaching for understanding*. Larchmont, N.Y.: Eye on Education.

Wiggins, A. (2011). Not Teaching Ethics. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 93(1), 33-35.

Retrieved September 15, 2014, from

<http://pdk.sagepub.com/content/93/1/33.abstract>

Usefulness of Seminar Library

Appendix A

October 31st, 2015

Dear Parkway Teachers,

As part of my continuing education and personal mission to make Parkway Montessori an elite Montessori middle school, I will be doing an action research project in our school. This project is a requirement of the Master's of Montessori Education program in which I am enrolled. The focus of my research is Socratic seminar, and how to make them most effective with our students and in our school.

As a component of a preliminary course, Structures and Organization, I began creating a seminar library for our staff with the hopes that teachers would use it as a springboard. The idea behind this collection is that it would become a living library that would grow as our program grows. The goal of the next step, the action research project, is to analyze the library and the tools it offers in order to determine how helpful it is currently, as well as what modifications need to be made to make it a more useful tool going forward.

There are many studies out there that show the benefits of Socratic seminar, ranging from the indirect instruction of ethics to the deep understanding of higher-level texts. I have seen this first-hand in many of your classrooms.

I need your participation to make this action research possible. I first need you to be present for the introduction to the seminar library and its many components. I would then ask you to take two different surveys: the first one soon after the introduction and then one at the end of the year. The information will be used as part of the final paper, which will be made available to all participants, presented in my final oral exam for my masters. The information gathered in the study will also guide any future modifications to the seminar library. Your name will not be used in my study and you may withdraw from participation at any time. My research report will be shared with my colleagues at Parkway Montessori and at UWRF, and with AMS certified teachers who express interest in this study.

If you have any questions about this research and how it will be used, please feel free to let me know at Jennifer.Wegwerth@spps.org.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Wegwerth

Please sign and return this letter as soon as possible.

By signing below, I give my consent to use data collected from my survey in the above-mentioned research project.

Participant Name (Please Print) _____

Participant Signature _____

Usefulness of Seminar Library

Appendix B

Place an X next to the level of Montessori training that best applies to you

___ Cohort 1 ___ Cohort 2

___ Montessori classes offered by Heidi Dunlap/Michael Miller

___ No formal Montessori trainings

Place an X next to the familiarity of Socratic seminars that best fits.

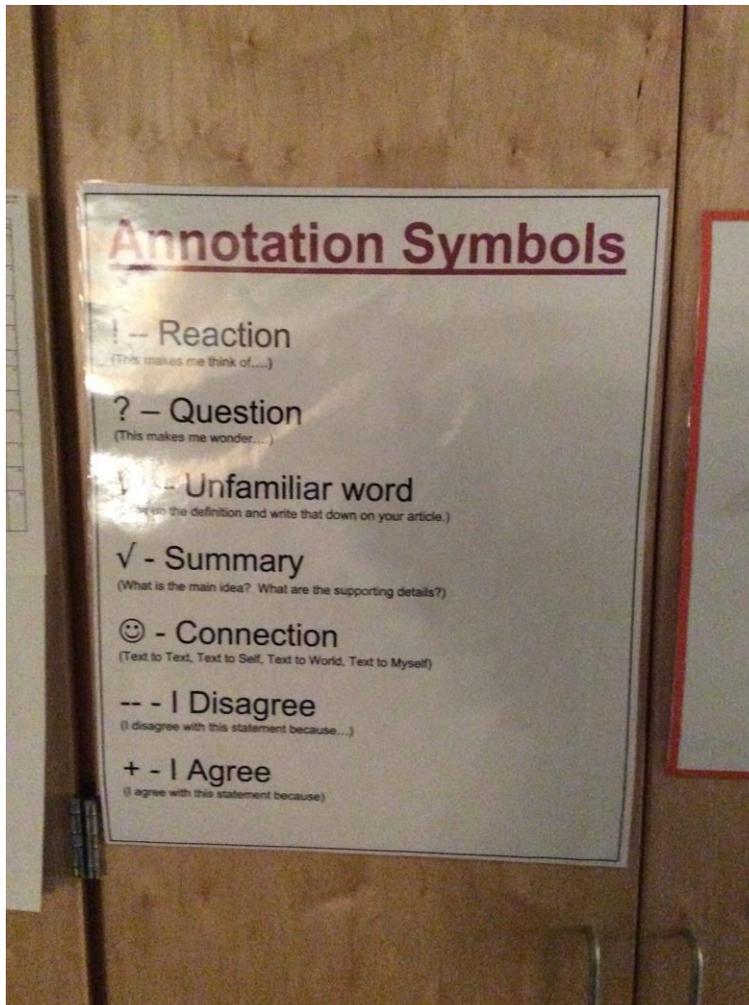
___ I have no experience with Socratic Seminars

___ I understand Socratic Seminars but have never facilitated a seminar

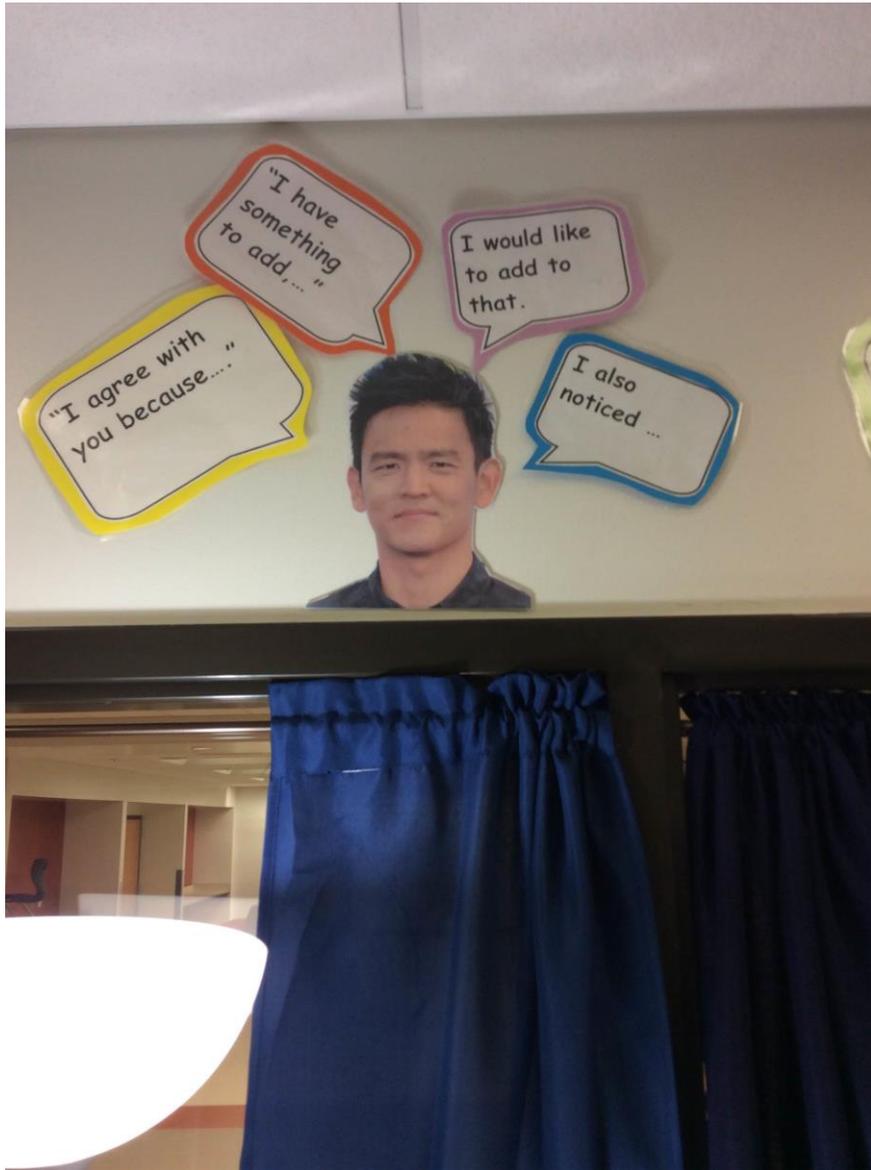
___ I have facilitated a few seminars

___ I am very familiar with Socratic Seminars

Appendix C



Appendix D



Usefulness of Seminar Library

Appendix E



Usefulness of Seminar Library

Appendix F

These questions surround the seminar library created during one of our Montessori class. Here is the link to the library if you would like to look at it prior to answering the questions.

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/#folders/0B8b6GnLdnjf_YlhRTDd5amZfdzg

- 1) How many seminars did you have so far this school year?
- 2) At any time (even those of you who sent me things this summer for our class) did you supply tools for the seminar library? Items include: pieces to read, rubrics, PowerPoints, how to annotate guides, etc
- 3) Did you use the seminar library at all this year?
- 4) How many times?
- 5) What could be done to increase your use of the library???

Appendix G

Teacher Quotes from Year End Survey

The seminar pieces I used I had found for my French classes-one I developed in Structure and Org, the other in Ped of Place. And I should put them in the library but am so technologically slow that just have not figured out how to scan and send them to you. I really want to do more seminars in Math but get so focused on the standards to prepare for the MCA that I get side tracked for investigating the library to see if there are any or to take time to find good math pieces by looking on the CMStep site where others have uploaded seminar pieces for their math classes.

As the years go on, I know that I will use it. Thanks for setting it up for us. Sorry I haven't put it to good use yet.

I feel like the Seminars that I conduct (using music as text) are more specialized and I didn't think the Seminar Library would have what I needed for my Seminar.

I could use teacher support (from you, or somebody else) and guidance about how to improve my seminars and they ways that the seminar library can help me with that.

The library is a great resource for new teachers, especially teachers that have not been through the Montessori training.

Maybe have more pieces for math (super hard to find, for me anyway!)

I used because it is a resource that groups several pieces together in one location which makes the finding of a Seminar piece more manageable. I also needed to update my Seminar PPT and rubrics and rather than bothering individual teachers, I was able to access a variety of resources in one place.

It's kind of old school, but having binders of the actual Seminar pieces printed would be nice to browse through when looking for a piece to use; faster and easier to read.

Although I did not use the seminar library this year I think it is more of a reflection of the still hectic nature of starting up the school and finding out just what and how I want to teach things in a Montessori way. As things settle down, and the water clears a bit, I can really see this being a useful resource for me. I'm just too flustered at the moment to take stock of the resources that will eventually help me. Especially for some of the general themes of Montessori like 'Service', 'Peace', 'Community', and so on, the seminar library will be a great touchstone for beginning of year and end of the year seminars that don't necessarily relate to specific disciplines. Of course the value of seminar is that we can talk about values no matter what class we're teaching and promoting the library will keep reminding us of this.

Usefulness of Seminar Library

I can't say because I've never used it... Does it have a physical presence beyond the Google drive location? If not I think that is important. So much stuff online becomes 'out of sight out of mind.' Maybe a little seminar library house like those people have in neighborhoods would remind people that we should be having lots of seminars and that the resources are right there in our faces. It could have a board next to it where teachers and students can post interesting comments and questions they heard at their latest seminar. It could be called 'Gems from the World of Seminars' are something, well anything, a lot better than that.

I am not trained on doing Montessori seminars. I am used to Socratic discussions, and realize that they are similar, but are not sure what the differences are so that I am doing the official ones.

I do more organic seminars. When I come across a reading, or topic, and hear how the kids are responding to it, I decide to do a seminar. I taught "A Game of Catch" during our literary elements unit, but I have been doing that one for years, so I had my own materials. I will double check what is in the library and add anything that I have that isn't already there.

The specific readings in the library did not fit my needs so far this year, but they probably will in the future though when our focus shifts. Our things for the District this year are mainly about social justice and they give us the readings to use.

Departments could get better at adding the materials that we are using to help it continue to grow and then other teachers could see what has already been used so they don't double up...unless the lens they are using is different. I think that having this is valuable, but since we are on a 3 year cycle, we are not apt to use the same stories again for quite a while.

Why did I?

- 1- Wanted to get familiar with the resource
- 2- Was looking for ideas and wanted to see how other educators structured their seminars.

I think we need to show more staff members the flexibility of seminar (for example- inner and outer circle)

Provide time for subject areas to look through the resources to familiarize themselves with the wide range of materials available.

Show them examples of the format and structure of how other educators use seminar.

Why did you use or not use the seminar library? - lack of knowledge mixed with fear; I've yet to figure out how to incorporate one into class.

Usefulness of Seminar Library

What could be done to increase the use of the seminar library??? - I'm not sure. I love the idea. I think it will increase accessibility and the ease of using them.

Appendix H - Example of Rubric from Seminar Library

Name:

Hour

Cycle One Seminar Rubric

Teacher Observations

| | 25 Points | 20 Points | 15 Points | 0 Points | Comments |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|----------|
| Preparation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Text is annotated. Seminar materials are out and ready to be used; other materials are out of reach. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much of the text is annotated. Seminar materials are out, other materials within reach, but not distracting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annotations are limited. One or two class materials are missing, additional materials are out and distracting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annotations are incomplete. Materials are missing. | |
| Discussion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raises hand to comment. Comments refer to the text. Maintains eye contact with the speaker | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raises hand to comment. Most comments refer to the text. Maintains eye contact with the speaker most of the time. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blurts or interrupts other speakers. Comments are opinion-based. Eye-contact is infrequent; may be distracted by other materials. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not participate. | |

Student Observations

| | 25 Points | 20 Points | 15 Points | 0 Points | Comments |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|----------|
| Preparation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Text is annotated. Seminar materials are out and ready to be used; other materials are out of reach. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much of the text is annotated. Seminar materials are out, other materials within reach, but not distracting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annotations are limited. One or two class materials are missing, additional materials are out and distracting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annotations are incomplete. Materials are missing. | |
| Discussion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raises hand to comment. Comments refer to the text. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raises hand to comment. Most comments refer to the text. Maintains eye contact with the | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blurts or interrupts other speakers. Comments are opinion-based. Eye-contact is infrequent; may be | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not participate. | |

Usefulness of Seminar Library

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintains eye contact with the speaker | speaker most of the time. | distracted by other materials. | | |
|--|--|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|

.