

KNOWLEDGE

Idea:

The aim of the session is to try to provide an account of the conditions under which it can be said that we know something. A secondary, and more philosophical, aim of the session is to identify any children who think that providing an account of knowledge is harder than it might at first seem.

This session is very improvisatory so we cannot provide a strict plan but can provide the basic riffs on which it is based and some suggestions.

Stimulus:

Have the children seated in a circle. Take a deck of cards and place two cards, one black and one red (the suits are not relevant at this time) face down in the middle of the group but make sure they don't know which is which. Make sure you know which is which. Then ask someone to volunteer to come and choose the one they think is the black card. When you have written down their guess allow them to turn it over for all to see. Circle or underline the one it was.

You said: Red, Black

Do this for as long as it takes for someone to get it right. When they do ask the following question to the class:

Task Question: Child A got it right. Does that mean that Child A knew where the black card was?

Follow this with Talk Time and then a discussion on this question.

The basic principle of the session is to test whatever they say with a card-test. You want to try to make true the condition that they have suggested (e.g. 'You didn't tell us') but for the situation to intuitively still not be knowledge.

So, for example, if someone says, 'x didn't know because it's 50/50.' Test it with the class. Perform the same activity as before but make both cards black. When it is revealed that they are both black, you could say, 'Okay, x got it right and it wasn't 50/50. They would have got it right whichever card they chose. Does that mean they knew where the black card was?' This becomes TQ2. I usually use the same two cards throughout the session as the fact that they are the same can sometimes become a point of discussion.

Note: If you decide to use this as an entry point for a discussion on induction then you need to remove the psychological element of the 'magician'. To do this introduce another scenario such as the sun rising or throwing a ball into the air (in other words, a natural event) and say, 'If x happens every time you do it does that mean that it will definitely happen the next time you do it too?' This is probably best left for a follow-up session.

Another example is when they say, 'You could be lying.' Perform the card activity again but this time tell them which one is which and tell them that you are not lying (make sure you don't lie). When you reveal that the cards are as you said they were. You can say the following: 'I told you where they were and I told you I wasn't lying, and I wasn't lying. So, did you know where the black card was?'

As you can see there are many ways that this session can go so you need to be on the ball and ready to be creative. One that is likely to come up is 'No, we don't know, because I can't see it.' The way to test this is to show them the cards and then to put them face down as you have shown them but to give them some reason to doubt them still, such as walking behind the board, so that they have some reason to think that you might trick them. When the cards are revealed you could say, 'I showed you the cards and they were just as I showed you. So, did you know?'

Keep going in this fashion until the end of the session but keep this for the end:

Place both cards face up so that they can all see them. Then ask them if they now know which card is which 100%. It is always interesting to see if, having gone through the session, any of them still think there is room for doubt. If there are some children who think this then you may well have identified the true philosophers in the room!

Nested Questions:

- ✓ What is knowledge?
- ✓ How do we know that we know?
- ✓ Can you know something 100% for sure?
- ✓ We sometimes say that 'seeing is believing'. What does this mean?
- ✓ If you see something with your own eyes does that mean you know it?
- ✓ Can you know something without seeing it?