

Socratic Seminar Facilitation Guide

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Class Questions Analysis

2nd Hour: Institutional Control vs. Emotional Safety

Class is focused on dress code (hoods), the schedule, and rules that seem **arbitrary** (based on random choice or personal whim, rather than any reason or system) such as waiting for the bell and taking off hoods when staff already know you.

3rd Hour: Behavior, Consequences, and the Future

This class had some interesting questions about their own **psychology** (the scientific study of the human mind, emotions, and behavior. It helps us understand why people think, feel, and act the way they do) and behavior. They are curious about the consequences of their actions and whether rules actually matter. They also had questions about how their current performance connects to their future. There were some questions about missing recess and having strict schedules that made them feel rushed or in an overly structured environment.

4th Hour: Fairness, Time Anxiety, and Bodily Autonomy

This class was very sensitive to double standards and pointed out perceived hypocrisies: teachers holding grudges, bullies getting away with things, and in-school suspension for “playing.” There was a really important question asked, “Why do you think rules exist, when it’s your body?”

5th Hour: Grace vs. Zero-Tolerance Policies

This class feels heavily penalized (and in reality, is likely the most penalized class due to some major behavioral issues). They honed in on asking why mistakes or “playing around” immediately leads to phone calls home or hall sweeps. They seem to really want a place where mistakes are treated as learning opportunities. They also had a really important question about wanting to create clubs and have a voice in a system where they currently only receive consequences.

6th Hour: Efficiency, Logic, and Proportionality

This class is critically evaluating how they work. They asked about the pros and cons of Chromebooks vs. paper, the integration of AI, and what they are allowed to do when they finish their work. They are asked some deeper questions about intent vs. impact; thinking specifically the question why making a simple mistake makes someone “irresponsible,” or why self-defense (hitting back) is punished equally.

Synthesizing Themes

The following themes emerged from students’ questions overall:

- Students are struggling to understand where their ownership over their own bodies ends and where school’s authority begins.
- Students are sensitive to adult hypocrisy and the lack of a “buffer” for being a kid. They feel that the discipline system is punitive rather than restorative.
- There is a collective anxiety about what grades actually measure and how that constant evaluation stifles their willingness to try.
- Students see technology as a utility (like AI or phones for post-work downtime) but feel constrained by the school’s rules.
- Students are tired and feel like their schedule is relentless, leaving no time for kids to just be kids.

Socratic Seminar

Beginning

Let students react to the circle and change in physical space. Let them know that I read every single question that was submitted. They were deep and honest and challenged the way this school operates. The seminar is about exploring those ideas together.

Set norms.

- Talk to each other, not me. Track the speaker.
- Absolutely no touching. Keep feet under the seat, no stretching out.
- Step up, step back. If you have spoken twice, wait for three others to speak before jumping in again.
- Challenge the idea, not the person. Disrespect is not tolerated.
- Use evidence, such as personal experiences, school policies, or things you've observed to back up your points.

Discussion

Use **Essential Questions**, instead of individual questions (see next page).

1. **Autonomy** (having the freedom to make your own choices) **vs. Control**: Many of you asked about hoods, bathroom rules, and passing time. The bigger question here is: Where does a student's control over their own body end, and the school's rules begin?
2. **Grades & Risk-Taking**: Several of you pointed out that grades make you afraid to be wrong. What would school look like if we only measured effort and growth, instead of right and wrong?
3. **Discipline & Grace**: A major theme was how mistakes are handled. What is the difference between a punishment and a learning opportunity, and which one does our school system use more?

Facilitating

- Can someone build on what [Student Name] just said?
- Does anyone have a completely different perspective on this?
- We are focusing a lot on the problem. What would a fair solution look like?
- How does this idea connect back to the question of [insert theme]?

Question Shortlist

Double Standards & Fairness

- (2nd Hour) Why is it that the Chromebook gets better care than the students?
- (3rd Hour) Do we really have to follow the rules? What will happen?
- (4th Hour) Why do some teachers hold grudges against kids, but when kids do the same they get mad?
- (5th Hour) If we do something to be stupid or joke around, why do we have to get our parents called because we were playing?
- (6th Hour) Why do we get in trouble if we hit someone and they hit us first?

Grades, Grace, & Fear

- (2nd Hour) How does fear of being wrong stop us from taking risks?
- (3rd Hour) Why does the way we talk to our friends hurt our ability to take risks?
- (4th Hour) How do grades make an impact on how we take risks?
- (5th Hour) When we make mistakes, why do we automatically get called home and not given a second chance?
- (6th Hour) Why is making a mistake and forgetting to bring something once enough to make a person irresponsible?

Systems, Control, & Autonomy

- (2nd Hour) Why can't we wear our hoods in the school building if the staff already know who we are and have been seeing us for almost 7 months?
- (3rd Hour) Is an hour a good amount of time for a class? If not, should it be longer or shorter and why?
- (4th Hour) Why do you think rules exist, when it's your body?
- (5th Hour) Why don't we give students a chance to make clubs and groups or give ideas?
- (6th Hour) When you are done with the M-step test, why can't you just play a game on your Chromebook without being loud?

Seating Chart: 2nd Hour

	<p>Shorthand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (✓) for a substantive contribution• (+) when a student directly references another student's idea• (-) for interrupting.				

Notes

Seating Chart: 3rd Hour

	<p>Shorthand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (✓) for a substantive contribution• (+) when a student directly references another student's idea• (-) for interrupting.				

Notes

Seating Chart: 4th Hour

	<p>Shorthand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (✓) for a substantive contribution• (+) when a student directly references another student's idea• (-) for interrupting.				

Notes

Seating Chart: 5th Hour

	<p>Shorthand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (✓) for a substantive contribution• (+) when a student directly references another student's idea• (-) for interrupting.				

Notes

Seating Chart: 6th Hour

	<p>Shorthand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (✓) for a substantive contribution• (+) when a student directly references another student's idea• (-) for interrupting.				

Notes

Closure

Synthesize the most important quotes or insights from the seminar.

When [Student Name] said X, it really showed the tension between our school policies and your experiences.

Go around and ask for one-word or one-sentence takeaway. What is one thing they are still thinking about?

We are going to use this data to shape our classroom norms and create a solution for improving our day-to-day creativity at school.