



SOCRATIC SEMINARS

*Powerfully addresses
Common Core State
Standards*

Greater Understanding Through:

Active Learning

Critical Reading

Attentive Listening

Clear Speaking

Critical Thinking



What are Socratic Seminars?

Socratic Seminars are a highly motivating form of intellectual and scholarly discourse conducted in K-12 classrooms. They usually range from 20-50 minutes once a week. Socratic Seminars foster active learning as participants explore and evaluate the ideas, issues, and values in a particular text. An effective Socratic Seminar consists of four interdependent elements: (1) the text being considered, (2) the questions raised, (3) the seminar leader, and (4) the participants.

- **The Text** - A seminar text can be drawn from readings in literature, history, science, math, health, and from philosophy or from works of art or music.
- **The Questions** - An opening question has no right answer; instead it reflects a genuine curiosity on the part of the leader. An effective opening question leads participants back to the text as they speculate, evaluate, define, and clarify the issues involved. Responses to the opening question generate new questions from the leader and participants, leading to new responses. In this way, the line of inquiry evolves on the spot rather than being predetermined by the leader.
- **The Leader** - In a Socratic Seminar, the leader plays a dual role as leader and participant. The seminar leader consciously demonstrates habits of mind that lead to a thoughtful exploration of the ideas in the text. As a seminar participant, the leader actively engages in the group's exploration of the text.
- **The Participants** - In a Socratic Seminar, participants share with the leader the responsibility for the quality of the seminar. Effective seminars occur when participants study the text closely in advance, listen actively, share their ideas and questions in response to the ideas and questions of others, and search for evidence in the text to



Why Socratic Seminars?

The consistent practice of Socratic Seminars:

- Addresses *Common Core State Standards*
- Increases *literacy* for all students
- Teaches all students to *think, read, and speak critically* about important texts across the curriculum
- Fosters the skills and passion for *life-long learning*
- Models *Best Practices*
- Builds a *community of learners* in K-12 classrooms



Socratic Seminar Leadership Workshops & Training

Socratic Seminar workshops and trainings can be tailored to meet specific needs and conducted year round at times convenient for teachers, schools, and districts. Three Standards of Professional Development are offered.

BRONZE STANDARD

1. An Experience in Socratic Seminars

½ day (3-4 hours)

Educators participate in a live Socratic Seminar, reflect upon the process, and discover how Socratic Seminars teach critical thinking and reading skills in all content areas and address state and national educational standards.

2. Socratic Seminar Leadership Skills Introductory Workshop One day (7 contact hours)

Participants experience one main Socratic Seminar, reflect on the process, practice one round of Socratic Questioning techniques, learn the fundamentals of writing Opening Questions, and discover the power of Socratic Seminars to teach to local, state, and national educational standards. This workshop needs a

minimum of 8 and usually has a maximum of 64 participants. Special arrangements can be made for more or less participants.

SILVER STANDARD

3. SOCRATIC SEMINAR LEADERSHIP SKILLS TRAINING (3-4 days; 21 contact hours)

Most participants gain the confidence and skill needed to lead Socratic Seminars after 50-60 hours of experience. This training comprises about half the needed preparation; the rest must come in follow-up seminars with students and fellow teachers and in peer coaching sessions with consultants and colleagues. This training provides intensive practice, with a major seminar daily, plus critiques and exercises that develop the skills of seminar leadership. This training is highly experiential, with emphasis on active learning, guided practice, and collective reflection.

GOLD STANDARD

4. SOCRATIC SEMINAR LEADERSHIP SKILLS TRAINING Plus 2 DAYS OF PROFESSIONAL COACHING AND CONSULTING/OBSERVATION DAYS.

After the three day training, a first Socratic Seminar Professional Coaching Day takes place within 75 calendar days of the on-site training, and the second day takes place 90 calendar days later. Each of these days include classroom observations of teachers practicing Socratic Seminars concluding with post-observation conferences highlighting areas of strengths and providing specific recommendations and strategies to the teacher addressing areas of weakness.

Contact Oscar Graybill for information on fees and expenses for Bronze, Silver, and Gold Standard professional development offerings.



Oscar Graybill, M.ED
Director,
Socratic Seminars
International

Oscar has a wealth of experience and expertise in instructional strategies and professional development. A former San Diego City Schools'

EXCEL Outstanding Teacher and former California Mentor Teacher, Oscar's 30 years as a high school English teacher taught him well what teachers want and need to improve their practice.

Oscar's participation on the Washington State Commission on Student Learning where he helped author the original Essential Learnings in Writing provides him with an understanding of educational standards that few have experienced.

As Director of Socratic Seminars International, Oscar knows how to train and coach teachers well. His trainings always receive high marks from teachers. As former Director of Teaching and Learning for Walla Walla Public Schools, he understands the goals of schools and districts in providing outstanding professional development opportunities that address student engagement and critical thinking.

Oscar's recent work with Dialogue Facilitation and Professional Learning Communities helps schools and districts create the positive culture needed to transform teaching practices for all students.



Comments from Participants

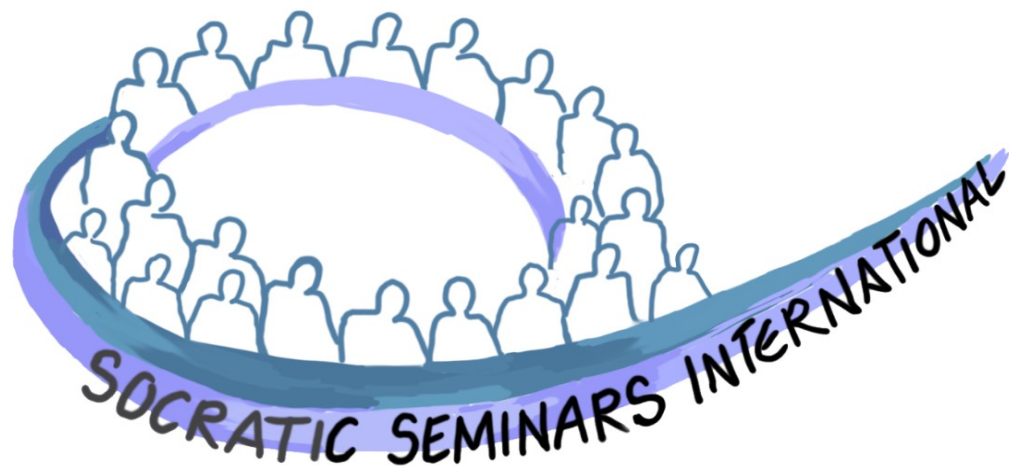
"I arrived feeling tired and intellectually 'spent.' I am leaving feeling 'filled up' (supported, validated, stimulated) and renewed. In a sense, the training has restructured me."

"I believe Socratic Seminars to be the most exciting, dynamic strategy that I have encountered in my twenty years of teaching. The best part is that it stimulates me!"

"Wow! This is very important training for teachers and all people...We have a big responsibility to teach this to all children."

"Three days of absorbing exercises and seminar activities have convinced me that this approach to learning constitutes a major missing dimension from our training of teachers."

"I want to thank you Oscar for conducting this training. I am amazed at how much better I am at analyzing written material and expressing what I think. I would even go so far as to call the total experience, 'Life Changing'."



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