

Habits of Mind/Analytical Questions

based on Deborah Meier's work @ Central Park East
(from *The Power of Their Ideas*, Beacon Press 1995)

Ask and find answers to the following (determining which are appropriate):

1. What happened? or what is the issue or phenomenon?
2. What's the evidence? (What's the value of the evidence? Where is a compelling example?)
3. What are the contexts?
4. What points of view are being taken? What points of view are possible?
5. What caused what?
6. What patterns or connections are evident?
7. What's missing?
8. What assumptions are we (& others) making?
9. What is the significance? (Who cares?)
10. What theory or concept would help interpret the situation or solve the problem?
11. What if?

A simpler version (Gerald Graff's list of Meier's habits, from his Clueless in Academe: How Schooling obscures the life of the Mind)

1. **Concern for evidence** (how do you know that?)
2. **Viewpoint** (who said it and why?)
3. **Cause & effect** (what led to it? what else happened?)
4. **Hypothesizing** (what if? supposing that . . .)
5. **Who cares?** (Knowing and learning take on importance only when we are convinced it matters, it makes a difference.)

The following page illustrates the recursive quality of a typical content analysis.

Holon

Record these discoveries as a **concept map**, revising it to clarify understandings as the analysis develops.

What is the pattern/
category's
significance?

What do the patterns
mean?

What meaningful
name do you give
the category?

What alternative
meanings
are possible?

What assumptions am I making?

Subject/Content Analysis

What's missing?

So what??

What
patterns/categories do
the parts fall into?

What points of view are possible?

What's it all add
up
to?

**Start
here?**

Define the parts by
observing details
closely.

In what contexts must
this be placed in order to
understand it?

What's the whole?
What's it part of?

Beck, English

Holon=whole/part.

All subjects for analysis are parts of other wholes. Understanding the context—the wholes of which a subject is a part—is an important aspect of both conducting an analysis and expressing the results.