

Information for Parents: Philosophy for Children @ CSUB

Philosophy for Children is a public service and community engagement program, aimed at

- 1) introducing philosophical discussion and critical thinking to children, and
- 2) providing a service learning and practical training opportunity for CSUB students.

The program follows the precedent set by P4C programs across the country and around the world, using established methods of P4C scholarship and practice.

- Children, ages 7-11, participate in open-ended group discussions, in public settings, such as elementary school classrooms and public libraries, facilitated by CSUB philosophy faculty and students.
- The conversations are prompted by picture books, stories, or thought experiments, that address a broad range of philosophical questions, such as “what makes a thing what it is?” “is courage the same as fearlessness?” “how do we judge art?” or “is it always wrong to lie?”

Building a Community of Inquiry

Engaging children in philosophical dialogue, we aim to build a **community of inquiry**. As part of a community of thinkers, pondering on big questions together and sharing their views with one another, children practice important skills, such as **critical thinking, oral communication, and intellectual empathy**. In these conversations, children

- a. think about and take a position regarding an open-ended question;
- b. clearly state their positions;
- c. give reasons for their positions;
- d. listen charitably to understand each other;
- e. consider whether they agree or disagree with others' answers;
- f. verbally express their agreement or disagreement in a respectful manner; and
- g. evaluate together diverse positions and insights.

Philosophical Skills Children Practice during P4C Conversations*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asking a question• Agreeing or disagreeing• Giving a reason• Offering a hypothesis or explanation• Giving an example or counterexample• Classifying/Categorizing• Making a comparison• Noting a distinction | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offering a definition• Identifying an assumption• Making an inference• Making a conditional statement (“if/then”)• Self-correcting• Restating• Entertaining different perspectives |
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Supporting K-6 Common Core State Standards†

P4C conversations are opportunities for children to practice key reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Here are a few California K-6 Common Core State Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, which highlight the possible benefits of P4C:

- Common Core State Standards in **Reading**:
 - “citing **textual evidence**,”
 - “making **logical inferences**,” and
 - “**evaluating validity** of reasoning and **the relevance and sufficiency** of evidence”;
- Common Core State Standards in **Writing**:
 - “**supporting claims** in an analysis of substantive topics or texts,” and
 - “conducting research on focused questions, **demonstrating understanding of the subject** under investigation”; and finally,
- Common Core State Standards in **Speaking and Listening**:
 - “participating effectively in **collaboration with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas**” and
 - “**presenting supporting evidence** such that listeners can follow your line of reasoning.”

Sample P4C Activity

Thought Experiment: *Chocolate Rain*

- Facilitators ask the children whether it would be good or bad to have *Chocolate Rain*. This exercise gets children to practice abstract thinking skills by engaging in **counterfactual or hypothetical thinking** and practicing **inferential thinking** where they come up with possible consequences of a given situation. Here are some responses from children: *If it rained chocolate*
 - we would get thirsty,
 - swimming pools and oceans would fill with chocolate,
 - fish wouldn’t survive, plants would dry up,
 - we would have to only eat and drink chocolate,
 - people with diabetes would get sick,
 - chocolate with nuts would make people with peanut allergies sick,
 - it would snow *white* chocolate in the winter,
 - we could drown in chocolate,
 - there would be sticky chocolate everywhere making everything dirty, and
 - they questioned whether the chocolate rain would have to be liquid.

Books on P4C for interested parents:

Lone, Jana Mohr and Michael Burroughs. *Philosophy in Education*. 2016.

Lone, Jana Mohr. *The Philosophical Child*. 2012. (written for parents)

Matthews, Gareth B. *Dialogues with Children*. Harvard, 1984.

Wartenberg, Thomas. *Big Ideas for Little Kids*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

---. *A Sneetch is A Sneetch*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

Worley, Peter. *The If Machine: Philosophical Enquiry in the Classroom*. Continuum, 2011.

* Kennedy, David. “Developing Philosophical Facilitation: A Toolbox of Philosophical ‘Moves’,” in *Philosophy in Schools: An Introduction for Philosophers and Teachers*, edited by Goering, Shudak, and Wartenberg, Routledge, 2013, pp. 110-118.

† Source: http://www.californiareads.org/res/common_core/cc_anchor_standards.pdf