

WHY PHILOSOPHY IN SCHOOLS?

“What is time? What does it mean to be good? Why should I be honest? Are numbers real?”

Children ask questions like this all the time, but often don't have an opportunity to consider and discuss them in school. Yet thinking about these seemingly abstract questions can serve a very practical purpose, enabling students to become actively engaged with their own learning and fostering the 21st century skills most needed for success: critical and analytic thinking. The age-old discipline of philosophy has in fact never been more relevant.

“It's what you think that makes you who you are.”

- Second grade student

“In philosophy, we're growing our minds.”

- Second grade student

Philosophy – the study of open-ended questions without single or simple answers – belongs in schools. Young people introduced to philosophy learn to:

- Evaluate assumptions and information based on sound reasoning and analysis
- Communicate their own views logically and clearly
- Think independently and analytically
- Consider and respect diverse viewpoints



“Children don't know as many things about the world and so our minds are more free to imagine things.”

- Third grade student

*“There are no barriers in our minds —
we can think of anything.”*

- Second grade student

Contemporary education research demonstrates that students perform better academically when they are engaged in their own learning (Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Martin, 2001).



When young people reflect on philosophical questions - whether in a dedicated philosophy class or across the curriculum - they are encouraged to raise questions and share insights that are relevant to their lives. As a result, they develop confidence in and skill at expressing their own ideas and perspectives. They become more interested in learning about themselves and the world around them, and they come to understand that there are many ways to address complex questions.

Philosophy addresses both the timely and timeless goals of education. Engaging in philosophical inquiry hones advanced reasoning and communication skills so necessary for success in school and employment. It has also been shown to improve students' test-taking abilities and sharpen their intellectual skills (Trickey & Topping, 2004, 2007), while at the same time providing a space for authentic, student-centered learning, which is too often limited by the crowded curriculum and pressures associated with standardized testing.

If you can think well about the questions at the heart of philosophy, you can think well about anything.

