Ball State Philosophy Outreach Project

Abstract
The Philosophy Outreach Project creates alternative spaces for learning in classrooms, clubs, online, and conference settings. By curating philosophical content and fostering philosophical discussion, POP brings college and high school students together to think and ask questions. They do so during regular outreach visits to area classrooms and clubs and during a weekly philosophy club at a local high school. POP members also create resources on philosophy for high school students and their teachers. Finally, POP hosts an annual precollege philosophy conference at Ball State University, which is free for attendees. Through its support, the APA will enable POP to expand its outreach to provide diverse audiences with increased access to philosophy through additional site visits to low-income schools, supporting conference attendance for students in underserved communities, and developing content for and promoting a website to model precollege outreach programs nationally.

Basic Information
Project Coordinator(s)
Sarah Vitale

Steering Committee
Adam Cunningham, Muncie Central High School
Dr. Adriel Trott, Wabash College

Funding Amount Requested
$3,700

Expected Project Completion Date
May 2020

Project Description
The purpose of the Philosophy Outreach Project is to introduce philosophy to high school students in Indiana and beyond, who have thus far had very little exposure, and then to promote continued engagement. The APA grant will help us provide low-income high school students with access to philosophy through our site visits, website, and conference.

We have laid appropriate groundwork through (1) establishing relationships with several schools, including Muncie Central High School, where we began a philosophy club in February 2017 with the help of social studies teacher and steering committee member Adam Cunningham; (2) making annual site visits to other communities (to date, we have made 22 site visits to 11 different schools, impacting 278 high school students); and (3) hosting an annual precollege conference for two years at Ball State University. In 2018, we welcomed 64 attendees from five schools. We increased our participation in 2019 to 88 students, and these students came from 9 schools. Our conferences have been well received by students and teachers. On
a Likert Scale (5 = Very Good, 4 = Good, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Poor, 1 = Very Poor), conference participants rated the conference on average (mean) 4.34 in the first year and 4.625 in the second year. To the question whether they are likely to attend again, all teachers and advisors responded with a 5 each year. For more information on the conferences, please see our current Wix website: https://bsuphilosophyconfe.wixsite.com/bsuphilosophy

We have also secured local and additional support because of the project's success. The project has received internal grant funding, which has supported a community-engaged course devoted to the project in Spring 2018 and again in Spring 2019, and an external grant of $1,836 from the PLATO Philosophy Fund in 2018.

Our goals and timeline are realistic and appropriate for the grant period. We are in the process of developing a new website, which will be hosted on the Ball State server, but we need to promote it and develop new content for it, which we will be able to do with a one-time infusion of funds from the APA. After the grant period, students in the course will be able to maintain the website and social media, as it will require less work than the initial rollout. In addition, we have a developed outreach program with trained site visit leaders, but we need more funding to target low-income schools.

Project Impact

The Philosophy Outreach Project benefits the profession by expanding the reach of philosophy beyond the academy. In addition, the project's focus on accessibility benefits the field by improving the diversity of the pipeline. The project involves community outreach insofar as university students work closely with various schools to engage in philosophical experiences with students and teachers.

Precollege philosophy programs have been proven to enhance the lives of high school students in many ways. Engagement with philosophy helps them succeed in high school and better prepares them for college. It helps students improve their reading, reasoning, and critical thinking skills. Philosophy programs also lead to personal growth for participants, who become more confident, independent thinkers with higher self-esteem.

At present, there is a paucity of philosophy programs in high schools across Indiana and the U.S. more generally. In December 2015, I contacted roughly 250 public and private high schools across Indiana to inquire into the state of philosophy education at the secondary level. I received responses from over half the schools. Out of those who replied, only eight had philosophy classes in their curricula and seven have philosophy clubs. Affluent districts were much more likely to have clubs and classes. The Philosophy Outreach Project seeks to provide philosophical engagement experiences to more students regardless of income or school district.

Letter of Support from Community Partner

June 26, 2019

Adam Cunningham

Department of Social Studies
To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of Dr. Sarah Vitale’s application for an APA Small Grant to expand access to the Philosophy Outreach Project.

I have worked with Dr. Vitale since February 2017, when the Philosophy Outreach Project began a philosophy club in my classroom at Muncie Central. The club aligns well with Indiana curricular standards for World History (WH.2.3. and WH.2.9, which focus on Ancient Greece, as well as WH.2.12, which focuses on Asian philosophies), and serves a need without duplicating present efforts. In addition, the students at Muncie Central are a high-needs population. In 2016, 74.6% of students in the Muncie Central School Corporation were eligible for free or reduced lunch, which is well above the state average of 49%, and 28.1% of Muncie residents live below the poverty line. The club increases access to precollege philosophy programming to underserved populations.

The high school students have loved their time in philosophy club, and they particularly thrive because of their interactions with the college students and each other. As an educator, I recognize the value of such engagement for students who are often not afforded a space to reflect and develop their own positions.

I support Dr. Vitale’s endeavor to support students from low-income and underserved school districts to attend the annual conference. Even though the conference is free to attend, travel costs are prohibitive. If the conference were not held in Muncie and were even as far away as Indianapolis, which is under 60 miles away, we at Muncie Central would not be able to attend due to the expense, and many schools are in similar situations.

In addition, I am excited about the online efforts of the project and look forward to working with Dr. Vitale, the POP team, and the high school students to develop content and market the website, so that the project can expand its reach by providing access to more diverse audiences and by helping other educators begin their own programs.

I am pleased to be on the Steering Committee for this project and look forward to its evolution.

Sincerely,

Adam Cunningham

Project Goals

- Increase the accessibility to our conference for low-income students.
- While the Conference for Precollege Philosophical Engagement (CPPE) is free to attend, travel costs remain a significant burden for students in low-income school districts, which makes
- Increase site visits to underserved schools
• The APA grant would also allow us to visit more schools during the grant period. We have developed a targeted campaign to low-income schools to recruit students for the conference and schedule site visits. My
• Develop content for and promoting a website that hosts resources for teachers and high school students interested in learning more about philosophy and starting their own precollege philosophy programs.
• Our website will provide an additional entry point

**Project Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 2019</td>
<td>Select Website Content Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2019 – May 2020</td>
<td>Weekly Club at Muncie Central</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2019</td>
<td>Announce date of conference</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Announce travel awards</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 2020</td>
<td>Community-engaged class begins</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Complete 2 site visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2020</td>
<td>Complete 3 site visits</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Send out formal conference invitation and advertise for conference</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Travel stipend applications due</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2020</td>
<td>Complete 3 site visits</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Registration deadline</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Select travel stipend recipients</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2020</td>
<td>Complete 2 site visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2020</td>
<td>Assessment and evaluation</td>
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**Project Outreach**

The conference is advertised to high schools through our contact list of Indiana administrators. We also advertise on our Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/CPPEbsu/) and through Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/philosophyoutreachproject/) and Twitter (https://twitter.com/PhilOutreach) and on our website. Teachers interested in site visits will also be able to sign up on the new website. We are listed as a partner organization on the PLATO site as well (https://www.plato-philosophy.org). POP member Zoe Lawson blogged about the project on the Women in Philosophy blog for the APA (https://blog.apaonline.org/2019/05/08/women-in-philosophy-philosophy-for-pre-college-students/).
Accessibility Plan

Our website has been created with attention to those using screen readers. The conference is held at Ball State University, which is ADA compliant. Please see https://www.bsu.edu/about/accessibility. In addition, we have asked pre-registrants about accommodations in the past. However, in the next iteration of the conference, in 2020, we will ensure that we provide accessible handouts and providing links to online versions of all handouts.

Evaluation Plan

The project will be assessed through (Goal 1) attendance at our conference by students from low-income schools; (Goal 2) number of site visits to low-income schools; and (Goal 3) traffic on the site and engagement with the social media. We will also evaluate our project through surveys by teachers and students, which we have used in the past to measure the success of the conference.

Goal 1. We will also consider ourselves successful if 50% of students who attend the conference come from schools in low-income districts (measured by free-/reduced-lunch rates).

Goal 2. We will measure success by increasing the number of site visits to low-income schools. To date, we have gone on an average of 6 site visits each year. We will measure success by increasing the number of site visits and by going on at least 5 site visits to low-income schools.

Goal 3. We will measure success by increasing our FB followers from 406 to 600, our Instagram followers from 115 to 225, and our Twitter followers from 64 to 120.

Exit Surveys: We will also measure success through improvement on our conference exit survey. We have used an exit survey after each conference, and we used the first exist survey to improve the second conference. Below is the Exit Survey we have used. We considered the project successful insofar as the ratings improved from the first year to the second. We also used the feedback from the first year to improve the conference in the second year. In the first year, we opened the conference with a keynote speaker and offered 15 interactive breakout sessions in 3 time slots. Because of feedback, in the second year, we opened with a “speed philosophy” session for all attendees, followed by a keynote address, and then offered 20 interactive breakout sessions in 4 time slots.

We will also implement exit surveys following site visits. For these, qualitative comments will be particularly useful. We will provide them to high school students and teachers via email after each visit.

Conference for the Pre-College Philosophical Engagement

Participant Survey

Thank you for attending the second Conference for Pre-College Philosophical Engagement hosted by the Ball State Philosophy Outreach Project. We appreciate your feedback so we can make next year’s conference an even better experience for our participants.

In what capacity did you attend the conference? Please check one.

_____ High School Student    _____ Club Advisor/Teacher/Chaperone
Overall, how would you rate the Conference for Pre-College Philosophical Engagement?

Very Good  Good  Neutral  Poor  Very Poor  N/A

Please rate the following aspects of the conference’s organization:

Very Good  Good  Neutral  Poor  Very Poor  N/A

Registration Process

Date/time

Range of breakout sessions

Facility/

Venue

Parking

Lunch/

Refreshments

Comments:

Please rate the speed philosophy session.

Very Good  Good  Neutral  Poor  Very Poor  N/A

Length of session

Quality of questions

Relevance to audience

Overall quality of talk

Comments:

Please rate the keynote speaker.
Demonstration of expertise
Responses to questions
Relevance to audience
Overall quality of talk
Comments:

Please rate each of the breakout sessions you attended. Please write in the title of the session.

Session 1: _______________________

Relevance of topic to audience
Speaker’s expertise
Speaker’s responses to questions
Overall quality
Comments:

Session 2: _______________________

Relevance of topic to audience
Speaker’s expertise
Speaker’s responses to questions
Overall quality
Comments:

Session 3: _______________________

Comments:
Relevance of topic to audience
Speaker's expertise
Speaker's responses to questions
Overall quality of session
Comments:
Session 4: ______________

Very Good  Good Neutral  Poor Very Poor N/A
Relevance of topic to audience
Speaker's expertise
Speaker's responses to questions
Overall quality of session
Comments:

Based on your experience at this event, how likely are you to attend future events?

Very likely  Likely  Neutral Not likely  Very unlikely

How likely are you to recommend the conference to your friends?

Very likely  Likely  Neutral Not likely  Very unlikely

Is this your first time attending CPPE?
Yes  No

We welcome suggestions and comments to help us improve our future events:

Summary of Exit Survey Results, CPPE 2018

Student Participants
Overall, how would you rate the Conference for Pre-Philosophical Engagement? (on a 5-1 Likert scale: 5 = Excellent, 4 = Good, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Fair, 1 = Poor)

4.27

How likely are you to recommend the conference to your friends and colleagues? (on a 5-1 Likert scale: 5 = Very Likely, 4 = Somewhat Likely, 3 = Neither likely nor not likely, 2 = Less likely, 1 = Not likely)

4.24

Teacher Participants

Overall, how would you rate the Conference for Pre-Philosophical Engagement? (on a 5-1 Likert scale: 5 = Excellent, 4 = Good, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Fair, 1 = Poor)

4.67

How likely are you to recommend the conference to your friends and colleagues? (on a 5-1 Likert scale: 5 = Very Likely, 4 = Somewhat Likely, 3 = Neither likely nor not likely, 2 = Less likely, 1 = Not likely)

5

Summary of Exit Survey Results, CPPE 2019

Student Participants

Overall, how would you rate the Conference for Pre-Philosophical Engagement? (on a 5-1 Likert scale: 5 = Very Good, 4 = Good, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Poor, 1 = Very Poor)

4.552

How likely are you to recommend the conference to your friends and colleagues? (on a 5-1 Likert scale: 5 = Very Likely, 4 = Likely, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Not likely, 1 = Very unlikely)

4.418

Teacher Participants

Overall, how would you rate the Conference for Pre-Philosophical Engagement? (on a 5-1 Likert scale: 5 = Very Good, 4 = Good, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Poor, 1 = Very Poor)

4.67

How likely are you to recommend the conference to your friends and colleagues? (on a 5-1 Likert scale: 5 = Very Likely, 4 = Likely, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Not likely, 1 = Very unlikely)

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Online Presence
The website will be hosted on the Ball State server. As it is in development, we do not have a URL yet. Our current Wix site is https://bsuphilosophyconference.wixsite.com/bsuphilosophy. We also have social media sites: Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/CPPEbsu/), Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/philosophyoutreachproject/), and Twitter (https://twitter.com/PhilOutreach).

Budget Narrative
Travel (funding to make conference participation possible for low-income students): The APA grant will allow us to increase accessibility to the conference by providing a total of $1500 in travel stipends to help low-income schools defray travel costs. We will award the travel stipends based on distance and need. We may be able to fund the entire travel costs of some schools or partial travel costs of fewer schools, depending on how many schools apply for the funding.

Honorarium for keynote: We have offered $200 as a keynote honorarium for the past two years.

Supplies for conference: This covers t-shirts, name badges, printing of materials, etc. These costs reflect our previous year’s expenditures while providing for growth.

Travel (keynote): This will allow us to invite a keynote who must drive from a distance (up to roughly 240 miles) or take an inexpensive flight.

Lunch (conference): These costs reflect our previous year’s expenditures while providing for growth.

Funding for national emulation: building and promoting a website with “How To” documents and videos: The manager of the site will work for 5 hours each week for $12.50/hour for 16 weeks of each semester (a total of $1000/semester)

Travel (site visits): We are requesting $200 from the APA for these site visits, and our internal grant would support the other $200. The average distance to a school we visit is 50 miles from Ball State. At $0.415/mile, the average site visit costs $41.50 (roundtrip). The grant would allow us to make about 5 additional site visits.

Other Funding Sources
Ball State Provost Immersive Learning Grant (plan to apply for funding): The remainder of our funding should come from an internal grant, which we received in 2018 and 2019. The application for that grant is in October. After the APA grant term ends, we hope the project’s success enables it to receive other grants from organizations such as the Teagle Foundation and the Indiana Campus Compact.