

Report to the APA
PLATO Seminar on Teaching and Learning in Philosophy for High School Teachers

The first PLATO Teaching and Learning Seminar for High School Teachers was held July 31-August 3, 2014, in conjunction with the AAPT Conference. Nine high school teachers and two facilitators participated in this first teaching and learning seminar. Our evaluation of the seminar follows.

1. The Program: The program interwove focused readings from philosophical literature with presentations by the participants. This balance seemed to offer participants a modeling of sustained inquiry with a text, as well as an opportunity to share with the community their current work with their own philosophy students.

Conclusion: While we were pleased with the conference flow, for the next time we would recommend focusing more on the sharing and evaluation of what participants are *doing* rather than a more facilitator-directed instructional model. This assumes that participants, like the teachers in this first seminar, will have taught already-established philosophy courses. If the next set of participants are novice philosophy teachers, with an interest in starting philosophy classes in their schools, our model might be more apt. In any event, including at least a couple of topical/textual modeling of readings and discussions is helpful for all teachers. The facilitator-led section of the program would emphasize *how* the topic is taught and invite participants to share their own work. If the knowledge level and experience of the group is more at the novice level, we might recommend the choosing of two or three topics or readings daily to present formally and then discuss with the participants in addition to their own presentations.

2. Schedule: The half-day seminar in conjunction with the AAPT conference was a good choice and we would recommend that again. The participants enjoyed joining afternoon panels with college instructors and were delighted with the warm welcome they received. They discovered, as did the faculty, that we all have more in common than perhaps expected. The high school teachers fully contributed to these conference session discussions, and were able to learn from their colleagues at the college level.

Conclusion: Repeat the morning seminar sessions at the next AAPT conference and include one conference afternoon session in which the seminar participants would describe their work with high school students, to allow AAPT members to learn about what pre-college teachers are doing.

3. Length of Program: The program was scheduled for four mornings, starting on the first day of the conference and ending on Sunday. Based on feedback and facilitator evaluations, we would recommend beginning on the evening before the AAPT conference starts, since it is easier to get there that day, meet at dinner, and have an opening session that evening. For travel purposes, we advise ending the workshop on the same day (generally Saturday) as the AAPT Conference finishes. Another way to accomplish everything would be to extend the workshop into part of the afternoons.

Conclusion: Run the workshop for three half-days to coincide with the AAPT three-day conference schedule and offer an evening opening session on the day of arrival, usually right before the AAPT Conference begins.

4. Recommendation: While the affinity of high school teachers with college teachers is easily seen, we might also want to think about running a workshop for elementary school teachers--either at the same time or another time. Our high school teachers really expressed appreciation to find out that others were doing what they were doing. Elementary school teachers would welcome that community as well.

Both facilitators judged the first workshop a success and hope that PLATO will be able to offer it again.

Steven Goldberg and Wendy Turgeon, Seminar Facilitators
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