

## Report on the second PLATO High School Philosophy Conference

July 2016

The second PLATO Workshop for High School Teachers was held July 27<sup>th</sup>-July 29<sup>th</sup> in conjunction with the AAPT conference. Eight participants formed a wonderful group, along with two facilitators. We learned from our first attempt and adjusted the program to three days with a get together meeting the evening before the conference began. Due to travel situations, we ended up having to cancel that evening meeting but all went well from there on. We restructured our workshop in line with lessons learned from the first time in 2014. This time we structured the workshop as a combination of discussions on the assigned readings, both classical and contemporary, and presentations from each of the participants. We also had participants lead the discussions on the assigned readings to encourage more active involvement with texts and pedagogy.

Again we had a mix among those who had been teaching a philosophy course for a while, whose who were already incorporating philosophy into their regular curriculum, and some who were just beginning to develop a course/unit. Since everyone was a professional teacher, albeit in different places in their careers, we had a lovely group with excellent dialogue.

We met each morning and for the afternoon, participants attended sessions at the AAPT. The following day we would share ideas learned from the presentations. They were uniformly helpful and often connected to concerns that our participants had in their own classrooms.

At the end of the conference we scheduled a panel of our participants who presented their own work to interested AAPT attendees. We had around 20 participants which was an impressive number given that it was at the end of the final day of the conference. There was much interest in how our teachers were able to include philosophy in the curriculum and to what extent this could be developed.

After the conference ended we sent out a survey to get some feedback. Of the 8 participants, 6 responded so the information is somewhat limited but still helpful. We hope that they will stay in touch with PLATO and we encouraged them to attend (and possibly present) at the PLATO 2018 conference in Chicago. They uniformly appreciated the opportunity to participate in the workshop and the AAPT conference and would share ideas with colleagues. They did recommend we spend more time on the Philosophy for Children literature and they really appreciated the ability to attend the AAPT and interact with college professors. They also expressed a desire to focus on ways to implement philosophy within their traditional high school subjects. As PLATO plans for the third workshop, we will take these suggestions under advice.

On behalf of PLATO, we are grateful for the support from the APA to make this event possible.

--Steve Goldberg and Wendy Turgeon  
9/24/2016

### **Some quotes from the survey:**

I went to a wonderful gathering of philosophy teachers at all stages of their careers and ended up gleaning a ton of highly useful information that I can use in my teaching in a variety of subjects. I've been sharing ideas with colleagues on my campus ever since I returned.

--Jenny Catteneo

Great experience with folks with common interest in making the world a better place, through the implementation of philosophy in schools.

-Jerry Pannone

I found the people that I worked with to be extremely knowledgeable and well-versed in literature related to their various field. I sincerely enjoyed working with them and the facilitators of the seminar. It was also a great experience listening and participating in workshops with graduate students and professors in the field.

--name not offered

**Recommendations from the survey:**

- I would like more emphasis on examples of implementing philosophical discussions in all subject areas and possible ways of doing PD training for faculties, particularly in ethics, given slim budgets for creating actual philosophy classes.
- We didn't discuss much of the Philosophy for Children readings.
- The university level seminars were very inspirational in addition to our pre-college discussions

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*Schedule for PLATO-AAPT Summer 2016 Seminar*

*Pre-Conference:*

**Background reading:**

Read CTY model curriculum on PLATO website; read Lipman essay

Recommended: *Provocations* by David Birch, Crown House Published, 2014. [Available on Amazon]

This workshop is a collaborative experience with participants actively engaged in co-facilitating the experience along with Steven Goldberg and Wendy Turgeon. Each of you will be working in a team to lead the discussion on a piece of philosophical writing as well as having an opportunity to present something of your own to the group.

**Three readings:** The Crito by Plato, Meditations I by Descartes, "Puppies, Pigs, and People" by Alastair Norcross.

**Individual Presentation options:**

Please plan on a presentation for the participants of 40 minutes in length (including time for questions). Consider the following suggestions:

- a. a lesson plan/project/unit that they have used that works particularly well
- b. a lesson plan/project/unit that you have tried to use and that did NOT go well but that they think should have and would like feedback
- c. a lesson plan/project/unit that they are working on or planning to present for the first time.

We hope to have a good cross section of varying options here so please let us know some options for what you would like to present so that we can structure this with wide appeal.

## SCHEDULE

### *Wednesday, July 27*

Meet and Greet get together in the evening

#### **Some background discussion: Paths to Philosophy-Direction—administration**

- history, approaches, rationale
- how philosophy was introduced to school—a brief history
- place of philosophy in the curriculum: fitting it in?
- the range of approaches available: models of philosophy as forensic debate, community of inquiry, historical sweep/Great Conversation, problems application, philosophy as stand-alone/as interwoven within disciplines, others?

### *Thursday, July 28*

**8:30-9:00** Getting Oriented—intro to AAPT and to our workshop

**9:00-9:45** Reading a text-- Platonic Dialogue, *the Crito*  
facilitated by two participants and the facilitators  
Discussion: Political philosophy and Social Studies, government: getting students to reflect on society and

**9:45-10:00** Coffee Break

**10:00-noon** **Your turn:** presenting a unit or program  
three participants, 40 minutes each

- distinctive nature and value of philosophy as a discipline
- characteristic philosophical questions and problems
- philosophical reasoning and conversation
- intellectual and moral virtues cultivated by philosophy
- tackling challenging readings with students;
- Getting productive classroom discussion

Afternoon: **AAPT sessions begin at 1 PM each day**

### *Friday, July 29<sup>th</sup>*

**8:30-9:00** Review of AAPT Session  
Ideas for college teaching from yesterday's afternoon sessions that can be adapted to high school philosophy

**9:00-9:45** Reading a text-- first person reflection: Descartes' *Meditation I*  
facilitated by three participants and the facilitators  
Discussion: tackling classic texts with high school students

**9:45-10:00** Coffee Break

**10:00-noon** **Your turn:** presenting a unit or program  
three participants, 40 minutes each

Afternoon AAPT sessions

### *Saturday, July 30<sup>th</sup>*

**8:30-9:00** Review of Friday AAPT Sessions

**9:00-9:45** Reading a text-- philosophical analysis: Alistair Norcross's *Puppies, Pigs, and People*  
facilitated by three participants and the facilitators

**9:45-10:00** **Coffee Break**

**10:00-11:20** **Your turn:** presenting a unit or program  
two participants, 40 minutes each

**11:20-Noon** Aesthetics: the forgotten philosophical area: demonstration of a community  
of inquiry and/or other areas of interest to the group

- *Motivating the Question:* thinking about art and aesthetic  
experience: maybe it is not all opinion?
- *Central Question and concepts:* what is art? The roles of artist,  
audience, critic
- *Close reading and discussion: Leo Lionni's **Frederick** and Clive Bell  
on significant form*

### **Afternoon AAPT sessions**

Later on Saturday afternoon we hope to offer a session sponsored by you all for your  
colleagues at AAPT to find out more about teaching philosophy at the high school level.

### **General Information**

#### **Opportunities for Teachers and Students**

- PLATO conferences
- PLATO teacher awards
- PLATO student essay competition
- NEH seminars and Institutes
- ICPIC and its upcoming conference in June 2015
- *Questions*, a pre-college philosophy journal for students and teachers
- APA Committee for Pre-College Instruction in Philosophy (CPIP)
- Useful Online Materials for teaching philosophy