Mr. Arnold,
Thank you for teaching us philosophy!
Love,
Second Grade
Room 231
5/5/15
Winning Words

instructors, students from the University of Chicago, work with younger students in elementary, middle and high schools on Chicago’s South Side to cover a curriculum that features an introduction to philosophy and Socratic dialogue, while also working on reading, writing, public speaking, drama, poetry and art.

The curriculum uses the Socratic method to engage students in philosophical conversation and to encourage critical thinking and collaborative inquiry, reasoning and expression.

Such modes of thought and communication foster the sense of wonder that is at the root of serious introspection, intellectual growth, and ethical reflection.
Dear Friends of Winning Words,

It has been some time since the last issue of this magazine appeared, but the delay reflects all of the exciting developments that we wanted to feature in our second issue. The Winning Words Pre-Collegiate Philosophy Program has had one of its best years ever, with over a dozen sites serving nearly two hundred young philosophers on Chicago’s South Side. We have continued our work with our wonderful long-term partners, great schools such as Shoesmith Elementary and Carnegie Elementary, and added some exciting new partners as well, notably the Chicago Free School, the UChicago Lab School, the XS Tennis foundation, and the RainbowPUSH Coalition.

We have refined and developed our curriculum, particularly our curriculum with respect to Black History and Philosophy, and now, as a result, the Winning Words coaches are using lesson plans featuring, not only W. E. B. DuBois and Martin Luther King, Jr., but also such local civil rights heroes as the activist and historian Timuel D. Black. Prof. Black, who was born in 1918, is a UChicago alum and the Senior Statesman of Chicago’s South Side; he worked with Dr King, helped elect Harold Washington as Mayor of Chicago, and coached a young Barack Obama on how to do community work on Chicago’s South Side. More recently, he was on the Community Advisory Committee that helped bring the Obama Presidential Center to Chicago’s South Side. And he is a longtime friend and supporter of the Civic Knowledge Project and its programs, including Winning Words. It is a very great honor to have developed the Winning Words curriculum with his support and advice, and to be able to feature his life and work when we are doing philosophy with young people on Chicago’s historic South Side. Prof. Black’s philosophy of life has a lot to teach us, and this issue of the Winning Words Magazine is dedicated to him.

Sincerely,

Bart Schultz
Director of the Civic Knowledge Project
Senior Lecturer in Philosophy

The University of Chicago
6030 S. Ellis Avenue, Edelstone 133, Chicago, IL 60637
Phone (773) 834-3929 ext. 1
rschultz@uchicago.edu
The mission of the Winning Words Pre-Collegiate Philosophy Program is in keeping with this description of a public ethics program from Peter Singer, one of the world’s most important and influential philosophers:

We all make ethical choices, even if we never think about ethics, so a Public Ethics program will play a valuable role if it can take ethics out of the university and bring it to everyone, encouraging them to think about values in a reflective and methodical way.

A Public Ethics program should bring discussions of the nature of ethics, of important past ethical thinkers, and of key ethical questions to the wider community, and help to engage them in issues that they face on a daily basis. How can we think about ethics, and get beyond habit or conformity?

Too often, people assume that ethics is about prohibitions  the “thou shalt not...” approach to ethics. But we fail to think about the good we can do to others less fortunate than ourselves – including not only people in our own community, but people in extreme poverty in developing countries. We also need to think about future generations: what kind of planet are we leaving for them? And ethics extends beyond our own species: what do we owe to animals?

A Public Ethics program should therefore raise not only the obvious questions about treating people close to us well, and about the inequality in our society, but also about helping the distant poor, about what we eat – both in terms of how the animals we eat were treated, and in terms of the greenhouse gas emissions for which we are responsible.

Finally, a Public Ethics program should ask young people what they want to do with their lives: how will they find fulfillment and purpose? That question leads to reflection on our ultimate values.

Peter Singer
Ira W. DeCamp Professor of Bioethics
University Center for Human Values
Princeton University
On January 23, 2016, the University of Chicago Civic Knowledge Project/Winning Words will be hosting a regional Ethics Bowl for high school students!

Watch our website for more information, and check out the Ethics Bowl information at nhseb.unc.edu/

Winning Words website:
civicknowledge.uchicago.edu/winningwords.shtml
On Friday, October 23rd, the University of Chicago Civic Knowledge Project/Winning Words will be hosting world-famous philosopher Peter Singer, who will give a lecture on “Climate Change: Our Greatest Ethical Challenge”

Watch our website, www.civicknowledge.uchicago.edu, for more information, and check out the work of Peter Singer at www.ted.com/speakers/peter_singer
I could write about so many sides of *Winning Words*: how it deepens my understanding of philosophy, how I constantly have my views challenged, how it led me to my future career in teaching. However, after kicking around so many things I could write about, I realized there was only one thing I should write about – my students.

I am constantly impressed by my students. Not just with the level at which they engage with philosophy – seriously, a fourth grader can have just as profound thoughts as a tenured professor – but also with how they engage with philosophy. They approach philosophy thinking that everything must be relevant to their lives.

Last year I taught a few classes on the philosophy of non-violence. I was tracing the idea from Jesus to Gandhi to Martin Luther King. Within five minutes hands shot up around the room: “Mr. Eric, yea, sure. Turn the other cheek sounds good, but what am I supposed to do about a bully? You really want me to let him hit me again?” So instead of continuing with my lesson, we spent the next 55 minutes talking about that one phrase – turn the other cheek – and whether it was feasible to actually live by it. I realized there was only one thing I should write about – My students in the university classroom, we too often get caught up in the minutia of definitions and confusing passages in Kant or Hegel or some other confusing German idealist, losing sight of philosophy’s applications. In stark contrast, in the *Winning Words* classroom we’re always thinking about how we can apply what we’re learning to our lives. My students are always concerned with bringing nebulous ideas into contact with the concrete reality of their daily lives.

*Visit the Winning Words Facebook Page at facebook.com/CKPWW*
In my mind at least, that’s what philosophy is all about. It’s why I love philosophy so much. At its core, philosophy is concerned with asking foundational questions about life and then applying your answers to your life. It’s concerned with making ourselves better people while bettering the lives of others. It’s concerned with not just pursuing truth, but living by it. My students are constantly thinking in this way, thus reminding me that buried under all that minutia in Kant and Hegel is something relevant. Something that can teach us how to live.

Help! My Child is a Philosopher

http://mychildisaphilosopher.com/
These controversial words are coming from nine year old Keean. He has just finished listing his top five rules if he were to rule the world. My co-worker is having a hard time keeping a straight face, and eventually bursts out laughing.

“That is not what I expected to hear,” she says while wiping a tear from her eye. Once we are all calm and collected, I start to wonder: why does Keean want this?

We are teaching political philosophy to a group of 4th graders, and the exercise is for the kids to identify problems in society. I have told them that in order to solve problems in life first we must be able to clearly identify and articulate those problems. Keean has done exactly that.

When prompted on why we should be injected with animal DNA, Keean voices a deep concern for society and the degenerative state of humankind. He is especially worried about inequality.
Keean understands that in order to achieve equality we ought to make it so that everyone can fully develop their virtues and become the best selves they possibly can be. Thus, Keean has a desire to build a better world, and his answer is animal DNA. Keean is hoping that by injecting our citizens with animal DNA they will inherit some of the virtues he sees in the animal kingdom: The loyalty of the lion, the grace and effectiveness of the tiger, and the persistence and gentleness of the horse.

Keean is not hoping to turn us all into a real world version of the X-men; what he is really hoping to do is to make society better and more equal. Keean, sharp as he is, points out that if we all had special animal powers, society would be fair. Everyone would be good at something, and everyone could have a job. Keean’s world is one in which the government insures that everyone gets a level playing field. In Keean’s world everyone has a chance of “making it.”

One of the many things I have learned as an educator with Winning Words is to never discredit arguments made by kids. A good argument is a good argument, no matter whom it comes from. Simply because it is expressed in an odd fashion or by a nine year old does not mean that the argument is without merit. We often discredit arguments made by kids, but I have found that they have a certain insight into the ways of the universe that we can all learn from. All we need to do is prompt children to think and speak.

I now often wonder what animal DNA I would choose to get injected with? Luckily I have Keean to help me as well as Bk 10 of Plato’s Republic.
Lesson Plan 1: MLK and Socrates

Essential Questions
What are human rights? What was the U.S. civil rights movement? Why was the practice of non-violence important to the U.S. civil rights movement in, for example, the Montgomery bus boycott and the actions in Birmingham? What did Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. like about Gandhi? What did their form of non-violent civil disobedience seek to achieve?

Activity 1: MLK and Socrates (15-20 minutes)
Review the discussion from the previous session, asking the students if they have thought more about the meaning of human rights, civil disobedience, and non-violence. Remind them that they are engaged in a collaborative inquiry, seeking to make progress in considering difficult philosophical questions. Give them their journals and explain that you want them to write down their thoughts and various points made in class. Invite comments on the handout on MLK and Socrates. If necessary, review the life and death of Socrates, explaining the background to MLK’s remarks.

Discussion
Ask the students what they make of the line: “To a degree, academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience.” Ask them how they would compare Socrates and MLK – on what did they agree, and on what did they disagree? Invite students to take turns reading the relevant passages from “A Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”

Lesson Plan 1: MLK and Gandhi

Activity 2: MLK and Gandhi (25 minutes)

Rehearse the profile and chronology of Gandhi, reminding the students how MLK followed Gandhi and Black followed MLK, and how the U.S. civil rights movement was committed to non-violence. Again, if possible review the following website/statement with them: http://www.thekingcenter.org/about-dr-king and the following account of Gandhian non-violence, which stresses a number of the key points: http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/encyc_nonviolent_resistance/. Non-violence does not, you should stress, mean passivity or cowardice. Explain some of Gandhi’s non-violent actions for purposes of comparison (see, for material, MLK’s “My Trip to the Land of Gandhi,” available at https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/my-trip-land-gandhi.

Discussion

Remind the students about the difference between human rights and legal rights. Ask them again if they think that MLK and Gandhi were right to break the law. Press them on why or why not they believe this. Ask them to explain under what circumstances civil disobedience would be right or wrong. Follow up by asking them why people should or should not practice non-violence. Ask them if non-violence makes a difference to the rightness or wrongness of civil disobedience. Ask them if there is any way to settle the question of whether non-violent civil disobedience is right or wrong. Press them on why Gandhi and MLK believed that it was right under certain circumstances. Did their religious views make a difference to their philosophies of non-violence? Ask them if the U.S. is right to honor MLK with a national holiday, and what that means.

Words for the Day

Non-violence, civil disobedience, Socrates, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Closing

Collect permission slips and make sure that each student has a journal. Offer students thanks for attending the session of Winning Words. Ask for some quick takes on the most interesting question of the day—what did the students find most intriguing? Which questions do they want to pursue? Ask them to write down their thoughts in their journals so that they can share them at the next session.
Lesson Plan 2: Philosophy of Sport
Sports and Body Image

TIME: 1 HOUR

Focus
In this session we will focus on body image in relation to sports. What type of body image does the constant bombardment of sports images produce? Is there a right or wrong way to have a body? Are some bodies more or less fit for certain activities? Why are pictures of women’s sports bodies so different from pictures of men’s sports bodies? Should sports really be divided between the sexes?

Goals
To make students understand that society puts a lot of pressure on them to look a certain way, while in reality they should all be happy and cherish their own bodies.

NOTE: MAKE SURE CLASS DOES NOT TURN INTO BOYS VS. GIRLS

Quick Review Of Topics From Previous Classes (5-10 mins)
- What is philosophy?
- What are sports?
- Why are sports so important to society?
- What is competition?

Opening Activity (10 mins)
Begin by having students mention an actor, athlete, or other celebrity they think is “pretty” or “handsome”. The coach will find a picture of the person on their cellphone and show it to the class. (Make absolutely sure to pick a picture that is PG).

Next the coach will show a print out of paintings from “The Past”. These paintings contain rather voluptuous men and women. The coach will then ask the students why there is such a difference in the way people used to think “healthy” and “beautiful” people look versus how people think they look today.
What is the Orange Curriculum?

Winning Words has developed a new curriculum on the philosophy of sport. The curriculum is designed to look into the ethical, social, and metaphysical issues that kids face almost every day engaging with sport and play.
Lesson Plan 2: Philosophy of Sport  
Sports and Body Image

Opening Questions (5-10 mins)
- What is body image?
- What sources influence how we see our bodies?
- How does sports affect our body image?
- How do athletes affect our body image?
- What is self-esteem?

Discussion
Go around the circle and allow students to talk about their favorite body parts, specifically as this relates to sports. Let them share their thoughts about the sports they are good at. Encourage them to discuss how bodies move, how bodies allow one to participate and be good at sports, how different bodies are good for different activities.
- Is it important how others see your body?
- Is it important to have a positive image of your body?

Positive Body Talk
What can you say about someone that would make them feel good about their body? Bad? Is it important to say positive things about other people? What if you only said bad things about other people? Would they be happy? What if no one ever told you something nice? How would you feel? Have the students say nice things/compliment the students next to them.

Closing Activity:
“Run like a Girl” This video shows how different people think about how girls run. Why is it important how they view others? Is this unfair to people? How should we think about our words and actions? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylxA3o84syY
Congratulations to XS Tennis on the groundbreaking of their new facility at 5400 S. State St. Winning Words will continue to partner with XS to provide mind-bending after school philosophy for kids all over the South Side of Chicago.

Shout Outs to the Philosophy Learning And Teaching Organization AKA PLATO.

Check them out at: [http://plato-philosophy.org/](http://plato-philosophy.org/)
Students at XS Tennis summer camp not only improved their tennis skills, they experienced a unique curriculum of philosophy, coding, and break-dancing. All offered by the Winning Words Team.
Anyone who has been around young children will realize how natural this practice of self-examination is – one of the most common responses to a direction or explanation is “Why?” Unfortunately, this natural inclination to question has been allowed to atrophy in many of America’s schools due to the ubiquity of standardized tests. As high stakes testing has gained prominence, the focus has shifted away from questioning and critical thinking in favor of the ability to answer a set of constrained questions, each with a definite answer; even when reading something as subjective and open ended as poetry, a single “correct” interpretation is promoted and encouraged to be reproduced on a Scantron form.

In both years that I have taught with Winning Words, I have ended my first class by asking the students to begin to flex their questioning muscles and think about the questions that they want to discuss over the course of the year. It became clear both times I completed this exercise that the concept that there exist questions without definite answers is quite foreign to some students. Some of the responses I received included such varied queries as “How do they get electricity into power cords without using lightning?” or “How do DVDs work?” In order to open students’ minds to a wider range of examination, Winning Words highlights that there are many questions that their teachers or parents may not have the answers to; indeed one of my favorite parts of being a Winning Words Coach is the ability to freely admit to my students that I don’t have all of the answers.

“The unexamined life is not worth living.”
– Socrates
The fact that some of history’s greatest minds have disagreed on many of these questions can be especially empowering, showing that the ideas and arguments of the students can be just as valid as those of their teachers or the philosophers themselves. During my Winning Words classes, I frequently attempt to reiterate the idea that there are no wrong answers to many of these questions, as long as the students can logically and passionately defend their claims. Eschewing typical classroom interactions, Winning Words discussions allow for the type of conversation in which the “answer” is not as important as the critical thought that was used to arrive at that conclusion.

“The fact that some of history’s greatest minds have disagreed on many of these questions can be especially empowering”

The free flowing structure of Winning Words lessons allows the students to discuss the issues and topics they care about most. I am continually surprised by the breadth and depth of material the classes are able to cover. For example, in one class period, though I planned to discuss a different topic, the students asked if we could reexamine a topic they had learned about in school that day: the debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois. As we addressed the merits and drawbacks of each viewpoint, we were able to add to their current understanding by drawing connections to previous Winning Words topics such as justice and political philosophy. The critical thinking tools provided through Winning Words were on full display as we questioned the consequences of each viewpoint, both at the turn of the 20th Century and in the present day.

I believe that the freedom to question, discuss, and think deeply provided by Winning Words is valued by the students. In fact, one of my current students told me that his favorite part of the classes is this very ability to ask questions about things he is interested in. Through Winning Words, hopefully many more students will take up the cause of Socrates in questioning their beliefs and world.
School Programs and DuBois

Square-cut pizza slices, processed fruit cups, some untouched steamed vegetables. At Beulah Shoesmith Elementary, where I work with fifth graders after school, I once began a discussion on inequality with something concrete that made it into the classroom each session: the free meals that many of the students at this majority-black school enjoy before their after school programs. Not all the students have meals; some bring their own snacks from home. This miniature case of unequal goods begs some explanation. Is it just that someone who can’t afford a meal wouldn’t get one? What if it has been shown that being hungry at school lowers academic performance? What if there were only so many meals to give out – would everyone still be entitled to one? Some students insist that the purpose of school is simply to teach, that the free meals are students’ private business. On this topic, every student has an opinion, and none are too embarrassed to share it.

I want every lesson to achieve this level of groundedness, which in turn fuels philosophical discussion without even changing gears. Without me realizing it, the students lead the conversation back to an earlier discussion of W.E.B. DuBois’s philosophy of education: “Sure, schools are mostly for teaching, but aren’t we here for an education for the whole person? So shouldn’t they also keep us healthy?” An ever-outspoken student chimes in. She is recalling Du Bois’s critique of Booker T. Washington’s program of technical education, which we read the previous week: “The final product of our training must be neither a psychologist nor a brickmason, but a man.” Beginning with the styrofoam trays in front of us, we end up discussing the limits and aims of education itself. At the end of this discussion lies the inevitable question of why we are all sitting in Winning Words at this very moment. Why examine one’s life?
In the following weeks, I ask students to design their own schools based on their background in Du Bois’s defense of liberal education, Washington’s defense of economic empowerment through vocational education, John Dewey’s philosophy of experiential education, and Rabindranath Tagore’s focus on cultivating artistic and spiritual sensibilities. What would Dewey say about the iPads in their classroom, students wonder. He wrote, “A map does not take the place of an actual journey” but rather “serves as a guide for future experience; it gives direction.” The iPads help make certain issues engaging, for example through math or vocabulary games, sure, but could they take the place of group collaboration, discussion, or reflection? Namely, do they help examine one’s life? When a few students insist they can’t, I allow us to do a round of questioning on Philosophyexperiments.com, where a series of questions prompt you to defend a coherent position on tough issues. In the end, students design all kinds of schools, from schools modeled like universities, to nature academies where all classes are conducted on hikes, to levitating schools based on “Sky High” where students learn to train their own inner (super)powers.

“What would Dewey say about the iPads in their classroom, students wonder”

After each student presents his or her school, it becomes clear that all the schools share core principles of freedom of self-invention and discovery. While this is often considered a hallmark of elite education, as at John Dewey’s own Laboratory Schools, it remains in the realm of fantasy for many Winning Words students. By turning the classroom around, by asking students rather than telling them, Winning Words actively turns that fantasy into reality. Unsurprisingly, Du Bois is another one of the students’ major inspirations. As he wrote in the Souls of Black Folk, “Men we shall have only as we make manhood the object of the work of the schools—intelligence, broad sympathy, knowledge of the world that was and is, and of the relation of men to it—this is the curriculum of that Higher Education which must underlie true life.”
When I began assembling and teaching the *Winning Words* “Black Curriculum,” I was unsure of how exactly to plug the staples of our curriculum—Socrates, Aristotle, John Dewey—into the live questions of race and inequality that many of our students face each day. Luckily Martin Luther King Jr. did much of the work for me in his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” King cites Socrates as a key source of inspiration for his philosophy of nonviolent protest: “Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.” King’s “Letter” is more than eloquent political rhetoric; it is a philosophical text, arguing that racial justice is not fundamentally different from any other kind of justice.

Yet King is no sophist. What makes his writing truly philosophical is that he draws upon but ultimately critiques Socrates’s conclusions on many key issues: that by living in a place you agree to live by its laws; that harming the laws of the city would necessarily bring the city harm; that activity that brings violence into the open is always unjust. Where Socrates refused to break the law of Athens and flee the city, King brings in St. Augustine’s distinction between natural law and human law to argue that “an unjust law is no law at all.” This leads us to an opposing conclusion: “One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.” Even further, he argues, “an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.”
King had not just himself on the line, as Socrates did, but an entire movement seeking justice. He was not less principled than Socrates, but his principles were rooted in concrete justice and thus depended on the real challenges of leading a political movement. When I asked my 7th-grade students at Lenart Elementary to defend King or Socrates on several issues, the discussion that ensued was understandably heated. Many students defended the merits of Socrates’ justice-at-all-costs, but saw its weaknesses when applied to the political reality faced by King, where disobeying unjust laws clearly contributed to the justice of the Civil Rights Movement.

Since the Winning Words curriculum normally begins the school year with an introduction to philosophy through Socratic dialogues, I typically move directly to King, who cements the relevance of Socratic dialogue in the modern world. As he wrote, “academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience.” In the frequent case that this aligns with Black History Month, one can see how showing King in a philosophical light also secures King’s claim to universal significance, grounded in but not limited to the American Civil Rights Movement.
I believe that Socrates made the right choice in staying in prison and drinking the hemlock. This is because he believed that he was not corrupting the youth of Athens, although the people of accusing him thought he was. This is where the saying “live what you preach” comes in. Socrates believed what he was preaching was just, so he should stay and accept what he got himself into. Plus, the senators must have known that Crito could help Socrates escape; so Socrates didn't let the government kill him, he let himself kill him.
“Philosophy is about life, death and everything in between”

“Having Justin Bieber as your mentor is not a virtue!”

“Philosophy is learning how to live a good life”

“Socrates was the original rap star”

“A continent is like a city only bigger”

“Why do I have to sit up!”

“Control is only necessary in a world ruled by adults”
I believe Socrates should have fled the city. This is because he did not do exactly what he was accused of. He was accused of corrupting the youth. Most of the people he talked to were old men. He was also accused of not believing in the gods. That cannot be proven. He may have not talked about the gods, but that does not mean he didn't believe in them. Every person can choose what they believe in and what not to believe in. If he fled the city he could continue spreading his opinion and knowledge throughout the world, like Martin Luther King Jr. did. He never gave up during the fight, when he was pushed down he got back up. But Socrates chose not to. But I believe that was a mistake, that he should have stuck to his man and died.

This is a very clear and strong argument — exactly what makes for a good philosophical argument!