

# EMPOWERING PHILOSOPHY

ASHOKA EDUCATION



## THE PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL



*“PHILOSOPHY CONVERSATIONS BY STUDENTS FOR CHILDREN AS A MEAN TO DEVELOP EMPATHY, CRITICAL THINKING AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP »*



### CHALLENGE

In the current educational system, philosophy does not constitute an official subject matter. Besides, most of the existing methodologies on how to approach philosophy in classrooms are aimed mainly for primary education: manuals about philosophising with adolescents and young adults are rare. The existent methods are often elaborated in rather lengthy studies, and teachers rarely have the time to thoroughly wade through them. However, with the increasing interest in active citizenship, training students in critical reflection, awareness, argumentation and philosophical skills seems more relevant than ever.



### PROJECT

Empowering Philosophy approaches philosophy in the classroom in an innovative way. Instead of having teachers develop a philosophical conversation with their students, they empower their students (16-17 years old) and have them prepare and moderate a discussion with children (10-12 years old) from an unfamiliar school. They use a concise and hands-on lesson plan and make them create a link with nature through a reflective walk from the primary school to the conversation location, in order for them to look at their city from a different point of view.



### STAKEHOLDERS

Empowering Philosophy works better with a class of **16-17-year-old students** within the context of a language class. Indeed, the skills developed in the philosophical conversation can be useful for the course material as well. The project also requires to find a primary school teacher ready to involve **10-12-year-old children** in a philosophical discussion with your students.



### WORKLOAD

To organise a philosophical conversation with your students and primary school children, consider dedicating **between 7 and 10 hours in total** to the project.



### RESOURCES

This project requires minimal resources except for sources of inspiration for older students to prepare their philosophical conversation with the children (ex: videos, key concepts...).

# HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE PROJECT **IN YOUR SCHOOL**

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## SET-UP OF THE PROJECT



### FIND A GROUP OF CHILDREN

Find a partner teacher with a group of 5th-grade children (10-12 years old), ideally coming from an unfamiliar school so that students can create bonds more easily.



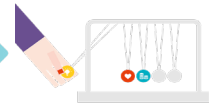
### FIND A LOCATION

You can organise the conversation in the primary school, but it is best in another location as it allows for a reflective walk before the discussion takes place (see below).



### SCHEDULE A DATE

Agree on a date, a schedule and logistical matters with your partner teacher. Confirm these aspects and communicate them to the school(s) and parents.



### INCLUDE IT IN YOUR CLASS

Use the preparation of the philosophical conversation to achieve the pedagogical objectives related to your subject (e.g. writing, public speaking, grammar...).

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## PREPARATION AND MODERATION OF THE CONVERSATION



### GATHER INSPIRING CONTENTS

Gather enough material to inspire your students and make them understand what a philosophical conversation should and shouldn't look like (videos, readings, examples, etc.).



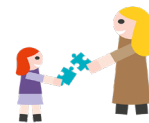
### PREPARE YOUR STUDENTS

Take between 4 and 6 hours with your students to help them prepare their conversation and reflective walk. See below for more information on the objectives and process.



### GO ON A REFLECTIVE WALK

Take your students to the primary school. 3 students are then in charge of a group of 10 children and go for a reflective walk to the conversation location through various stops.



### OVERVIEW THE MODERATION

During 30-40 minutes, 3 students will moderate a philosophical conversation with up to 10 children in the chosen location. Take a moment to wrap-up before walking back to school.

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## FOLLOW-UP AFTER THE EVENT



### WITH THE CHILDREN

Take a moment a few days after the activity to reflect with the teacher and her pupils on their experience. What did they discover during their philosophical conversations?



### WITH YOUR STUDENTS

Organise a roundtable with your students to share their learnings: what worked and what did not, what happened and what did they observe, what would they do differently next time?



A language class is ideal to launch Empowering Philosophy. Indeed, the program achieves similar goals such as systemic argument, writing and talking in front of unknown people.

Give your students a set of questions to help them prepare their group facilitation, starting with:

1/ **What is it that you want to achieve?**

- goals and objectives of the session

2/ **How will you do this?**

- organisation of the session

- skills developed

- material needed and exercises to facilitate

## BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNT

### TEACHERS POSTURE

It can be difficult for teachers to let go of what might happen during the conversations. Keep in mind that, as a teacher, you should control the process, not the content. «Letting things happen is not the same as letting people do what they like!» Children feel it a lot when the conversation is not open but rather going towards a specific answer. As a teacher, your role is to help your students prepare a set of questions that keep the frame working without controlling the outcomes of the conversation.

### ENVIRONMENT

It is always better to go outside of the school to make connections with the school environment and break the energy of the classroom thanks to a walk. It is also an opportunity to create interactions between philosophy and the environment (museum, nature, city) and prepare children and students for the conversation by opening their minds.



### BACKGROUND

Some extra material can be found in developing contents, more inspiration and background on philosophy, facts and effects of philosophy on pupils (based on research). This extra work depends on how much time you want to allocate to the project.

### PREPARATION

You need 6 hours to prepare your students in 3 steps: 1/information/inspiration, 2/framing questions, 3/conversation preparation. Then, take an entire afternoon for the conversations: time to walk to the location, 30-40 min of discussion, time to wrap up and go back to school.

### GROUP SIZE

It is essential to keep the size of the group manageable for your students. Make sure to have 3 students taking care of maximum 9-10 children in a philosophical conversation. Do not get involved on the content but make sure that the process is running smoothly.

## MORE INFORMATION TO GO FURTHER



### CONTACT

Meet with the project owners  
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### VIDEO

Discover the story of the project and the behind the scenes videos:  
[ashoka.org/en-BE/eduinnovation](https://ashoka.org/en-BE/eduinnovation)

Download the Teacher Manual (NL) [here](#)

