

## World Philosophy Day: Where It Can Lead To?

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SharingPYP blog at <http://blogs.ibo.org/sharingpyp/> and  
IB Community Blog at <http://blogs.ibo.org/>

***It is World Philosophy Day on Nov 15<sup>th</sup>. Conceived by UNESCO in 2005, it is now entering its teens! There will be philosophical events - even parties - across the world, celebrating philosophy as 'an everyday practice that can transform societies'. P4C shows it can also transform schools.***

There are many 'World Days' – more than the number of days in a year, actually – and no doubt every one of them deserves support and celebration. But anyone who tried to support them all would surely be exhausted in less than a year. If only for our health's sake (World Health Day is April 7th, by the way) we all have to prioritise some and ignore others.

But on what basis do we prioritise? World Philosophy Day (Nov 15th) is a good day to think about this question. Broadly speaking, a person's choices and priorities in life reflect his or her 'personal' philosophy or principles – he values kindness (World Kindness Day was two days ago, Nov 13th) or she celebrates a day for happiness (March 20th), etc.

Most people's principles and preferences, however, are not particularly thought through or systematised. We might find it hard to justify why we support one good cause rather than another. Philosophising at least helps us to be a little clearer about what we value and why.

But we can't spend all our time philosophising about this. The point of philosophy is not just to think well but to act well on our thoughts.

That, at any rate, is the thinking behind World Philosophy Day today (Nov 15th). When the General Conference of UNESCO established this Day in 2005, it wanted to underline *that "philosophy is a discipline that encourages critical and independent thought and is capable of working towards a better understanding of the world and promoting tolerance and peace"*.

Turning philosophy as an academic discipline into a discipline for life – encouraging and enabling young people to be more considerate, reasonable and, yes, kind – was the dream of Matthew Lipman, the founder of Philosophy for Children (P4C), 50 years ago. Happily, it is a dream that is increasingly becoming realised. P4C is now being practised in over 60 countries, and significant projects have recently been launched in two contrasting Middle Eastern countries.

One area I am particularly excited about is making links between P4C with IB aims and curriculum. Since I did an evaluation of the ToK programme for the IBO a few years ago, I have been convinced that the spirit of the IB is closely aligned with that of P4C.

There is even a sense of synchronicity here, since the IB was founded in the very year, 1968, that Lipman conceived the radical pedagogy that underpins P4C – the Community of Inquiry. This pedagogy, celebrated by the BBC in a 1990 documentary series called 'The Transformers', has been

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thoroughly adopted by an increasing numbers of teachers. One teacher, in a video produced by an East London school, said it had helped her 'become the teacher I always wanted to be'.

I began a project of my own a couple of years ago, introducing P4C to IB schools in Chicago, Paris and Shanghai, and the feedback has been such that I have set up two Development Teams with them and other invitees - one for PYP and MYP / Diploma. P4C courses and materials tailored for IB schools are in the making, and should be ready soon into the New Year.

The courses will be based on the 6 strands of philosophical teaching-and-learning that I have been elaborating over a longer period: *inquiry, reflection, conceptualisation, dialogue, reasoning*, and - what I call - '*virtue-valuing*'. IB teachers may immediately sense the resonance of these within their context, but obviously each of them has a philosophical 'flavour', and draws naturally on what is, after all, the most ancient of academic disciplines – philosophy itself.

I hope to produce short blogs on each of these strands in coming months, and would be encouraged by any expressions of interest by individual teachers or schools. Meanwhile, I attach a couple of photos of P4C in practice, courtesy of one of my partner schools, Hongqiao Primary in Shanghai – children sitting in 'philosophical circles'. These may not be 'magic' circles, but they are definitely having wonderful effects.

## About the Author

Roger Sutcliffe was a primary, and then secondary, teacher for 20 years before he became involved with P4C. He has been freelancing for the last 20 or so years, specialising in P4C and Teaching Thinking. He helped found and develop the world's leading charity promoting P4C, and has served 2 terms as President of ICPIIC, the international network of P4C educators. Roger is now the President of DialogueWorks and can be reached at [rogersutcliffe@dialogueworks.co.uk](mailto:rogersutcliffe@dialogueworks.co.uk)