## Philosophy For Children In Houston

In Houston several projects in philosophy for children are in process or are about to be initiated. To begin with, I am continuing the work in philosophy for children which I began at the Laboratory School of the University of Missouri in 1976. My earlier work in Missouri focused primarily on the effect of philosophy for children as an adjunct in developing children's syntactic skills and their understanding of science. Since arriving here in Houston, I have operated philosophy for children classes for gifted students in the Clear Creek Independent School District of Houston. My interest in philosophy as an adjunct to science education continues and is now accompanied by an additional concern: the use of philosophy to increase student appreciation and understanding of mathematics.

A former graduate student from our program at the University of Houston at Clear Lake City, Ms. Janet Penner, is about to begin a program in analytical reasoning for gifted and talented elementary school students in the Alvin Independent School District.

Also two of our recent masters degree graduates will be joining me as teaching associates in my work with gifted and talented fourth through sixth graders this coming spring semester.

Two graduate courses which we offer at the University of Houston at Clear Lake City to prepare teachers for working with philosophy for children or related programs are entitled "Logic Games and Giftedness," and "Children's Logic and Analysis." The first course focuses on the use of various games to teach children

formal principles of systematic thinking. The second course deals more generally with the theory and practice of philosophy for children including the use of such curricular materials as Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery and topical outlines of specific discussions that have been developed as a by-product of our work at the Clear Creek Independent School District.

The use of logic games - in conjunction with a philosophy for children program - has several aspects, the most obvious being the children's increased capacity for formal thinking. More importantly, however, is the fact that the logic games can be used to create several distinct and intense learning situations for small groups while a somewhat larger group engages in the process of doing philosophy. By using a variety of carefully selected logic games, a class of thirty can be reduced to a discussion group of twelve while the other students are arranged in groups of two to four for the purpose of game-playing. In this manner each student is involved in the rewarding process of learning more careful habits of thinking.

It has been and will continue to be our goal to encourage the development of philosophy for children practices only under the direction of trained and competent teachers. Thus, while such a process will necessarily proceed at a snail's pace, its long-range effectiveness ought to be much more pronounced than a somewhat briefer and more superficial strategy. In this way we hope to insure that philosophy for children will gradually become a standard part of the general curriculum in our local school districts and not just one more passing fancy.

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