

Philosophy for Children

Lesson Plan: **Epistemology**

Samantha Bernstein, Sophie Rubin, Mansie Bennett

Total time: 45 minutes

Materials:

- Printed-out optical illusions (2 copies)
- Printed-out picture of clouds (1 copy/student)

Objective:

- The goal is to have the children begin to question the variety of their held beliefs and knowledge and prove where their knowledge comes from. We want them to begin to understand knowledge as determined by experiential data and how this changes based on differing perceptions.

Introductions (8 min):

- Have everyone say their name, one thing they know about themselves, and how they know it
 - I know that my birthday is ___ because I was told this, for example.
 - I know that my shoes are white because I can see them, for example.
- Go over norms again from the last class

Activity 1 (5 min):

1. Using three red solo cups and one toy basketball, put the ball under one of the cups and mix them around
 - a. Sneakily move the basketball out of the cup and ask student to choose which cup the ball is in
2. Have each student talk about why they thought the basketball was under a certain cup, how they could truly **know**
3. Lead into discussion about deception
 - a. Can we trust our perceptions? Can we trust our eyes? Can we trust our brain? Where does the information we hold to be **true** come from?

Movement Break (2 min):

- Simon says
 - Touch your head, touch your toes, crouch to the floor

Activity 2 Optical Illusions (10 min):

- Sometimes we see different things and we might not know what's actually there!
- What do you see? Does anyone agree? Does anyone see something else? What is actually there? (The goal of this is not for the children to say "both" but to recognize that their classmates might be seeing/believing/thinking something else)
 - Rabbit or duck
 - Glass or faces
 - Elephant (how many legs)
- Optimal conclusion: we all see different things! So what you think or believe or know might be different than what your friends think or believe or know.
 - If the student sees both, ask:
 - Then which one is it?
 - If the students sees only one, ask:
 - Then does the other one exist? Are the other people who see it lying?

Activity 3 Clouds (10 min)

- Give each child the same picture of a cloud and ask that they turn the cloud into a drawing
- Begin a discussion about trusting your senses and concluding the idea that not everyone sees the same thing

Wrap-Up/Clean-Up (2 min)

- Ending questions/key takeaways:
 - We shouldn't just assume that people always see the same thing as us, and even if someone sees something different than you, this doesn't mean that you or the other person are wrong - multiple things can be true!!
- Say our goodbyes!





