Title of lesson: PhilosoFriday

Suggested grade/age: Any - I work with 10-12th grade

Approximate time needed to complete lesson: Twenty minutes to an entire class period

Learning objective(s) and significance of lesson:

Learning Objective: Students will practice discussion skills; students will consider new points of view; students will write about philosophical questions that don’t have easy answers.

Significance: Students get the opportunity to slow down and authentically deliberate - I believe careful deliberation and thought is the cornerstone of a liberal arts education and this practice reintroduces the art of thinking.

Brief summary/outline of lesson:

Steps: 1) Have a “big idea” question (either teacher or student developed) on the board
2) Students write about the question for about 5 minutes silently
3) Large group discussion, with a focus on careful thought, questioning assumptions, and listening
4) Students take notes during the discussion when they feel they need
5) Students write about their thoughts at the end

Assessment: This is meant to be low risk, high reward time. The focus is not on grades. I give students feedback on their thoughts in a mainly dialogical (rather than evaluative) format. I ask them questions to get them thinking on their own.

Related Resources:

Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs:
- Use questions to create journal or blog entries
- Use writing to create longer essays
- Find philosophical writers writing on the same questions to boost ideas
- Look for ideas that are actionable in students’ lives, the school, and community and create a class or school plan to implement change