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Mrs. Cannon

Socratic 12

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42

42. The number printed on my back every basketball and Frisbee game my senior year, it's also the answer to life, the Universe and everything, according to *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*. Let me explain, there's a planet whose inhabitants are so advanced and intelligent, they created the ultimate computer, able to answer *any* question. So they asked, what is the answer to life, the universe, and everything? To these massive questions, the computer responded it would need a couple million years to answer. So they waited, generation after generation passed until the computer finally calculated the answer. The answer was 42.

Obviously nobody understood the answer. The point is, when answers are given to us externally we don't always do the work or discovery to understand them internally.

I initially approached my classes thinking only about answers, and what methods I could use to receive the "right" ones. I used Google for my assignments, and received similarly how the machine responded to the inhabitants. An answer I didn't understand, one just to get the grade. I did minimal work, went to school for my daily dose of answers, everyday the same routine.

I've changed, not because I give better answers, but rather because I have more questions.

Beginning Sophomore year, I sat in the back of my Socratic 10 classroom, disinterested. After the first hour, I had what I needed. Next period! Having Ms. Smith constantly urge me to

participate in Socratic discussions was exhausting. Didn't she get it? I knew the book and the historical facts. One day I determined to end it, to prove there wasn't a need for socratic discussion. I was winning, or so I thought. I brought certainty to the questions she asked, I was so confident, that I actually shared with the class for once. I wanted to prove the questions Ms. Smith was asking were obvious. Why didn't other students see that? The discussion was an awkward verbal volleyball game. I had answers, and when others questioned them, I justified, using whatever methods I could. Why was I the only one who understood? Or was I? I took a major step back to self-reflect. I couldn't tell Ms. Smith how useless the discussion was, because it wasn't! It *was* useful! How could this happen? I was right, wasn't I? I thought about it more and more as the day went on.

What happened that day was a personal birth of questioning, and one massive hit to my ego. I found out that every answer in my life had another question behind it. If there are no questions about our societal governments, religions, and institutions, wouldn't everyone be supporting them? That class had me wondering if this was the same situation and if so, did I really understand what I believe?

My Maeser education wasn't about learning society's answers, but understanding society's questions. The questions we find on homework train us to look at society's questions. Understanding the questions that are given on tests is arguably the most important part of doing well on them. Classes I came to appreciate the most were those that left me with more questions than answers. Specifically, how is this applicable to everyday life? Why was this course important to take? Why have these concepts shifted the world?

Every answer gave me more questions to explore. THIS is true education - personal exploration and discovery! When you truly wonder how to solve  $94 = 2x + 10$  in the classroom,

you can truly wonder how to solve world hunger outside the classroom. That's the Maeser way of learning.

This all leads to the big question: what's the answer to life, the universe, and everything? Why should these questions be asked personally? I've found the essence of a question isn't about closing something, but about opening something, discovery. The inhabitants opened their Hamlet book and skipped to the end, trying to disclose their curiosities about it and move on.

During my early years at Maeser I asked far too many questions that only dealt with grades, tests, and basic answers, (one of my biggest regrets). But I learned how to ask questions that opened up to new possibilities, discoveries, and more questions. Not just any questions, but the kind that lead me toward understanding myself, and the world. The answer isn't 42, but you're going to have to figure that out for yourself.