

Pilot Aims and Outcomes

> who will design the course and what will it look like?

Curriculum development will be led by UNSW Professor Philip Cam, an expert in philosophical inquiry for children. Professor Cam will develop a secular, inquiry-based program focusing on 'ethical exploration'.

Essentially, the aims of such a course are to:

- provide a secular complement for the discussion of the ethical dimension of students' lives
- offer a secure, non-judgemental space to explore the question, "What ought one to do?"
- introduce the language of ethics and in doing so to provide the tools to survey the values and principles we live by
- inspire an appreciation of virtues and ideals
- develop the intellectual capacity and the personal attitudes needed for participating in ethical reflection and action
- encourage an openness towards important personal and public issues
- introduce dialogue as a means of resolving ethical issues
- develop students' ability to identify the relevant stakeholders and thoroughly explore, among other things, the consequences of proposed resolutions to the ethical dilemmas which they are considering
- in short, to deepen the ethical sense of the future generation.

> some topics for ethical exploration include:

Arguments	Authority
Being Excluded	Blame
Bullying	Children's Rights
Courage	Disability
Discrimination	Duty
Excuses	Fairness
Freedom and Responsibility	Friendship
'Ganging Up'	Inappropriate Behaviour
Lying and Telling the Truth	Name Calling
Normal and Acceptable	Promising
Right and Wrong	Racial and Other Intolerance
Rights and Responsibilities	Teasing
Violence	

> an example, illustrating methodology:

>> is it fair?

This activity asks students to judge whether a scenario is fair or not fair.

Before you begin, form the class into a discussion circle. Place a piece of card marked 'FAIR' away from the centre, another marked 'UNFAIR' opposite it, and a third marked '?' in the middle. Then divide the class into groups of three or four students and give each group given a card containing one of the scenarios.

Allow the groups no more than five minutes to discuss whether their case is fair or unfair and decide on their reasons. Where members of the group are unable to agree, they will need to present their conflicting reasons.

One by one, ask the groups to place their cards where they think they belong, inviting them to present their findings and to field discussion of the reasons for their decision. When the group presents its findings, and during the discussion, you should assist the class to recover any *criteria* that are being used to make judgements as to why what happened in the scenario was fair or not fair.

Discuss as many cases as time permits, adding to and refining your list of criteria as you go. The discussion should end with a list of considered criteria for what makes something fair or not.

No one would own up to having broken the classroom window, so the whole class was made to clean up the school yard.

Although Robert worked very hard at school, he nearly always received very poor marks.

Naomi found some money in the playground and handed it to the teacher. As no one came to collect the money, the teacher let Naomi keep it.

Bethany knew who had broken the classroom window, but she wouldn't tell. So the teacher punished her.

Jackson pulled the cat's tail, and the cat scratched him.

Maria stole something from you, and so you steal something from her.

Since Sally's brother is older than she is, he is allowed to stay up later than her.

Lola writes wonderful stories without even trying. She won the school writing prize.

> some tangible examples of ethical exploration include:

- What does it mean to be fair (respectful, tolerant)? How do we know if something is fair?

- Is it ever okay to tell a lie? A relative versus absolute view of situations e.g. Your grandmother has just knitted you a sweater for your birthday and you don't like it. What do you tell her?
- exploration of ethical dilemmas such as the use of animals in medical research or sport (foxhunting, bullfighting)

> Benefits of teaching ethics through the collaborative inquiry method include:

- an inquiring and open-minded outlook
- willingness to look at things from other people's points of view and to consider their interests
- a disposition to respond to differences and disagreements with others on the basis of reason rather than resorting to abuse or force
- a tendency to be actively involved in matters of community concern
- an inclination to take responsibility for one's decisions and actions
- development of higher order (critical) thinking skills
- development of social skills such as cooperation, mutual respect
- self-esteem and resilience development.

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