

Ethics Lesson Plan

Total Time: 41 min
Ages: 4-5 years old

Materials:

- “It’s Mine” by Leo Lionni
- A few chairs from the classroom
- Phone and speaker to play music

Goal: Our goal for this lesson is to remind children what philosophy is and how to participate in a philosophical discussion by emphasizing the structure for response covered during our last visits. We will introduce ethics to them and discuss the difference between “right” and “wrong.” In our adaptation of musical chairs, we will help students to think about sharing in their own lives and will expand upon those ideas through reading the book “It’s Mine” by Leo Lionni. We hope the book will be a successful prompt for students to explore ideas of fairness and reflect on whether things are good for them vs. good for everybody.

Introduction (5 minutes):

- Facilitators re-introduce themselves and give have students introduce themselves again..
 - Everyone stands up, go around the group and say name and a rule they have to follow.
 - Ex. “My name is Amy and I have to wash my hands before I eat my food” or “My name is Eden and I can only eat two sweets a day.”

Reminding Children What Philosophy Is (7 minutes):

- Does anyone remember what philosophy is?
 - Philosophy is asking big questions like “what is fairness?” and “what is right? Vs. what is wrong?”
 - Today we will be studying ethics, have students say “ethics”
 - In ethics we try to see what’s right and what’s wrong.
- Remind them how to participate in philosophical discussion.
 - Encourage students to explain their answers in the following way:
 - “I agree with ____ because...”
 - “I disagree with ____ because...”

Sharing Musical Chairs Activity (10 min):

- This activity is a twist on the typical musical chairs game. Students will walk around a circle of chairs and must find a seat when the music stops. But, in this version everyone must have a chair, requiring students to share their spots as the amount of chairs lessens.
- During the activity we will find opportunities to ask children the following questions:
 - (to a child doesn’t have a chair) How does it feel to not have a chair to sit in?

- (to a child with a chair) How does it feel to have a chair when someone else does not?
- (to children sharing a chair) How does it feel to share?

Read and Discuss “It’s Mine!” (15 min):

- Facilitators will read “It’s Mine” and will ask questions at various marked points in the book.
 - Mark 1: Why do you think the frogs are fighting?
 - Mark 2: Milton says the water is his and Rupert says the earth is his. Does anyone own the water/earth?
 - Mark 3: Do you think these frogs are friends?
 - Mark 4: How do you think the frogs feel
 - Mark 5: Why do the frogs feel better now?
 - Mark 6: Why are the frogs sharing the water now?
 - Mark 7: Do you think the one frog, Lydia was happier when she had all the butterflies for herself or now when she’s sharing them?
 - Mark 8: What do you like more: sharing your toys or having them all to yourself?
- After the book we hope to facilitate a larger discussion about whether it is more fun to do things that are good for them or good for everyone.
 - If students say that it is more fun to do things that are good for them, we can challenge this:
 - Did the frogs have more fun when they were sharing?
 - Can it make us happier when our friends are happier?
 - Do you think it is important to treat others as you would want to be treated?
 - When someone shares with you do you trust them more?
 - If students say that it is more fun to do things that are good for everyone, we can challenge this:
 - What if what is good for everyone is wrong or makes you sad?
 - Are there things that you would not want to share or an activity that you like to do by yourself?

Lesson Plan adapted from “Ethics for the Very Young” by Erik Kenyon.