

Course Title:
Philosophy: "The Way"
Mini Course

Grades 7 & 8

Length:
Approximately 10 Weeks

DEPARTMENT
Gifted and Talented

Schools:
Pierrepont
Union

Date:
Fall/Winter 2010

RUTHERFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rutherford, New Jersey

GIFTED AND TALENTED DEPARTMENT

“The Way”...Philosophy
MINI-COURSE
GRADES 7 & 8

“The Way” (Philosophy)

1. Introduction/Overview/Philosophy

In this philosophy unit students will explore everyday issues, such as: What is love? Is lying always wrong? Is beauty a matter of fact, or a matter of taste? What is real/unreal? Through the reading of the book The Tao of Pooh, by Benjamin Hoff, students will develop an understanding of the Chinese philosopher Lao-Tsu who hypothesized the notion of happiness through “the Way.” “While Eeyore frets...and Piglet hesitates...and Rabbit calculates...and Owl pontificates...Pooh just is.” And that’s a clue to the secret wisdom of the Taoists.

Course Outline

The course includes, but is not limited to, the reading of the book The Tao of Pooh by Benjamin Hoff. Along with this reading, a selection of personal and societal philosophical problems will be taken from a variety of resources. These situations are designed to challenge the students’ ability to make moral decisions by analyzing dilemmas and synthesizing alternative ethical solutions to problems. In addition to the eastern philosopher Lao-Tsu, the philosophies of Plato, Socrates, Aristotle and other great western thinkers will be examined.

2. Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. To use their critical and creative thinking skills to solve problems
2. To utilize deductive and inductive reasoning skills to interpret information
3. To translate logical arguments into symbolic form and develop logical conclusions.
4. To practice their lateral thinking skills as they use the concept of syllogisms to solve puzzles.
5. To demonstrate responsibility for personal actions and contributions to group activities.
6. To describe and demonstrate appropriate character traits social skills and positive attitudes needed for home, school, community and workplace.
7. To explain and demonstrate how character and behavior affects and influences the actions of others in home, school and community.

New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards

The following New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards are integrated into this course:

Language Arts Literacy List of Standards (2004)

- 3.1 (Reading) All students will understand and apply the knowledge of sounds, letters, and words in written English to become independent and fluent readers, and will read a variety of materials and texts with fluency and comprehension.
- 3.2 (Writing) All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in context and form for different audiences and purposes.
- 3.3 (Speaking) All students will speak in clear, concise, organized language that varies in context and form for different audiences and purposes.
- 3.4 (Listening) All students will listen actively to information from a variety of sources in a variety of situations.
- 3.5 (Viewing and Media Literacy) All students will access, view, evaluate, and respond to print, nonprint, and electronic texts and resources.

Mathematics List of Standards (2004)

- 4.4 (Data analysis, probability, and discrete mathematics) All students will develop an understanding of the concepts and techniques of data analysis, probability, and discrete mathematics, and will use them to model situations, solve problems, and analyze and draw appropriate inferences from data.
- 4.5 (Mathematical processes) All students will use mathematical processes of problem solving, communication, connections, reasoning, representations, and technology to solve problems and communicate mathematical ideas.

Technology List of Standards (2009)

- 8.2 (Technology Education, Engineering, and Design) All students will develop an understanding of the nature and impact of technology, engineering, technological design, and the designed world, as they relate to the individual, society and the environment.

Life and Career Education in the 21st Century (2009)

- 9.1 (21st century life skills) All students will demonstrate creative, critical thinking, Collaboration and problem solving skills to function successfully as global citizens and workers in diverse ethnic and organizational cultures.

3. Proficiency Levels

This mini-course is offered to students in grades 7 & 8 who have qualified for the Gifted and Talented Program.

4. Methods of Assessment

a. Student Assessment

The teacher will provide a variety of assessments, which may include, but are not limited to, the following: teacher observation of individual and group exercises, class discussions, and evaluation of student products.

b. Curriculum Assessment/ Teacher Assessment

The teacher/ Gifted and Talented coordinator will review this course and continue to modify and update its content.

5. Grouping

Students self-select this mini-course in grades 7 & 8.

6. Articulation/ Scope & Sequence/ Time Frame

Over a period of approximately 8 weeks students will be given a variety of philosophical dilemmas to solve individually and in groups. Their decision-making will be based on sound ethical principles that are based on the reading of great eastern and western philosophers including but not limited to Lao Tsu, Plato, Socrates and Aristotle.

7. Resources

The Tao of Pooh by Benjamin Hoff

Philosophical Thinker Sheets (Trillium Press)

Philosophy Rocks by Stephen Law

River of a Thousand Tales by Rao Kolluru

The Allegory of the Cave by Plato

Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery, The Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children

Orbiting with Logic by Bonnie Risby

Tough Decisions: 50 Activities in Values and Character Education by Ann Bourman

Creating More Creative People by Anne B. Crabbe (Future Problem Solving Program)

Psychology for Kids II by Jonni Kincher

Possible Films: Clips from "The Gods Must Be Crazy"

8. Methodologies

Methods include but are not limited to:

- Cooperative learning
- Individual and group problem solving
- Inquiry
- Class discussion
- Role playing
- Written expression
- Experimenting

9. Suggested Activities

- Silent sustained reading
- Shared Inquiry discussions
- Tactile art creation
- Close textual analysis
- Philosopher research

10. Interdisciplinary Connections

The scope of materials for this philosophy unit is broad and interdisciplinary. Questions from different cultures and different points of view are examined from areas, such as aesthetics, science, law, logic and daily personal life.

11. Professional Development

As per the PDP/100 Hours statement: the teacher will continue to improve expertise through participation in a variety of professional development opportunities. Specialized professional development for teachers in the Gifted and Talented Department is offered through the Bergen County Consortium of Teachers of the Gifted (BCCTG), the New Jersey Association for Gifted Children (NJAGC), and Montclair State University G/T Youth Program

