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Overview of the Summer Ethics Academy

The authors of this paper, two faculty members in the department of philosophy, designed and implemented the summer program. Smith was the sole director the first two years, and she and Oxley divided the responsibilities the next two years. The directors were responsible for every element of the program, including working with schools and parents to select children and facilitate their participation, arranging transportation, purchasing, buying, and preparing food and craft supplies, writing the curriculum, and training the assistants, and implementing the day to day activities with the children. The first year, the SEA had fifteen students for three days in July; by the fourth year, there were two one-week sessions with roughly twenty-five students each. Five area elementary schools participated the first year, and by the fourth year, eight participated. For each week of the Academy, four to five university students participating in an ethics scholarship program and course of study, the Jackson Scholars (JSs), assisted as group leaders and facilitators. The children, the Jackson *Junior* Scholars (JJSs), were transported to and from the university by local school buses generously provided by the Horry County school district. The program scheduled two morning sessions, an afternoon session, and then a recreational activity such as swimming or ping-pong daily. Morning and afternoon snacks, as well as lunch in the college dining hall, were provided. On the final day, the students visited a local campground owned by the family (the Jacksons) that funds the Ethics Center, where they presented what they learned during the week to the family, ate lunch, and played video games and miniature golf.

The university students (JSs) who served as group leaders had taken one or two courses in ethics, such as Contemporary Moral Issues, Ethical Theory, or Business Ethics; also, they were trained in Philosophy for Children's "community of inquiry" approach to teaching ethics to the kids.³ This method emphasizes asking philosophical questions together *with* the children, not giving them answers on how to live each day. The aim was to enable the kids to think through the moral issues that they face in everyday life, and engage in critical thinking through stories, games, and activities. The college students facilitated discussion, and encouraged the children to explain *why* they have the ideas that they do, even if they are in line with standard moral rules and expectations. The "community of inquiry" approach requires encouraging everyone to participate, including those who are reluctant to speak up, and so the college students were trained to promote mutual respect in all activities and encourage discussions free of ad hominem attacks. During each week of the SEA, each JS led a group of three to five children in conversations about ethics. Armed with pens, paper, presentation tablets, and Post-It notes, they worked together as a small group then discussed their ideas with the whole class. Each day, students were randomly assigned to a different table, so that each child got to know the other participants and each JS.

Program Goals

The learning goals implemented in the SEA focus on three areas: (1) developing moral reasoning abilities (i.e., changing the way they reflect on ethical issues), (2) becoming positive role models (i.e., changing their behavior) by expanding the horizons of one's moral thinking, and (3) building their "moral confidence" (i.e., changing the way they feel about themselves) to act as moral leaders in their communities. Specific learning goals include:

Area (1):

- Reason using moral principles,
- Predict the possible outcomes of actions,
- Consider alternative courses of action,
- Recognize the facts relating to particular situations,
- Recognize those affected by certain actions,