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WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Grades: 3 through 8

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Two sets of age-appropriate scenarios (personal issues and humane issues); black/white board and chalk/markers

Relevant Subjects: Social Studies and Language Arts

Pertinent Information: The first set of scenarios can help children explore how to balance friendship and loyalty with integrity and honesty. The second set can help them explore how to balance desires and ethics. Both sets help students examine and clarify their own values. Before embarking upon an exploration of values, be sure to get the support of parents and your school administrators, so that you're not presenting issues that conflict with a particular family's values.

Preparation: Develop two sets of scenarios that are age-appropriate for your students – one set dealing with personal issues, and the second set dealing with humane issues. (See samples below.)

1. Have students brainstorm what they consider to be the best qualities of human beings. Write their suggestions on the board. Let them know that the definition of “humane” means “having what are considered the best qualities of human beings.”
2. Ask them to name some people who embody these “humane” qualities. (Encourage them to name “famous” people like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi, as well as people they know, such as friends, family, community members and themselves.)
3. Share with students that you're all going to explore some situations and try to decide how to solve the problems using our best qualities.
4. Share one of the personal issues scenarios and discuss it as a class. Ask students to share their ideas for solving the problem. Share one of the humane issues scenarios and discuss it as a class. Ask students to share their ideas for solving the problem. Be sure to model good critical thinking and creativity for your class.

Depending on the grade level and experience of your class, you may want to divide students into groups to explore additional scenarios and share their ideas with the class, or continue to explore the scenarios with your class as a whole.

Alternative: Some students might better connect with the scenarios through role play.

Extensions:

1. Have students divide into small groups and develop their own scenarios, and then share them with the entire group for the whole class to solve. You may also prefer to have the small groups switch the scenarios they've created with those of other groups and practice solving each others' scenarios.
2. Ask students to consider a problem that they've experience before and use what they've learned to determine how they might address the problem differently (or to acknowledge that they handled it just right).
3. Have students choose a current issue that's been in the news (or a current social/environmental problem) and brainstorm ways to solve the problem, using their best qualities.

Sample Issue Scenarios:

Personal Issues:

- Jeremy has witnessed two friends stealing from a local store. Jeremy doesn't want to tell on his friends, but he knows what they have done is wrong. What should Jeremy do?
- Maria is sitting with her friends at lunch when they start talking about a girl in their class in a mean way. They plan to play a trick on the girl that is hurtful. What should Maria do?
- Henry's fourth grade class has a spelling test, and Henry finds himself peeking at his neighbor's work because he did not study for the test. When he gets his test back, he's gotten 100%. Henry starts cheating on every test. Charlie, Henry's best friend, sees Henry cheat one day. What should Charlie do? Sam, who isn't friends with Henry, sees him cheat. What should Sam do?
- Yovanny and his friend Topher spend lots of time listening to music on the Internet, sometimes downloading songs they really like. Yovanny just found out from his older brother that it's against the law to download music from the sites they've been using. Yovanny wants to do the right thing, but he doesn't want Topher to think he's lame, and he knows lots of his friends at school are doing it. What should Yovanny do?
- Jasmine knows a girl at school who frequently gets bullied by a group of girls. Jasmine wants to help, but she doesn't want the group of girls to start bullying her. What should Jasmine do?

Humane Issues:

- Nine-year-old Sarah wants a dog, and Sarah's parents are excited to bring a dog into their home, but they want a golden retriever puppy because they believe that this breed is good with children, and they also feel that it's better to purchase a puppy than to adopt an older dog who may have behavioral problems. Sarah has learned about dog overpopulation in school, and she knows that there are dogs at shelters who desperately need good homes. Sarah doesn't want her family to contribute to the overpopulation problem by purchasing a purebred dog from a breeder, but she wants to have a good dog, too. What should Sarah do?
- Ahmed wants new clothes for school. He's tired of wearing hand-me-downs and especially wants new basketball shoes, along with regular sneakers. His parents don't have much money, so in order to get new clothes and shoes, they shop at a discount chain store. But Ahmed has learned that these stores sell clothes that are often produced by people in sweatshops, and Ahmed doesn't want some kid

to have suffered in a factory so that he can have new stuff. What should Ahmed do?

- Yan and her whole family love chocolate. They buy chocolate cookies and treats whenever they get the chance. Yan learned recently at school that most chocolate comes from slave labor. Yan doesn't want her family to support slave labor, but they really like their chocolate. What should Yan do?
- Audilynn just had her birthday, and some friends got together and bought her some really nice shampoos, soaps and other personal care products. Audilynn noticed that none of the bottles show the "leaping bunny" symbol, which lets her know that the products haven't been tested on animals. Which means these products probably have. She doesn't want to support animal-cruelty, so what should Audilynn do?
- Dane and his family want a new house. They've narrowed it down to two: one is smaller, and in town. The other is larger, but way out in the suburbs. Dane likes the idea of having a big yard and his own room in the larger house, but he knows that bigger houses and lots mean more habitat destruction and that living in the suburbs means more gasoline burned to get into town. Helping protect the environment is important to Dane, but so is having his own space. What should Dane do?

Activity from *The Power and Promise of Humane Education*