

# PEACE STUDIES JOURNAL

Vol. 4, Issue 2  
July 2011

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## **The P.E.A.C.E. Project: Philosophy, Ethics, and Communal Education**

Author: Benjamin J. Wasserman<sup>1</sup>  
Baccalaureate Program for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies – CUNY  
2063 74<sup>th</sup> St. #3  
Brooklyn, NY 11204  
(516) 639-2665  
E-mail: [wasserman.benjamin@gmail.com](mailto:wasserman.benjamin@gmail.com)

and

Author: Priya Parmar, Ph.D.<sup>2</sup>  
Brooklyn College – CUNY  
School of Education  
2900 Bedford Ave.  
2403 James Hall  
Brooklyn, NY 11210  
(718) 951-4377  
E-mail: [pparmar@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:pparmar@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin J. Wasserman is a graduating senior in the CUNY Baccalaureate Program for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies (Brooklyn College) with areas of concentration in Dynamics of Informal Education and Philosophy. His studies are focused on the intersections between neuroeducation, philosophy and experiential learning, and on the role of education in promoting social, cognitive, and affective development. Ben is a Thomas W. Smith Academic Fellow and the recipient of the Memorial Scholarship for Education Services.

<sup>2</sup> Priya Parmar, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Adolescence and Literacy Education at Brooklyn College – CUNY. She is author of *Knowledge Reigns Supreme: The Critical Pedagogy of Hip Hop Artist KRS-ONE (2009)* and is co-founder of *Lyrical Minded*, a literacy and performing arts program implemented in select NYC schools. Professor Parmar has published numerous articles and books on critical and multiple literacies, youth and Hip Hop culture, and other contemporary issues in the field of Cultural Studies in which economic, political, and social justice issues are addressed.

# THE P.E.A.C.E. PROJECT: PHILOSOPHY, ETHICS, AND COMMUNAL EDUCATION

## Abstract

This article explores how universities, college students, and surrounding local communities can collaborate to build, strengthen, and sustain relations. The PEACE Project is a social justice movement in which future educators enrolled in Schools of Education, philosophy majors, and communities unite to promote cognitive, social, and affective development of children and youth through a unique ethics based curriculum. PEACE provides future teachers with the opportunity to develop new skills to explore crucial issues regarding social justice with students, while simultaneously offering philosophy majors an alternate means to explore philosophy as well as provide pedagogical training for future philosophy teachers.

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## INTRODUCTION

Poor academic achievement, low graduation rates, and high drop-out rates, among other problems, have been the central focus in current mainstream debates and policy decisions concerning the fate (or reform) of public schools in the United States. In order to meet the demands instituted from top-down officials, many of whom have very little, or no educational or teaching experience, school administrators and teachers are faced with undue pressure to produce high test scores which often result in teachers teaching-to-the-test and entire school days devoted solely to test preparation. Incentive programs such as merit pay or performance-based assessment of teachers (supported by President Barack Obama and the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)) place even more pressure on schools and has become a highly divisive issue in the ongoing debate on educational reform.

However, this pressure is not only felt by public school administrators and their teachers. Standards-based reform movements, specifically NCLB and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's Race to the Top initiative, also include the assessment of "quality" teacher preparation programs situated in Departments of Education across higher education institutions. The premise is, if public schools are to improve, so must teacher preparation programs in graduating quality, skilled, and proficiently prepared teachers. At the completion of two rounds of competition for Race to the Top funding, eleven states and the District of Columbia have been awarded money based on their comprehensive (standards-based) education reform plans that were developed based on four key areas of improvement regulated by Race to the Top. Of the four key areas defined by Race to the Top, one focuses specifically on teacher preparation: "recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most." In addition to federal assessment measures, in January 2011, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) began reviewing approximately 1,400 teacher preparation programs across the 50 states evaluating the structure and design quality of each program based on 17 standards considered to be instrumental in successful teacher training programs. Those schools of education not proven to meet standards are subject to sanctions by state (i.e. - termination of teacher preparation programs) and federal (i.e. - cutting off funding) officials.

Due to the pressure such measurements place on students, teachers, and administrators at all grade levels (pre-school to grade 12 and undergraduate/graduate teacher preparation programs), the heavy concentration on testing and other outcomes-based measures leave very little room for alternative methods of assessment and implementation of creative, intellectually-stimulating curricula. As an Assistant Professor (Priya) teaching in a School of Education, the majority of students who enroll in education courses are education majors required to take an introductory level foundations course focusing on the social, historical, and philosophical aspects of education – a lot to cover in a fifteen week semester! The “philosophy” part of the course is infused throughout the semester encouraging and reminding students to reflect upon the select philosophies and philosophers introduced to them from the onset as we discuss the complex and myriad social, political, and historical issues found within the education world. However, deeper analysis and connection to teaching on the different branches of philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, logic, aesthetics, axiology, etc), while usually briefly mentioned in some education foundations textbooks, is sorely lacking. Deeper analysis and understanding of how philosophy shapes our perceptions of self, others, and ultimately, our own teaching philosophy has always been a central focus in my own teaching of pre- and in-service teachers.

Now that teacher preparation programs are experiencing similar scrutiny as P-12 schools to perform well, there is real concern that authentic, organic, innovative pedagogies when teaching content-based subjects will take a back-seat to decontextualized pre-packaged curricula that tend to be technocratic and solely skills-based, resulting in teaching-to-the-test methods that many P-12 schools have resorted to. Brooklyn College’s nationally accredited School of Education is similar to many teacher preparation programs across the country in that we aspire to integrate diversity and social justice practices throughout the program; however, my personal fear and frustration is that once our students graduate, will they truly be afforded the opportunity to implement diversity- and social justice-based lessons, strategies, programs, and philosophies that they were exposed to in their undergraduate or graduate programs? Will their knowledge and understanding of affective-, cognitive-, and social- development of their future students be respected, considered, and realistic to integrate when developing lessons? Will they be effective in differentiating their instruction to meet the diverse academic and linguistic needs of their students? Will they have the necessary knowledge, skills, and disposition to be a successful teacher?

As a student (Ben) majoring in both philosophy and education while also working extensively with young kids and youth in developing curricula and teaching in afterschool and teen programs in Brooklyn, NY, taking a foundations and philosophy of education course at Brooklyn College seemed natural and necessary to better understand, reflect, and improve upon my own teaching philosophy and pedagogical skills. While issues of social justice and diversity were heavily emphasized in the course, I (Ben), too, witnessed a clear disconnect with what was practiced and emphasized in public schools to what was being discussed in my education course. When does a teacher cease to be an *educator* and become an *examiner* (*and what does that do to students and communities*). *If I decide to become a public school teacher, will I be able to implement creative lessons that promote life learning values like critical analysis, self and social awareness, and student’s agency if I am faced with pressure from administrators to teach a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) focused curriculum in rote, dry, and meaningless ways?* As suggested earlier, public school teachers and administrators (P-12) are forced to focus heavily

on high-stakes testing measures resulting in less educational time spent on other subjects, particularly the humanities.

Initiated by Ben, we have proposed a unique collaboration between students majoring in Brooklyn College's School of Education and the Philosophy Department to participate in a project that will build and strengthen personal and communal relationships while improving critical thinking and literacy skills. It is proposed that the PEACE: Philosophy, Ethics, and Communal Education Project (PEACE) would address a growing gap which is evident in the current direction of the public educational system. As Dr. Jonathan Cohen (2006: 201) writes "parents and teachers want schooling to support children's ability to become lifelong learners who are able to love, work, and act as responsible members of the community...yet these values have not been substantively integrated into the schools or teacher training." However, such *life learning* values are nearly impossible to foster and integrate in schools and teacher training programs with the passage of NCLB which force teachers to teach-to-the-test with strong focus on STEM. If children and youth are not able to effectively and practically explore what it means to be "responsible members of the community" through a balanced, interdisciplinary approach to learning, and teachers are not trained to facilitate such educational experiences, then both individual students and the community will be stunted in achieving their maximum potential. Without schools providing the opportunities for students to develop *real* critical thinking skills (deep analysis), self-knowledge, ethical understanding, and a sense of social justice and communal responsibility, we can never expect them to "love, work, or act" as Cohen described.

To this end, Cohen argues the importance of educators addressing and implementing strategies that will include social, emotional, ethical, and academic education (SEEAE) into their teaching. PEACE attempts to integrate these four domains by creating a curriculum guide which aides in the personal development of the individual through: critical thinking exercises, experiential and *embodied* learning, self-knowledge exploration, affective/emotional/value clarification, discussion/dialogue and encounter, AND the involvement and participation in communal/social action. Just as important as the implementation of the curriculum guide, extremely crucial is that future teachers are given the opportunity to critically reflect, explore, analyze, and dialogue about ethical and social justice issues concerning them or their communities. The project encourages teacher training programs to engage its teacher candidates in coupling experiential and philosophic theory and pedagogy with curriculum development followed by implementation. This creates a model bridging theory and practice, offering teacher candidates practical teaching experience immediately upon enrollment of an introductory level education course. The experience gained as PEACE facilitators will assist teacher candidates in analyzing, deconstructing, and reconstructing curricula and model alternative approaches of instruction that will foster engaging, thought-provoking, and interactive dialogue that changes the traditional power dynamics of the teacher-student relationship. Teachers and students work with - and learn from - one another, creating safe learning environments that promote the "love, work, and act[ion]" Cohen argues for. Students and schools inspired to improve or enhance their communities aim to change the way communal institutions view their role as well. These institutions are not only there to provide basic services, but to help change the environments in which they exist for the better - one which is rationally grounded, objectively aware, and morally or ethically sound.

With the recent increase of bullying in schools and among youth in general, the need of an outlet for youth to develop cognitive, social, and affective knowledge in regards to ethics social justice has grown even stronger. PEACE offers a unique and organic response to such an education vacuum wherein philosophical thought, social justice issues, and applied ethics converge both for youth and future educators.

Teaching-to-the-test and the promotion of other mindless test-taking skills have resulted in teachers ignoring important affective, cognitive, and social development of students. The result is very little to no focus on creativity, self-exploration, and cultural awareness that can be easily remedied through the incorporation of interdisciplinary approaches to the standard curriculum or the implementation of afterschool programs integrating the arts, music, and theatre with a philosophical twist. Sadly, there is generally little to no emphasis on meta-cognitive skills in teaching, even though *thinking about thinking* (philosophy, in a general sense) is of great benefit towards academic achievement. School curricula tend to neglect important diversity and social justice issues (i.e. - race, identity, justice, freedom) and when they do, there is little to no exploration or analysis of the topic. Discovery and project-based learning, alternative assessment measures, deconstruction and reconstruction of perceived social or political problems, critical and continuous reflection, and collaboration with community-based organizations and community members are missing, particularly in urban communities where resources are scarce. Instead, diversity and social justice (if at all integrated) are taught as neutral, rote, or static resulting in very little opportunity to engage with material on any *real*, critical, deeper, intellectual level. That is, students are not able to emotionally and cognitively register material. Even more disturbing is that according to recent research in the fields of educational psychology and neuroscience, our capacities and processes of thinking and feeling are intimately connected. It has been found that we learn more while experimenting and being active, while feeling free and in control of learning, and when we are socially and emotionally balanced (Blakemore, 2010; Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007).

As a philosophy and *dynamics of informal education* major deeply interested and invested in public education and social justice, it was perplexing to me (Ben) that the Education and Philosophy departments, with so much in common, had not partnered sooner in ways to promote social justice through education. While learning about Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire in Professor Parmar's education class, Ben was reminded of another influential Dutch Jewish philosopher – Baruch Spinoza – whom he was studying in his philosophy seminar.

Paulo Freire (2009: 39) noted that a “radical” is a person committed to human liberation, and “the more radical a person is, more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can transform it... [the radical] is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled... to meet the people or to enter into a dialogue ... [the radical] does not consider himself or herself the proprietor of history or of all people, or the liberator of the oppressed; but he or she does commit himself or herself, within history, to fight at their side.” Freire channeled his *radicalism* through education, developing the concept of critical pedagogy as an effort to empower individuals and communities to liberate themselves, and become more fully active in their lives and societies. According to such criteria alone, we argue that Baruch Spinoza, the Dutch Jewish philosopher, may rightly be considered a radical. He is aptly remembered for his comprehensive philosophical project which championed naturalism, rationality, democracy, and

humanism; a project aimed at promoting the freedom, activity, and happiness of both the individual and the community, or *universal empowerment*. In §§13-14 of his *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, considered to be an introduction to his broader project, Spinoza clearly pronounces this as his goal when he writes that “my aim is to acquire such a nature [one of empowerment or happiness], and to strive that many acquire it with me...that is, it is part of my happiness to take pains that many others may understand as I understand” (Curley, 1994: 6 pg?) Taken as a whole, Spinoza’s *corpus* represents a unified perspective of how adequate accounts of metaphysics, epistemology, psychology, ethics, and politics can help foster and facilitate his ideal of empowerment. He is, in fact, outlining a radical method towards achieving such a nature both individually and socially, by liberating oneself from the passions (the affects which render us passive) and establishing a democratic state. Furthermore, his radicalism, it has been noted, is embedded in this all encompassing philosophic perspective which challenges and critiques “some of the most ingrained antinomies” (Mercon and Armstrong, 2011: 253) and beliefs in classical and folk understandings of metaphysics, ethics, human nature, religion. Specifically, Spinoza argued against the dichotomies between mind and body, knowledge and emotion, and the individual and the collectivity, as well as the common beliefs in a benevolent and intervening God (and religious orthodoxy in general), free will, miracles, and natural rights. These general aspects of Spinoza’s philosophy, in addition to his relationship with unorthodox thinkers, his *cherem*, or excommunication from the Jewish community in 1656, and his condemnation as an “atheist,” it is easy to see how Spinoza can rightly be conceived as a radical according to and beyond the criteria which Freire enumerated.

It was the “radical” philosophies of Paulo Freire and Baruch Spinoza that inspired much of the development of the PEACE Project. PEACE has a mission which aims to not only supplement, but transform the current educational and communal institutions towards liberation, democracy, and social justice. As Steinberg (2009: 47) points out, for Spinoza, *peace* is liberation and it is a “civil condition” wherein community members are conscious and committed to the common welfare, engage in rational political discourse, and “are guided by harmonious affects.” To foster such a condition – the PEACE Project concerns itself with the intersection of philosophy and social justice.

Similar to PEACE, the long existing movement, P4C (“Philosophy for Children”), established in the late 60’s – early 70’s by Professor Matthew Lipman along with colleagues at Montclair State University’s Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC), has worked at providing children and youth the opportunities to study and “do” philosophy in order to develop cognitive skills and dispositions which can help promote children’s level of “reasonableness” (the fourth “educational R”). Over the last 30 plus years, P4C advocates and implementers have been focused on helping to establish communities of philosophical inquiry; those in which members are able to freely and rationally engage in discourse and dialogue with one another. Although the development of cognitive skills (i.e. - critical thinking, rationality, logic) and myriad other opportunities offered by exposure and immersion in “doing philosophy” under the current P4C norms (i.e. - communication skills, divergent thinking, inquiry and the pursuit of truth/knowledge) are not inessential, this construal of *philosophy* can at times prevent P4C educators from taking full advantage of the more *holistic* opportunities (self and social awareness and understanding, creativity, harmonious emotional balance) which philosophical inquiry can offer (Lipman, 1988).

Furthermore, while *some* P4C curricula and initiatives are centered around ethics and moral philosophy, there is very little attempt to create a bridge between the “community of inquiry” in the classroom with the *community* outside of the classroom. Instead, more often than not, most ethics based P4C programs focus on older students (mostly high school) and engage *applied* or *practical ethics* merely in the fields of science or medicine. This considered, the P4C movement can be seen, unfortunately, and perhaps not wholly intentionally, as a curious bedfellow to NCLB and STEM curricula. Similar to PC4 initiatives, PEACE is also concerned with logical reasoning, truth, acquisition of knowledge, but PEACE takes into account that philosophy is a cognitive/academic discipline that is rich with social and practical implications – ones which can seriously affect change and progress. By exploring, discussing, and learning about the way we think and feel about certain issues (including ourselves and relations to others), we can contextualize, critique, and modify the way we think, feel and act towards progress. In the PEACE world, we strive to promote philosophical engagement coupled with direct and practical social action projects which aim to not only develop and improve community relations and environments but also to foster leadership skills and social participation for all of those involved (P-12 students, future teacher educators, philosophers, community leaders, etc.).

Like all human beings, children and youth are by nature curious, questioning nearly everything. Unlike adults however, who unfortunately lack the time to maintain their wonderment and discovery, children are by nature philosophers. As such, children and youth all too often concern themselves with the three major areas which Anthony Quinton notes philosophy is concerned: “the general nature of the world (metaphysics or theory of existence), the justification of belief (epistemology or theory of knowledge), and the conduct of life (ethics or theory of value)” (Quinton, 1995). Unfortunately, the current system does not allow for the cultivation and exploration of such topics which students are inclined to cogitate. Engaging philosophy with youth in regards to social justice and ethics (values of good/bad, justice, equality, obligation, moral responsibility, etc.) is invaluable. Lipman (1988: 76) points this out when he writes that “when it comes to ethical reasoning...the subdiscipline of logic is indispensable.” Furthermore, philosophy’s approach to taxonomy and classification (hermeneutics, phenomenology, dialectic, etc.) allows students to contextualize and participate in moral inquiry in a meaningful way. To be sure, ethics is by no means restrictive to children nor too complex or mature. As Gregory (2009: 117) notes: “Even young children come upon ethical problems and opportunities every day: in the school bus, the lunchroom, the playground, the classroom, the street, and the home...[and they] often feel the distinct ethical qualities of these situations more keenly than we adults do...what we have to teach them is that the more they become aware of the unfinished, potential, qualitative ethical meaning of their experiences, and learn to inquire into that meaning intelligently, the more they will be able to respond to their own ethical problems and opportunities in ways they (and we) will find satisfying, appropriate and worthwhile.”

Focusing on the ethical realities of children in regards to individual and communal development is key; deconstructing situations and experiences, analyzing the moral dimension of subject matter, and applying ethical inquiry to our lives help students to develop civic and personal values, order their emotions, and become socially aware – this is the contribution of ethics in education. The social and affective values of philosophical and ethical inquiry with children are also a reverberation of Spinoza and modern neuroscience. Our social, emotional and cognitive

developments are intricately intertwined, and the development of one domain requires the development of the others. Furthermore, our natural social inclinations and emotional dependence on others to maximize our own potential advocate that such a philosophy and ethics based initiative, if it is to be concerned with social justice should be taken on via a trans-institutional and interdisciplinary effort. It is in this vein that PEACE aims to be a communal educational enrichment initiative. Meeting the needs of students is bar none the most important task that we have as educators and as long as the system is unwilling or unable to nurture such development, we must find a way to respond outside of the system (with the hopes of inspiring change within the system). The PEACE Project works by bringing together public schools, community centers, and universities to create meaningful educational experiences for individuals and the collective. As such, the project is in a position to bring a vivid, valid, and vital social justice/action dimension to youth, having students participate in social issues affecting their communities. The PEACE Project represents a unique convergence of philosophy, ethics, and communal education creating an environment where students, teachers, and community leaders can embody, explore, and engage in critical inquiry, service, and social justice towards freedom and empowerment.

In conclusion, the overall aim of PEACE is not only the educational and social enrichment of students towards communal vitality, but also the holistic personal development of kids. Equally important, it also forces a reexamination or shift in teacher training programs and prep/communal institutions' missions (or projects). While one of the major goals is to build or strengthen community relations (with the goal of liberation, happiness, democracy or other social justice mission) there must be "communal norms" of understanding and practice of rational dialogue, analytical and critical techniques, balanced and healthy emotions (empathy is crucial for social justice as is happiness) and the pursuit of knowledge and progress. To achieve such desired community relations requires that the individuals involved must be able to adequately develop their own cognitive, affective, social and ethical dispositions and reflect on how their individual development is interrelated with other's development over these four domains.

We have included in this article the model, goals and objectives, program design, future goals, and sample learning modules in hopes of inspiring readers to take action in their own communities, schools, and affiliated universities.

## **MODEL**

The PEACE Project is currently underway as a collaborative effort by the Brooklyn College Philosophy Department and School of Education to provide an experiential philosophy and social justice themed educational enrichment program select number of children and youth (grades 4-12) in NYC afterschool and teen centers. Program objectives include the promotion of cognitive, social, and affective development of NYC youth through a unique ethics based curriculum; providing future NYC teachers with the opportunity to develop new skills to explore crucial issues regarding social justice with students; and offering philosophy majors an alternate means to explore philosophy as well as provide pedagogical training for future philosophy teachers. As such, in its pilot year, the PEACE Project will be implemented by a small number of specially trained Brooklyn College education and philosophy majors with the guidance of faculty members drawn from both departments. In its pilot year, the PEACE project will be coordinated

by an intern in the Brooklyn College Philosophy Department who will oversee all aspects of the program including educational programming development, administration, and evaluations.

## **Goals and Objectives**

The primary goal of the PEACE Project in its pilot year is to provide opportunities children and youth (grades 4-12) to engage and explore philosophical and ethical issues as they apply to personal/communal development through the implementation of an experiential ethics and social justice based curriculum in afterschool and teen centers in the NYC area. A desired correlated goal is that through philosophically rooted discussions and learning, children and youth will also begin to develop improved reasoning, analytic, and other cognitive techniques as well as an increased sense of community and social responsibility. Secondary goals for the project are focused on the PEACE facilitators (students from both the BC School of Education and BC Philosophy Department) who would implement the PEACE curriculum centered on *life learning* values. Future educators/teachers within the School of Education will be involved in training and gain experience in exploring these values (philosophy, ethics, and social justice) and alternative methods of teaching with students in both formal and informal settings such as classrooms and after-school programs. Students in the Philosophy Department will be given a chance to engage philosophy outside the academic setting with a unique perspective on applied philosophy and philosophy of education. This will give philosophy students (who may also be future educators) experience in teaching philosophy and youth. The collaboration between the two academic departments will enhance the quality of the PEACE curriculum and its implementation for the children while also promoting interdisciplinary skills on the part of the student-facilitators which will further their own personal and professional development.

## **Program Design**

The PEACE project will be staffed by the PEACE coordinator (an intern working half-time) to develop and coordinate all logistical and programming aspects of the project. A Faculty Advisory Board (FAB) will be formed with representatives of faculty from the Brooklyn College School of Education and Brooklyn College Philosophy Department as well as staff from the after-school and teen centers in which the PEACE project is to be implemented. The PEACE project is centered on a 6-unit philosophy/ethics based (i.e. identity/self, freedom, justice/fairness, responsibility/obligation, happiness, etc.) experiential education curriculum (learning through role-playing activities, arts and crafts, games, and other modules) to be developed by the PEACE coordinator, FAB, and PEACE facilitators. There will be three variations of the curriculum according to the various age levels of PEACE students (elementary, middle, and high school). In its pilot year, the PEACE curriculum will be implemented by 8-10 PEACE facilitator pairs (ideally, one philosophy major and one education major) who will each work with students in the age level of their concentration or interest. The PEACE project will be carried out in three stages during the length of a college semester (for both fall and spring), including two co-curricular events for middle school and high school level PEACE students in the spring semester. These events, a 3 hour mini-conference (PEACE Summit) and a community service day (PEACE-athlon), will provide an opportunity for older students in different locations to extend their engagement in philosophy and social justice, meet one another, and gain leadership experience.

### *Stage One: Training and Development*

This first stage consists of a 6-hour PEACE training seminar which will be led by the project coordinator and involved faculty. Over the course of three 2 hour sessions, facilitators will be introduced to the PEACE project, experiential education as related to personal/communal development, and curriculum development. **each of the six curricular units (including content, facilitation techniques, and variations according to age-levels) by engaging with the learning modules hands-on.** By the end of the PEACE seminar, student-facilitators will be familiarized with the project and its goals while also having an opportunity to meet with their education (majors) partner and use the skills and content they learned to begin brainstorming for the mini-conference and community service event.

### *Stage Two: Implementation*

The second stage of the PEACE project involves the PEACE facilitators (philosophy and education students) develop curriculum or modules (with consultation from the coordinator and FAB) and then implement the learning modules for the participants (according to the after-school and teen center's availability). Facilitator pairs will be assigned to the institution(s) and grade level(s) for whom they will facilitate the six 45 minute units over the course of the semester. Prior to implementing each unit, student-facilitator pairs will have the opportunity to meet with the project coordinator to review the content and activities and make any needed adjustments.

### *Stage Three: Evaluation*

The third stage of the PEACE project is a final evaluation period. After a unit is implemented facilitators and after-school coordinators will be asked to evaluate the unit. Classroom teachers or after-school coordinators will also be asked for feedback on the effectiveness of units.

During the remaining weeks of the semester, the PEACE project coordinator and faculty will meet with all student-facilitators to evaluate their experience and provide feedback on the PEACE curriculum and project as a whole. Teen center and after-school coordinators will also be asked for feedback on the PEACE project. It is hoped that a selected number of direct feedback interviews with students may also be conducted. After all evaluation and feedback is collected and researched, the PEACE project coordinator will write a program assessment report as well as offer considerations and suggestions for future PEACE project initiatives.

### **Future Goals**

If successful in all of its goals, the PEACE project aims to be an ongoing program offered at Brooklyn College for philosophy and education majors. The curriculum will expand to eight units and be implemented for more children and youth in a wider variety and increased number of educational settings, including summer day camp.

Further, in year two, a consultant will be added to the project to help define measures to gauge academic and social progress of PEACE participants. The consultant will work with the PEACE

project coordinator and Faculty Advisory Board to assist in assessments and offer suggestions for future initiatives.

## Sample Learning Module

### *Rawls Relay for Justice*

Themes: Justice/Fairness

Age: 4th – 6th grade

Location: Indoors

Time: 45 mins

Materials: “PEACE: Justice ID Cards,” persona list, bowl for lottery, veil/curtain to hide results, large post-it dry-erase board, markers.

**Goal: To have participants articulate a conception of justice and enumerate a set of values which would allow them to be advocates for justice. To have participants relate their conceptions of justice to their lives.**

#### Introduction (7 mins)

- Facilitator announces to group that “unfortunately, only *some* participants can participate in today’s activity. We will hold a race to see who will get to participate today, but to be fair, we will hold a trial run to see the positions in the real race which everyone deserves.”
- Hold *trial run*.
- Place participants into positions closer to or farther from the goal respective to how they finished in the trial with first place runner receiving the closest position and the last place runner receiving the farthest (naturalism). As participants begin to express the “unfairness” of their new positions, rearrange so that the majority are in equal positions and announce that “unless a majority of people are unhappy, these will be the final positions” (utilitarianism). Again, as participants express “unfairness” rearrange positions randomly. When those who were now less advantaged than they previously had been express dissatisfaction, announce to the group that everyone will have an opportunity to participate in today’s activity.

#### Main (28 mins)

- Facilitator gathers participants into a circle and elicits reactions while writing responses on large post it:
  - Why was everyone unsatisfied before?
  - What is justice? Fairness? Are they the same?
  - Was the race we had just/fair or unjust/unfair? Why?  
(7 mins)
- Facilitator distributes invitations to “the original position” and volunteer reads aloud:  
**“Congratulations, you have been invited to the original position! We think of you as a reasonable, good person who gets how the world works! You are the perfect person to help us figure out certain values that will lead to justice in society. There is**

**one trick though, you are asked to forget everything about *you*, and act on behalf of *someone else*. You will not find out who you are representing until after the group comes to a decision, still do everything you can to make sure that person will be happy. - Mr. John Rawls”**

- Facilitator introduces list of possible personas which participants will represent and holds a secret lottery to determine who will be representing each persona (e.g. African-American Store Owner, European immigrant, white man with children). The participants are not told who they have been assigned to, thus creating a *veil of ignorance*. (3 mins)
- Facilitator guides discussion (15-18 mins):
  - Without knowing who you are representing, what would you think is most important in order for everyone to be happy? Are there certain rights or things which everyone should have or be able to do? (freedom of speech/thought/assembly, making decisions, property.)
  - Should people have equal opportunities to influencing decisions and acquiring positions? What about the same education, recreational activities?
  - What would the best system of justice look like? Let’s use our race:
    - Should people be unequal because some people are born with certain talents or in certain places? (First positioning)
    - What about so that a majority of the people are happy? (Second)
    - Random? (Third)
    - What if we made it so that those who weren’t as well off would get a little more and those who were very well of gave a little? So that everyone is closest to being equal? (Difference Principle)
  - Have you ever felt like something was unjust or you were treated unfairly? How did that feel?
  - How can something be unjust in school?
  - Should we aim to always act in according to justice? Why/why not? What are the benefits? Disadvantages?

Closure (10 mins)

- After holding discussion and coming up with principles and a conception of justice. Distribute the personas which each participant had been assigned to and elicit their reactions to whether or not they think the individual they were representing would be happy with the principles they came up with. Would *they* be happy? Why?
- Close by providing “Justice ID Cards” in which participants write something they can do to ensure justice (look out for classmates, share supplies, etc.). Have participants share if they like.

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