

Using the Academic Curriculum for Moral Development: The Basics

The overall goal of any program must be to help children reason autonomously about moral problems. No amount of rote learning or indoctrination will prepare children for the many diverse situations that they will face in life.

—William Damon (1988)

In this chapter we will go over the basic process for using the academic curriculum to facilitate moral and social development. A central premise of this approach is that each lesson will generate a “2 for 1” set of benefits. A successful lesson or unit should serve *both* academic achievement and social and moral development. Adopting this 2 for 1 approach allows teachers and schools to contribute to students’ moral development without sacrificing instructional time. More importantly, evaluation research has demonstrated that programs for emotional or moral development that are implemented in isolation have little long-term effect on children and tend to be short-lived (Greenberg et al., 2003). Thus, the 2 for 1 approach is not only the most efficient way to go; it is also the most effective.

The use of the curriculum should go hand in hand in with the establishment of a socio-moral atmosphere and practices of classroom management and discipline as described in Section II. This will result in a holistic approach to academic teaching and social development that benefits academic achievement as well as emotional and moral development. Developing social knowledge within domains has been shown to contribute to students’ academic achievement in specific content areas such as social studies and language arts (Nucci & Charlier, 1983). In a meta-analysis of existing research, Roger Weissberg (2006) concluded, “There is an inextricable link between students’ social-emotional adjustment and their academic achievement. They are not just relevant to academic achievement, they are central to it.”

This holistic and integrated approach to teaching is consistent with the intuitions and practices of many successful teachers. Thus, the practices that will be

described in this chapter and the ones that follow should be seen as extensions of good teaching, rather than a radical departure from what good teachers have been doing in their classrooms. In our work with classroom teachers, we have found that there is an initial adjustment period as teachers work through their existing materials to identify moral, conventional, and personal issues within their academic lessons. It also takes some time to help students develop the listening and discussion skills needed for effective moral lessons. However, once things are in place, the application of domain-appropriate social and moral education becomes a natural part of academic instruction. We recently integrated domain-appropriate social and moral education in our undergraduate elementary teacher education program at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The evaluation of that initiative demonstrated that when our students had completed student teaching their knowledge of children's social and moral development and their own sense of efficacy in contributing to children's moral education was significantly higher than graduates of our program from prior years (Nucci, Drill, Larson, & Browne, 2006). This project along with our work with experienced teachers provides a basis for confidence that the practices that will be presented are ones that most teachers can readily adopt. This is not to say that the skill to integrate moral education within the curriculum will come simply as a result of reading this book. Developing that skill will take time and practice just as in any other aspect of classroom teaching. A novice using this approach needs to be patient and willing to stick with it through early phases of implementation. It is also a good idea to collaborate with a colleague. The concluding chapter of the book contains contact information and other resources to provide support to teachers implementing this approach.

Goals

In addition to having the 2 for 1 goal that social and moral development lessons contribute to academic learning, there are seven other basic goals for use of the regular curriculum for domain-appropriate moral and social developmental education. Some of these goals need to be further specified by grade level in relationship to normative patterns of social development. In Chapters 7–9 goals will be defined in relation to examples of lessons for students at different grade levels. What follows is a description of the general goals for use of the curriculum for social and moral education that cut across grade levels.

- **Goal 1. *Moral domain.*** Students will develop their concepts of fairness and understanding of their obligations with respect to the welfare and rights of others. This goal means extending students' prevailing concepts of fairness to begin to question their assumptions about what it means to be treated fairly and to reevaluate their moral obligations toward others.

- **Goal 2.** *Conventional domain.* Students will develop their understandings of the functions of societal convention in everyday life. In middle school and high school students will coordinate their concepts of convention with an understanding of societies as rule-governed systems. Although Goal 1 is included in all developmentally based programs of moral education, Goal 2, the fostering of concepts about convention, is not generally included as an aspect of social developmental education. This is because traditional moral education programs based on the work of Kohlberg and Piaget have regarded social convention as an inferior basis for structuring morality. Research demonstrating that convention and morality are different conceptual frameworks contradicts those older assumptions. Goal 2 stands as recognition that mature and competent members of society must have an understanding and appreciation of the functions served by convention if they are to function within society, and if they are to be able to stand outside of their own social and cultural framework. The latter is an essential component for membership in a pluralist democracy in which respect for the culture and traditions of others is needed. Finally, it is only by first understanding the functions of convention that students can apply morality to evaluate society as a system of norms and rules from a moral perspective.
- **Goal 3.** *Personal domain.* Students will develop an understanding of the role of a zone of personal choice and privacy for maintaining a sense of autonomy, individuality, and the capacity to create a self consistent with one's own sense of identity. Development within the personal domain is tied to the student's developing understandings of self and personhood. This is an essential aspect of establishing the ability to function as a competent person. It is also critical to the person's ability to appreciate the rights and needs of others.
- **Goal 4.** *Coordination across domains.* Students will develop their capacity to employ knowledge from more than one domain to reason about and evaluate their own social behavior and the conduct of others. Students will also develop in their capacity to apply knowledge from more than one domain in evaluating the norms of social groups, social institutions, and the general society.
- **Goal 5.** *Factual assumptions.* Students will develop the skills and attitudes consistent with an inquisitive and critical orientation toward the factual assumptions associated with social and moral value judgments.
- **Goal 6.** *Critical moral perspective.* Students will develop a critical moral perspective. Goals 4 and 5 should combine to result in students who approach their own personal moral positions with humility and willingness to change in the face of new information or a more compelling moral argument. Goal 6 also means that students will apply their moral under-

standings to evaluate the morality of existing social norms, institutions, and practices. This goal moves moral education beyond the task of fostering conventionally moral, nice people toward encouraging the development of citizens who can contribute to the moral growth of society.

- **Goal 7. *Moral self.*** Students will connect moral and social knowledge to their sense of themselves as moral agents. This goal might be considered similar to the goals of character education. The aim would be to connect the processes of reflection, discussion, meaning making, and reasoning to the student's core personal values and sense of self. The assumption is that genuine moral development will result in more than a surface change in moral language, but a deeper shift in the student's moral perspective and worldview. Unlike traditional character education, however, there are no particular virtues that would be presumed to attach to all students as they construct themselves as moral beings. Nor would the goal of connecting to the moral self be aimed at attaining a decontextualized "good person" whose conduct would always be guided solely by moral considerations.

Basic Principles

There are four basic educational principles for constructing domain-appropriate lessons to attain the moral and social development goals listed above. In addition to these social development aims, however, a successful lesson should also be evaluated in terms of its connection to the academic standards and goals of the subject matter. Thus, each lesson should be consistent with principles of sound academic instruction as well as social development in order to meet the 2 for 1 objectives of academic and social and emotional learning.

1. *Generate reflection and construction of knowledge.* Lessons that facilitate moral development engage students in actively figuring out increasingly more adequate ways of understanding and reasoning about the social world. This principle draws from the basic premise of all constructivist teaching. Genuine understanding and the ability to reason can only result from the active efforts of students to recognize and resolve contradictions, build from the hints and suggestions of others, and generate novel insights through personal reflection. These processes map onto Piaget's notions of cognitive equilibration, Vygotsky's ideas about co-construction and the zone of proximal development, and Bruner's concept of scaffolding. Teachers will recognize that this principle means that simply memorizing rules, maxims, and definitions has little effect on students' development. Successful lessons are those that generate controversy, pose problems to solve, and require the students to come up with ideas and solutions rather than simply model the views and behaviors of others.

2. *Employ age/development-appropriate activities, terms, and discourse.* This principle acknowledges that students at different ages and points of development will process information differently and provide different resolutions to social and moral issues as a function of their level of understanding of the social and moral world. Teachers must select issues that match the developmental levels of their students and frame questions and activities that will generate student reflection within the developmental frame (zone of proximal development) appropriate to their level of social and moral understanding. This principle fits the intuitions of most teachers and has been supported by a generation of research. We will provide general guidelines for selecting materials and constructing lessons to fit developmental level in the following chapters.
3. *Employ domain-concordant issues, terms, and discourse.* This principle states that the tasks assigned to students in a social and moral development lesson need to be in sync with the domain of the focal issues. We will provide examples of how to identify and select curricular issues by domain in a later section of this chapter.

Several years ago, we set out to address whether attention to the domain of social values in teaching social and moral lessons makes a difference in the development of children's moral and social conventional concepts (Nucci & Weber, 1991). The setting for our study was an eighth-grade American history course and a companion course in English composition. Together with the history teacher, we identified a series of issues from American history that were primarily either moral or social conventional in character as well as events and issues that involved domain overlap. Examples of the moral issues were slavery and the forced removal of Indians from their lands. Conventional issues included such things as the adjustments in modes of dress, work conventions (such as time schedules), and dating patterns that resulted from the influx of immigrants and the shift from an agrarian to an industrial society. Changes in laws permitting women to vote is an example of a mixed domain issue used in the study.

Students participated in small-group discussions of these issues once each week for a period of 7 weeks. In addition, students were given essay homework assignments based on the issues that they had discussed. These homework assignments were graded by the classroom teacher as a part of his assessment of their learning of history. Finally, students wrote essays on related moral, conventional, or mixed issues in their English composition class. Students were assigned to one of three forms of instruction. In one condition (Convention), students were directed in their small group discussions and in their essays to treat all issues as if they were matters of convention. Discussions centered around the norms in-

volved, and the function of norms in structuring society, and the impact that altering or violating the norms would have on the social order. In the second condition (Moral), students were directed to treat these same issues as if they were matters of morality. Discussions and essay instructions directed students to consider the justice and welfare implications of the issues under consideration. The third instructional mode fit our definition of Domain-Appropriate values education. The focus of discussions and essays was matched with the domain of the particular issue under consideration. In the case of mixed domain issues, students were asked first to consider normative, conventional aspects and then to consider the justice or welfare features of the issue. Finally, students were asked to integrate or coordinate the moral and conventional features of the event. This latter exercise was one that we hoped would increase the capacity of students to spontaneously respond in a critical way to contradictions between morality and conventions, and to seek moral resolutions of those contradictions in ways that also respected the need for social organization. Examples of how these discussions were structured will be presented in some detail later in Chapters 7 through 9 when we look more closely at examples of domain-appropriate lessons.

Several findings from the study are important for this discussion. First are the outcomes regarding development of morality and convention. What we found was that students in the Moral condition and students in the Domain-Appropriate condition had moral reasoning scores that were very similar to and significantly higher than the scores of students who had been in the Convention condition. With regard to the development of reasoning about convention, the outcome was the inverse. Students in the Convention and Domain-Appropriate conditions had similar levels of conventional reasoning, and both were on average nearly half a stage higher than the conventional levels of students in the Moral condition. These results indicate that attention to domain does matter in terms of efforts to affect students' social conceptual development. Students who received instruction focusing in one domain developed in that domain, and not the other. Only the students in the Domain-Appropriate instructional condition developed in both domains.

A second noteworthy finding of the study had to do with how students dealt with overlapping issues. At the end of the 7-week instructional period all students were asked to write an essay discussing their views of the social values issues raised by an event in which morality and convention were in conflict. The matter concerned an actual event in which the king of the Gypsies of the Chicago metropolitan area refused federal money for scholarships to attend a local public university because it would require him to permit Gypsy women to attend as well as Gypsy

men. This event pitted the gender-based conventions of Gypsy society against the unfair provision of educational opportunities for one gender and not another. The student essays were scored in terms of whether or not they subordinated the issue to either morality or convention, vacillated between the two domains without coordination, or integrated the moral and conventional elements of the event through domain coordination. Findings were that students who had domain-appropriate teaching were the only ones to spontaneously coordinate elements from both domains. In contrast, two thirds of the students in the Moral instructional condition subordinated the issue entirely to its moral elements. Conversely, and as we had expected, a majority of students (including females) in the Convention instructional condition subordinated the issue to its conventional elements.

This last set of findings has particular relevance for our aim to develop students' capacity for critical moral reflection. Obviously, the students in the Convention instructional condition were hampered in their ability to attend to the moral implications of the gender-based conventions of Chicago's Gypsy community. Their prioritization of concerns for social organization was fostered by their recent educational experiences, which heightened the salience of those conventional elements. The social conservatism of their curriculum appeared to foster a similar conservatism in their reading of this real-life social issue. Conversely, the students in the Moral instructional condition prioritized the moral elements of the situation and guided the social arguments made in their essays. The prioritization of morality is recognized in philosophy as a requirement for ethical judgment and behavior (Baumrind, 2004). However, the "idealist" social critics in the Moral condition of our study did not spontaneously consider the social organizational ramifications of their single-minded attention to morality. In real life, however, there are always organizational costs to any change in the conventional social structure. For example, a single-minded attention to needs for gender equality in careers leaves unanswered any number of practical questions in terms of how one should restructure the conventions of the family. When all is said and done, somebody has to do the dishes, raise the children, and so forth.

The students in the domain-appropriate instructional condition did prioritize the moral elements of the situation and argued in their essays against the Gypsy king's decision. However, their arguments also acknowledged the ramifications this decision might have for the conventional organization of Gypsy society and offered constructive suggestions for how those changes might be resolved. When we argue for a critical moral perspective as a goal of domain-appropriate moral education, we are not simply advocating the development of single-minded moral criti-

cism of social conventional systems, but rather this more integrative form of social critique.

In sum, attention to domain in the selection of issues that are the focus of lessons and the wording of questions and assignments is critical to maximizing the effectiveness of lessons for social and moral development. Attention to domain is also critical to the goal of developing students' critical moral perspective.

4. *Make connections to students' own feelings, beliefs, and sense of self and not just to abstract principles or norms.* This principle is consistent with the accepted educational practice of making connections to students' prior knowledge and interests in order to maximize student learning and motivation. It also refers to the goal of engaging students in connecting their social concepts and moral judgment to their construction of a moral self.

Putting This Into Practice

There are some general strategies and practices for attaining the goals and implementing the basic principles listed above. These strategies fall into three basic categories: selection of lesson formats, identification and domain categorization of social development issues, and structuring effective developmental discussions.

Lesson Formats

There are several formats that lessons can take and still be effective for moral and social development. In some cases, lessons, and especially units, will use a combination of formats. However, the one constant across formats is that the lessons include some time for reflective discussion. In most cases it is advisable that the lesson include a written reflection or interpretation either as homework or as an in-class assignment. This encourages additional reflection and further identifies the lesson as an academic activity to be taken seriously by the students. It also provides the teacher with an academic product that can be graded using regular academic standards. We will take up the issue of grading and assessment at the end of the chapter.

Exceptions would be lessons for young children below third or fourth grade where writing is still in the early phase of development. Other exceptions regarding writing could be made for lessons involving artistic expression or mathematics. In these cases the provision of a verbal explanation along with the performance or artistic product would serve as the product to be assessed or graded by the teacher.

Curricular Issue Discussion

The most common format and the one that is most readily used with language arts and social studies content is *issue discussion*. In this format, the teacher identifies moral, conventional, or personal issues ahead of time that are contained within the material that the students are covering. The teacher constructs questions in advance that will be used to guide students' reflective discussion. The lesson can be based directly from the reading the students have done at home or in class, or from a summary provided by the teacher. Some of the teachers we have worked with have created brief fictional scenarios based on the curricular unit to bring the values dimensions of issues to light.

Role Play

In a role play social values issues are embedded in a dialogue created by the teacher, or in collaboration with the students. The dialogue is then acted out and serves as the basis for a related discussion and possible homework assignment. The content of the role play should be connected to the academic content being covered in the class. Teachers we have worked with have created social development role plays based on issues raised in history, language arts, and biological sciences.

Representation Through the Arts

The arts can be employed for social and moral education in two ways. With students in secondary school, the arts can be used as the basis for an issue discussion. In this case, students are asked to respond to the social and moral themes represented in artwork, music, or drama. Examples of such lessons are presented in Chapter 9. The other primary use for the arts is to allow students to represent social or moral issues or concepts through visual media, music, theater, or dance. This is an especially effective mode for students who have difficulty expressing themselves in writing. Representation through the arts can be employed across grade levels.

Representation Through Mathematics

There are several ways in which social and moral issues can be integrated within mathematics lessons. Educators who connect issues of mathematics to social justice have created lessons that ask students to reflect on social issues, such as the relationship between poverty and the likelihood of incarceration, and then use mathematics to investigate available data on those relationships. Mathematics can also be used to represent distributive justice issues in everyday life, such as how four kids would most fairly distribute the money they make working together on a paper route. Such lessons typically involve using statistics, graphing, and constructing equations. Graphic representations are also a good way for students to

sort out what they would consider to be moral, conventional, and personal matters. Students can construct Venn diagrams to represent areas of domain overlap to guide their reflections on complex, multifaceted social and moral issues.

Empirical and Library Investigation

Finally, lessons can include the investigation of underlying factual assumptions associated with moral issues. Students might use the library and Internet resources to gather information that would inform their discussions, and/or to find artistic and mathematical representations of social and moral issues. They can also use the tools of empirical sciences, thus combining the learning of scientific methodology with social development. For example, students can construct surveys to sample student opinion about complex issues, such as teasing or bullying. They might also construct simple social psychological experiments with peers to investigate their assumptions about how young people react to moral and social conventional situations.

Identifying and Categorizing Issues by Domain

In order to construct effective moral and social values lessons, the teacher needs to be able to identify the domains of the issues that are to be the focal point of the lessons. The primary reason for doing this is to ensure that the discussions and activities of the students are concordant with the type of issue being considered. The other reason is to ensure that students confront issues from several domains rather than focusing predominantly on either morality or convention, or only considering complex multifaceted issues without the opportunity to hone their concepts and reasoning within each particular domain.

One factor that enters into domain classification of issues is that most real-life events occur in contexts that include some elements from more than one domain. For example, using titles and surnames to address teachers is a matter of social convention. However, respect for other people that can be conveyed through convention does have an element of morality. Constructing lessons that would focus on a single domain, such as convention in the case of teacher titles, means selecting events or issues that are predominantly characterized by features consistent with one domain. What follows are criteria that a teacher can use to identify issues by domain.

Morality

- Does the act affect the welfare of others? If yes, then the act is likely to be moral.
- Would a transgression still be wrong if there were no rule or norm about the act? If yes—because it affects others' welfare—the act is an issue of morality.

Social Convention

- If there were no rule or norm about the act, would the act still be considered a transgression? If no—then the act is a matter of convention.
- Could things be set up differently so that the purposes of the norm could be achieved through a different arrangement? For example, boys could have long hair and girls short hair to differentiate between sexes. If yes—the norm is a convention.
- Is the primary purpose of the norm to coordinate the interactions of people or to organize the system in some way? For example, we walk on the right-hand side to allow efficient movement through the school hallway. If yes—the norm is a convention.

Personal

- Do the effects of the act fall primarily on the actor? Are the effects on the actor benign? If yes to both, then the issue is personal. If yes to the first question and no to the second, then the act is a matter of prudence. Children and younger adolescents generally view prudential issues such as whether to eat healthy foods as matters that parents and teachers can influence or control. Older adolescents and adults generally treat even these latter issues as personal.
- Is the act a matter of privacy? If yes to this question and to the first question above, then the act is personal.
- Is the act an aspect of constructing autonomy and a unique sense of identity? If yes to this question and to the first question above, then the act is personal.

Overlapping or Multifaceted Issues

The above criteria can be used to identify complex social issues that have elements from more than one domain. For example, rules and laws that define who is allowed to vote help to structure how people contribute to governance of a particular social group. Thus, these rules have to do with social organization. These rules can also be changed through social consensus. Thus, voting laws are a matter of convention. On the other hand, voting rules also differentially treat people in ways that give one group of people, voters, more power than other people, nonvoters. Thus, the rules that govern voting have a considerable element of morality to them. A lesson that focused on voting rights and suffrage would, therefore, be one that would address both morality and convention, and how these elements of social life interact with each other. We could do a similar analysis for issues that involve considerable overlap between social convention and the personal domain.

Structuring Effective Developmental Discussions

The key element for moral and social cognitive development is engaging students in meaningful reflection. This can be accomplished in a number of ways including providing students with provocative problems to solve, or assigning readings and written work that provokes reflection. Some examples of provocative writing assignments will be provided in the following chapters. However, the primary tool for engaging students to think in new ways about moral and social issues is developmental discussion. It is through open discussion that students hear differing perspectives and points of view, and experience challenges to their own positions coming from peers as well as the teacher. We see this at an early level in the arguments and negotiations among young children. Without such argumentation, there would be no reason for children to assume that others do not hold the same position as they do, and certainly no reason to assume that the other person might be in the right (Piaget, 1932). At an advanced level, discussion can take place through interactive writing, and we are beginning to see a revolution in that form of communication through the Internet.

There are three general forms that discussions can take. These differing forms map onto conceptual tasks that are associated with the characteristics of domains.

- *Dilemma discussion.* This entails pitting two moral principles against each other, such as stealing versus human welfare. Should you steal bread from a store in order to feed a hungry person?
- *Conflict discussion.* This pits social norms against either moral or personal domain considerations. An example would be whether a boy should follow a school dress code or wear a T-shirt with a rock band logo if he feels it is important to his personal identity.
- *Conceptual discussion.* This form of discussion would be a group effort to try to generate an understanding of the purpose or meaning of a social norm or social or moral construct. An example would be a discussion of the social functions served by differing forms of clothing for formal and informal occasions. Generally, conceptual discussions center on social conventions. However, they can also focus on discussions of moral concepts such as what is meant by fairness, or personal concepts such as why it would matter to maintain some things as matters of personal choice.

In whatever form discourse takes, it must result in changes in the ways that students think about social and moral issues if it is to have an impact on development.

Communicative Discourse: Nine Rules for Having a Good Discussion

In early efforts at moral education, it was assumed that discussions had to take place between people who were within one developmental stage of each other in terms of their moral reasoning (Blatt & Kohlberg, 1975). This was based on experimental research indicating that students do not benefit from exposure to arguments that are either too primitive or too advanced for the student to understand. For this reason, teachers were instructed when leading moral discussions to provide statements one stage above the modal level of the class. This is different from the general educational principle of employing developmentally appropriate issues and posing questions or assignments that are within the developmental range of students. The notion contained in the “plus one” assumption was that teachers should adjust their statements within a free-flowing classroom discussion to match the modal level of the arguments being used by the students.

Research on this “plus one” assumption proved it to have little use in actual classroom discourse (Berkowitz & Gibbs, 1983; Berkowitz, Gibbs, & Broughton, 1980). What this research uncovered is that it is very difficult for teachers to generate plus-one statements in the flow of actual classroom conversation, and they were in fact rare in occurrence. More importantly, even when such plus-one statements were provided by experts, their input into the discussion had less of an impact on students’ moral reasoning than did the statements of their classmates. Given that most classrooms have students who vary in level of development within one level or stage of one another, the concern for plus-one discussion is essentially met through the normal range in student diversity of typical classrooms.

Transactive Discussion

When the researchers looked at the factors that made for effective discussion, they discovered that the most important variable was whether or not the statements made by students were efforts to actively transform the arguments that they had heard others make. The researchers labeled such statements *transacts*. Transacts are responses that attempt to extend the logic of the speaker’s argument, refute the assumptions of the speaker’s argument, or provide a point of commonality between the two conflicting positions. Passive listening and simple efforts to restate or give back the speaker’s argument were not associated with conceptual change. This last finding is a rather revealing indictment of simple direct instruction and regurgitation as an educational method.

Communicative Discourse

Encouraging students to engage in transactive discussion has clear developmental and educational benefits. However, there are two important caveats to this statement. First, transactive discussion is not something that can generally be accomplished by children before second or third grade since generating this type of discussion requires linguistic skills and perspective taking that is beyond the developmental levels of young children. Young children are, however, very capable of listening to another child's statements when directed at their own conduct. They can also listen to others and add ideas of their own. As we will see in a moment, young children can be encouraged to engage in what we will refer to as communicative discourse.

A second limitation of a reliance on transactive discourse as the sole element of classroom discussion is that such transacts can be used in two fundamentally different ways. Here we are going to loosely borrow from the distinction the philosopher Jurgen Habermas (1991) makes between strategic action and communicative discourse. When we are engaged in strategic action, our goal is to somehow get the other person to agree with and go along with our own point of view and our own goals. A great deal of our conversations are of this strategic kind. The prototype of strategic discourse is debate. In a debate, the goal is to win the argument. It doesn't matter whether or not the position we take is the most defensible, but whether or not we are able to convince the other, or convince the judges, that we have been able to outdo our opponent in presenting our case. When we are engaged in communicative discourse, however, the goal is to arrive at the best, most compelling position regarding the issue. It is the shared recognition of the force of the reasoning and not the power or skill of the debater that is the winner. In a strategic discourse, the outcome is unilateral; someone wins. In a communicative discourse, the outcome is mutual; the argument wins.

The goal of a developmental discussion is to have the argument win and not an individual student or elite group of students. In our approach to social and moral education, we attempt to engage students in activities that move toward communicative discourse. The approach we have taken makes use of the work on moral dilemma discussion (Lind, 2006; Oser, 1986; Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989) along with the suggestions and guidance of experienced teachers we have worked with. We are especially indebted to Georg Lind for his guidelines on the pace and timing of dilemma discussions in classrooms. In the recommendations that follow we are assuming that the overall moral atmosphere of the classroom is compatible with this form of instruction. In effect, the use of communicative discourse contributes to an overall moral climate of mutual respect and cooperation that not only serves social growth, but academic achievement as well. As part of a project we did with Elementary District #64 in

Park Ridge, Illinois, we worked with teachers and fifth- and sixth-grade students to come up with the following guidelines for how to structure a good classroom discussion. These guidelines incorporate elements of transacts and translate the basic notions of communicative discourse into language readily accepted by students and teachers. Although these guidelines are the handiwork of elementary school students, they have also been embraced by undergraduates to frame their discussions in my university-level courses.

Nine Rules for a Good Discussion

- *General principle:* The purpose of a good discussion is to work with others to come up with the best set of ideas or ways to deal with a situation. In an argument or a debate, only one side wins. In a good discussion, everybody wins!
 1. Think before you speak.
 2. Listen carefully to what others have to say.
 3. Do not interrupt when some one else is speaking.
 4. Make use of what others have to say when it is your turn to speak.
 5. Only say what you truly believe.
 6. Do not remain silent. Make sure to contribute to the discussion.
 7. Let other people speak. Do not hog the discussion. Once you are done speaking, let at least two other people talk before you speak again.
 8. Support good ideas that other people have, even if they are different from your own.
 9. Search for the best solution even if it is different from the way that you thought at first.

Preparing Students to Engage in Productive Discussion

In working with teachers, we have found that implementing the above nine rules works best when students have an opportunity to discuss what these rules mean, and then to consider which ones they would find difficult to put into practice. We have found that elementary school students from grade 4 through middle school take this discussion very seriously. High school teachers may or may not feel the need to have this list of rules, though as I have mentioned, my own undergraduates have found them useful. This list of rules should also be viewed as a starting point, as students may wish to alter, delete, or add new ones to reflect their own approach toward communicative discourse. The purpose, of course, is to reach consensus on the process of discussion that will lead to genuine efforts to find the best argument rather than to win a debate.

Implementing a communicative discourse of the sort described by the above nine rules requires skills that not all students have developed as part of their linguistic repertoire. What follows are some suggestions for how to prepare students to effectively engage in moral discussion. Students and teachers find

these exercises fun. They should be used early in the term to prepare students for later work. They may be used sporadically thereafter, as a way to develop discussion skills, but shouldn't be overdone. These exercises were constructed with the help of Marvin Berkowitz. They make use of the discoveries from his research on transactive discourse, and borrow from practices that teachers have long used to help students engage in productive discussions. The initial listening exercise may be used at all grade levels. The transactive discourse exercises are intended for use with students in grades 4 and above.

Warm-Ups: Learning to Listen

In order for students to discuss one another's ideas and points of view, they need to be able to listen to what each person has to say. There are many exercises that teachers have developed over the years as ways to help students learn to listen. This first one is taken from Aronson and Patnoe's (1997) book, *The Jigsaw Classroom: Building Cooperation in the Classroom*. It is intended to help students realize the importance of turn-taking in a group discussion. Place students in groups of 5 seated in a circle facing one another, and ask them on the count of three to say their names out loud all at once. A brief follow-up discussion with students will quickly reveal that it was very difficult to make out anyone else's name under those conditions.

The second activity is intended simply to address the tendencies among some students to listen to others only in the sense of hearing their voices in order to tell when they have stopped talking so that the listener may begin. This sort of parallel conversation is common among very young children, but it is an affliction that many older students and adults share as well. The purpose of the game is to get each player to accurately paraphrase the statement of another speaker. It is similar to the game "Telephone" except in this case, the goal is accuracy.

Place students in threes. Player (1) tells something brief about himself to player (2). Player (2) restates it as accurately as possible to player (3). Player (1) then evaluates whether or not the paraphrase was accurate. Player (2) then tells something brief to player (3) with player (2) as the "checker" until all players have had a turn at each role.

Transactive Discourse: Elaboration Game

One of the simpler transacts is to extend the arguments made by a previous speaker. This game may be used directly after the listening game because it extends the use of paraphrase. In this game the student must take into account what the previous person said and elaborate on it. Prior to play, the teacher models a simple elaboration of a previous statement. The teacher then gives the class an interesting issue to discuss. Over the past three years we have used the following issues: Should the Chicago Cubs rehire Sammy Sosa? Should Congress

permit stem cell research? Should the mom have a say in whether or not a person your age cleans up his or her room?

Place students in circles of up to 6 players. Player (1) begins by expressing a point of view. Player (2) paraphrases the statement made by player (1) and elaborates or extends it. Player (3) does the same with the statement made by player (2). This continues until all students have had a turn at extending the argument. With elementary-aged children, the teacher should circulate from group to group to hear whether or not children are accurate in providing elaborations, and help out when this doesn't occur. With junior and senior high school students, the teacher can assign one member of each group to serve as "checker."

Transactive Discourse: Rebuttal Game

The rebuttal game is an extension of the elaboration game and uses the same procedure except that each student must paraphrase and offer a refutation of the argument advanced by the previous speaker.

Transactive Discourse: Integrative Resolution

This final version is intended for use with high school sophomores and above, or very advanced younger students. It requires the students to listen to both an initial argument and its refutation, and then, taking both arguments into account, offer an integrative resolution of the two positions. Prior to this exercise, the teacher should model an integrative resolution.

Students are placed in groups of six. Player (1) states a position, which player (2) then paraphrases and refutes. Player (3) then paraphrases the positions taken by both players (1) and (2) and offers an argument that resolves the differences between the two positions. Player (2) then offers a new position, which Player (3) refutes and Player (4) integrates. This continues until each player has had a turn at offering an integrative resolution.

Common Questions for Setting Up Discussions

We will close this section by reviewing and providing answers to some common questions teachers raise about how to use discussions for social and moral lessons. These answers are based on our own experiences and those of others who have worked with dilemma discussion (Lind, 2006).

- How do I structure groups? For students in grades 4 and above, groups should have 5 or 6 children. In younger grades children can work in pairs or triads. Groups should be heterogeneous with respect to gender, ethnicity, and academic ability. For dilemma and conflict discussion groups

should include children who hold opposing views with at least two members on each side of the issue (in grades 4 and above).

- How do I introduce and sequence the lesson? The following chapters will provide examples of lessons with model questions that the teacher should have prepared in advance to structure discussions.
 1. *Clarify the issues.* To begin the lesson, make sure that everyone understands the issue. Does everyone agree on the facts? It can help to have a brief prepared summary of the particular issue that you want students to focus on. After the initial phase of some moral issue discussions it may be important to help students identify situations where their disagreements are about factual assumptions. For example, discussions about controversial issues such as the death penalty often center around assumptions about whether the death penalty acts as a deterrent, whether it costs less than life imprisonment, if it is applied unevenly by race, if innocent people are put to death, and so on. When such factual assumptions lead to disagreement it is best to have the students research the facts and then return to the moral discussion.
 2. *Clarify feelings and engage in person perception.* This applies to moral, personal, and overlapping issues. This is an especially important element of social emotional learning in elementary and middle school.
 3. *Connect the academic issue to students' personal experience.* There is some disagreement as to whether to begin an issue discussion with the moral or social issues raised in the academic content, or to begin with questions that connect the underlying theme to students' personal experience. Generally, teachers in elementary grades find it more engaging to start with everyday experience and then move toward the more distal academic lesson. However, this is not always the case, especially when dealing with literature or stories. In most cases the lesson should make a connection to personal experience, whether at the beginning or end of the lesson.
 4. *Connect to an academic assignment.* Lessons should generally end with an academic assignment either for in-class work or homework.
- Do I also use whole class discussion, or only small groups? A pattern employed by many teachers is to have a small group discussion followed by a whole class discussion. This allows everyone the benefit of hearing a range of solutions or positions. Generally students participate at a greater level in small group rather than large group discussions.
- Can I use this type of discussion with young children? The short answer is yes, especially with regard to moral dilemmas or moral conflicts. However, these discussions should be integrated into reflective “pairs” reading or other academic activity. Teachers can effectively lead small group

and whole class discussions with young children similar to what older children can accomplish in groups on their own. Generally, young children do not have much to say about social conventions. Discussions about conventions are more fruitful in relation to classroom rules or in the context of understanding a story plot than in trying to get young children below grade 3 or 4 to try to figure out the social functions of conventional norms through academic content.

- Can I take a moral position as the teacher? The short answer is yes, but with this caveat. Every time that a teacher provides an answer, it robs the students of the opportunity to construct their own understanding and to come to hold a moral position firmly on their own. The better role for the teacher is to ask the provocative questions, and to prod students into looking for solutions beyond pat answers that will cause them to grow in their moral and social understanding.
- Should I connect the discussion to some other academic assignment? Yes, have homework or other assignments connected to the discussion. This will increase the likelihood of on-task behavior and will help students to deepen their understanding and knowledge.
- How long should this take? For simple issues, about 20 minutes. For complex issues in middle school and high school, it can last up to 35 minutes across two sessions. For children below grade 4, a discussion should last no longer than 10 minutes.
- How often should this be done? No more than twice per week, and no less than once every two weeks.
- Should I plan for particular days each week for moral lessons and discussions? This should be a function of the connection between the academic work of the class and the issues that emerge within the academic content. Social and moral lessons should not occur on an “if this is Friday, it must be honesty day” formula. As in other good teaching always be prepared to raise moral issues during a “teachable moment.”

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the basic elements for constructing a moral and social values lesson using the regular academic curriculum. A guiding principle for constructing such lessons is that they provide a 2 for 1 benefit of increasing moral and social development and contributing to academic learning within the same lesson. The purpose of using the academic content for social and moral lessons is to contribute to the development of students’ social and moral knowledge and understanding. A particular advantage of integrating social

and moral development with academic content is that it affords an opportunity for reflection on issues that go beyond personal experience. It also allows students to apply their moral knowledge to existing social norms and social structures, particularly as students enter upper elementary grades and secondary school. This gives students the chance to become morally reflective and develop a critical moral perspective, which they can apply to themselves and society.

The basic principle that guides lesson construction is that lessons generate reflection and construction of new social and moral understandings. In order to do this effectively, lessons must be appropriate for the students' age and the activities of the lesson must match the moral, conventional, or personal domain issues contained in the lesson. Finally, lessons should connect to the students' own feelings and sense of self.

Lessons can take several formats including discussion around issues raised in the regular curriculum, role plays, representation through the arts, representation through mathematics, and empirical (scientific) or library investigation. In most cases, lessons will make use of developmental discussion.

Discussions should take the form of communicative discourse in which the goal is to have the best argument or idea emerge, rather than for the most skilled debater to dominate and "win" the discussion. Effective discussions involve having students think about and reflect upon what they are hearing and offer suggestions that make use of what others have to say. This process is referred to as transactive discussion. Teachers can develop students' listening and discussion skills. The chapter offers nine rules that can be helpful for classroom discussion. The chapter ends with answers to common questions teachers raise about how to implement values lessons.