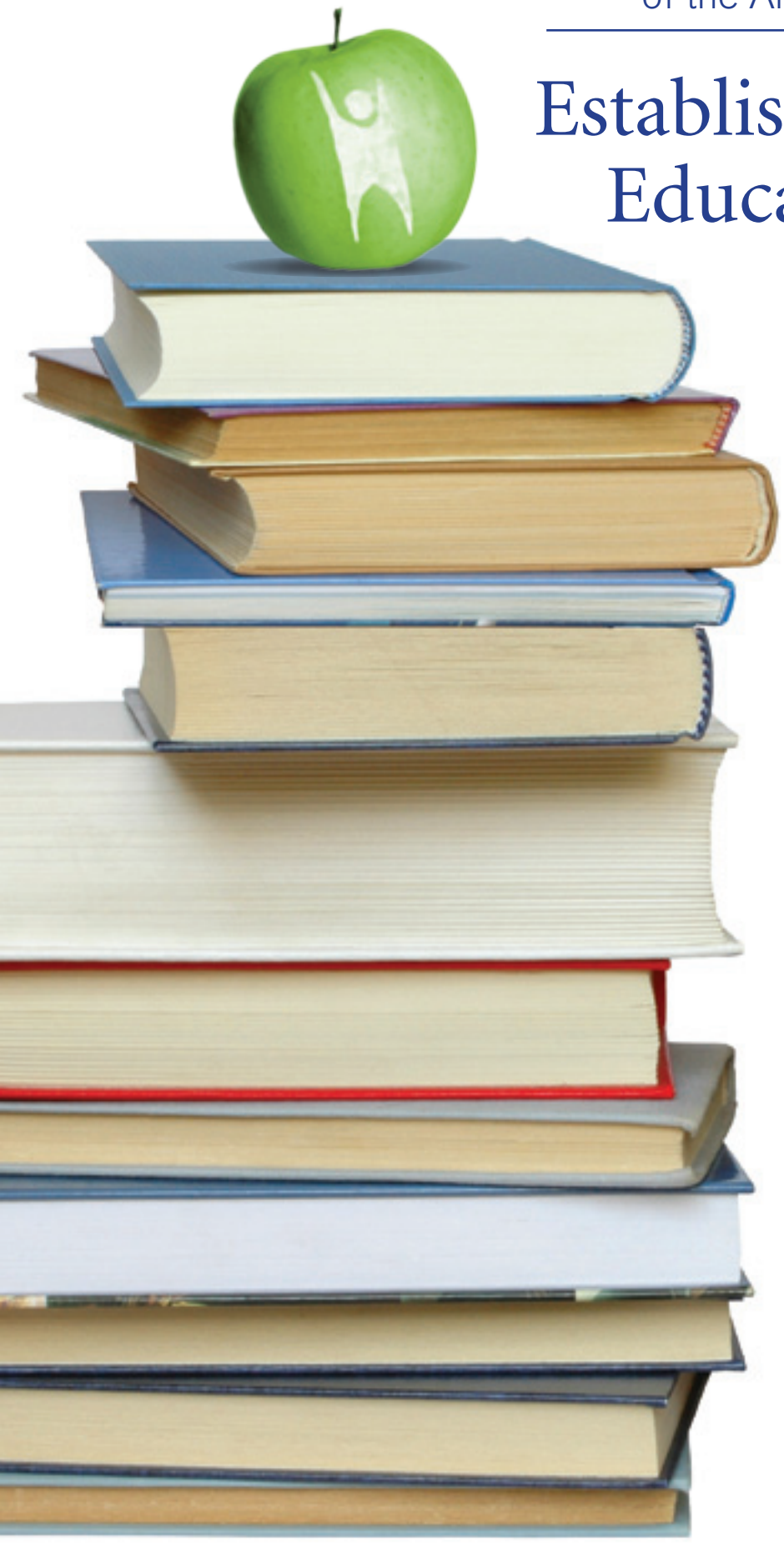
Kochhar Humanist Education Center
of the American Humanist Association

Establishing Humanist Education Programs for Children



Establishing Humanist Education Programs For Children

CONTENTS

STEPS IN ESTABLISHING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

APPENDICES

Dear Colleagues,

The purpose of this manual is to provide a working model with steps for establishing humanist educational programs for children. It also includes the experiences of two American Humanist Association chapters which received start-up funding from Pritpal Kochhar through the AHA and which have developed such programs: the Humanists of Greater Portland, Oregon and the Humanist Society of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

We must champion humanist curricula that prepare students who are capable of thinking critically. When should we begin? Carol Wintermute, co-dean of The Humanist Institute, has written that it is never too early to begin a child's development of the critical attitude toward all knowledge claims and that "critical thinking is needed to keep us afloat in the waves of truth claims coming to our shores."

As noted, the manual presents an overview of the approaches used by the two AHA chapters. It includes background information on their programs, goals and objectives, brief program descriptions, suggestions for reaching out to communities, challenges and ways of addressing them, suggestions for other chapters and affiliates, and steps to be taken. It also includes several related readings which should provide added information and "food for thought" which should be helpful in establishing educational programs for children.

The manual is open ended. Please send us your plans and reports of your progress so that we can include them in the next edition. The American Humanist Association has over 140 chapters and affiliates. Our goal is to establish educational programs for children in each one of them.

Sincerely,

Bob Bhaerman, Ed. D.
Director, Kochhar Humanist Education Center
American Humanist Association

STEPS IN ESTABLISHING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

In each of the reports from the Humanists of Greater Portland and the Humanist Society of New Mexico, you will find a listing of the steps which each chapter has taken in establishing programs for children. Because each chapter is unique, each approach is different in its specifics but greatly alike in their overall approach to program planning and implementation. In addition, we have developed a model list of nine steps which AHA chapters and affiliates should consider when establishing their programs. Each step begins with questions to be addressed. They can also be stated as discussion points (matters to consider) or action points (things to do). You will note that we also have stated the overall main categories as gerunds, that is, we have consciously used verbs as nouns because we have chosen to connote *doing* as well as *talking*. The steps also can be grouped into three categories: the *planning* stage, the *performing* stage, and the *evaluating* stage (which should be an ongoing activity).

The steps are as follows:

1. Assessing your needs
2. Determining your objectives
3. Advertising your program
4. Establishing your policies
5. Acquiring funds to operate the program
6. Determining the curriculum
7. Identifying resources: people, places, things
8. Implementing the program
9. Evaluating the program

1 ASSESSING YOUR NEEDS

Questions to Ask

Why is an educational program needed?

What specific information is needed and how we will collect it?

Who should be included in this assessment, e.g., chapter members, prospective parents of participants, educational consultants, others?

What other educational programs with humanist sponsorship or values exist in our community, e.g., UU Fellowships, Ethical Culture Societies, other stakeholders?

Take Time To …

Conduct a needs assessment. Why is a program necessary for children and youth in your group? There are many ways to go about answering this question. You can conduct informal surveys, individual interviews with parents, focus groups or a combination of these approaches. Focus groups which allow a free flowing exchange of ideas and opinions are often a good place to begin, although the number of participants should likely be limited to eight or ten. The steps in the process normally include:

- Forming a needs assessment committee
- Determining the group or community to be surveyed, e.g., all members of your group or only those with children
- Selecting one or more of the needs assessment approach noted above
- Developing a plan for acquiring the information
- Collecting and analyzing the results and "going on from there."

The following is a brief example of a needs assessment which can be expanded as needed:

Questions to be asked	Responses from the surveys, interviews and/or focus groups
(1) How many children would be served and what are their ages?	

(2) Is child care for very young children needed and should it be part of the program?	
(3) What do you believe should be the content emphases and the specific objectives of such a program?	
(4) What are your thoughts on charging a small fee or tuition?	
(5) Would you be willing to assist in such a program and, if so, in what way?	
Add any additional questions	

Reach out to other freethought and atheist groups in your community to assess their needs and see if there are families with children who would be interested in being involved in your program. Seek their permission to do a mailing to their members to announce the availability of your new program. Conduct several collaborative family-friendly events during the year. One of the best places to start identifying these groups is the United Coalition of Reason. The United CoR, as it is called, provides a structure where local groups in the community of reason come together cooperatively to raise their public profiles and help generate dialogue on the legitimacy of religious skepticism. They work with a number of national organizations – including the American Humanist Association – as well as many independent groups. To find out if there is a local CoR in your area, check www.UnitedCoR.org. As of the beginning of August 2010, they had over 27 groups in 18 states and the District of Columbia.

Closely following assessment of your needs for establishing a program for children, the next step is determining the specific objectives for such a program.

2 DETERMINING YOUR OBJECTIVES

Questions to ask

What is our vision for the program and how will it be stated in our mission statement?

How will the mission statement lead to specific areas around which programs and activities can be developed?

Have both long-term and short-term objectives been established?

Are the objectives and intended results measurable?

Take Time To…

Develop a mission statement for your program. A mission statement is a short, formal, written statement of the purpose of any organization. It contains the basic principles and values which guide the program, in our case, educational programs for children. While we cannot write a mission statement for any specific AHA group, we share part of a highly relevant statement on humanist education by Nimrod Aloni (*Humanist Education.* Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Education, 1999). Dr. Aloni, Professor of Philosophy of Education at Seminar Hakibbutzim in Tel Aviv and UNESCO Chair for Humanistic Education, Kibbutzim College of Education in Israel, wrote the following. While longer than a mission statement normally is, we believe that it contains the essence of what humanist education should be for both children and adults.

> The business of humanistic education is nothing less than to empower and guide individuals to lead a vital and sound life, marked by wide-awakeness and thoughtful deliberation, moral conduct and political involvement, authentic engagement in life and discriminating appreciation of beauty in both nature and art. Humanistic educators should further seek to develop well-rounded and integral persons whose culture is manifested not only in their broad-learning but also in wise and responsible utilization of knowledge … Its ideal is to achieve in their students the right integration as well as the right tension between a commitment to high cultural standards and a strong sense of individuality in both the forms of autonomy and authenticity. Finally, to

achieve all this, truly humanistic teachers take the responsibility to set personal example in the art of living as well as to create at their schools a pedagogical atmosphere of care, trust, support, dialogue, respect, fairness, tolerance, inquiry, freedom, commitment, responsibility and reciprocity. Without these last elements, even the most beautifully woven theory of humanistic education would fail to become a lived reality for its teachers and students (www.ffst.hr/ENCYCLOPAEDIA/doku.php?id=humanistic).

Build your programs on the principles of humanism. The principles of humanism and, hence, of humanist education are well established and are outlined in Humanism and its Aspirations, Humanist Manifesto III in 2003, the primary points of which are:

- *Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis.* Humanists find that science is the best method for determining this knowledge as well as for solving problems and developing beneficial technologies. We also recognize the value of new departures in thought, the arts, and inner experience—each subject to analysis by critical intelligence.

- *Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change.* Humanists recognize nature as self-existing. We accept our life as all and enough, distinguishing things as they are from things as we might wish or imagine them to be. We welcome the challenges of the future, and are drawn to and undaunted by the yet to be known.

- *Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience.* Humanists ground values in human welfare shaped by human circumstances, interests, and concerns and extended to the global ecosystem and beyond. We are committed to treating each person as having inherent worth and dignity, and to making informed choices in a context of freedom consonant with responsibility.

- *Life's fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals.* We aim for our fullest possible development and animate our lives with a deep sense of purpose, finding wonder and awe in the joys and beauties of human existence, its challenges and tragedies, and even in the inevitability and finality of death. Humanists rely on the rich heritage of human culture and the lifestance of Humanism to provide comfort in times of want and encouragement in times of plenty.

- *Humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships.* Humanists long for and strive toward a world of mutual care and concern, free of cruelty and its consequences, where differences are resolved cooperatively without resorting to violence. The joining of individuality with interdependence enriches our lives, encourages us to enrich the lives of others, and inspires hope of attaining peace, justice, and opportunity for all.

- *Working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness.* Progressive cultures have worked to free humanity from the brutalities of mere survival and to reduce suffering, improve society, and develop global community. We seek to minimize the inequities of circumstance and ability, and we support a just distribution of nature's resources and the fruits of human effort so that as many as possible can enjoy a good life.

What are the implications of these aspirations for humanist education? We believe it means that as humanist educators:

- We shall teach that the meaning of life is derived from human experience.
- We shall teach moral and ethical values.
- We shall teach the values and skills of free inquiry and critical thinking.
- We shall teach the concepts and implications of evolution.
- We shall teach about finding meanings in relationships.
- We shall teach about peace and social justice.
- We shall teach that we are interconnected and that everything we do has global implications.

We believe that it also means that those who teach children about humanism must do so in a humanistic manner. They must establish learning environments in which mutual respect is continually evident. A humanistic way of teaching means working together cooperatively, sharing our deepest thoughts and feelings, discussing all manner of issues in depth, and adhering to and practicing the following core values:

- Everyone is important and unique and deserves to be treated fairly and kindly.
- Everyone can learn from everyone else and from the world around us.
- Everyone is a member of the world community and depends on the cooperation of all people for peace and justice.
- Everyone can learn from the past and participate in building the future.
- Everyone is free to choose what she or he believes.
- Everyone must accept responsibility for her or his choices and actions.

Education in a democracy is rooted in the inherent worth and dignity of every human being. Thus, democratic education is inherently humanistic.

Conduct a survey to ascertain what the members of your group believe are the most essential learning outcomes and focuses. Here are a number of areas to consider:

- Providing peer socializing opportunities in an environment in which nonreligious thinking is considered normal
- Gaining a sense of community by interacting with members of all ages in the humanist group in social gatherings and programs
- Bolstering reasonable and non-condescending confidence and pride in secular or nonreligious children and youth
- Encouraging pro-social behaviors: caring, cooperation, empathy, and mutual consideration among children and youth in the group
- Engaging in community service activities that contribute to the larger community
- Appreciating world cultures, being responsibility as a world citizen, and considering the needs of the earth and all its inhabitants
- Building character, integrity, and consistency of beliefs and action
- Understanding how to reason effectively about ethical issues
- Living one's humanistic principles and values; understanding and living up to one's moral and ethical lifestyle
- Exploring diversity of thought, respecting those who may disagree with you and exploring the various ways individuals live, including people with different physical or mental/emotional abilities
- Exploring the world through science and the processes of observation, hypothesis, experimentation, and drawing conclusions
- Appreciating history's role in making future decisions

- Encouraging expression in art, music, dance, writing, storytelling and drama
- Comparing religions and other life philosophies and the human needs they are striving to meet

Have the respondents rank these items and rate each one's degree of support or non-support. Often a five-point scale is used, for example:
Strongly oppose … Somewhat opposed … No preference … Somewhat support … Strongly support

Complete the following objectives activities chart. You will recognize that these objectives are drawn from the principles outlined in Humanism and Its Aspirations. Objectives state what the program is intended to do and should be measurable in order to assess progress toward attaining them. They should become the foundation for program implementation, that is, they should lead to learning activities.

Objectives	For a number of suggested learning activities, see the examples in Appendix 5, "Critical Thinking with a Humanist Focus" There are many others that you can add.
(1) To understand that knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis	
(2) To recognize that humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change	
(3) To understand that ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience	
(4) To realize that life's fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of human ideals	

(5) To recognize that humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships	
(6)To know that working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness	

3 ADVERTISING YOUR PROGRAM

Questions to ask

How will we attract new students?

How will we advertise and market the program?

Has a community outreach plan been established?

Take Time to …

Consider the wide variety of approaches for advertising and marketing the program:

- Word of mouth (one of the best ways)
- Flyers and brochures
- Chapter's newsletters and websites
- Paid advertisements
- Public service announcements
- Targeted mailings (regular and e-mails)
- Press releases, e.g., its title might be along these lines: "Local Humanists Establish a Program to Educate Children on Humanist Principles and Values"
- Meet-ups are valuable in helping people with shared interests plan meetings and form offline groups in local communities

Consider the wide variety of places in which to announce, advertising and marketing the program:

- Community centers
- Public libraries
- Local radio and television stations
- Supermarkets and even some popular family-oriented restaurants and coffee houses
- Craiglists and other on-line forums; Craigslist provides local classifieds and forums for personals, services and community events.
- Parent magazines and family journals (which often are free)
- Special events such as summer picnics, Darwin Day and Solstice observations

Other points to consider:

- Making certain that the contents include a clear and cordial welcoming to a program that is truly an authentic learning experience which, includes lots of fun things to do.
- Mentioning the children's program in all announcement and advertisements of the adult program and jointly advertising both programs.
- Creating an attractive program name and logo (or using the Happy Humanist symbol).
- Including a special section on your website devoted to the children's program, activities and events.
- Assuring the public that there is no discrimination related to ethnicity, sexual orientation, or any other.
- Citing humanist principles and values; including the following passage from "Humanism and Its Aspirations" so that the readers know where you are coming from and what will be the central focus of the curriculum:

> "The lifestance of Humanism—guided by reason, inspired by compassion, and informed by experience—encourages us to live life well and fully. It evolved through the ages and continues to develop through the efforts of thoughtful people who recognize that values and ideals, however carefully wrought, are subject to change as our knowledge and understandings advance."

4 ESTABLISHING YOUR POLICIES

Questions to ask

Has a planning committee or council been set up? Who will serve on it? What should be its size? What are it responsibilities and what roles should it play in determining the mission and implementation of our program?

Have we set up rules of procedure and by-laws to follow?

Have we determined policies for special needs students?

Have we determined policies for a "safe" classroom? (This is to protect both the students and the adults from inappropriate behavior and accusations.)

Have insurance issues and health and safety policies/rules been addressed?

Will a nursery be established? (Offering a nursery comes with many logistics and legal matters which need to be considered.)

Take Time To …

Consider the following policy matters:

▸ The need for written policy guidelines for operating the program. The policies should be reviewed periodically and updated as needed. Below are some important issues to consider; no doubt you will want to add other specific ones that are directly related to your situation. We suggest that they be organized using the five standard "journalist questions" (Who? What? When? Where? Why?) and that your committee or whoever develops polices consider the following items:

Who?

The role of the school committee is to …. It should include (#) members.

In an effort to build a sense of community and the feeling of program ownership, our policy on the use of volunteers as teachers is .... Our policy on staff remuneration is ….

Our policy is that teachers and/or volunteers be drawn from (parents? the chapter membership at large? both?)

Our policy on the role of families is ….

The job descriptions of all of our staff will include the following dimensions …

What?

Policies will be established in the following areas: insurance matters, emergency procedures, disciplinary concerns, health and safety issues, and …. (Safety policies are extremely important since the children need to feel safe and secure at all times. Just as in the public schools, if young children want to play outside the building in any location with public access, an adult needs to be with them at all times.)

Teacher training programs will be offered by …

Programs will be considered for older youth, i.e., those in middle schools and high schools, and will focus on such issues as ……

When?

Our policy is that the program will meet (weekly? bi-weekly? monthly? all year long? the same as the public school calendar?)

Where?

The sessions will meet at … a.m. on (day of the week) at the following location …

Why?

We realize that while there are many learning objectives on which we will focus, one that is central to humanist educational programs for all age groups is *critical thinking*. And while there also are a number of definitions of critical thinking, one of the most precise is the statement that "Critical thinking is that mode of thinking -- about any subject, content, or problem -- in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them." (The Critical Thinking Community: http://www.criticalthinking.org/aboutCT/define_critical_thinking.cfm). We believe that this definition is applicable to all ages groups, young and old.

▸ With regard to budget matters, the budget should be projected annually by an executive committee as part of the chapter's budget. A list of approved expenditures (curriculum, etc.) should be made by the committee and supplied to the chapter's

treasurer. When developing your budget, there are several decisions to be made and areas to be considered. For example:

Decisions to be made

Regarding the numbers:

- projected students (and anticipated increases during the school year)
- classes that are needed
- teachers who are needed

Regarding the need:

- to purchase pre-developed curriculum materials
- for classroom preparation and/or improvement
- for new or replacement furnishings and/or equipment

Areas to be considered

Compensation for teachers and consultants
Curriculum resources: books, audio-visual materials
Supplies, e.g., children typically need crayons, markers, coloring books, craft supplies and snacks
Advertising of the program in the local media
Printing and duplication
Rental space
Insurance

Develop registration materials. There are a number of items which should be included in the registration form: birth date; grade in school; school and name of school; ages of siblings; contact information and emergency contact information; and personal information such as allergies, medical conditions, physical or mental limitations, and specific requests or considerations.

5 ACQUIRING FUNDS TO OPERATE THE PROGRAM

Questions to ask

What funds are needed and how might they be acquired?

Will fees or tuition be charged?

Has a tentative budget been developed?

Take Time To …

Review Section VII on Fundraising in the American Humanist Association's 2007 *Grassroots Manual*. There you will find a great deal of information and insights on such topics as membership dues, fundraising drives, grants and fundraising events.

▸ On membership dues, the manual suggests that "While it's always a good idea to give your members the option to contribute more than the basic dues when they renew, focus on keeping your renewal response numbers high, and remember other opportunities exist to seek contributions."

▸ "Fundraising drives can also be used to benefit children and students in the group." The manual suggests that you may want to hold a fundraiser to help sponsor members' children to attend Camp Quest. This is an excellent idea since the young campers learn about science and critical thinking through games, skits and other fun activities, activities which supplement the curriculum of a chapter's educational program for children. Of course, a fund-drive mailing for the education program also makes sense.

▸ The manual points out the advantages as well as the challenges of fundraising events, that is, while they can be a significant source of contributions, they also can take a good deal of time and planning. Having interesting and noted speakers is suggested, for example, authors of children's books dealing with humanist values.

Lastly, the manual also suggests forming a development committee for overall fund-

raising for your group – to which we would add – for fundraising and grant development for such specific initiatives as humanist education programs for children and youth.

Become familiar with funding sources including community foundations and family foundations. Community foundations provide funding within a local community or region. It is estimated that there are between 650 and 700 in the United States. Search for one in your own backyard by visiting—

- http://www.communityfoundations.net/
- http://www.communityfoundations.net/page14122.html
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_foundation
- http://www.cof.org/ (Council on Foundation)

Also check out the Foundation Center (http://foundationcenter.org/) which provides information about these three resources:

- Foundation Funder: http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/
- Links to Private Foundation websites: http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/topical/sl_dir.html
- Community Foundations by State: http://www.tgci.com/funding.shtml

A related resource is a reading list of citations to works from the Foundation Center's bibliographic database, *Catalog of Nonprofit Literature*, on the topic of family foundations. The catalog is a searchable database of the literature of philanthropy that incorporates the contents of the Foundation Center's five libraries and contains approximately 28,000 bibliographic citations.

See: foundationcenter.org/getstarted/topical/family.html and
http://cnl.foundationcenter.org/

6 DETERMINING THE CURRICULUM

Questions to ask

What will be the focus of our program, e. g., do the learning outcomes include both intellectual skills and knowledge (cognitive objectives) and growth in feelings, attitudes and emotions (affective objectives)?

Have we determined the curriculum areas to be covered and whether they are to be recurring themes throughout the grades?

What specific curriculum topics will be stressed?

Has a formal curriculum been identified?

Have both the scope and sequence of the curriculum been outlined?

Have we reviewed the curriculum of other programs from which we might benefit?

Have we reviewed the resources of the Kochhar Humanist Education Center's website, Curriculum Resources for the Life Span?

Take Time To …

Review the instructional program and curriculum of Camp Quest. Camp Quest provides children of humanist, atheist, and freethinking parents a residential summer camp dedicated to improving the human condition through rational inquiry, critical and creative thinking, scientific method, self-respect, ethics, competency, democracy, free speech, and the separation of religion and government. The camp's educational programs and activities introduce campers to the history and ideas of freethought. The programs and activities also include what is usual for summer camps: campfires, canoeing, crafts, drama, games, nature hikes, singing, and swimming. In addition, the book *Raising Freethinkers* (Dale McGowan et al) includes a number of Camp Quest activities. For additional information, contact Camp Quest, PO Box 2552, Columbus, Ohio 43216 or check their website: www.camp-quest.org.

Check the curriculum resources of the American Ethical Union. If you are looking for other secular groups with experience in programs for children and youth, look

into the programs of American Ethical Union and its Ethical Culture societies. The AEU provides ethical education in their member societies. Their goal is to encourage teachers to work with their students in ways that focus on values and moral decision making. Contact the AEU to be directed to various Sunday schools to learn how their programs were started as well as for curriculum resources and lesson plans. Check their website: http://www.aeu.org

One of the AEU's most popular and valuable resource is *The Love Your Neighbor* curriculum written by the AEU's Religious Education committee. It accompanies the book of the same name by Dr. Arthur Dobrin, the Leader Emeritus of the Long Island Ethical Humanist Society; the book of stories is available through Scholastic books. *The Love Your Neighbor* curriculum is appropriate for preschool through early elementary aged children. The curriculum includes lessons to go along with the 13 stories in the book. Lessons include art projects, songs, dramatic play, and discussion questions. Materials for the lessons are primarily basic easy-to-find supplies. These lessons can be used with a school group or at home with one's family. For each lesson, key Ethical Core Values are identified. The stories in the book *Love Your Neighbor* were originally written to be shared with an intergenerational group since they are enjoyed by all ages. To view this resource: http://aeu.org/library/articles/Love_Your_Neighbor_exploration.pdf

Examine the many resources of the Unitarian Universalist Association. The Unitarian Universalist Association also has extensive experience in developing educational programs for children, youth and young adults. Contact the UUA at—

http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/index.shtml—to learn how such programs were started and for their extensive curriculum resources.

The UUA, for example, has developed a series of curriculum materials bearing the same name, *In Our Hands: A Peace and Social Justice Program.* Five resources have been published for various age levels: Grades 1-3, Grades 4-6, Junior High, Senior High, and Adults. Each resource begins with a brief overview of several issues: the rationale for peace and social justice education, linking peace and justice, ends and means/ideals and realities, cherishing the earth, defining peace and justice, and sources of authority (e.g., an individual commitment to helping to create peace and justice on the planet.) Each include introductory information on goals of the lessons, the structure of the lessons, characteristics of the age group, discussion suggestions, and other items relevant to the specific age group. For information on acquiring these resources, contact the Unitarian Universalist Association, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108; phone: 617/742-2100. Their web address is: www.uua.org

Also be sure to look for the *R. E. Road Map: An Administrative Guidebook for UU Religious Educators*, written and published in 2006 by Cindy Leitner. This revised and expanded "how to" book on program administration is full of concrete suggestions, useful resources and bibliographies, bulleted lists, sample forms, safety issues, ideas for intergenerational events and much more. The nine sections include such topics as: Vision, Beginning Well, Organizing Your Program, Programming and Teacher Development. The cost is $35 (prepaid) in print and $25 on CD and is available by contacting Cindy Leitner by e-mail: cbleitner@hotmail.com

And be sure to explore the continuously expanding resources in "Curriculum Resources for the Life Span" in the Kochhar Humanist Education website. For a complete description of all of these curriculum resources, see: http://www.americanhumanist.org/What_We_Do/Education_Center/HELP

An example curriculum can be found in the appendices. Here is another example of a curricula resource developed by the Teachers' Press:

The Golden Rule: Basis for Morality and Ethics by Brant Abrahamson and Fred Smith. The authors indicate that, while this resource is intended for high school students, teachers can create effective lessons for younger students as well.

A brief overview of the contents. This 30-page resource is in two parts: a student lesson and a teacher's manual. The student section includes an introductory presentation on the Golden Rule as a standard for moral/ethical conduct, a brief history of Golden Rule ethics, and a brief section on when the Rule became the "Golden Rule." The teacher's manual includes sections on the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments, using the Golden Rule in difficult situations, the "Golden Rule" from McGuffey's Fourth Eclectic Reader, questions and projects, multiple choice questions, and additional discussion questions.

Objectives. What is more important than teaching morality and ethics? As the authors state at the outset, "Probably the most basic everyday guideline for human behavior is to treat people as you would want to be treated if in the other's position." The question is -- how? This resource provides excellent insights on how to go about teaching, living by the "Golden Rule" and, perhaps most importantly, thinking about the meaning behind this most widely-known ethical principle.

Suggested procedures. Study this resource closely with your students, reading parts with them and parts to them. The following are just a very few of the highlights you might wish to stress and explore in depth.

From the Golden Rule as a standard for moral/ethical conduct

- The concept of altruism is defined as people caring about another person's well-being when there is no return favor. Students can suggest times in which they behaved altruistically, doing something good when there was no reward.

- The United Nations' 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* is is a relevant gold mine for students to explore individually or as a group. Check the internet for the many sources that are available. You might want to begin your search here: *un.org/Overview/rights.html*

The Teacher's Manual, part of this resource is replete with much information and many teaching ideas. For example, the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments section suggests having the students restate the last seven commandments (as commonly listed) into Golden Rule terms. Several examples are given, e.g., "pay attention when people talk, as you would like them to pay attention to you." Much of this section is devoted to thought questions and projects, multiple choice questions, and more discussion questions. Several of the questions, projects and discussion items are as follows:

- Felix Adler, the founder of the Ethical Culture movement, wrote "Act so as to elicit the best in others and thereby the best in yourself." In your judgment when, if ever, is this guideline an improvement on the Golden Rule? What reasoning supports your answer?

- What will happen in a society if people generally fail to follow the Golden Rule? Will order then be imposed through more and stricter laws? Harsher punishments?

- Is this an example of the Golden Rule?: Using "An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth" as a guide when mistreated.

- What evidence, if any, shows world-wide progress that has been in using the Golden Rule as a moral guide?

- Is "following the Golden Rule" all that is needed to live a moral life? Yes or no? Why or why not?

- To what extent are such mottos as "Do a good deed every day" or "Engage in random acts of kindness" like the Golden Rule? How are they different?

You also will find a copy of The Golden Rule Poster which you can order. The poster illustrates Golden Rule statements from 13 world religions both Western and Eastern.

The last five pages of the document include the actual lesson plan with the topics that have been noted above. For example, the section on the history of Golden Rule ethics includes the relevant rules from ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, East and South Asia, West Asia, the Hebrew scriptures, Islam and Baha'i, various Native American cultures and Africa.

Contact for additional information and cost of resource materials:

The Teachers' Press, 3731 Madison Avenue, Brookfield. IL 60513.
e-mail address: teacherspr@aol.com
website: http://www.teachingaboutreligion.com/teachers_press.htm

In addition to developing the Golden Rule curriculum resource, Brant Abrahamson has compiled a list of 11 related ideas for parents and teachers to consider. Although his experience was with high school age students, the following ideas are appropriate for parents and teachers of younger children:

(1) Faithfully practice the Golden Rule. Children mimic. They will likely treat others as they themselves have been treated.

(2) Frequently talk about the Golden rule. Use the term in daily conversation. For example, almost all parents ask misbehaving children, "How would you like it if she did that to you?" But, don't stop there. Say "This is not Golden Rule behavior!" Beyond talking, secure Golden Rule artifacts. Pencils, rulers, posters and other articles are available on the web. Embed the title (and associated concept) in children's minds in as many ways as is possible.

(3) Read Golden Rule stories. One from McGuffey's Fourth Eclectic Reader (with questions) is included in the Teachers' Manual. Search local libraries for age-appropriate children's books on the Golden Rule.

(4) Children need to be physically active. They want to feel that they are valuable participants in the home and community. As a parent or teacher, have them work along side you at the local food pantry or other charitable activity that has a Golden Rule basis.

(5) Use their creative abilities. Have them draw pictures illustrating Golden Rule behavior. Often children love to make posters. Have them construct those featuring secular renditions of the Golden Rule such as those found in the lesson. Multiple posters of the Golden Rule from various religious traditions exist.

(6) Use Golden Rule games.

▸ Play "telephone." Whisper a rather non-standard variation of the Golden Rule into the first child's ear and see what version emerges at the end of the line. See if "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" emerges -- or something else.

▸ Have children develop their own Golden Rule wording. Write out their statements and post them or have them compare their statements with those in the materials.

(7) Provide children with multiple inter-cultural activities where they work toward common goals with children very different from themselves. Try to keep broadening the circles of people with whom they identify, i.e., work toward enlarging the child's perceived in-groups for which he or she thinks Golden Rule behavior is appropriate. As adults, they are not likely to be empathetic toward out-group individuals—whether they are in their class or elsewhere in the community or the world.

(8) Challenge them to memorize multiple versions of the Golden Rule, identifying each with a religious or secular tradition. Many children like to memorize and "verses" memorized at a young age often stay with people through their lives.

(9) Have children evaluate their past actions, e.g., they can recount (in writing or otherwise) times when they remember using Golden Rule behavior—or times when, in afterthought, they could have done so but did not. In this case, you might ask, "What would you do differently the next time to more closely follow the Golden Rule?"

(10) Children are idealistic. Ask how they would feel if somebody used one of the anti-Golden Rule sayings that are listed in the lesson. For example: "How would you respond if you heard someone say, 'He who has the gold rules?'"

(11) Children increasingly think about ethical issues as they mature. Challenge them to think about tough ones relative to their lives. For example, can the Golden Rule be used to to persuade a classroom bully to change his or her behavior? If so, how? If not, why not?

Brant concludes, "Together these suggestions amount to an immersion program such as those used to teach a child a foreign language. As with teaching any material, one needs to think about where to draw the line, when 'enough is enough.' I remember a statement a student made years ago when I was providing example after example: "Mr. Abrahamson. We get the idea.'"

Also check with The Teachers' Press how to acquire the following additional curriculum resources for high school age children:

Thinking Logically A Study of Common Fallacies. A study of 13 mental errors that students learn to avoid as they discuss or write about important issues. Each of these thinking problems is defined, described and illustrated. Students are given "Questions to Ask" themselves so that the fallacies can be avoided. The Teacher's Manual includes multiple activities, exercises and quizzes.

Thinking About Religion. Students learn to put their beliefs into a broad cultural perspective as they consider "The Religious View of Life," "New Religions," "Religion and Morality," Religion and Science," and "Religion and Human Life." Additional readings are on religious change and faith systems that originated in Asia, Africa and the Americas.

Thinking About the Mysterious. Students focus on occultist and psychic subterfuge in this 3-week study. Presumed "unnatural forces" are demystified as students learn to perform the same tricks that charlatans often use. The instructional kit has factual data on a wide variety of pseudo-scientific practices such as astrology and palm reading.

7 IDENTIFYING RESOURCES [PEOPLE, PLACES, THINGS]

Questions to ask

People

Have the requirements for and the responsibilities of the program director been established, for example, training responsibilities?

How many children will the program initially serve?

What is the age range of these children?

Are older youth included in the plans?

Who will serve as teachers?

How many teachers will be needed to begin the program?

Will the teachers be paid and, if so, what are the projected salaries?

What is the role of parents in both planning the program and as teachers?

Places

Is a suitable facility available? If not, how might it be acquired? Is there a cost involved?

Things

What equipment and supplies will be needed?

What books for children will be needed and how will they be acquired?

Take Time To …

Consider these criteria for a program director (who would also serve as a teacher).

- A state certified teacher or, in lieu of that, someone with a great deal of private school teaching experience
- In-depth familiarity with the teaching of humanist principles, values and ethics and with the history of humanism
- Ability to teach a variety of subjects to children of a variety of ages
- Willingness to work with parent committees to plan special events, trips and social action projects
- Availability for additional meetings on weekends, if necessary, and for curriculum development, lesson planning and training other teaching staff

Use a participating-parent model, that is, parents take turns helping in the program. In that way, two classes might be set up in case the subject matter needs to be age appropriate.

Involve your children and older youth in leadership roles in presenting the values of humanism to their fellow students. Since so many young people are very sophisticated when it comes to using computers, take advantage of their interest and expertise. They could develop and compile resources which other students can use. They also can set up discussion groups with other young humanists around the country.

Contact the Secular Student Alliance -- ssa@secularstudents.org -- for information on where SSA chapters are located. For those of you who might be looking for young teachers, we recommend that you identify local college students who are studying to become teachers – and who also happen to be members of the local SSA chapter. See if they would be interested in developing curriculum resources and lesson plans and serving as teachers. It would be a great experience for them and an on-going source of instructors for you.

Consider various options for addressing space constraints either by looking for more space in your current location or being more creative with what is readily available. Some examples of places to check out: community centers, public school buildings, private schools, meeting rooms at a public library, available classrooms at a local college, and possibly liberal UU churches. The goal: local multi-purpose humanist centers!

Include in your newsletters requests for materials and supplies which are needed in the school and which could be donated by members of the group.

Include children's books in your chapter's library and let members know what is available. Encourage families to share books that they may own by such authors

as Dan Barker and Helen Bennett. Also study the many resources listed on-line in Curriculum Resources for the Life Span, the Kochhar Humanist Education Center's web site. They include curriculum units, lesson plans, and teaching resources for the following areas:

- Secular Humanism
- Critical thinking
- Secular values and virtues
- Science issues
- Ethics in action
- Peace and social justice
- Human freedom for all
- Building and maintaining relationships

Within each area, a number of more specific areas are listed. For a complete description of all of the resources, see:
http://www.americanhumanist.org/What_We_Do/Education_Center/HELP

Here are some of the children's book that you will find in this resource. There are, of course, many others to be found when you search the Internet for the topic "humanist books for children".

Character Building Day by Day: 180 Quick Read-Alouds for Elementary School and Home by Anne D. Mather and Louise B. Weldon. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 2006. The book includes 180 character vignettes grouped by traits. Each features children in real-life situations making decisions that reflect their character. Each is short enough to be read aloud; and all can be used as starting points for discussion.

Evolution: How We and All Living Things Came to Be by Daniel Loxton. Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press Ltd., 2010. Based on articles from Junior Skeptic, this beautifully illustrated book introduced the theory of evolution as well as to modern day science. It answers common questions and clears up misconceptions that sometimes confuse people about the history of life on Earth. Recommended for children ages 8 to 13.

Hey, Little Ant. Story and song by Phillip and Hannah Hoose [Posing the eternal question: "to squish or not to squish"]. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1998. In 1992, Phillip Hoose and his daughter Hannah, then nine, wrote a musical conversation between an ant about to get flattened and the child about to squish it. It ended with the question, "What do you think that kid should do?" Their popular recording of

the song "Hey Little Ant" led to the story's publication as a children's picture book in 1998. Now the ant and the child – and their shared dilemma – are known by parents, children and educators throughout the world. For additional information about this excellent resource, see: www.heylittleant.com/homepage2.html

How Do You Know It's True? Discovering the Difference between Science and Superstition by Hyman Ruchlis. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991. Part one of this book deals with superstition and fairy-tale thinking, Part two focuses on science as a way of thinking.

How To Behave And Why by Munro Leaf. New York: Rizzoli/Universe International Publications. Republished in 2002. First published in 1946, this book gives touchingly sincere yet gently funny lessons in Honesty, Fairness, Strength, and Wisdom. Originally intended for the very young, but with meaning for us all, the book is a true classic, illustrated with childlike drawings and with a timeless message.

Humanism for Kids by the Family of Humanists, Salem, OR, 1997. This is an illustrated booklet developed to teach and discuss Humanism for young readers. It is the result of efforts by several adults, youth, and children, growing with each new contribution. Topics range from descriptions of Humanism, science and evolution to how to live a good humanist life. Sections include the Golden Rule and the Scientific Method. For additional information: www.familyofhumanists.org/hfk.html

Humanism, What's That? A Book for Curious Kids by Helen Bennett, Prometheus Books, Amherst, NY, 2005. In a lively fictionalized discussion, a humanist teacher and a group of elementary school students talk about secular humanism. They confront the big issues, including evolution, capital punishment, anti-Semitism, bullying, and much more -- even the causes of 9/11. The children's voices are insistent and informal, and the teacher calls for tolerance, for asking questions, for doing good right here on earth.

If You Had to Choose, What Would You Do? by Sandra McLeod Humphrey. Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 1995. This is an interactive book about moral choices for children 6-12. There are 25 stories about moral dilemmas and the reader is asked what he or she would do in that situation. Each story is followed by thoughtful questions which stimulate discussions.

It's Up to You, What Do You Do? by Sandra McLeod Humphrey. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1999. Young people are continuously exposed to questions of personal values; their responses help to develop those unique virtues that govern their

actions for years to come. The 25 anecdotes in this book offer challenging situations involving school-age children who must make their own life choices.

Just Pretend: A Freethought Book For Children by Dan Barker. Madison, WI: Freedom From Religion Foundation, 1988. A fun book which allows children of all ages to explore myths like Santa Claus and compare them with ideas like the existence of God. Entertaining and respectful of children's intelligence, It encourages kids to apply the tests of reason to any idea, fairy tale, myth or religion.

Love Your Neighbor: Stories of Values and Virtues by Arthur Dobrin. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc., 1999. There are stories about stubbornness and prejudice, tolerance and being different, growing up, living by one's convictions, leaving home, freedom, lending a helping hand, and our relationship to the earth. Each story ends with thought-provoking questions rather than a moral that is intended to invite discussion about the moral issues posed by the story and its characters.

Maybe Right, Maybe Wrong: A Guide for Young Thinkers by Dan Barker. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1992. This book affirms a child's ability to think, seek information, and—most importantly—to ask "Why?"

Maybe Yes, Maybe No by Dan Barker. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991. In a note to parents, Dan Barker writes that children need to be taught to develop their own minds at an early age so that a foundation of self-confidence and self-reliance grows with them as they mature. This is an excellent guide for those ends.

The Rosie Stories for Humanist Children by Tricia Budd, 2008. Three books to be read by or to children giving a Humanist perspective on three important occasions in our lives: humanist weddings, baby naming ceremonies and funerals. For ordering information, contact: triciabudd@oakesbankpublishing.co.uk -- or -- www.oakesbankpublishing.co.uk

Sometimes Bad Things Happen by Ellen Jackson. Brookfield, CN: Milbrook Press, 2002. This book is designed to help young children (pre-school to grade 2) cope with "bad things" that occur in their everyday lives and to allow them to explore their feelings of sadness, fear, anger, etc. Some of the examples offered include a game being canceled, a sibling being pushed by a bully, adults fighting, and seeing scary news stories on TV. Older children could use the book as a springboard for talking about their own experiences and ways to handle them positively. Younger children will find comfort in expressing their own sadness and looking for a happier outcome. Note: Ellen Jackson also has written four science books for students in the primary and up-

per grades: ***The Spring Equinox: Celebrating the Greening of the Earth*** (2003) completes the quartet that includes ***The Winter Solstice*** (1994), ***The Autumn Equinox: Celebrating the Harvest*** (2000), and ***The Summer Solstice*** (2001). Each describes the events and how they have been celebrated by various cultures.

What About Gods? by Chris Brockman. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, Second edition, 1989. In this book the creation of god by man is explained simply and clearly for a child. As one reviewer wrote, "I wish I had been exposed to this book when I was about eight years old. It could have saved me much self doubt and turmoil resulting from early indoctrination."

What Do You Stand For? For Teens: A Guide To Building Character by Barbara A. Lewis. Minneapolis, MN: Free children explore who they are and develop positive traits such as caring, good citizenship, empathy, respect, peacefulness, and responsibility.

Six books for younger children on Secular Values and Virtue:

On honesty: ***The Empty Pot*** by Demi, Hitz Demi (Illustrator). New York, Macmillan/ Henry Holt and Co., 1996. When Ping admits that he is the only child in China unable to grow a flower from the seeds distributed by the Emperor, he is rewarded for his honesty

On sharing: ***Rainbow Fish*** by Marcus Pfister, New York: North-South Books, 1992. This book tells the story of the vain, lonely Rainbow Fish who relinquishes his pride and gives away almost all of his special shiny scales to gain friends.

On equality: ***Martin's Big Words*** by Doreen Rappaport. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2001. By using simple, direct language -- much of it King's -- the text offers young readers an accessible yet profound introduction to King's legacy. It explains that as a child, he listened to his father's "big words" and vowed to inspire others with such words when he grew up.

On abundance: ***The Gift of Nothing*** by Patrick McDonnell. New York: Little, Brown Young Readers, 2005. The problem of Mooch the cat is what to give his best friend, Earl, who has everything. How he solves the problem is pure delight, reminding young readers that the greatest gift is friendship, not things.

On self-esteem: ***Stand Tall Molly Lou Melon*** by Patty Lovell. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 2001. Even when the class bully at her new school makes fun of her, Molly remembers what her grandmother told her and she feels good about herself.

On life purpose: ***The Three Questions*** by Jon J. Muth (an adaptation of a short story by Tolstoy). New York: Scholastic Press, 2002. Nikolai asks his animal friends to help

him answer three important questions: "When is the best time to do things?" "Who is the most important?" and "What is the right thing to do?" To answer these questions is to know how to be a good person.

See also:

Where Can I Find Humanist Books and Films for Children and Teens? by Fred Edwords (www.americanhumanist.org/.../Humanist_Books_and_Films).

Fred Edwords lists a number of mainstream publishers, well-known humanist or humanistic fiction writers, and contact information for humanist publishers and booksellers. He concludes with this note on compiling your own list: "Once one starts looking broadly for humanist books and videos for children and teens, the problem won't be how to draw up a list but how to prune it down to manageable size. Still, the effort to locate humanistic books for young people is a wonderful research project for someone. A comprehensive list needs to be compiled of the material that's already available so the American Humanist Association can share it with everyone. So let us know if you'd like to contribute to this effort or share your own list with us."

8 IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM

Questions to ask

How often will the program meet?

How will the instructional methods and learning activities bring about the desired outcomes stated in your objectives?

Have specific lesson plans been developed or identified?

Will the children be grouped by ages?

Take Time To …

Read – or rather -- study "Rational Sunday School", Ute Mitchell's article in the May-June 2009 issue of *The Humanist* which is included in the Resource section. She has provided a valuable list of things to do and consider in planning and implementing programs.

1. Use a search engine to locate possible humanist groups in your area. A good place to start is the American Humanist Association (AHA). Or try your luck on meetup.com or yahoogroups.com for atheists, nontheists, or humanist groups. Or start your own.

2. Advertise in local newspapers, on Craigslist and other online forums; post flyers in supermarkets, community centers, libraries, and other public places. Creating a group contact e-mail address is a good idea.

3. Once you've recruited at least three or four families, hold your first brainstorming meeting (or, if you already have a whole set of great ideas, present them to your group). You can meet at a coffee shop, a restaurant, the library, or, if you're comfortable enough, at your house. Don't end the meeting without answering a few questions: When will the first Sunday school be held and where? Also, which activities will be introduced (this can be as simple as story time and a few songs), and on what topics?

4. At the end of the first Sunday school meeting, plan the next activity and ask

for volunteers to lead it. Ask participants for word-of-mouth promotion of your group.

5. After several weeks or even a couple of months meet with parents to brainstorm new ideas and ask for feedback. Don't be afraid to ask for volunteers to step up and lead activities. Also, create core principles for the group or adopt them from an established chapter. Decide whether you'd like to follow a set curriculum or take the "wing it" approach.

6. Try to meet several times a month (later more often) to get the children acquainted and comfortable with each other. Field trips, play dates, and museum visits are always great ideas for socializing. Arranging a parents' night out is also a great idea.

7. Locate a variety of sites for activities. Some libraries and community centers will let you rent rooms for free (although some will require you to be a registered club) or for a small fee. Agree on a "membership fee" to pay for room rentals, material fees, and so forth.

Compile a creative activity box to bring to meetings which contain books, coloring books, crayons, puzzles, and activity books that relate to humanistic values. When parents bring their younger children to meetings, there should be some quiet activities for them. Also explore the many valuable resources of Charlie's Playhouse - Games and Toys inspired by Darwin. See -- www.charliesplayhouse.com/

Four Lessons on Compassion. Since the "Seeds of Compassion" resources are under copyright, we are providing the link to the source of these teaching materials: www.seedsofcompassion.org/why/curriculum.asp. The lessons were developed to prepare students for a Seeds of Compassion event in April 2008 as part of an introduction to the Dalai Lama who was featured at Children's Day. They can also serve as a foundation for a deeper focus on compassionate action in the every classroom and every school. The lessons are intended for grades K - 2, 3 - 5, 6 – 8, and 9 - 12.

Another resource on teaching compassion. *Kids Can Share: Creative lessons for teaching compassion, respect and responsibility* by April Hartmann, Rhoda Orszag Vestuto and Doris Larsen. Cartage, IL: Teaching and Learning Company, 2003.This 64-page book for grades pre-K and K focuses on a number of virtues: kindness, compassion, respect and responsibility. The resource include stories, Mother Goose rhymes, crafts, role playing, projects and other ways to involve young children in demon-

strating positive values in everyday situations at home and in school. The lessons include problem and ways of addressing them -- all by means of developing positive values. The authors indicate that the activities can be implemented independently or linked by units and chapters. Unit 1,"Within Myself", includes chapters of cooperation, tattling, and table manners. Unit 2 is "Proceed with Caution"; the chapters are called Careful Bear, Street Safety, Car/Bus Safety, Personal Safety, and Safety with Others. The last unit is "The Larger World" and the chapters are titled Littlebug Lookout, Friendship Quilt, and Friendship Soup. Source: awww.teachinglearning.com/showanything.php?this_page=TLC10384

The Self-Esteem Resources (Curriculum and Lesson Plans). A self-esteem curriculum can be the key to effectively helping teens and adolescents suffering from low self-esteem to raise their view of themselves to an acceptable level. A good curriculum will attempt to teach teens coping and social skills. By changing negative thoughts into positive ones, they can improve their self image and be comfortable with who they are -- especially if they hold skeptical views about religion. Numerous lesson plans are available. Begin by checking these two resources: www.selfesteem2go.com/self-esteem-curriculum.html -- and -- www.selfesteem2go.com/lesson-plans-on-self-esteem.html

Three examples of lesson plans from the Family Cooperative program of the Humanist Society of New Mexico

The intent of the Family Cooperative program has been to expose the children to different religious beliefs and teach them about values, morals, critical thinking, and scientific methods. The children's parents have rotated as the teachers, preparing the lessons and conducting the class. To date, a total of 27 lesson plans have been developed. They can be viewed at: http://www.americanhumanist.org/What_We_Do/Education_Center/HSNM_Lessons

When you review the plans, you will see "Complementary Activities" listed that tie together different concepts. Some of the lessons that are centered on a story may seem short; however, the lesson is really in the story itself. Preparation times are provided as relative guides but vary depending on the teacher's knowledge of the material. References to the curriculum areas outlined in the Kochhar Humanist Education Center's Curriculum Resources for the Life Span are included for each of the 27 lesson plans which can be reviewed at: http://www.americanhumanist.org/What_We_Do/Education_Center/HSNM_Lessons. For additional information, contact: Director of Classes: Ron Herman, hsnmfamily@aol.com.

Here are three examples:

Truthfulness in Stories

Appropriate Ages: 4-9 year olds

Subject Areas: Literacy, Beliefs

Duration
Prep Time: 1 hour
Activity Time: 10-15 minutes

Setting: Story telling arrangement, kids on the floor on carpet squares, teacher on a chair in front of them

Reference to Curriculum Resources for the Life Span: 2.1 Rational Scientific and Reflective Thinking

Objectives: To promote critical thinking about whether a story is true or untrue, completely or partly real or mythical, through the telling of a story.

Materials: "Mitchell is Moving" by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat.
This story was chosen since some of our members were moving. Any story where the animals have human characteristics could be used.

Background: Stories are told for different reasons: to teach a lesson or about history, to frighten, to control, to entertain, to cause people to think, to act. Historically, some stories were created to explain what people did not yet know until science provided an explanation. This lesson encourages questioning about what makes a story true or false.

The Lesson:
What is a story? A story is a written or told narrative, either true or false (in prose or verse, designed to interest, amuse, or instruct the hearer or reader). What does fiction mean? (It didn't happen.) What does non-fiction mean? (It really happened.)
Read the story of "Mitchell is Moving" (or other animated dinosaur book).
Discuss the story, ask if they think this story is fact or fiction and why. Is it true that dinosaurs existed? Is there anything about the story that tells you it's not a true story?

It's true that dinosaurs existed but dinosaurs didn't live in houses so we know its fiction. Paleontologists, scientists who study dinosaurs, know that dinosaurs didn't live in the kind of houses people live in, they lived in the wild, out in the open in nature, and roamed the earth.

Wrap up and other references: Why would someone write or tell a story that is not true? (To scare people into acting a certain way, to entertain, to get people to think or to act, to educate people). How can you tell if something is true or not?

Complementary activities: Refer to other lessons, e.g., the Telephone Game; Myths, Legends, and Fable.

****

"Sneetches"

Appropriate Ages: 4-9 year olds

Subject Areas: Human Rights

Duration
Prep Time: 1 hour
Activity Time: 40-50 minutes

Setting: Story telling arrangement, kids on the floor on carpet squares, teacher on a chair in front of them.

Reference to Curriculum Resources for the Life Span: 7.2 Civil Rights; 7.4 Equal Opportunity

Objectives: Learn about differences and similarities.

Materials: yellow t-shirts, green felt stars and safety pins, puzzle pieces to two different puzzles, and *The Sneetches* by Dr. Suess.

The Lesson:
When everyone (adults and kids) arrives, hand out yellow shirts (or have everyone wear one to the meeting). Half of the group will be given green stars to put on the front of their shirts.

Include some small activity (such as Camouflage Candy) to show preferential treat-

ment is given to the‘star’ group. This will provide a background that you can discuss later.

For the next part, participants in the ‘star’ group will be given puzzle pieces and see if they can work together to solve the puzzle. Participants without stars will be given puzzle pieces to do the same. The puzzle pieces of the two different puzzles are mixed together so that cooperation is required.

Next, have everyone traipse through the ‘star on’ or ‘star off’ machine so those without stars will now have stars and those who previously
had stars will have none.

Snack time! The people with stars will get to eat their snack first.

Story time! Read *Sneetches* by Dr. Seuss and discuss issues of tolerance and diversity and how the preferential treatment for those with stars made the kids feel. Optional: briefly discuss Martin Luther King Jr. or other civil rights leaders.

Complimentary Activities: Camouflage Candy (and have the ‘star’ group choose their candy first.) Good January Activity in celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Wrap up and other references: Make sure the kids recognize this lesson was done to teach about inequality; not to show them that they aren’t equal.

****

Arm Levitation

Appropriate Ages: 5-10 year olds

Subject Areas: Science, Beliefs

Duration
Prep Time: 30 minutes
Activity Time: 10 minutes

Setting: Story telling arrangement, kids on the floor on carpet squares, two teachers in the front.

Reference to Curriculum Resources for the Life Span: 2.1 Rational Scientific and

Reflective Thinking

Objectives: Students will receive an understanding of the differences between science and belief in superstition through scientific experiment. Students will also learn about cooperation.

Materials: 2 boards, such as 2x4s, about 5 feet long

Background: This lesson provides a great opportunity to teach that there are scientific explanations for experiences that seem like "magic". This experience is not caused by some supernatural force but rather from a fairly simple, natural reason.

The Lesson: This activity takes cooperation (just like the Billy goats gracious cooperated with each other to get to the other side of the river to the grass so they could eat). Have two adults firmly hold the boards resting vertically on the floor (secured with a foot) on both sides of the student (for bigger kids a door frame works better). Ask the kids "what would happen if you stood between these boards, pushing against them with the back of your hands for 20 seconds, then step away…?" One at a time, have the kids stand between the boards and do that. Encourage them to push as hard as they can, so the effect is better.

As each child steps away and relaxes their hands at their side, their arms should rise "by themselves" without any effort. Ask the kids if they know how and why this happens. Eventually tell them that the entire time they pressed their hands against the boards, their brain was sending signals to their muscles to raise their arms. A signal was sent long enough that there was tension on their muscles. When their arms were relaxed, there was still some tension in the muscles, so their arms began to rise.

9 EVALUATING THE PROGRAM

Questions to ask

For what purpose will the evaluation be done?

Who are the audiences for the information from the evaluation?

Who will participate in the evaluation process?

From what sources will the information be collected?

How will we know if the program goals have been met?

How will the objectives be assessed?

How will the results be documented?

How will we determine which aspects of the program need improving?

What are our plans for meeting any of the goals which have not been met?

Take Time To …

Consider the goals. The goal of most evaluations is to provide *useful feedback* to a variety of audiences including sponsors, client-groups, teachers, and parents. Feedback is most useful if it aids in decision making.

Learn about the types of evaluation and assessment. There are several types of evaluations depending on what is being evaluated and the purpose of the evaluation. The most important distinction is between formative and summative evaluation. *Formative evaluations* strengthen or improve the program by examining the processes, program delivery, implementation and the assessment of the procedures, inputs, and the like. *Summative evaluations* examine the effects or intended outcomes and assesses whether the program has met its goals. Both types of evaluation are important.

Consider these important concerns:

- Make your evaluation procedures part of your planning from the earliest stages of program development and develop a plan for using the evaluation findings.

The plan should depend on what information you need to make your decisions and determine your resources.

- State the purposes of the evaluation and the reasons for it.
- Develop evaluation tools that address the issues of measurement that characterize outcomes of humanist programs for children.
- Use a variety of data gathering methods designed to reflect the program's goals.
- Describe the users of the evaluation and the type of information they require, request and find credible.
- Provide adequate time for evaluations.
- Identify all audiences who have an interest in or need for the evaluation results and involve them in the evaluation process.
- Consider whether the evaluation provides new information and/or if it confirms previous information.
- Draw justified conclusions and link your interpretation to the data.
- Determine how to share the information with others, what formats you will use, and how you can increase the chances that they will use the information.
- Distribute reports to all appropriate audiences with recommendations designed to encourage follow through.
- Communicate the evaluation findings and not your opinions or biases.
- Examine strengths and weaknesses of the program so that you can use the information for program improvement.

There are many approaches to evaluating programs and, hence, many types of evaluation tools, e.g., informal interviews of the participants (in this case, students and their parents), questionnaires, surveys, checklists, rating forms, observations, and anecdotal record keeping. In the worksheet below, we have briefly illustrated three types of program evaluation -- goal-based evaluation, process-based evaluation, and outcome-bases evaluation -- each of which can be adopted as well as enhanced to meet your specific program components.

Goal-based approaches evaluate the extent to which programs are meeting predetermined goals and objectives. The tool to use, therefore, normally consists of a series of questions to ask in order to determine if the goals were reached.

Questions to be asked	Your findings determined by informal interviews, questionnaires, surveys, etc.
(1) How were the program goals and objectives established? Was the process effective?	
(2) What is the status of the program's progress toward achieving the goals?	
(3) Were the goals achieved according to the timelines specified in the program implementation or operations plan? If not, why not?	
(4) Do we have adequate resources (money, equipment, facilities, training, etc.) to achieve the goals?	
(5) Should priorities be changed to put more focus on achieving the goals?	
(6) Should any goals be added or removed?	
Add any additional questions	

Process-based evaluation is geared to understanding how a program works, that is, how it produces the intended results. Here, too, there are several questions which should be asked.

Questions to be asked	Your findings determined by informal interviews, questionnaires, surveys, etc.
(1) What is required of our teachers in order to deliver the program?	
(2) How are they trained to do this?	
(3) What do our clients (the students and their parents) consider to be strengths of the program?	
(4) What do our teachers consider to be strengths of the program?	
(5) Are any complaints heard from our clients? What are they?	
(6) What do our teachers and our clients recommend to improve the program?	
Add any additional questions	

Outcome-based evaluation approaches are typically stated in terms of enhanced learning objectives (knowledge, perceptions/attitudes or skills). The general steps to accomplish an outcomes-based evaluation are listed below.

Steps to be taken
(1) Identify the major outcomes that you want to examine or verify. Reflect on your mission by asking "What major activities are we doing now to achieve these outcomes?" For each activity, ask "Why are we doing that?"
(2) Choose the outcomes that you want to examine in depth, prioritize them, and pick the top two or three most important ones to examine.
(3) For each outcome, specify what observable measures or indicators will suggest that you are achieving that outcome with your students.
Add any additional steps which you believe are needed.

Let us know how you are starting your educational program for children and youth. Please share your experiences with us so that we, in turn, might share them with others. Please send your responses to Bob Bhaerman at – rbhaerman@americanhumanist.org.

APPENDICES

I. REPORTS FROM THE TWO PILOT PROGRAMS

The Portland Model: Humanists of Greater Portland, Oregon

This section was submitted by Carole Kellogg, who served as Chairperson of the Children's Program Committee. We are terribly saddened to report that Carole died in February 2010. The Children's Program of the Humanists of Greater Portland has been renamed in her honor as the Carole Kellogg Freethinking Children and Youth Program, also known as "Carole's Kids". The section was updated by Barbara Kerr.

Background

The Humanists of Greater Portland (HGP) has existed for over 20 years, starting with a handful of individuals with a shared interest in meeting and discussing issues - in a pizza parlor. It now has over 200 members and meets every Sunday morning in a community center. Adult attendance ranges from 50 to 100. Coffee and cookies are served - but not pizza any more.

The Children's Program Committee began meeting periodically to develop a program for humanist children in 2005. The purpose of such a program was to provide an organized opportunity for children from humanist families to explore humanist values, develop critical thinking skills, and form connections with other members of the humanist community. To this end, the committee members communicated with and sought advice from others who work with children, including a teacher who teaches art to children with the goal of fostering their creative freedom; humanists from the Palo Alto chapter; a member of Kol Shalom, a local Jewish humanist group; and the head of a local Unitarian-Universalist Sunday School as well as with a number of Unitarian Universalist members who have been very cooperative.

The group spent many hours discussing such topics as materials procurement; creation of a flyer, brochures, and forms; classroom structure; finances; insurance needs; staffing and job descriptions; short- and long-term goals; and – most importantly – the teaching philosophy and curricular themes.

Two previous children's programs ended (the last one in 2001). In one case, the parents were willing to work with the children but felt they were unable to develop an

adequate curriculum on a weekly basis and, in the other case, the children grew out of the program. Creating a comprehensive humanist-themed curriculum that would serve different age groups and be easy for volunteer teachers to implement became a pressing and time consuming goal. More recently, the chapter received many inquiries about a children's program, and most indicated that they would attend weekly meetings if there were a place for their children. The committee, recognizing that it would take time to create, test, and write up the lessons of the comprehensive curriculum, decided to develop the children's program in two phases.

Phase 1 began with welcoming children to a childcare program in November 2008. At this time, the group worked on developing the curriculum. During these months, regular attendees were toddlers. As enrollment increased, the children in attendance often ranged in age from one to nine years. Phase 2 began with using curricula developed to date with the older children. As necessary, one of the supervising volunteers takes the younger children aside for play when their attention spans falter. As of now, the group may soon be at a point where it will separate the toddlers from the school-age children in different rooms. The chapter has use of a great facility, a community center which has a good-sized, well-equipped room for the children.

In the fall of 2008, the current Children's Program received a start-up grant from the American Humanist Association's Kochhar Humanist Education Center. A portion of the funds was used for curriculum development with the hope that this would provide parent volunteers with teaching resources needed to work with the children every week. The curriculum developer built on the many lessons found in the Kochhar Humanist Education Center's website [Curriculum Resources for the Life Span -- www.americanhumanist.org/What_We.../Education_Center/HELP] and gathered input from parents and others.

Since the purpose of the curriculum is to provide lessons for volunteers to teach, the curriculum developer provides support to chapter members and others in putting together lessons they present on their specific interests; provides templates for general topics, which give a lesson structure with choices of activities and enables them to insert additional materials; and produces complete lessons from which to choose. Along with supporting volunteers in doing group presentations with the children, the curriculum developer is now building a bank of critical thinking and creativity activities and materials that are available every week for the children to choose from on an individual or small group basis. This allows less directed and more freethinking experiences for the children and gives the group a chance to develop its own freethinking skills, especially while the volunteer base is growing.

The group hired an educational consultant who is also a humanist. The goal was to develop a curriculum for Pre-K through Grade 8 which can easily be used by volunteer teachers in any humanist children's program. The philosophy is that using volunteers as teachers from the parent group, as well as from the membership at large, adds to a chapter's feeling of program ownership and sense of community. Knowing that they will be given a complete, user-friendly curriculum, volunteers are much more likely to step forward.

The group was gratified to see the structure and resource list created by Kochhar Humanist Education Center. The eight-point "Curriculum Resources for the Life Span" framework gave the curriculum a solid base, and most of the curricular themes the committee had already discussed were included in the eight points. Upon completion of the curriculum, it will be submitted to the American Humanist Association to share with all interested humanist chapters.

Goals and objectives

As stated in the "Family Program" brochure, "The goal of our program is to help children and youth develop critical thinking skills while exploring the use of reason and compassion to produce a world in which peace, prosperity, freedom and happiness are widely shared." The intent is to provide children with the opportunity to explore humanist values. The ultimate goal should be fulfilling the potential for growth in every human personality and holding humans responsible for their own destiny. In addition to the educational goals, the group is also trying to attract younger families by providing a safe place for parents to leave their children while attending the main session.

Brief overview of the program

In the brochure, it also states that "in a freethinking environment the children are given the opportunity to exercise their thinking skills, imagination and social interaction while playing challenging and inspiring games, creating art and music, reading books, enjoying talks and presentations from guest speakers, and developing activities of their own." The Children's Program committee is always eager to have ideas from parents regarding the activities as well as their expectations for the program. As noted, the plan is to develop a program that is led and run by families.

While parents must remain in the building during the time the children are in their class, the parents have these five options: (1) attending the chapter's featured program of the week; (2) watching a simulcast of the program in a room designated for that purpose (this often is the choice of parents with infants); (3) participating in a

discussion group on a topic of concern to the participants; (4) joining in a special discussion group for parents of the children on issues related to raising freethinking children; or (5) remaining in the classroom with their child or children. The latter sometimes is the best choice of parents whose young children may not yet be ready to be without their parents in the new environment.

With regard to parent discussion topics, some of the "frequently asked questions" include How do we support our children's healthy skepticism without allowing them to become cynical or disrespectful? How do we provide an environment where children learn that questioning is normal? Are there times when we have to resort to rules rather than reasoning?

The underlying philosophy includes these three principles: (1) encouraging the asking of questions in a safe and non-judgmental atmosphere; (2) using critical and rational thinking skills which includes familiarity with the scientific method; and (3) practicing such humanist values as cooperation, curiosity, and responsibility both in and out of the classroom.

The curriculum includes such topics as world cultures, wonders of nature, creation stories, stages of life, conflict resolution, problem solving, ethics, logical thinking, living with disabilities, and various family models.

At this point, the typical attendance on a Sunday morning is four to six children, although they are not always the same ones. About 25 different children have shown up; the ages normally range from three to nine and sometimes as low as age one. The Children's Program is offered every week, all year long, including summers, as are the Sunday programs of the Humanists of Greater Portland.

Establishing the program

The membership of the planning committee has ranged from four to eight people and currently has five who are active. Some of the important issues that were initially considered were the matter of insurance, child safety and emergency procedures. In creating a children's program, it was necessary to learn what parents and other freethinkers would look for in such a program. Therefore, a "Children's Program Goals Survey" was developed and distributed in the chapter, at a freethought conference at Portland State University, and at the 2009 AHA's annual meeting. A total of 54 responses were received from these three sources.

The first item in the survey asked respondents to indicate whether they have children

and, if so, how many are in the various age groups, whether or not there should be such a program, and what the children might gain from the experience. Space was provided for these general comments. This was followed by a list of 18 possible program goals. The respondents were asked to indicate their opinions on a rating scale.

Without going into in-depth statistical analysis, a number of the findings were significant, e.g., the majority of the respondents supported the goal of an educational program with specific content and learning goals. Other goals which mainly received "Must have" responses were Peer socialization opportunities, Sense of community, Confidence building, Pro-social behavior, Avoiding indoctrination, Sound reasoning, and Rational analysis of religion. The rest of the goals, for the most part, were in the "I like it" or "Maybe" categories with few exceptions.

The many insightful comments from respondents also were very valuable. The following is a small sample of comments relating to general goals as well as several related to specific goals:

- "My expectation would be a discussion of ethical and scientific challenges and making good decisions based on rational reason."
- "Arming children so they can recognize groundless claims would be good – critical thinking skills, practice at recognizing snake oil…."
- "… reinforcing (the children's) personal identity and their emerging place in changing society is an important goal."
- "I see four main goals: (1) providing a place for kids to form community with each other; (2) providing education in areas such as ethics, critical thinking, humanist heroes, religious literacy and scientific inquiry; (3) providing a welcoming place that encourages families to get involved with humanism; and (4) provide a *fun* program for kids."
- "Comfort zones to ask questions. Wonderful stories. Singing and dancing. How to make decisions."
- "Community service oriented… social bonding."
- "Focus on the positive aspects of humanism: the golden rule, honesty and respect for others – especially if they are different."
- "Explore issues and means for being fair and pursuing justice – social, economic, environmental – for the present and future."
- "They (the children) should experience kindness, compassion, acceptance, and

an invitation to express their thoughts and views free from adult judgments. They should be invited to participate but allowed to decline."

- "Very important to avoid indoctrination."

Advertising and reaching out to the community

Advertising is primarily through word of mouth and the monthly newsletter. Parents also are encouraged to join and participate in the Portland Area Humanism Meet-up which can be accessed on line (http://humanism.meetup.com). Most of the new families and inquiries have come from those who found the group on the Meetup site. An ad also ran for several months in *Metro Parent*, a free publication distributed throughout the city and especially in such family-oriented places as community centers, libraries, and some restaurants. Here is the content of the ad:

> **Freethinking Kids & Youth—explore life and the world in a fun environment sponsored by the Humanists of Greater Portland—**
>
> Sundays 10 – 11:30 a.m. at Friendly House, 1737 NW 26th Avenue, Portland
>
> —while parents attend parent discussion group or presentations by HGP's guests speakers.
>
> **See www.portlandhumanists.org for topics. 503/222-5531 or info@portlandhumanists.org**

The graphic for the ad showed a curly-headed child peering through a magnifying glass and another child looking at the stars in wonderment.

A brief note on our finances

The following is a brief break-down of the funding received for the pilot program:

Areas	Dollar amount	Use of funds
Curriculum development	$ 7875	Pays for a humanist educational consultant: 4.5 hours per week for 50 weeks at $35/hour. Committee members assist with research so that the consultant's hours can be used where they are most needed, i.e., to develop and write curriculum.

Curriculum resources	$ 1500	Books, CD's, DVD's. Some books from the KHEC list, in addition to music CDs, have been donated to or purchased by our chapter.
Supplies	$ 300	Consumable and non-consumable classroom materials and copying supplies. Some arts and crafts supplies have been donated.
Advertising and printing costs	$ 0	Our chapter will cover these costs estimated to be $100-$300.
Rental space	$ 0	We have the use of a large childcare room in the community center where we meet weekly for which our chapter pays $60/month.
Insurance	$ 0	Our chapter will pay for insurance estimated to cost $2500 per year.
Projected total	$ 9,675	

How funds are to be raised to support the program

It is anticipated that parents will make donations when their children attend the weekly sessions. Also, the monthly newsletter will include a list of children's program material needs and it is anticipated that most of these items will be donated.

Since the plan is to develop a curriculum that can be easily used by volunteer teachers, the need for funds in the second year and beyond should be manageable. The chapter will cover insurance and room rental, worth $3220. Monetary donations (weekly and earmarked donations), in addition to material donations, will cover the remainder, estimated to be $1500 per year after the first year.

The program got off the ground slower than expected. Only recently have new families begun to attend on a somewhat regular basis. At this point, the group is hesitant

to ask for money (from parents) until attendance is well established and the group is still discussing whether to have a fixed amount, a suggested donation, or just a donation jar. Also, there is not yet a great need for additional funds.

Four major challenges and ways of addressing them

(1) Volunteer help. The greatest need is for volunteers to work with the children. Since the ages of the children often range from one year and up, it often is necessary for an adult to work with the younger children, another to work with the older kids, and a third to be available to escort children to the bathroom or water fountain which are down the hall. We want to give new parents a chance to familiarize themselves with HGP and with humanism in general before asking them to commit to staying with the children during Sunday meetings. So it has been a great effort to move from the couple of people who were managing the classroom to filling a dozen slots a month with volunteers who are committed on a regular basis.

(2) Publicity. To have a successful program, people have to know about it. While getting started, the group did not publicize outside of the organization and its website. Truthfully, a large number of "newbies" appearing every week was not wanted until there was certainty regarding procedures and personnel. As it developed, the group began publicizing on the Meetup website and also took out a paid ad in a parent magazine. Even now, a slow steady growth is more desirable than a large influx at one time.

(3) Lesson planning. This will become easier, but right now lesson development is keeping one step ahead of the kids. As stated earlier, the goal is to have a bank of lessons from which to draw.

(4) Space for supplies. The HGP is fortunate to have a small office next to the Children's Room. It houses file cabinets and the HGP library, necessitating being mindful not to overload and clutter it with program supplies. Much of the materials are carried to and from the program every Sunday.

A final note

The initial challenge, unless a program is started by a group of parents, is to attract enough families to have a children's program at all. The website/Meetup was the most successful approach for the HGP Children's Committee, even over paid advertising in a well-distributed free family magazine. Now that the children have started coming, the challenge has been finding enough adult volunteers with the time and comfort

level to work with the children. Comfort level is important. It is advertised that volunteers are needed and that they can check out the program before committing.

Ideally, the group of adult volunteers would be small enough for the children to get to know and trust them but large enough that the adult community has a sense of involvement in the program. It is essential that the children are part of the community and not just a program sponsored by them. The group tries to involve the children in the community activities whenever possible so that they and adults can get to know each other.

Attempts so far have resulted in the children making centerpieces for a Solstice party and planning a performance for the talent show and will including hosting events such as a critical thinking game day. Throughout all the struggles and decisions, the most important accomplishment is a learning atmosphere that supports engagement, curiosity, and discovery for all involved, children and adults, rather than being directed by adults. This has its own obstacles in materials development and storage and helping adults learn how to support the children's engagement in the activities without continual direction. If done sincerely, it has the benefit of modeling values (walking your talk) rather than indoctrination, which was a controversial point in the responses to and discussions around the surveys of what the community would like to see in a children's program. If the children are free to grow and develop, they will be happy, families will be attracted, and the larger community will want to support and participate in the program because it will be inspiring and productive.

Twelve Recommended Steps for Establishing Programs for Children

The steps are in a generally sequential order but some overlap or occur simultaneously.

(1) Establish your program philosophy and goals to begin communication but know that they may change as the program builds. Allow ongoing time for your committee to discuss and refine them.

(2) Determine program structure. What are the age ranges of the children? Will they be grouped by age? What format will be used? Do the children meet while the parents are attending the adult program or is it regular or spontaneous get-togethers for families or just children? How many adults will you need and what will be their roles/job descriptions? What will a daily routine look like?

(3) Determine parental roles and involvement. Is the program being run by parents,

a set committee, or volunteers who will eventually turn it over to parents as families join? Will parents be expected to work with the children, make materials, etc.? Are the parents in the classroom at all times? Are they in the building at all times and, therefore, immediately accessible for emergencies or behavior concerns?

(4) Establish a large enough committee to be able to start program development and promotion; contact and follow-up families who have shown interest; negotiate for and organize space and supplies; keep track of expenses and budgeting; develop curriculum; schedule and organize volunteers; and work with the children. (If volunteers and/or parents will be working with the children, begin identifying them as soon as the program has been defined, so as not to overburden the committee. This can take time, so begin working on it early.)

(5) Find a site. Things to consider: safety and sanitation, proximity to parents, access to bathrooms (best if used exclusively by children during class time), access to water fountains and sinks for water projects and clean up, ability to house simultaneous activities for different age groups, access to outdoor area, and storage for materials and equipment.

(6) Seek input from the chapter membership. Survey the membership to (a) get a sense of the level of interest in having a children's program and what concerns there might be and (b) identify purposes parents would like to see a children's program serve and what purposes they might object to (e.g., indoctrination). The survey can both build awareness that you are planning a program and garner input, resources, and possibly new members for your committee.

(7) Determine the scope of your curriculum content. Decide if you will use a series of set curriculum or create your own. Decide if it will be sequential from class to class, freestanding topics, an environment where the children choose from a variety of activities that are available each week, or a combination of these. Will there be one teacher, a rotating group of teachers, or guest presenters?

(8) Consider the classroom culture. Set up guidelines for interaction between children, between adults and children, and a discipline policy.

(9) Establish health and safety rules. Determine your level of risk, e.g., will there be field trips? Acquire or create forms for emergency information and accident reports. Have anyone who will be working with the children undergo a criminal background check.

(10) Consider insurance issues. Determine if your chapter's coverage is adequate to cover casualties for the children and adults and liability for the volunteers/staff. Otherwise, find insurance coverage.

(11) Consider finances matters. Set up a preliminary budget. Decide on and secure funding from grants, support from parent organization, attendance fees, and/or donations. Keep your chapter members aware of what you may need for supplies, books, or equipment. Document any donations and acknowledge them in the newsletter, etc., to thank the donors while also building awareness of the program and its needs.

(12) Promote by making connections rather than just advertising. If the children are to meet during an adult program, begin with just childcare while you are building a more complete program so you can start to bring in families; mention the children's program in all advertising/public announcements of the adult programs. Decide on a program name and a logo to use consistently so you build recognition, once you are ready to do publicity. Create a brochure with your philosophy/purpose, program description, age ranges, contact information, and the like for members of the chapter to give to friends and families, to distribute at events, or to mail to anyone who has asked for information. If your chapter has a webpage, be part of it or start your own. Organize activities and start or join a meet-up or use other social media. Sponsor a speaker or other activity with a city-wide draw.

Please let us know if we can answer any questions or concerns you might have. We can be reached at 503-222-5531 or info@portlandhumanists.org.

Contact information

Barbara Kerr – kerrclifford@hotmail.com. To learn more about our chapter, check our website: www.portlandhumanists.org -- or e-mail us at: info@portlandhumanists.org

The New Mexico Model: The Humanist Society of New Mexico

Submitted by Ron Herman, Director of Classes, Humanist Society of New Mexico

Background

The Humanist Society of New Mexico (HSNM) became a chapter of the American Humanist Association (AHA) in 2001. HSNM launched its Family Cooperative children's Sunday school program in Albuquerque in May of 2008. Following the annual conference of the AHA, "Humanism on the Rise," which HSNM hosted in Albuquerque in 2005, the group was highly motivated to become more active in the community. Hence, an education subcommittee was formed that met under chairperson Ron Herman. The group began to plan programs in three directions – adults, children, and students at the University of New Mexico. Mr. Herman was a graduate student at the University of New Mexico (UNM) working toward his MBA and initiated a student group on campus, the UNM Humanist Society. Then emphasis was shifted to education for adults and exploring possible study topics. Although HSNM numbered more than 100, membership was past their child-raising years, so they would probably not have direct participation in a children's school. The plan was to attract parents to the adult class and then encourage them to start a program for their children. The group interviewed some teachers to hire and held some pilot classes. That process was interrupted when the selected teacher moved out of town for a full-time job.

Before the group could find another teacher and finish the lesson plans for the adult class, the program was mentioned in a *Time* magazine article on Humanist education. That article featured the Palo Alto chapter of AHA and was published in late November, 2007. The group received several calls from parents who had seen the article and who wanted their children to join the "school." One parent arranged a seminar for us that was conducted by noted author Dale McGowan (editor, *Parenting Beyond Belief*). This was held in March 2008. Dale was very inspiring and motivated the group to start a children's class to support the growth of our children in a non-dogmatic environment with awareness of religions, the scientific method, and cultural diversity. HSNM then created the position of Director of Classes to oversee the adult, university, and children's educational programs. Ron Herman volunteered for that position.

The purpose of the education program is to attract a large minority of area residents to enroll for at least some time during their lives, so that they may come to under-

stand the value of humanism to health, prosperity, and happiness. In the process, these classes will help form a Humanist social community.

Creating a business plan

With the help of the Education Subcommittee, Mr. Herman developed a business plan for the program. He felt that the program should be planned and run on firm business principles as well as humanist principles. Even though the purpose did not include making a profit, the best operational principles for the development of the school were likely the same as for a business. This plan presented the core strategic vision and proposal for the structure, purpose, and content of classes. The vision was shaped by the success of both secular and sectarian private schools in Albuquerque where some subcommittee members had taught.

The plan identified the products and services expected to be offered to the Albuquerque community and the management and organization required. Teachers were expected to be active not only in the classroom but as ambassadors for the program in the greater community. Market segment and position were identified and the group addressed how the group would compete for students and nurture doubt about the claims by believers concerning religion and the paranormal. The group developed a consensus on how to respect the views of students and generally established our bounds of tolerance (not allowing class disruption). It was agreed that the only way to reach out to the community with this product and services was through publicity, and that the most effective publicity would be articles like the one in *Time* and the one about our president, Jerry Wesner, that ran in a local paper in 2004. The effectiveness of radio interviews was recognized like the one done that featured a professional humanist broadcaster and author, Jerry Reiter.

Targeting a market segment in discourse and advertising was a very important consideration. Surveys of religious belief at the time indicated a surprisingly large number of people, perhaps 15% and possibly as high as 20%, who would answer the question of religious affiliation with "none." Given the population of metropolitan Albuquerque of about 800,000 people, Humanism Classes targeted "Nones" and new doubters seeking a change in their lives, an estimated 160,000 men, women, children, and youth. Of these, the group expected 1%, or 1,600, would ask to participate within the first five years of significant advertising for humanism classes. The group agreed to target the "Nones" and ignore strong believers in our marketing with a positive approach, rather than criticizing belief.

Considering the competition for time in today's world, the group decided that most

Americans still have a natural tendency to leave their Sundays open for rest, recreation, and recovery from six days of responsibilities. That is also a time when many seek inspiration and emotional support for the week ahead, making Sundays a good time for Humanism classes as well. The group planned to offer a class for adults at the same time that the children's Family Co-Op would be meeting, so that at least one parent in the family could attend the adult class while their children were attending their own class.

The Subcommittee drafted a publicity and advertising plan as part of the business plan. Ads were designed for several printed publications including the program guide for the local PBS TV station and public service announcements on radio stations. The group issued press releases for major events, hoping to gain interviews on TV news and radio programs, but these were not picked up by the media.

To fund teacher salaries, which would be very modest for curriculum development and classroom time and for space rental and advertising, a fundraising campaign was initiated and the group applied for several small grants. (Good pay for teachers is a principle that humanists should support, although it was hoped that some teacher time would be donated.) The group tried to evaluate strengths, weaknesses, uncertainties and risks in the program. Regarding financial risks, it was decided that as long as reserves were in the bank account, the group could plan to spend as much as received in funding, as long as major expenditures were approved by the HSNM Governing Board. An 18-month budget plan was prepared using an Excel spreadsheet. Concerning liability for any injuries during the classes, it was learned that the insurance carried by the AHA and the college where our classes were held would cover that issue. The group considered that any risk of child abuse during classes should be protected by the policy of having parents in attendance.

Program overview: Phase 1

When the children's program unexpectedly blossomed, it was focused on during 2008. At the first meeting, five couples agreed to form a parent's cooperative that would be parent-led with parent teachers and supervision with the support of the HSNM Governing Board and membership. A very nice functional classroom space at the Albuquerque branch of the College of Santa Fe was found in a commercial office center. It had a great open space with work tables and couches and a small kitchen which was indispensable for "wet projects" and snacks for kids. It also had easy access to a lawn outside for more physical activities and play breaks. The group agreed to pay $60 per class ($120/month), but the college donated almost half of those charges during the eight months of classes by purposely not billing us.

As a cooperative, the children's school relied on parents to design each lesson and present or guide the children through it. The parents rotated as the teachers, preparing the lessons and conducting the class. All parents were encouraged to stay with their children to share in the learning and teaching and to help manage the children who were all under the age of ten. This is preferred to a "drop-off" arrangement. Preparation times gave the parents the opportunity to consider their own interest in humanist principles and issues. Most parents rehearsed their class activities with their teaching partner and even their own children. All parents wrote some outlines for their classes, some with considerable text detail and reference material in the areas of science, the environment, evolution, mythology, folklore, critical thinking, religious beliefs and holidays, music, and human rights. The group met twice each month and typically had six to eight children attending. The general format was as follows: began with a story or an introduction, discussion, songs, play break and snack, and science activity.

It was felt that it was important to not lose the benefit of our parent/teacher work and to provide them and others with guidelines for future classes. Therefore, a portion of funds was used to hire one of our Master Teachers, Michelle Watson, to collect all of the class notes and compile them into a set of Lesson Plans. Those were recently reproduced on the AHA's Kochhar Humanist Education Center (KHEC) website -- http://www.americanhumanist.org/What_We_Do/Education_Center/HSNM_Lessons.

HSNM actively advertised in a bi-monthly publication, *New Mexico Kids*, which brought in a few new parents and children from time-to-time. A particularly successful class that drew a large attendance was a magic show where a local scientist demonstrated how magic is only tricks and how easy it is to deceive and be deceived. That is an important component of humanist education and magic was a fun way to include that lesson for the children (and parents).

Advertising, space rental, and minimal teaching materials were purchased with donations from HSNM and by a grant from the AHA Committee of Trusts and Grants. At the end of 2008, HSNM received a grant from the Friedman Foundation and a start-up grant from the American Humanist Association.

In 2009 the group lost the lead parents in a job move out of town and another couple's family changes prevented them from making the trip to Albuquerque for classes. Finally, our classroom space was no longer available because the college closed due to the economic recession. Classes were run very successfully for about eight months. The group is now taking steps to revive interest among the remaining core

group of parents and others in the broader community through Meetup.com. The group has scheduled another seminar by Dale McGowan and has renewed our advertising, marketing, and fundraising activities.

In summary, the steps we took to establish Phase 1 of the education program were as follows: (1) brainstorming of HSNM's purpose, goals, and resources for talent and funding; (2) establishing a subcommittee organization and developing a business plan; (3) implementing the business plan by advertising, attracting parents by holding special events, and holding classes. Within the first year the group completed most of the goals under the direction of two or three dedicated leaders.

Major success, challenges, and ways of addressing them

The program has been effective in several ways. The first is the loyal attendance, preparation, and satisfaction of parents and the children alike, as the children demonstrated critical thinking skills and excitement about the class content. One dedicated couple traveled 90 miles to participate in almost every class.

The second way the group has seen the effectiveness of the program is that HSNM now has a small core of five young families and five children who have participated consistently. This is a vital step in securing the future of the Humanist Society of New Mexico.

Third, the parent/teachers produced a set of lesson plans that will serve future classes in Albuquerque, and by sharing those with the AHA's Kochhar Humanist Education Center have made those available to all who might search for these kinds of materials.

Finally, the group succeeded in raising the money needed for these programs by appealing to members during meetings and in the monthly newsletter. About $12,000 came from member donors. An effort was made to keep donors informed of how their money was being used and to thank them often and in print. The group applied for and received approximately $10,000 in grants. The HSNM still has funds in those accounts to renew the programs with the possibility of new leader incentives in the form of minimal salaries on a contract basis.

However, efforts to gain enrollments in AHA/HSNM and additional parents in the school were not as successful during these years as we had hoped. We should place more emphasis on HSNM and AHA membership in the future.

The University of New Mexico program languished after Mr. Herman graduated,

and no one has renewed the group after other student leaders graduated. Furthermore, serious issues of tolerance and boundaries erupted within the group which divided the membership and weakened its role on campus. (Some members felt it was acceptable to be openly critical of believers in the spirit of free speech and academic freedom, but others in the group still had religious bonds and did not want to be seen as rude or hostile by their friends who were believers. This may be a common problem within humanist groups.) The group needs a faculty member there who will revive this group, mentor it, and insure its continuity.

The adult program has been on hold due to the obligations of the Family Co-op and the Director's need to seek paid work to deal with the effects of the recession. It is difficult to maintain three different programs with only volunteers. To help solve that problem, Mr. Herman has been hired on a task-by-task basis to start the adult classes and to raise more funds for our education program. Now that the program is established, renewal of these programs will be possible as new initiatives are created and memberships grow.

Plans for Phase 2

These were the major challenges during Phase 1, how HSNM addressed them, and what the group must do in the future:

(1) Attracting parents – Use media and special events (kickoff, dinners at homes, magic shows, etc.).
(2) Apathy among parents– Keep them involved, keep asking for volunteers (show them it won't happen if they don't make it happen), socialize.
(3) Leadership
- e-mails – Keep them short, include everyone.
- phone talks – Do more; these are more personal and productive.
- advertising – The group had a good designer; do more.
- responding to inquiries – Do more.
- the leadership couple left town for job reasons.

(4) Child discipline – Parents stay for class (no "drop-offs"), but parents need short-courses on behavior modification; limit age spread by adding classes as enrollment grows.
(5) Involve parents in activities of the older generation of HSNM membership, especially for those children who don't have grandparents in the local area. The group had very little cross-participation between age groups, but the wisdom and experience of "the elders" is an important component of the larger humanist community. Parents could take turns in the chil-

dren's class to attend the "senior" events held at the same time or alternate as child-sitters for events at other times.

(6) Scheduling classes – Sunday mornings are best (but not too early).

(7) Social events – Don't expect everyone every time; do more.

(8) Parents feel pressures to "stay in the closet". Respect their need for privacy but reassure them with stories about others "coming out" and with humanist news showing the importance of speaking out.

(9) Discussing real-life ethical issues. Respect their needs for privacy, but use your "personality" and current events to "draw them out" and form bonds. (Consider ethical issues for military families, gender issues, why are teens so angry, etc.)

(10) Finding classroom space. The group visited child care facilities and liberal churches to find a site without success, although we will try those again if necessary. The group wanted a clean, well-kept facility that was centrally located and that would feel safe and comfortable. Private schools are empty on weekends so those are good possibilities. Business conference rooms might work well if the owners will donate the space or offer a low rental rate. The group is currently negotiating for space in a new branch college at the same facility where we started our classes.

(11) Fundraising – Several members have generously contributed, and we have received a grant from the AHA. There are many very wealthy non-profits and our cause is great enough to gain the attention of other generous donors and grant-makers. The group will double its efforts to find those supporters.

(12) Accommodating diversity and setting boundaries. Find roles for not only "middle moderates" but also those at the one extreme who are critical of religion and those at the other extreme who have religious traditions and perhaps some beliefs. Acknowledge that this diversity might exist among the parents. Discuss how to support members or children who have behavior or learning problems without compromising the goals of the program. (Sometimes it might be appropriate to just admit "We can't deal with this.")

Goals and plans for the future:

(1) Resume and increase fundraising.

(2) Resume and increase advertising. Use Meetup.com to grow members.

(3) Have another kickoff for the Family Co-Op to grow members and establish new connections.

(4) Find new classroom space.

(5) Identify new leadership.
(6) Start adult classes on Human Progress: Milestones in the History of Science and Religion to grow the humanist community.
(7) Find faculty at UNM who will renew the UNM Humanist Society.

Members of the Family Cooperative and HSNM hope that these experiences will motivate other AHA chapters to initiate and extend their education programs as the principle means of bringing about change in the world. Education is the foundation of democracy and human progress, and we think expanding and improving education is the most important activity of Humanism. The group welcomes inquiries about its programs as well as advice from the AHA and other chapters.

- Eight Recommended Steps in Establishing Programs for Children

(1) Prepare a business plan for your program using a standard business plan outline. Your chapter board of directors should approve this plan, because it will be their responsibility to see that it is carried out, possibly through a director of education. This will help make everyone aware of your intentions, the steps required, and the possible risks and rewards. Summarize your plan on one page to present to potential donors.

(2) Raise enough money for the first round of advertising and any other start-up expenses identified in your plan. Fundraising from your membership and sympathetic businesses and foundations is essential to funding the level of advertising required for a good community response, depending on rates in your location. Present your plan to potential donors at member meetings and in individual visits with them, encouraging them to be a part of your program by donating. (See *Asking: A 59-Minute Guide to Everything Board Members, Volunteers, and Staff Must Know to Secure the Gift*, by Jerold Panas -- www.jeroldpanas.com/pages/book_asking.htm)

(3) Kickoff your program. Include in your plan a workshop with a noted author or speaker who has experience working with children, knows humanist issues, and has experience giving workshops or seminars to parents. (For example, Dale McGowan, editor, *Parenting Beyond Belief and Raising Freethinkers*, or one of the contributing authors in those books.) Arrange that event and develop a media plan for advertising it.

(4) Advertise heavily in print media, radio, and TV, targeting young parents. Also, distribute fliers to selected stores, private schools, and children's events. Issue press releases to encourage interviews with the workshop presenter and your leaders before and after the event. All of this is not only to gather attendance at the event but

to increases awareness of your chapter in the community and among news reporters and columnists. It is part of "coming out of the closet."

(5) At the kickoff, ask attendees to sign a roster at the start of the workshop and, before the end of the workshop, plan a follow-up social event to discuss the classes they want for their children. A Meetup group (Meetup.com) can be helpful with scheduling and group cohesion.

(6) Follow-up meeting. Plan that social event with whomever took the lead and communicate with the roster or Meetup group to ensure good attendance.

(7) Let parents develop the classes. At the follow-up meeting, identify leaders and make the important decisions such as class venue and schedule and whether there will be hired teachers or the parents will teach the classes. We at HSNM recommend that parents teach the classes on a rotation basis, because then they invest more in the process (and they learn more about humanism). If teachers are hired, they must be paid market rates, so that they stay motivated and responsive to your board of directors, and because good pay for teachers is a humanist principle. Provide curriculum resources, as necessary. (This is easy in the age of the Internet.)

(8) Nurture growth. Your classes should have sufficient momentum at this point to continue for some time. However, don't forget that parents go through life changes, so continue to (1) advertise the classes, especially special events (seminars, magic shows, holiday parties, etc.); (2) involve new parents; and (3) raise funds to meet your expenses (the director's responsibility); and (4) ask parents to document their lessons in some form. Nurture leaders among the parents by involving them in the advertising and media interviews, publishing lesson plans or other guides, and serve as community ambassadors for humanism. This will grow your chapter or create an associated group of young parents supported by your chapter.

We welcome inquiries about our programs, as well as suggestions from other AHA chapters.

Contacts for additional information

Ron Herman, Director of Classes, 505-292-4375 - hsnmfamily@aol.com
Frederick March, HSNM President, 505-366-8721 - fmarch@thinkwellassociates.com

II. RATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL

By Ute Mitchell

Published in the May/June 2009 *Humanist*—Reproduced with the approval of *The Humanist*.

It's Sunday morning at a community center in a suburb of Portland, Oregon. A group of children, age four to twelve, form a half circle, their mouths ajar and eyes wide, staring at the man in front of them. He performs a magic trick as part of the day's Rational Sunday School activity, dubbed "magic and illusions." Mike Mitchell, founder of the program, parent of two young ones, and magician for a day, has just captured a ghost inside a napkin. He invites the children to touch the napkin and feel for themselves. Unfortunately the ghost "collapses," the children break into uncontrollable laughter, and Mike wipes his forehead. Today's meeting is much more work than usual. Mike has spent hours researching, watching magic videos, and practicing his tricks at home. After each trick Mike explains to the kids how it worked and why. The "oohs" and "ahhs" confirm the class is a success, and the children thank their magician cheerfully before running off for free playtime.

Rational Sunday School, as the Sunday morning children's activity for children of atheists and humanists is called in Portland, is not a particularly new movement among humanists in the United States. As a matter of fact, The Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island has had a children's ethics program for kids between the ages of five and thirteen in place since the 1960s. The group meets each week as part of what the Ethical Society calls their Sunday platform (the Portland group's twice-a-month meetings generally split into two groups, "The Little Ones" and "Tween Talk"). Sharon Stanley, the Long Island children's ethics program director says, "Our themes encompass Ethical Culture history, comparative religion, current events, social action projects, and the Six Pillars of Character [as defined by the Josephson Institute Center for Youth Ethics]."

In addition to Sunday morning activities, the society offers field trips to traditional places of worship, including a mosque and a church, making sandwiches at a local soup kitchen, bowling, game nights, and other fun trips. "I think the children who attend an ethical children's Sunday program discuss ideas and participate in activities they will never have in school and might never participate in otherwise," says Stanley, and adds, "[The teenagers are] smart, self-assured, honest, and totally involved with the issues and politics of the day."

Portland and Long Island, New York, aren't the only places in the country with such groups in place. Albuquerque, New Mexico; Palo Alto, California; Chicago, Illinois; and Harvard University offer similar programs, and their success shows. The Palo Alto Humanist Society has offered a popular Sunday school off and on since the early '80s. While the younger group has no overriding curriculum and activities are led by a different person each week, Peter Bishop, one of the founders of the Palo Alto Sunday school, has written a textbook for the older kids' humanist philosophy class. "Humanism is a living, breathing way of life, not just some dry, irrelevant set of ideas," says Bishop.

The Palo Alto Humanist Community was featured in *Time* magazine in November 2007, and in March 2008, ABC's *Nightline* did a segment of "Faith Matters" on the group and their Sunday school.

"A Humanist Creed" by Peter and Catherine Bishop (presented to teens in the Humanist Community group in Palo Alto, California):

I believe in the real world and in people. I believe in separating myth from reality. I believe that people can solve their problems by using imagination and common sense applied with courage and following basic moral principles.

All my life I want to learn and develop, and to enrich the lives of other people. I want to feel the joy of life. I want to make peace, democracy, and well-being in the world while respecting the freedom of people everywhere.

I believe in beauty and in the beauty of truth. Beauty can be loved even when it is not understood, but truth can only be found through understanding. Truth becomes clearer and more beautiful, the more it is investigated.

The Harvard Humanist Parents group was formed in December 2008 through the humanist chaplaincy at Harvard led by Greg Epstein. Monthly gatherings combine small group meetings and occasional field trips. Parenting classes are also offered to assist parents in raising ethical, caring children. The Harvard group was recently profiled in a March AP story that appeared in a variety of media, including the *Washington Post, USA Today*, and the *Salt Lake Tribune.*

The Humanist Society of New Mexico has a very new program in place, currently for children age four to nine. Jeff Cornelius, leader of the family co-op, states, "We have decided to focus on five key areas that we see as critical to humanist education. These areas are based in part on the philosophy expressed in [Dale McGowan's] *Parenting Beyond Belief.* They are: religious literacy, ethics, personal responsibility,

critical thinking, and experimental science." Parents are responsible for planning the group's activities, including storytelling, singing, recreation, and a science experiment, which Cornelius says always lights up kids' faces with surprise and prompts questions.

McGowan agrees with this approach to teaching children. "I would try to blow their minds--get them to say 'wow!' and mean it," says the author, who adds there's really no reason to go looking for mythic sources of amazement when the real world is so accommodating. When asked what a rational children's program ideally should look like, McGowan states:

It should, first and foremost, be human and humane--fun and emotionally satisfying. Critical inquiry would be part of it, although I wouldn't call it that, or anything like it. I'd call it "Asking Great Questions." It should be wonder-based, not framed like some noble Arthurian quest for truth. There would be no weird black-and-white head shots of famous freethinkers around the room. I would want critical thinking activities to never exceed a one-to-one ratio with activities exploring empathy and ethics. And both should be further complemented with pointless fun.

Atheists, humanists, agnostics, nonbelievers--whatever you'd like to refer to yourself--you've learned that you're not alone. As a matter of fact, studies show the number of nontheists in the United States ranges between 10 and 18 percent of the adult population, with the highest occurrence of nonbelievers in the youngest age brackets. Nonbelievers have always "been around," but it has become easier in recent years to admit to one's own lack of religion when asked the infamous "Which church do you go to?" question. What remains a problem is to find the kind of community religious people in this country have available to them, simply by belonging to a church, mosque, or synagogue. Nonbelievers, like their religious peers, generally like to surround themselves with like-minded people, to be loved and understood, to discuss issues of everyday life and deeper topics, and of course to provide the same sense of community to their children.

For those who aren't lucky enough to live anywhere near the groups mentioned here, resources are plentiful to either connect with a similar group in your area or start your own. The following are useful steps to establishing a successful Sunday school community in your neck of the woods.

1. Use a search engine to locate possible humanist chapters in your area. A good place to start is the American Humanist Association (AHA). Or try your luck on meetup.com or yahoogroups.com for atheists, nontheists, or humanist groups. Or start your own--it only takes a few minutes.

2. Advertise in local newspapers, on Craigslist and other online forums; post flyers in supermarkets, community centers, libraries, and other public places. Creating a group contact e-mail address is a good idea.

3. Once you've recruited at least three or four families, hold your first brainstorming meeting (or, if you already have a whole set of great ideas, present them to your group). You can meet at a coffee shop, a restaurant, the library, or, if you're comfortable enough, at your house. Don't end the meeting without answering a few questions: When will the first Sunday school be held and where? Also, which activities will be introduced (this can be as simple as story time and a few songs), and on what topics?

4. At the end of the first Sunday school meeting, plan the next activity and ask for volunteers to lead it. Ask participants for word-of-mouth promotion of your group.

5. After several weeks or even a couple of months meet with parents to brainstorm new ideas and ask for feedback. Don't be afraid to ask for volunteers to step up and lead activities. Also, create core principles for the group or adopt them from an established chapter. Decide whether you'd like to follow a set curriculum or take the "wing it" approach.

6. Try to meet several times a month (later more often) to get the children acquainted and comfortable with each other. Field trips, play dates, and museum visits are always great ideas for socializing. Arranging a parents' night out is also a great idea.

7. Locate a variety of sites for activities. Some libraries and community centers will let you rent rooms for free (although some will require you to be a registered club) or for a small fee. Agree on a "membership fee" to pay for room rentals, material fees, and so forth.

8. Once your group grows, decide whether you'd like to stay a private group or join an organization like the AHA, which will help when you try to add more structure to your program.

Whatever your goal or vision, it doesn't take too much of an effort to find like-minded people for your cause. And it's important to note that rational Sunday schools are not created to bash religion. The image of the bitter atheist is not one that should be conveyed to the next generation. The real task is to raise children with a true understanding of who they are and why others may be different, and that it's okay that way. Or as Dale McGowan puts it, "I want to know about the world, because it is so

cool, and because I'm so incredibly lucky to have ended up a conscious thing in the midst of it."

-- Ute Mitchell is a freelance writer and the co-founder of a Rational Sunday School program. She homeschools two young children, and calls the beautiful Pacific Northwest her home.

III. THE HUMANIST EDUCATOR: STRENGTHENING THE PROFESSION

by Carol Wintermute, Co-Dean, The Humanist Institute

A Humanist educator is involved in the development of individuals who will attempt the transformation of society. His or her methodology is dialectical inquiry based on a philosophy that seeks to discover universal truths for the attainment of justice and reciprocal relationships in this world. So far, so good. We educators have a goal, we have the means and we have the ideological perspective for our objectives. What's missing? In a nutshell, it is political organization. Not only are we inconsistent about what we are doing within our Humanist community but also we have not clarified our educational agenda in the public arena.

But let's take this issue step by step. The Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire points out that we can't deal with education without determining a clear political and ideological view point. As Humanists we have that viewpoint. It is so well documented in our writings with which we Humanists are familiar, that there is no need to define it further. At a meeting of Humanists in Germany, I heard a phrase which the Norwegians and other Europeans use regularly in referring to a world view. It is called life-stance.

Life-stance

The Humanistic life-stance has been made manifest in education by the works of Lawrence Kohlberg and his colleagues in defining moral development. What Kohlberg is aiming at with his moral development is not the inculcation of the Humanistic life-stance. Such an indoctrination becomes a narrow sectarian enterprise like every other form of cultural transmission. Nor is he talking about a kind of new age value's clarification which is centered on the individual's narcissistic exploration of biofeedback or past lives to discover a set of self- satisfying precepts. No, he defines moral education as changes in patterns of thinking which result from resolving the relationship between inner conflict with an external situation. This type of education depends on the individual reflecting on experience and finding more adequate ways to make decisions which enhance not only the quality of his or her own life but the welfare of others. Take for instance a true dilemma that Jeffrey faced, when his friend Carl stole a large picture book on space exploration from the library. Until he talked with his school counselor, he thought he had only two awful choices in dealing with the situation. One, keep quiet, be loyal to his friend, but become an accomplice to a bad deed; or two, tell on his friend, lose a pal, but behave as an honest

kid. The counselor introduced some new possibilities to the situation which spurred Jeffrey to come up with a third and more satisfactory solution for him and Carl. She challenged him to find a way to have the book returned but not inform on his friend. After struggling with this newly focused problem and being prodded along to think in new directions, Jeffrey decided to confront Carl with a way to have his pictures, return the book and save face. He persuaded Carl to take the book back, apologize to the librarian for keeping it overnight and ask her if he might make photo copies of his favorite pictures and use them to illustrate a report due in science class. You may not judge this the "best" solution but it was more satisfactory for the two boys than any previously conceived.

Cultural Transmission?

Too often education is limited simply to cultural transmission. In public school systems throughout the world the majority standards and values are authoritatively presented without question. It is a trap we want to avoid in our zeal for our life-stance. Yet, we resort to this method and become blind to the process of education because we, too, want children and adults to "know" our truths. The result of employing this method is to produce total apathy toward an imposed system for determining personal and public good.

For example, as a child you may not yield to the temptation to smack a playmate who calls you a name because the kid is a bully and will probably whack you back. A few years older and you resist because your mother promised you'd have to stay indoors if you were caught hitting. As a pre-teen you restrain yourself because hitting is against the school rules but as a teen you realize that the whole place would be chaos if everyone hit others whenever they felt like it, so you control yourself because it's the only sensible way to behave. As a adult you've learned to abhor physical violence and know that a verbal insult is no excuse for smacking another person. Finally a Gandhi or King comes to the awareness that hitting another being is destructive to both of you physically and mentally and does nothing to enhance the worth, dignity and future relationship of two members of the human species. Such a person may decide on a principle of never striking or harming another human no matter what the provocation, even their own potential death.

First we learn to do "right" to avoid unpleasant consequences like retaliation or punishment. Next we do "right" to be part of the team and to go by the rules As our ability to comprehend and analyze experience increases so does our concept of "right". Now a larger view of life emerges in which doing "right" helps to tame the chaotic nature of the world. "Right" become a matter of not only doing well by yourself but of enhancing the good of the many. We move from the specific personal center of

ourselves being imposed on by outside sources to the imposition of order on ourselves toward a general focus on humanity and planetary species.

Reciprocal Values

The more adequate value systems are based on the concepts of justice and reciprocity in relationships with the entities of this planet and are common to all cultures. The fact that they are rarely in practice in our cultures does not negate their position as the most desirable values for humane living. It only tell us that they are indeed the most challenging values by which to live. Thomas Huxley put it well, when he said that "perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the things you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not."

Inherent in these values is the method of teaching them. To stimulate a sense of justice and reciprocity it must be exercised in the educational domain itself. Democracy is essential in the teaching situation and respectful dialogue is the means to achieving it. Teacher and students are co-partners and co-equals in the learning process. Paulo Freire's amazing success with illiterate students is proof of his belief that if the teacher begins at the experiential level of the students, discovers what these students want to know more about, and represents content in the form of problems to be solved by all of them, comprehension will occur and expansion of both students and teacher's horizons results.

Posing problems directly related to students experience challenges them to respond. This is their world and not the alienating domain of intellectual theorizing. Each response evokes a new challenge from the teacher to perceive the situation in a different way. This expands students' abilities to understand the complexities of the problem and find more adequate ways of solving it. The method requires the teacher's respect for the students' experience which in turn engenders the necessary trust for the students to become committed to the discovery process itself.

I was part of a University of Minnesota research team designing an experimental drug course which was introduced in a public middle school. The control class was taught a straight "this is what the awful drugs will do to you" course in a regular classroom setting with lectures, lessons and workbooks leading to passing a drug awareness test. The experimental class sat on the carpeted floor in the locker bays. Sample activities included body awareness games such as a submarine trip into the blood system and role playing drugs as nerve blockers, while talking about things we did on weekends to get "high" on life. Many discussions centered on what to do when you're feeling low about yourself and life, which then will make you feel restored and capable again. We did not lecture on drugs, we waited for specific questions about

drugs and did the research together. I taught both kinds of classes. The children in the first type scored significantly lower on the test than the kids in the "it's your life" discussion class.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking about experience necessitates dealing with issues of justice and reciprocity. The fact that problems are based on reality and experience leads to solutions that not only can be acted upon in everyday life but require it. For example, if the problem presented is one of a hurt done to a group member and the group decides that it was an injustice which must be corrected, therein the seeds are sown for seeing that injustice itself is something that should not occur.

Sounds very sensible, rational and simple, doesn't it? But it is very difficult and time consuming to educate in this fashion. It is more expedient and familiar for us to tell students that the answer to life is to be just and loving to others--and here's how you do it. Believe me, in two minutes, the classroom will be devoid of any truly living bodies.

Throughout the western world, I have found that we Humanists have a universal problem in attracting young people to our movement. They do not want to be told anything by the adult population, even our dramatic heresy to tradition. They, like past generations, are into discovering for themselves. They are taking charge of educating themselves on the streets and by television. They do not trust our words because they rarely match our actions.

To obtain their trust and interest we have to demonstrate that we are willing to suspend talking about our precious agenda for world transformation to take an authentic interest in them as persons and as a group. Young people, especially, are vulnerable to any movement which focuses on self. We must begin with that fact and develop our abilities to sublimate our desire to inform them about our non-selfish life-stance. Only then are we free of the very ego which we are attempting to move them beyond. An interest in a young person's personal development and transformation is a prerequisite to the expansion of their horizons to include others in their patterns of thinking.

Learning to view matters from another's perspective is the next essential step in ethical education. It encourages the individual to move beyond self-development and become involved with the welfare of the group. The definition of group then can be expanded until it applies not only to school, town, nation and species but also to life in general. Ultimately, ethical principles for life are derived which are imperatives for a transforming intervention in society.

So, how well are we Humanists doing as educators of creative transformation? We have some problems. They are centered on our abilities to implement our educational objectives. Part of our difficulties lie in how we are organized throughout the world. In several countries we have organized communities, some of which are based on the church model, others on the community center model and in some, educators have access to the school system. No matter which, it is easier to have continuity and long range programs when we are organized into some kind of units which meet regularly. In some of our countries there are no formally organized communities with buildings and regular interaction of members. In these cases, education consists of the preparation of youth for civil ceremonies and the edification of adults through publications, seminars and conferences.

I really don't believe that we can do much of a job of ethical education under such spotty conditions. It's an enterprise that requires more than occasional attention. Some sort of local organization is most suitable for this purpose. In only a very few locations do we have schools that offer ethical education. We may indeed need to provide more of them for ourselves in the future. At the same time, we need to do what we can to influence education within the systems run by our governments.

When we do offer some sort of educational program on an ongoing basis we often do so with borrowed materials and patched together curriculums, much of which does not reflect current youth experience. My experience is mostly with materials used in the US within church and community model groups. For children and young people, we often are willing to use any liberal appearing curriculums which seem to be critically process oriented but in reality are value inculcation programs or mere value's clarification exercises. Many of the educational programs have only the sketchiest references to the developmental goals and philosophical base which I have previously outlined. There is a lack of focus and direction to much of what passes for ethical education in these communities.

A Humanist Curriculum

Part of this problem arises from those who are called upon to implement an ethical education program. Curriculum writers are not often our leading philosophers and educational professionals. In my experience, children's education has been left to the devices of amateurs, public school oriented professionals and the parents. They stumble around together to come up with what they want the kids to know. It is not the process of education but the content of what is to be imparted that takes center stage with such planning groups. Henry Adams said it nicely: "Nothing in education is so astonishing as the amount of ignorance it accumulates in the form of inert facts."

These well-meaning volunteers miss the boat entirely with their lists of Humanist facts. That is most understandable as they have not been engaged with professional ethical educators to discover what is involved in a Humanistic education. *Ethical education is not focused on learning facts. It is centered on creating the desire to know the facts that will clarify experience.* (Emphasis added) Of course, teacher training in the inquiry method is basic to the whole endeavor.

The kind of world citizen Humanists educators are interested in helping to create is not the person who can quote laws and clichés for behavior. Humanist educators focus on the individual who can think through a situation to see the consequences of his/her actions as well as the consistency with which s/he acts according to the rational principles which are important for human welfare. The teacher for this process can not be a lecturer, but must be a provoker of thinking. The accomplished student is one who subsequently takes that role upon him/herself for future decision making.

Education for adults fares little better. Our leaders are stretched to capacity. When they can take time to participate in seminars and classes the results are very encouraging, but it happens too infrequently. In the States we have only just begun to train new leaders in the ethical education process. One example is The Humanist Institute in New York to train leaders from our various Humanist groups. The interactionists' method of education is in full use here.

We Humanists seem quite able to produce strong individuals and factions but are sadly lacking in the ability to foster cooperative action. As possible transformers of society we fall into the category of verbal revolutionaries who talk a lot but do little except on an individual basis. I find it amazing that we can recognize that education is the agent of evolution in society and yet we are always leaving it to "others" to do it. In this aspect we resemble the rest of society in abdication of educational responsibility. We are guilty of not being politically astute enough to make the development of a universal Humanistic education program for young people and adults a top priority of cooperative action within our movement.

We need professional guidance to tell us what is possible as to the ends and means for ethical education. Some of these answers are in the literature. But the next step of putting theory into practice has to come out of our own movement. Thus I suggest that an education committee could be formed which brings together all the resources we have for ethical education and organize these resources in ways that will suit the situations in our countries and communities. We could create a framework for ethical education which would be adaptable to individual, family, local, regional and national settings. It would be a very strenuous task but not an impossible one.

Beyond this work within our movement, we need to address ourselves to the political realities of public education. Like everyone else we have been content to criticize state education but leave the decision making power in the hands of the bureaucrats. If we are in the business of transforming society then we have to be the managers of change.

This is not a job for our educational professionals alone. Education is the business of every one of us who takes Humanism seriously. It is the crux of the movement. Humanist educator Maxine Greene of Columbia University is the most articulate spokesperson for the need for Humanists to create and occupy the public arena. We must come together where we are located and act, "as sanitary squads" to face the pestilence in education of "technicism, false piety, mean-spiritedness, and special issues." She states that one of the obligations of Humanists today is "to fight the plague by opening the public space, by struggling for an articulate public, by setting a place for freedom and taking initiatives never thought of before."

To manage change in state education we need to become a political force, not to engage in full scale warfare which only mobilizes the opposition, but to do battle with specific infringements on rights and curriculum materials within the system. We must take issues to the public, educate it about our position, and try to win its assistance in our campaign. We must demand education which teaches children to think critically about facts and issues. There will be no creative transformation of society for the good until we do. Like Mark Twain says, "Soap and education are not as sudden as a massacre but they are more deadly in the long run."

In conclusion, we are able to define ethical education, articulate our goals and objectives in relation to it and have the methodologies to employ it. Now all we have to do is join our Humanist educators in taking responsibility for organizing it amongst ourselves, demonstrating its effectiveness and agitating the public to demand it in our state institutions.

Reprinted with the permission of The Humanist Institute.

Available on-line at -- www.humanismtoday.org/vol11/wintermute.html

IV. A HUMANIST MORAL EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN

by Fred Edwords, National Director, United Coalition of Reason

After graduating from high school in San Diego, California, in 1967, I worked for a time at a Taco Bell. One of my co-workers was a bright born-again Christian, and the two of us had some rather stimulating conversations. One day, however, an event occurred there that left an indelible impression on me, affecting my ideas about child-rearing to this day.

A whole busload of Protestant-fundamentalist parochial school teenyboppers showed up fresh from a revival meeting. These kids carried Bibles, wore evangelical buttons, and some had giant fingers for pointing heavenward. Since the chaperones decided that they liked the fare better at the Jack-in-the-Box hamburger stand across the street, the kids were suddenly on their own. And when that happened, all hell broke loose. These kids suddenly became rude and abusive to the two of us who were serving them as well as to each other. They were rowdy, noisy, and difficult to deal with. And when they finally departed, they left a mess of papers, napkins, straws, and sacks in their wake, scattered all over the dining area.

However, just as we were getting ready to go out and clean the mess up, a young hippie couple arrived on the scene. They were kind and friendly and, would you believe it? they picked up that mess those kids had left behind.

Well, to say the least, my born-again co-worker was quite chagrined at what had just transpired. But I chose to be consoling. I said, "Look, those kids probably have it pretty tough: they are required to be on their best behavior at home, at school, at church, and just about everywhere else. Being so repressed, they have no outlet for their youthful energy. As a result, they go wild the moment they're left unsupervised."

And that's the way I see it to this day. If you try to make sure that your kids are well-behaved whenever you're looking, you might have cause to wonder what happens when you're not. I think it's better to teach children acceptable social behavior-to behave well when they're in public, in school, and visiting at the houses of friends. Home can be another situation altogether.

So my strategy has been more like the reverse of the Taco Bell example. Within certain limits, I prefer to let my kids be wild at home, where I can see them. And I want my two girls to speak freely to me. That way I'll know what sort of ideas and infor-

mation they're picking up elsewhere. Toward this end, I've taught them that there are no bad words, just socially unacceptable words. This means that I get to hear the words many kids would never let their parents know they knew. As I see it, home is a place where you can be yourself, where you can express yourself, where you can vent your true feelings, where you can speak your mind. Home is an oasis of liberty in a world of constraint. And I've been happy with the social results of this approach. My kids get excellent marks for citizenship in school and excellent reports from the parents of the kids whose homes they visit. All of this contributes to what I consider the first humanist virtue: civility. It also shows respect for the honest expression of feelings. The other humanist virtues I wish to address here are compassion, reason, and love of life.

But first let me finish with civility. I've suggested a way to bring about civility in children that, to some, might seem publicly dishonest. That is, I've suggested that we can spare the public the true beastly nature of our children simply by letting our children do all their growling in the lair. And by this means, we can falsely enhance our public image as good parents. And this suggestion, in turn, implies that I cynically see no necessary connection between civility and morality: civility can simply be an act put on to impress others. Is this disconnection of civility and morality valid?

Well, a leading ethical educator of children thinks so. Let me quote from Can We Teach Ethics? by Howard Radest, a man who was director of the Ethical Culture/ Fieldston Schools of New York City and chair of its ethics department for many years, and who founded and chaired the University Seminar on Moral Education at Columbia University. Radest writes:

> *Our observations of behavior entail their own paradox and are unreliable. Our students may be using "good" behavior as a way of dealing with adults, but we do not know. Out of sight, they may behave one way in school, another way at home, still another way on the street, yet we cannot observe these other spaces, and so cannot know what is going on. Our presence as parents or as teachers changes things. It comes as a shock, for example, when a student we thought was "well-behaved" cheats or steals. Newspaper accounts of a crime typically report the "surprise" of the criminal's neighbors.*
>
> *Teachers know that students will use "good conduct" to get non-moral rewards--not always, but often enough to suggest the moral unreliability of "good conduct." . . . despite the appearance of virtue, our students can as readily be manipulators as moralists. . . .*
>
> *The difference between claim and conduct haunts us. We know that helpfulness*

> *out of concern for another is not morally the same as helpfulness for payment. We know that truth telling out of respect for accuracy is not morally the same as truth telling for fear of being caught in a lie. In short, simply to equate "good" behavior with morality doesn't make sense.* [Pp. 10-11.]

So, unless we are simply interested in successful conditioning, social control, and good appearances, the virtue of civility, while of definite practical usefulness, isn't enough by itself. It cannot be the centerpiece and cannot be the benchmark of any humanistic program of moral education for children. We need to set our goals higher. We need to work toward inducing our children to internalize the moral values we teach them.

In their book, Bringing Up a Moral Child: A New Approach for Teaching Your Child to Be Kind, Just, and Responsible, Michael Schulman and Eva Mekler address this issue of internalizing. They write:

> "*Warm parents who give their children clear rules and affectionate approval for following them, as well as firm correctives for transgressions, tend to raise children with strong consciences.*" [P. 22.]

Children naturally want their parents' love and approval, especially if they have strong feelings of love for their parents. And so securing parental approval out of love becomes a motivation for accepting and even internalizing parental rules. But that's only the beginning. The authors go on to say:

> *Their parents' rules must become their rules, which can only happen if they understand and appreciate the reasons for the rules. When that occurs, we say the rule has become a personal standard of the child. A rule . . . will then be followed because it leads to good consequences, and not because parents or any other authority say it should be followed.* [P. 22.]

Schulman and Mekler therefore advise parents to do two things: make their rules clear and give reasons for their rules. For example:

> "*Remember Billy--be nice to your cousin Jennifer when she comes over tonight*" *is not a clear statement of how Billy should behave toward his visitor.* "*Don't forget to ask her what she wants to see when you're selecting a television show,*" *or* "*Remember, she's not supposed to eat ice cream, so don't make fun of her when she has fruit for dessert*" *are statements that define for Billy what you mean by* "*nice,*" *and also clarify for him what he must or must not do to fulfill your instructions.* [P. 23.]

Schulman and Mekler are quite adamant about this approach, declaring:

> *As a parent you have a choice. You can refuse to explain the reasons behind your commands and, in effect, teach your children that being good simply means being obedient, or you can teach them that being good means striving for certain openly stated values . . . , and that the purpose of the rules . . . are to bring those values about.* [P. 23.]

One practical benefit of parents explaining rules is that the obedience to such rules can then carry over to new situations and can also occur when the parents aren't present. Further, the authors write: "When parents make clear statements of reasons, a child learns that they care about his intentions as well as his actions."

A particular intention that plays a major role in moral behavior is the feeling of empathy. And this brings us to the second of the moral virtues I wish to discuss, that of compassion. Schulman and Mekler define empathy in this way: "When you feel sympathy you care about the other person; when you experience empathy you are the other person." With empathy, you identify another person's experience.

There are psychological studies that demonstrate how easy it is to arouse empathy and how that then leads directly to altruistic behavior. For example, in 1982, University of Kansas psychologists Miho Toi and C. Daniel Batson performed an experiment. They had two groups of students listen to a taped interview with a fellow student who reported having broken both her legs in an accident, resulting in her having difficulty keeping up with classwork. One group of the student interviewers were instructed to listen dispassionately, gathering only objective facts. The other group was asked to focus on the feelings of the interviewee. After the listening was finished, the students in each group were given an opportunity to volunteer assistance to the interviewee. The results were striking. Students who had been instructed to focus on the feelings demonstrated much more compassion toward the student in need and considerably more of them volunteered to help, as compared to students in the "objective" group. The conclusion of the researchers was that empathy for someone in trouble induces a strong urge to help.

Other studies show that parents who are, themselves, empathic and who also consistently react to the misbehavior of their children by causing them to focus on the feelings of whoever they have harmed, tend to have more caring and altruistic children. Schulman and Mekler write:

> *A child is better able to put himself in someone's place and thus is more likely to feel empathy for that person when he knows not only what the person feels, but why he feels as he does. If a mother tells her son in a harsh voice, "Turn down*

the stereo," he can be pretty sure what she is feeling. . . . Scolding and threatening may get her what she wants for the moment, they won't get her son to care about her peace of mind.

If she wants empathic understanding from him, she'll have to provide him with the information he needs to understand her. . . . She might, for instance, tell him, "when the stereo is that loud, it makes me physically uncomfortable and I can't concentrate on my work," or "I need to relax for a while after work and I can't when the music is that loud." These messages would let her son know the specific needs behind her reactions to his loud music and give him the opportunity to accommodate her out of compassion rather than fear. [Pp. 55-56.]

With all of this advice, however, and with the evidence from these studies, we still need to keep our expectations realistic. Moral education in compassion isn't equally easy with all children. Studies of infant temperament and later development make it clear that empathy is like most human traits; it isn't distributed equally across the human spectrum. Some children are naturally more empathic than others. In fact, securing empathy and altruistic behavior can often be like pulling teeth. And that's just one fact we will continue to have to live with. So, though compassion can be taught to some degree, we shouldn't expect miracles.

But where compassion is taught, and where it results in improved altruistic behavior, that compassion can be expanded to develop an overall social awareness. The empathic person can put him or herself in a variety of other people's shoes. Here, then, is a social consciousness-raising experiment you can try with children. It comes from the book Parenting for Peace and Justice, authored by Kathleen and James McGinis, two liberal Christians who quote more humanists and have adopted more humanist ideas than I think they realize. In any case, their "TV Quiz for Martians" is an excellent exercise. It goes like this: [P. 21.]

Watch television for a continuous two-hour stretch.

Pretend you are from Mars: Imagine that what you are seeing on the screen is the only information you have about Americans.

Spend the first hour watching two half-hour portions of shows.

Spend the second hour switching the channel selector every five minutes to sample programming at random.

1. Discuss what you have seen. As Martians, what would be your ideas about Americans, judging from the shows and ads you have seen?

What are women like?

What are men like?

What do people do most of the time?

What is the goal of most Americans?

What do Americans value highly?

What do they believe in?

What are Blacks like? Hispanics? Asian-Americans? Native Americans? Americans of European descent?

What do people do for pleasure?

2. Now switch your identity back from Martian observers to the Americans who were being observed. Discuss the experience of being observed and the descriptions of you that these "outsiders" gave. How does it feel to be seen and described in that way?

So we see how empathy can be inspired and, from that, altruism and social consciousness developed. But such compassion isn't the only moral virtue. Compassion without reason can actually bring about harmful results. We can become carried away with our feelings, paving the road to hell with nothing but good intentions. Reason needs to be applied as a manager of emotions. And it forces us to gather our facts before adopting policies that may only appear compassionate but may have long-term disastrous effects.

Reason is also a moral virtue because it is an important tool of mental health. Little good can come, for example, from a concern for others that develops into a kind of neurotic catastrophizing, followed by our making absolutistic demands on others. Children need to be reminded that we all have limited powers for setting matters right, that matters are rarely set right quickly, and that one's emotional energy is better invested in empathic efforts that have some possibility of success. As the ancient Roman Stoic philosopher, Epictetus, pointed out, some things are beyond our power, some things are within our power, and emotional health is the art of knowing which are which and acting accordingly.

One way of teaching children how to involve reason in the moral process is to encourage them to think about their thinking and feeling. Children can learn to examine themselves and discover why they feel angry, for example, or why they feel upset. Psychologist Albert Ellis teaches this directly to children through a booklet called

Instant Replay. It shows children how to rationally review the thoughts that may have led to their excesses of emotion.

As children develop the ability to reason about their feelings, they develop more confidence in their own thinking. And with this, they become more willing to think for themselves in ethical situations and to also be skeptical of certain empathic claims made by others who are only trying to manipulate them.

Another way to directly develop rational thinking is to utilize Socratic dialogue. That is, never tell when you can ask. Let children find out factual and ethical truths somewhat for themselves. In this way, the values acquired will be theirs, not yours. Your values they will skeptically question. But their own values they will know.

This has the added advantage of promoting flexibility. The real world is a complex place. It rarely lends itself to the direct application of copybook maxims, the Ten Commandments, or any other simple rules. One therefore needs to be adaptable. Moral living requires thinking. And thinking is particularly vital in sorting out moral dilemmas.

We humanists recognize that moral dilemmas are real and that solving moral problems and acting in the right way is therefore an uncertain process. At some point, children need to be taught that moral decision-making can be difficult at times, that wrong decisions can be made for the right reasons and right decisions for the wrong reasons. But the more they think their way through moral problems, the better they will get at it. And this will enhance self-confidence.

With the self-confidence to reason, children can gradually be left to let experiences be their own teachers. Allow your children some looseness in the system, some free choice. As events unfold, or when they are reading a story, don't always give away the moral. Reality and fiction often deliver their messages obliquely, rarely directly. Learn to respect that. Despite humanism's manifestos, humanist moral values aren't a catechism. They are an internalized attitude and a way of life. And this leads me to the final virtue I wish to address. I call it the "love of life." This is about happiness. Happy people find they have disposable energy they can devote to helping others and self-confidence enough to tackle moral dilemmas.

But happiness can't be pursued directly. Happiness and love of life is what happens when you are busy doing something else. So children need to learn how to secure for themselves the sort of vitally absorbing interests that will give their lives meaning.

With my own children, I do this by making them aware of as many choices as I can. This gives them a larger universe, a larger smorgasbord, to draw from and thus in-

creases the odds that they will find things in the world they can get excited about. By this process, my children have learned to enjoy travel, movies, music, people, animals, nature, daydreams, books, and the joy of learning. And even from an early age, it created an attitude of optimism toward life. For example, when our family was traveling in Texas and Oklahoma a number of years ago, we stopped by the Oral Roberts religious complex in Tulsa. Our oldest daughter, Livia, was then four. And when I asked her what she thought the praying hands in front of the Oral Roberts medical complex were doing, she exclaimed, "They're clapping!" Such was her love of life.

Morality, then, is made up of at least these four things: external civility, internal compassion, reason, and the love of life. Though all of them have their roots in temperament and, therefore, are not completely in your hands, they also can be taught to a significant degree. And the teaching is worth the effort.

I'm fond of that common remark of Christian fundamentalists when they argue against evolution. They declare that if you teach your children that they are animals, they will act like animals. Of course, these folks are thinking of lions and tigers and bears (oh my!), not dolphins and other peaceful creatures. But also, they are forgetting that animals come in three varieties: wild, domesticated and feral. If you teach your children well, if your moral education has a real civilizing impact, you will have made the wild little ones who first became part of your life into the sort of domesticated animals who won't suddenly go feral every time a chaperone isn't looking. And they will grow up to become the civilized human beings we adults have all, ourselves, learned to be.

** This article originally appeared in *Humanist Living* Volume 2, Issue 3 & 4 Summer/Fall 1999. It is available on-line at: www.humanist-society.org/communities/moralchildren.html

V. CRITICAL THINKING WITH A HUMANIST FOCUS

by Bob Bhaerman

"With the plethora of information that has inundated us today, we need critical thinking skills to sort through this mass of material to decide what is important and useful…. Critical thinking is vital in any context where irrational arguments are being used to persuade us to a course of action, Critical thinking is needed to keep us afloat in the waves of truth claims coming to our shores."

> Dr. Carol Wintermute, Co-Dean, The Humanist Institute, from "A Vision of Humanist Education for Our Complex World", *Essays in the Philosophy of Humanism*, Volume 18 (1) Spring-Summer 2010

Couldn't agree more with Dr. Wintermute's statement on the need to "keep us afloat"! We believe it is never too late to teach children how to swim – and never too early. This section, therefore, deals with two areas: (1) Exploring the Basics of Critical Thinking and (2) Applying the Basic Understandings of Critical Thinking to Humanist Principles and Values.

Exploring the Basics of Critical Thinking

We do not need to "reinvent the wheel"! There are a great many high quality resources to which parents and teachers can – and should – turn in order to explore and understand the concepts of critical thinking and to learn from those who have been instrumental in developing them. Perhaps none have developed higher quality resources than The Foundation for Critical Thinking in Dillon Beach, CA (www.criticalthinking.org). That surely is the first place to turn.

In their website section on "Where to Begin", you will find numerous complementary resources for parents and teachers of young children in grades K to 3, including the following: Teaching Tactics that Encourage Active Learning; Remodeled Lessons: K-3; Glossary of Critical Thinking Terms; For Young Students (Elementary/K-6); and the Children's Guide Video Series for K-6 which is available on YouTube for public use.

Similar resources are available for use with students in grades 4 to 6 including lesson plans, effective strategies (such as thinking independently and exercising fair mindedness) and numerous cognitive strategies (such as evaluating the credibility of sources of information, questioning deeply; raising and pursuing root or significant

questions; and giving reasons and evaluating evidence and alleged facts, and many more, all of which are relevant to humanist education.)

The *many books* include such titles as *Critical Thinking: How to Prepare Students for a Rapidly Changing World; Critical Thinking Handbook: K-3* (and also ones for Grades 4 to 6 and 6 to 9); *Learning to Think Things Through: A Guide to Critical Thinking in the Curriculum;* and *Teacher's Handbook for Critical Thinking for Children.* The handbook is designed for teachers who want to foster fair-minded critical thinking in instruction. It is designed to be used in conjunction with *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking for Children* (Linda Elder, 2006). Another valuable booklet is *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking: Concepts and Tools* by Richard Paul and Linda Elder (2008). And surely, among the many useful resources is the "Teacher's Manual" to *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking for Children*, Linda Elder's marvelous guidebook for teachers of children and youth.

The resources in the section of the website called "About Critical Thinking" include defining critical thinking; critical thinking: basic questions and answers; a concept and definition of critical thinking; and research on critical thinking.

As you see, we have provided a number of resources of The Foundation for Critical Thinking. Where then do we suggest that one should begin to exploring the basic of critical thinking? Start by reading *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking: Concepts and Tools* by Elder and Paul (2008). Some of the many topics are: The Elements of Thought, A Checklist for Reasoning, Three Levels of Thought, Three Kinds of Questions, What Critical Thinkers Routinely Do, Stages of Critical Thinking Development, and more. The booklet is small so you can carry it around in your purse or pocket. You can read it on the train or bus on your way to work but not while you are driving. That is not a very thoughtful thing to do since you might wind up on the "critical" list. That is not the type of critical we had in mind!

The second book to read and study is the "Teacher's Manual" for Linda Elder's *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking for Children.* The five parts are: Understanding Fictional Characters That Help Children Understand Critical Thinking; Introducing Fair and Unfair Thinking; The Intellectual Standards (i.e., helping children evaluate thinking, clarity, accuracy, relevance, logic and fairness); The Parts of Thinking; and The Intellectual Virtues. The manual includes many "Thinking For Yourself Activities for Children".

Several universities also have developed excellent resources including The Northwest Center for Philosophy for Children at the University of Washington and The Insti-

tute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children at Montclair State University in New Jersey.

The Northwest Center for Philosophy for Children, a non-profit organization affiliated with the University of Washington Department of Philosophy, has been introducing philosophy into the lives of young people since 1996 through their "Philosophers in the Schools" program and workshops about ways to facilitate philosophical dialogues with young people. Their resources include such critical thinking resources as "Discussion Questions for Doing Philosophy Using Literature" (lesson plans for facilitating philosophy discussions with elementary school students using various stories) and "Ethical Dilemmas" (four ethical puzzles for discussion with elementary and middle school students.) The dilemmas deal with these issues: lying, friendship, animal rights and obedience and authority.

The discussion questions and activities are geared toward elementary school age students, some more particularly for younger elementary school students and some for older students. All of these stories can also be used with middle and high school students, with adaptations of the questions. Below is the list of books that are used. There are literally scores of thoughtful discussion questions for each book.

The Incredible Painting of Felix Clousseau by Jon Agee

The Runaway Bunny by Margaret Wise Brown

My Friend the Monster by Clyde Robert Bulla

Stellaluna by Jannell Cannon

"A Mad Tea Party" from Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll

The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes

Peach & Blue by Sarah S. Kilborne

A Color of His Own by Leo Lionni

"*Dragons and Giants*" *(in Frog and Toad Together)* by Arnold Lobel

The Great Blueness and Other Predicaments by Arnold Lobel

"*Owl and the Moon*" *(in Owl At Home)* by Arnold Lobel

"*Tear-Water Tea*" *(in Owl at Home)* by Arnold Lobel

The Tale of Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble by William Steig

Yellow and Pink by William Steig

Albert's Toothache by Barbara Williams

The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams

The Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) at Montclair State University in New Jersey provides curriculum materials for pre-school through high school students in philosophical inquiry and provides teacher preparation in the pedagogy of critical inquiry. Since 1974 the Institute and its affiliate centers around the world have been largely responsible for the mutual encounter of children and philosophy. On their website -- http://cehs.montclair.edu/academic/iapc/whatis.shtml -- you will find thoughtful discussion of such questions as: What is Philosophy? Why 'Philosophy for Children'? What is a typical Philosophy For Children (P4C) session like? and What is the IAPC Curriculum?

The curriculum resources developed for grades K-12 are designed to engage students in exploring the philosophical dimensions of their experience, with particular attention to logical, ethical and aesthetic dimensions. The curriculum consists of novels for students and manuals for teachers. Each novel is about 80 pages in length and is written without technical terminology. Each manual is about 400 pages and contains conceptual explanations for teachers as well as discussion exercises and activities that can be used to supplement the students' inquiry.

Another of their resources is *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children*. The journal is a forum for the work of both theorists and practitioners of philosophical practice with children. Its articles include philosophical argument and reflection, classroom transcripts, curricula, empirical research, and reports from the field.

Applying the Basic Understandings of Critical Thinking to Humanist Principles and Values

We believe there is no clearer statement of humanist principles and values than those in Humanist Manifesto III: "Humanism and Its Aspiration" and that these can serve as the foundation of building a humanist curriculum for children and youth (and for adults of any age). We further believe that these principles and values should be posted in every classroom where parents and teachers are striving not only to keep their children afloat but to teach them to swim against the tide of ignorance and irrationality that often surrounds us.

Although we humanists are familiar with "Humanism and Its Aspirations", let's look at the key elements again.

> Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.
>
> The lifestance of Humanism—guided by reason, inspired by compassion, and informed by experience—encourages us to live life well and fully. It evolved through the ages and continues to develop through the efforts of thoughtful people who recognize that values and ideals, however carefully wrought, are subject to change as our knowledge and understandings advance…. It is in this sense that we affirm the following:
>
> **Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis**. Humanists find that science is the best method for determining this knowledge as well as for solving problems and developing beneficial technologies. We also recognize the value of new departures in thought, the arts, and inner experience—each subject to analysis by critical intelligence.
>
> **Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change**. Humanists recognize nature as self-existing. We accept our life as all and enough, distinguishing things as they are from things as we might wish or imagine them to be. We welcome the challenges of the future, and are drawn to and undaunted by the yet to be known.
>
> **Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience**. Humanists ground values in human welfare shaped by human circumstances, interests, and concerns and extended to the global ecosystem and beyond. We are committed to treating each person as having inherent worth and dignity, and to making informed choices in a context of freedom consonant with responsibility.
>
> **Life's fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals**. We aim for our fullest possible development and animate our lives with a deep sense of purpose, finding wonder and awe in the joys and beauties of human existence, its challenges and tragedies, and even in the inevitability and finality of death. Humanists rely on the rich heritage of human culture and the lifestance of Humanism to provide comfort in times of want and encouragement in times of plenty.
>
> **Humans are social by nature and find meaning in relationships**. Humanists

long for and strive toward a world of mutual care and concern, free of cruelty and its consequences, where differences are resolved cooperatively without resorting to violence. The joining of individuality with interdependence enriches our lives, encourages us to enrich the lives of others, and inspires hope of attaining peace, justice, and opportunity for all

Working to benefit society maximizes individual happiness. Progressive cultures have worked to free humanity from the brutalities of mere survival and to reduce suffering, improve society, and develop global community. We seek to minimize the inequities of circumstance and ability, and we support a just distribution of nature's resources and the fruits of human effort so that as many as possible can enjoy a good life.

We believe that these six principles and values form the foundation of humanist education. How, then, do we teach children about humanism? The following are some preliminary ideas and resources:

How do we teach our children to understand the world through observation, experimentation, and rational analysis? There are many ways. Young children can describe the room they are in, the clothing they are wearing, and what they are doing. They can go on walks and observe the variety of stores and homes – and people. With regard to experimentation, there are several steps: asking a question or stating the problem, gathering information about the problem, making a hypothesis (educated guess), experimenting, collecting and analyzing data and drawing conclusions. Some simple questions to begin: Will ice sink in water? Will nails rust faster in tap or salt water? Do earthworms prefer moist or dry soil?

How do we teach our children that humans are an integral part of nature and the result of unguided evolutionary change? There are many excellent resources to begin exploring evolution. Here are three books to begin with. For younger children: *How Whales Walked into the Sea* by Faith McNulty. By focusing on one species – and one with a unique background — the book demonstrates how the process of evolution works. For upper elementary and middle school children: *The Tree of Life: Charles Darwin* by Peter Sis. This is a picture book that will appeal to older children as well as younger ones. *Darwin and Evolution for Kids: His Life and Ideas with 21 Activities* by Kristan Lawson. This book has a wealth of information plus activities on nature observation and an experiment in acquired characteristics. The PBS series on *Evolution* (www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/) also is worth watching. One advantage of watching it with your children is being able to stop and discuss questions or listen to comments as they come up. There also is a companion website -- http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/ -- with online activities and extra informa-

tion and curriculum kit: kitwww.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/educators/index.html.

How do we teach our children to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment and that ethical values are derived from human needs and interests? Here are three approaches suggested by experienced teachers. (1) Reacting to the wrong behavior in the right manner. If someone does something that we think is not ethical, talk about why it is or isn't. Say something like "This happened and it bothers me. What do you think of it? Is it or isn't it the right thing to do? Can you tell me why?" Begin a conversation and don't foreclose it by moralizing or presenting a conclusion. (2) Reinforcing ethical education by telling a story or asking the child or children to tell you a story. Explore with them the consequences that can happen from unethical behavior. (3) Selecting books that address ethical issues and talking about the scenarios in the stories, what the right choices are and why. One to start with is Dan Barker's *Maybe Right, Maybe Wrong* (Prometheus Books, 1992.)

How do we teach our children that life's fulfillment emerges from participation in the service of humane ideals? Strive to do this by living compassionately, a term Dr. Caron Goode defines as earnest feeling for others, experiencing their grief or suffering, and making positive efforts to reduce that grief or suffering. Parents and teachers can be role models and discuss real-life heroes such as Gandhi and King who dedicated their lives to the service of humane ideals. For additional suggestions, see --
http://www.more4kids.info/277/teaching-compassion-to-children/.

How do we teach our children to develop positive relationship with people of every race and creed? Diversity traditionally has referred mainly to race and ethnic relations. Today it can refer to gender, religious beliefs, the ability to learn, sexual orientation, parental status, and more. Several ways to develop positive relationships with people of different backgrounds include attending multicultural events so that children can see that different ethnic groups have rich and interesting histories; using cookbooks that include recipes from other cultures and letting children help in the food preparation; watching movies and TV shows that reflect families or individuals of diverse life styles; reading about accomplished people of other ethnic groups; and being a role model in recognizing the worth and dignity of every person. Many resources are available. One place to begin is the web site for Teaching Diversity and Other Parenting Resources: (life.familyeducation.com/diversity/parenting/344).

How do we teach our children to work to benefit society? Whatever the subject, parents, teachers and students should look for ways in which the studies can serve as "jumping off points" to working to benefit society, particularly through community

service. Such examples of service are never hard to find. Here are two brief examples: (1) Children can survey the degree that hunger, homelessness, and poverty are issues in their community and inform the public and local policy makers about the extent that these problems are closer to home than many might have imagined. (2) Children can draft plans for the people they need to serve and services they need to provide. They can serve in soup kitchens but, as importantly, work to alleviate the problem of hunger so that soup kitchens become a thing of the past.

What is humanist education? It is focusing teaching on the aspirations and positive affirmations of humanism.

VI. CURRICULUM RESOURCES FROM THE BRITISH HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

We are greatly indebted to our friends and colleagues in the British Humanist Association who have granted us permission to reproduce their curriculum resources on the positive affirmations of humanism. Parents and teachers on both sides of the Atlantic surely have a wealth of instructional resources on which to draw.

We especially call your attention to the six Teaching Toolkits at --
http://www.humanismforschools.org.uk/teachingtoolkits/index.php.
The topics, as you will see, are directly related to the principles and values in "Humanism and Its Aspirations". For example, Toolkit 1 relates to the humanist value of questioning and investigating the world around us; it is science and scientific application for younger children. Toolkit 2 concerns relationships with people in their lives, communities and throughout the world; commitment, responsibility, and leading a happy life. Toolkit 3 focuses on making moral decisions, the Golden Rule, and the use of reason. Toolkit 4 also deals with science and scientific applications – but for older children. Toolkit 5 is about making moral choices and ethical decisions. Toolkit 6 explores the meaning and purpose of life, reviews the use of reason and the need for evidence in all our thoughts and actions, and addresses social and community problems through community involvement and community service.

Each toolkit includes teaching notes, a lesson guide, worksheets, and video clips relating to class presentations. Several of the toolkits also refer to the study of various religious traditions. Here is a brief description of each.

Toolkit 1: What Makes Us Special? (ages 5 – 7) For humanists, one of the most important attributes of humans is the ability which we have to ask questions about the world around us and investigate those questions. This attribute is important for humanists for two reasons: it means that we can find out about and understand the world around us, and it means we can use the answers to our questions to change the world around us. The aim of this toolkit is to introduce pupils to these ideas and to stimulate them to explore their own responses to them.

Toolkit 2: What Do We Celebrate and Why? (ages 7 -11) The aim of this toolkit is to explore two key humanist ideas. The first is that our relationships with others are

important: humanists say that it is our human relationships, and the love, commitment, and responsibility in those relationships, which give us the support we need in life, and that there is no god or life after death. The second is the humanist idea that because this is the only life we have we should therefore try to live a full and happy life and help others to do the same.

Toolkit 3: How Should We Treat Other People and Why? (ages 7 – 11) The aim of this toolkit is to explore the ways in which humanists make moral decisions. It focuses on two key ideas: the Golden Rule and the use of reason. Humanists say that our ability to reflect on issues of right and wrong comes from our own human nature and that the way to answer questions of what actions are right and wrong is to ask what the effects of those actions will be on people.

Toolkit 4: How Do You Know It's True? (ages 12 – 14) This toolkit explores the ways in which humanists approach the question of what is true. Humanists use reason and evidence to work out what is or may be true. They look for evidence, weigh up the strength of evidence, look for ways to test the evidence, and look for the simplest explanations of it.

Toolkit 5: How Do You Tell Right From Wrong? (ages 12 – 14) In this toolkit students explore the concepts which humanists use to make moral choices. They look at the ways in which these concepts can be applied to practical ethical decisions. They compare the humanist approach to ethics with their own ideas and with those of people from religious traditions they have studied.

Toolkit 6: What's It All For? (ages 12 – 14) The aim of this toolkit is to explore what humanist beliefs about what gives a sense of meaning and purpose in life and why. It focuses on three main points: humanists base their ideas about the world on reason and evidence; humanists therefore conclude that this is the only life we know we have and that there is no evidence for life after death; humanists say that there is no evidence of ultimate purpose or destiny in the universe and that therefore we have to make our own meaning and purpose. We must also look to our own human attributes to deal with the problems in the world and make our own destiny.

You surely will want to review all of them and adapt them to your teaching situation.

Toolkit 1: What Makes Us Special? (Ages 5 to 7)

For humanists, one of the most important attributes of humans is the ability to ask and to investigate questions about the world around us. This is important for two

reasons: it means that we can find out about and understand the world around us and use the answers to our questions to change the world. Humanists do not look to any god or sacred texts for guidance in life but look to our own ability to ask questions, explore the world, reflect on our own experience, and find answers. Humanists say that our curiosity and the intelligence, imagination, creativity, and empathy with which we seek answers to our questions demands responsibility. We can change the world we live in and we are responsible for our own actions.

Learning objectives are to answer these questions: What makes us special? How have our questions changed the world? Is it always a good idea to think about lots of questions? The students will be able to compare their answers with those of humanists and other people and to explain why humanists say that thinking about questions is special.

Summary of activities. Students explore questions they are interested in using the creative skills with which they feel most at home. Using photos of people at work and thinking about the questions they ask and the effect the answers have, they find out about and reflect on ways in which human questioning has changed the world. They then explore the humanist 'happy human' logo and watch video clips of humanists talking about their ideas in order to find out about the humanist idea that being able to think about questions makes people special because it means we can change our world and think for ourselves. Students demonstrate their learning by producing a display showing the humanist ideas they have studied, discussing their own and humanist ideas, the question of whether it is always a good idea to ask lots of questions, and expressing what they think is special about being human by using artwork, stories, drama, dance, constructions, or other forms of creative expression.

Lesson Guide

Preparation. Print and copy the worksheets, review the presentation, and also have red, amber and green cards for each student for the traffic light discussion (described below).

Introductory activity. Using Screen 1, students match the words to the picture and discuss ways in which humans are similar to and different from other animals. They discuss what they think humans are particularly good at and compare their answers with other students' ideas. Draw out the idea that humans are very good at thinking about questions and finding out answers.

Main activities: Exploring our questions. Using Screen 2, the students watch a short video that shows children aged 5-7 investigating things they are interested in, enjoy

doing, and would like to find out more about. Ask them to think about what questions the children in the film might be asking. Discuss the questions which the children in the video might have in their minds. In pairs and small groups, the students talk about the questions they have in mind which they would like to find out the answers to. What do they know about it already? What would they like to find out more about? How could they find out more?

Extension activity. The class could go on practical or imaginative adventures to explore answers to their questions, e.g., building some construction, doing experimental artwork or music composition, investigating some aspect of the natural world, investigating a math puzzle, writing a mystery story or a poem, or any other creative venture which explores their questions. They then share their work and talk about what they have done and about their question, what they found out, what new questions may have come up with, and how they might want to take their ideas further.

Thinking about how questions have changed the world. Using Screen 3, the students look at pictures of an artist, musician, scientist, and doctor. Invite the students to comment on the questions these people might have in their minds. Discuss the impact which their questions might have on the world, e.g., a doctor would be asking 'How can I make my patients well again?'

Extension activity. Use Worksheet 1a to give examples of answers to some human questions which have changed the world (like the question 'how can we travel fast?' Answer: make cars and trains etc.), and to suggest some other questions which have had an impact on the world.

Finding out why humanists say our questions make us special. Using Screen 4 and Worksheet 1b, introduce the 'happy human' logo. Explain that the picture is used by people called humanists. The pupils then explore the meaning of the logo. What comes into your mind when you see this symbol? What does it look like to you? What do you think it shows? Explain that this is a picture of a human being and it is designed to look like an H for 'Human' and 'Humanism'.

Explain that the class is going to explore this picture to find out more about what humanists think. Have them stand in the same position as the 'happy human' logo - feet squarely on the ground, arms stretching up into the air. How does it make you feel? Where might you have seen people standing like this? What were they doing? Ideas might come up such as it's like celebrating scoring a goal, winning a race, finding the answer to a difficult problem, shouting 'Hurray!', or stretching up to feel awake and energetic.

Introduce the idea that this picture makes us think about achieving and celebrating things and being energetic. For humanists, it is about celebrating being human. Humanists say that one of the special things to celebrate about being human is our curiosity. We can question and explore the world and ask other people about things that interest us.

Using Screen 5, the class watches a video clip of humanists talking about why questions are important. The key ideas are that our ability to think about questions and find answers to those questions enables us to change the world we live in, and that our ability to think about questions and find answers to those questions means that we can think for ourselves and not rely on authorities without question to give us answers. Summarize these two ideas. Refer to the pupils' questions at the start of this lesson and to the examples in Screen 3. These people all had questions in their minds and the answers helped to change the world around them.

Plenary (activities in which students work together as a whole class). Everyone has a copy of the 'happy human' logo with the title, 'What Makes Us Special?' The first task is to complete a sentence below the picture to explain how humanists would answer the question 'What makes us special?' The sentence is 'Humanists say that one special thing about humans is .....because ..... The second task is to decorate the 'happy human' in a way which shows the idea of 'celebrating being human'. Then the students work together to make a display.

Pose the following questions: What do you think is the most special thing about being human? How could you show your idea? Make a picture, story, play, music, dance, construction, or anything else which shows their idea. Discuss how far it is the same or different from what a humanist might say.

Extension activity. Discuss the questions 'Is it always a good idea to ask lots of questions? What might a humanist say? How is your answer similar to or different from humanists'?' This could take the form of a 'traffic light' discussion in which the teacher poses the first question to which all pupils answer using red, amber, or green cards. Red = no, amber = maybe, green = yes. Students may be asked to give reasons for their opinions bringing in answers to the second and third question.

Review the ways in which questions made them invent and imagine, the ideas they thought of about how questions impact on the world, their 'happy human' symbols, their ideas about whether questions are always a good thing, and their creative work on what makes humans special.

Review the ways in which they learned: by listening, discussing ideas, working in a team with others, using creative skills, looking at pictures, and writing ideas. Preview ways in which they can apply and extend their learning. Give assessment sheet (Worksheet 1c) to enable them to think about what they have learned and enjoyed most.

Follow-up ideas. Prepare interview questions and invite in a humanist to speak. Find out how different religious traditions answer the question 'what makes us special?'

Worksheets

Worksheet 1a – Why Are Our Questions Important? Humans ask a lot of questions. The answers can change the world. Here are some questions that people have asked: How can we travel on water? How can we travel fast? How can we cure illnesses? How can we keep warm and dry? There are other questions which have changed the world we live in. With a partner, think of as many as you can.

Worksheet 1b – What Makes Us Special? Humanists say that one special thing about humans is …….This is special because …….

Worksheet 1c – What Have We Learned? Note the things you can do:

I can share my ideas about what makes humans special.
I can share my ideas about how our questions have changed the world.
I can share my ideas about whether it's always a good thing to think about lots of questions.
I can say how humanists answer the question 'What makes us special' and explain why.
I can listen to other people's ideas.
I can compare my ideas with other people's.
I can work with other people in a team.
I can work on my own.
What I enjoyed doing most in this work was:

Worksheet 1d – What Do Humanists Believe? The Facts -- Humanists:
Are not religious. Do not believe in gods. Believe that one of the things that make us special is being curious and being able to ask questions.

Class preparation (video slides). What makes animals and humans special? What questions do you have? What questions do we ask? Who are humanists? What have we learned?

Toolkit 2: What Do WE Celebrate and Why? (Ages 7 – 11)

The aim is to explore the humanist idea that our relationships with others are important. Humanists say that it is our human relationships and the love, commitment, and responsibility in those relationships which give us the love and support we need in life. Humanists do not believe there is any god who looks after us.

Humanist new baby ceremonies and weddings/civil partnerships reflect this idea. New baby ceremonies focus on the love, commitment, and responsibility of the parents and wider family and friends toward the child. Weddings and civil partnerships celebrate the love, commitment, and responsibility of the couple towards each other and the support which friends and family can give. A celebrant helps the participants to plan the event and choose readings and leads the ceremony on the day.

Learning objectives. Explain why many humanists may hold new baby celebrations and weddings/civil partnerships and say how and why these celebrations differ from or are similar to those of some religious traditions. Explain what the students feel is of value and worth celebrating and compare their ideas with those of humanists and others. Use correct vocabulary to express ideas.

Summary of activities. The students think about different kinds of celebrations, reflect on what they celebrate and what is important to them about those celebrations. Using two short videos, they investigate humanist new baby ceremonies and weddings/civil partnerships. They compare and contrast the significance of these events and new baby ceremonies and weddings/civil partnerships in some religious traditions they have studied.

Lesson Guide

Preparation. Download and copy the worksheets; preview the screens; prepare craft materials, if needed.

Introductory activities. Explain that the class is going to think about what we celebrate, the things in life that we value that are worth celebrating. We are also going to find out about people called humanists and about what they celebrate and why.

Using screen 1, in pairs or groups the class looks at the 'happy human' logo talk about what they know about it and what they think it makes them think of. They then look at the statements on screen and decide which they think is true or false. The aim is to recap prior knowledge and start thinking about the humanist ideas they will encounter

Using screen 2, they look at the images on screen. Invite them to share ideas about the celebrations shown in the images. What are people celebrating and why? The images show a birthday celebration, a humanist wedding, and a harvest festival.

The class shares ideas about special occasions they or their family celebrate. These might be festivals like Christmas, life-milestone occasions like new babies, weddings, anniversaries or birthdays, or a one-off special event -- maybe passing an exam. They consider the questions 'When you celebrate, who do you celebrate with? What do you do? What is the most important?

Main activities. Recap what humanists believe. Using screen 3 (the happy human symbol), explore their ideas about what this image shows and discuss what it means. (It is designed to look like an H for Humanism, stretching up to evoke the idea of celebrating being human.) Humanists are people who say that this world and this life are the only world and life we have and that we should try to live full and happy lives and help others to do the same.

Using screen 4, explain that we are going to look at two events in life which many humanists celebrate: new babies and weddings. We are going to find out how humanists may celebrate these events and why many humanists feel these celebrations are important.

The humanist new baby ceremony. Invite the class to think and talk about the celebrations people have when a new baby arrives. What do they already know about such celebrations in religious and non-religious families? What happens? Why?

Using screen 5, they watch the video of a humanist new baby ceremony and discuss what the people are saying and doing. What does this show us about what is important for the people celebrating? Ideas will come up about the love, commitment and responsibility the parents feel for the child and the support of friends and family.

Each one has Worksheet 2a -- a still from the new baby ceremony. Each adults has a speech bubble. Students write a sentence in each bubble what that person might be saying, expressing their thoughts and feelings. The aim is that they reflect the key values for humanists of love, commitment, and responsibility in our relationships. Explain that for humanists, the love and support of our family and friends is important. Humanists believe there is no god; it is the people around us who help us in life.

The class then imagines that someone in their family or an older friend has had a

baby and asked them to be a special person for that child. What would they want to say to the baby? The students could show this though drama, artwork, a song, a poem or other creative work. What would they say to the baby about where love comes from, and who loves them?

The students share and talk about their work. In what ways are their ideas similar to or different from humanist ideas? In what ways are their ideas similar to or different from those of some religious traditions? What would a humanist say about where love comes from? How is this different from what people in some religious traditions might say?

The humanist wedding/civil partnership ceremony. Invite the students to think and talk about weddings and civil partnership ceremonies. What do they already know about such celebration in religious and non-religious families? What happens? Why?

Using screen 6, they watch the video of a humanist wedding and discuss what the people are saying and doing. What does this show us about what is important for the people celebrating? Ideas will come up about the love, commitment, and responsibility the couple feels for each other and the support of friends and family around them.

Each person Worksheet 2b, -- a still from the wedding ceremony. Each of the key participants has a speech bubble. Students write a sentence in each bubble what that person might be saying, expressing their thoughts and feelings. The aim is to write sentences which reflect the key values for humanists of love, commitment, and responsibility in our relationships.
Explain that for humanists, the love and support of our family and friends is important. Humanists believe there is no god; it is the people around us who help us in life.

The students imagine that they have been asked to be the best man (or best woman) at a wedding or civil partnership ceremony. They have to say a few words about love. Where does love come from and what would be an example of doing something loving for someone? They could show this though drama, artwork, a song, a poem, or other creative work. They share and talk about their work. In what ways are their ideas similar to or different from humanist ideas? In what ways are their ideas similar to or different from those of some religious traditions? What would a humanist say about where love comes from? How is this different from what people in some religious traditions might say?

Plenary (activities in which students work together as a whole class).

This offers a choice of activities to enable pupils to present and reflect on their learning. The students produce a short TV or radio interview with a humanist and somebody from a religious tradition they have studied. They explores why each celebrates new babies and/or weddings/civil partnerships. They either invite speakers in or role-play the parts of the interviewees. They use screen 7 to recap what they have found out about humanist celebrations. They think of questions they want to ask a humanist and someone from the religious tradition. They then add comments of their own about the views given.

Using screen 7, they recap what they have found about humanist celebrations. They produce a magazine feature celebration, a leaflet to inform people about humanist celebrations, or a script of a conversation with a family member about why they had a humanist celebration. They explain what happens in the celebration and why.

The students discuss and suggest ideas about what they think are the important things in life which are worth celebrating and why. How would they celebrate? They could pool ideas, choose the one they like and create and film their own class celebration. On film they could talk about how their idea is similar to and different from humanist ideas about the things that are worth celebrating in life.

Worksheets

Worksheets 2a – A Humanist New Baby Ceremony and 2b – A Humanist Wedding. What might each of these people be saying? Write a sentence in each speech bubble.

Worksheet 2c – What Have You Learned? Note the things you can do:
I can explain why many humanists hold new baby celebrations and weddings/civil partnerships. I can say how and why these celebrations differ from or are similar to those of some religious traditions. I can explain what I feel is valuable and worth celebrating. I can compare my ideas with those of humanists and others. I can use the right vocabulary to express my ideas.

Worksheet 2d – What Do Humanists Believe? The Facts
Humanists are people who: Do not believe in god. Believe that our relationships with others are important. Believe we should try to live full and happy lives and help others to do the same. Believe that it is important to think for yourself and ask questions

Class presentation (video slides). What do you know about Humanism? Why do we celebrate? Who are humanists? What do humanists celebrate? How humanists celebrate a new life. How humanists celebrate weddings. What have we learned?

Toolkit 3: How Should We Treat Other People and Why? (Ages 7 to 11)

The aim is to explore ways in which humanists make moral decisions. It focuses on two key ideas: the Golden Rule and the use of reason. Humanists say that our ability to reflect on issues of right and wrong comes from our own human nature. We have the ability to empathize with others. We can imagine ourselves in another person's place and think about how we would feel. We can see that everyone would want to be treated well by others and therefore we should treat others as we ourselves would like to be treated. As humans, we also have the ability to reason. We can work out from the available evidence the likely consequences of an action, the harm or good which is likely to result from it. Humanists say that on this basis we can judge how far an action is right or wrong.

Humanists say that our moral values have developed along with our evolution as social animals. Our values are based on our common human need to live together harmoniously in groups. We need the kind of rules and behavior that enable social groups to work well.

Humanists assert that our shared human nature and needs explain the considerable agreement among religions and societies about what is ethical. They believe that the Golden Rule is so widespread and in most religions and philosophies because it is based on our common humanity. We all want to be treated well and we all need to live together harmoniously.

The first two activities give a scenario with an ethical dilemma and summarize humanist ethics in relation to it. The third explores the Golden Rule and compares humanist ethics with some religions and other philosophies. The fourth gives examples of how humanists apply their ethical views in practice.

Learning objectives are for students to understand two key concepts that humanists use to make moral decision; compare some religious views and humanist views about ethics; and explain their own views on how we should treat others and compare their own ideas with those of humanists.

Summary of activities. The students reflect on an ethical dilemma, think about their options, and debate what they would do in this situation using a 'traffic light' discussion. They investigate, using video clips, what humanists might do in this situation and why and imagine the next scene with a humanist in their place. They explore, using information on screen and their own research, how far some religions and philosophies share humanist views of ethics and why. The then revisit the initial ethical dilemma, thinking about what they would now choose to do in that situation and comparing their ideas with those of humanists. They evaluate the ideas they have

studied using challenging questions and exploring them through drama, discussion, or writing.

Lesson Guide Preparation.
Preview the screens, download and copy Worksheets 3a, 3b and 3c. Prepare red and green cards for each pupil. Have books or other materials on the sacred texts and leaders/teachers of a religion you have studied.

Introductory activities. Explain that the students are going to explore the question of how we should treat other people. They are going to find out about Humanism and how humanists say you should treat other people. They will to do this in order to work out more clearly our own views about how we should treat other people. First, recap on what Humanism is.

Using screen 1, the class looks at the 'happy human' symbol and talks about what they know about it and what it makes them think of. They then look at the statements on screen and decide which they think is true or false. The aim is to recap prior knowledge and start thinking about the humanist ideas they will encounter.

Main activities
1. What should you do? Using screen 2, the students consider the following scenario: your friends are stealing sweets and chocolates from the local sweet shop and want you to join in. What do you do? What are your options? Students produce "a mind map" of the options they can think of. Each group shares with the rest of the class the ideas they have thought of.

They then discuss which option they would choose and why. This could take the form a 'traffic light' discussion: each pupil has a red and a green card. Pupils can vote for or against each option by showing the red or green card. Individuals can then explain their choices. The reasons for choices might include: Stealing is always wrong. Nobody wants to have their things stolen. We want to be liked. We should keep to the rules. It's only sweets so it doesn't matter. What would happen if everyone stole sweets? What is the effect of our action going to be? Each student circles on the mind map the option they would go for. They write the reason why they would choose that option, either in their own words or finishing the sentence 'I would choose to do this because….'

2. What might a humanist decide and why? Using screens 3, 4 and 5, the class watches video clips of humanists talking about how we should treat others. Discuss the ideas expressed in the films and summarize the three key ideas which emerge: First,

humanists say you should treat others as you'd like to be treated yourself. You should do this because you can put yourself in somebody else's place and imagine how you would feel. This is called empathy. Second, humanists say you can think about the effect your action is going to have. If something is likely to have a harmful effect you shouldn't do it. This is called reasoning. Third, humanists say that empathy and reason are in our nature as humans. They say we use our own human nature to work out how to treat others and that we don't need a god or a holy book to tell us what we should do.

The students look back to the mind map. In a second color they circle, or add, the options which a humanist might choose. Next to it they write down why a humanist might choose that option. They either write a sentence of their own or finish the sentence 'A humanist might choose this option because …' Screen 6 contains a brief statement of the humanist view for display while pupils are performing this task.

Extension activity. The students could role-play, create an animation or cartoon, or write a script of the next scene in the sweet shop. They imagine a humanist in their place and show what they might be thinking and what they might do.

3. What is the Golden Rule? Using screen 7, the students discover what some religions and other philosophies teach about how to treat other people. They click on each symbol on the side of the world map on the screen. This brings up each religion/philosophy and shows its teaching on how to treat others and where that religion/philosophy originated. The students have three minutes to discuss what they have found about what other people say about how you should treat others. They report their ideas to the class. These ideas should be that: each religion/philosophy has a similar view of how we should treat others; this idea is found all over the world; and it is found at all the periods of history represented by the examples on screen.

The students then choose one religion they have studied. They recap or research and pool their ideas to answer the questions on Worksheet 3b.
They report back to the class. Why do the pupils think that so many different cultures across the world and at different times have come up with something so similar? Make sure that the pupils understand that humanists say it is because the golden rule comes from our own human nature and the need we have to live together in communities, not from god(s) or a holy book. Humanists say that this is why the Golden Rule is found all over the world and at all periods in history.

4. How do humanists apply reasoning and the Golden Rule. The students produce a wall display around a humanist 'happy human' symbol (Worksheet 3b) showing ex-

amples of how humanists might put the Golden Rule into practice. They first watch the video clip on screen 8. They then show their ideas in visual form. Examples might include: Drawing a picture of somebody behind bars and the sentence 'Nobody wants to be imprisoned for what they believe;' sticking on a picture from a carton of fair trade juice with the sentence 'Everyone wants to earn a fair wage for their work;' freeze-framing and photographing a dance/drama moment of somebody being released from prison, with the sentence 'How does it feel to be set free?' or designing a logo for a humanist environmentalist campaign around the question 'What's the effect of your actions?'

Plenary (activities in which students work together as a whole class).
Using screen 9, recap what they have done. Then invite them to look back at the mind map and think back to the sweet shop scenario. They discuss and write their answers to the following questions: Would you now choose to do the same thing or something else? What reasons would you give? How is your answer similar to or different from what a humanist might say?

Using group discussion, drama, or writing, they consider these questions: Do you think that it's just the effect of an action which makes it right or wrong, or are some things always right or always wrong? Do you think that the way you would like to be treated is always a good guide to how other people should be treated? Does this tell us what is right and wrong? Invite in a humanist speaker and prepare questions they would like to ask.
Worksheet 3c gives the class the opportunity to assess what they feel they have learned and say what they enjoyed doing in this activity.

Worksheets

Worksheet 3a – What Do Humanists Believe? The Facts -- Humanists:
Do not believe in god or other supernatural beings. Believe you should treat others as you would like to be treated yourself because you can put yourself in somebody else's place and imagine how you would feel (empathy).
Believe you should think about the effect your action is going to have on people when you make choices (reasoning). Believe that empathy and reason are in our nature as humans. They say we use our own human nature to work out how to treat others and that we don't need a god or a holy book to tell us what we should do.

Worksheet 3b – How Should We Treat Other People? Which religion have you studied? In this religion: Is there a sacred book which tells people what is right and wrong? What is it called? Is there a special leader who tells people what is right and wrong?

What is the leader called? Is there anything else which tells people what is right and wrong? Where do humanists say our ideas of right and wrong come from? What is the difference between this religion and what humanists say about where we get our ideas of what is right and wrong? Discuss this question: Why do you think that all religions/philosophies share the same idea about how to treat other people?

Worksheet 3c – What Have You Learned?
I can explain what humanists say about how you should treat other people and why.
I can compare humanist views with a religious viewpoint.
I can explain what I think about how you should treat others. I can compare my ideas with those of humanism. I can the right vocabulary to express my ideas. What I enjoyed doing most in this piece of work was_____.

Class Presentation (video slides). What do you know about humanism? What would you do? What do we mean by "behaving well"? How do humanists decide right from wrong? The importance of human nature. Who are humanists? What is the Golden Rule? Humanists and the Golden Rule. What have we learned?

Toolkit 4: How Do You Know Its True? (Ages 12 – 14)

The intent is to explore the ways humanists approach the question of what is true. They use *reason* and *evidence* to work out what is or may be true. They look for evidence, weigh up the strength of evidence, look for ways to test the evidence, and look for the simplest explanations of it. Humanists do not think that things can be 'true for you but not for me' or that there are special 'religious' kinds of truth. They prefer to use the word 'faith' for beliefs which are not backed up by evidence, and 'opinion' for matters of personal judgment.

The toolkit shows students how to use reason and evidence. Using the example of the existence of god(s), it explores some of the ways in which reason and evidence are used by humanists to make decisions about what is true and how else humanists might approach the question of whether god(s) exist. It introduces the concepts of belief, agnosticism, and atheism as responses to this. It does not deal directly with questions of how far we can know if there is a world out there, how language and sensory input mediates our experience of the world, or with metaphorical truth; however, students may raise these ideas in discussion.

Learning objectives are to explain how humanists use reason and evidence to decide what is true and give examples; express their own views on how they decide what is true, giving reasons and examples and compare their ideas with those of humanists;

and use religious and philosophical vocabulary.

Summary of activities. The students have a list of statements which may or may not be true and discuss which they think is true and why. They then watch video clips of humanists talking about using reason and evidence to decide what is true. The students research and present the ideas of one humanist thinker about whether god is true. They then give their own views on this question, referring to the ideas they have explored. They revisit one or more of the initial statements and give their views on whether they think it is true or not, using the religious and philosophical vocabulary and explaining how far they agree or disagree with humanist viewpoints.

Lesson Guide

Preparation. Download the Worksheets and preview the screens.

Introductory activities. Using screen 1, the students look at the 'happy human' logo and talk about what they already know about Humanism. They then look at the statements on screen and decide which they think is true or false. The aim is to recap prior knowledge and start thinking about the humanist ideas they will encounter.

Using screen 2, students watch a video clip in which humanists describe the reasons for them becoming humanists and what humanist values mean to them. They discuss whether or not they feel Humanism makes sense to them and whether humanist values conflict with those of some religions they have studied – and why.

Main activities

How do you know it's true? In screens 3, students first answer the following statements and then view the videos to see what other people think. In each case, the important point is that the only way to know if something is true is to examine the evidence for it and to make a reasoned judgment. The statements are: The stars and planets influence what happens to you in your life. There are such things as ghosts. Henry VIII had six wives (for British students). Green plants need light to grow well. If my friend grazes his knee he will feel pain. There are intelligent beings on other planets.

The importance of *reasoning and evidence*. This screen describes how humanists decide on the truth. They use reasoning and evidence. Do the students agree that this is how the truth is discovered?

Is there a god? In this video humanists give their views on the existence of god and stress the need to use reasoning and evidence in their decision making. Ask if they

agree with this approach and to compare it with the 'god-view' in some religions they have studied. Explain that for many humanists the question of whether there is a god or not is simply answered by saying that, because there is no evidence for the existence of god(s), then there is no reason to believe in them. Explain some of the specific arguments that some humanist thinkers have made concerning god(s).

Thoughts on god. Using screen 6, students investigate how humanists have applied reason and evidence to different aspects of the question of whether there is a god. They view each thinker into the frame to give their view in one short statement.

Using Worksheets 4b and 4c, they read the information on their chosen thinker and write answers to the questions on worksheet. They next present that thinker's idea and say how far, in the group's opinion, the thinker has made a good argument that god does not exist.

Plenary (activities in which students work together as a whole class). Using screen 7, summarize the key idea that humanists use reason and evidence to work out what is or may be true. The students choose one (or more) of the examples from screen 3. Through discussion or writing, they explain how a humanist might respond to this statement and how far they agree or disagree with the humanist viewpoint and why. They refer to reason and evidence.

Students do some creative work to communicate and apply their understanding of the key concepts of reason and evidence, atheism, agnosticism, and belief: a play script or cartoon/animation of 'God v Hume'; a letter from Darwin to Thomas Huxley wondering whether to publish his ideas on the origin of species; a report for the school magazine about the survey of students' ideas in screen 3, using graphs and interviews to show the results; an essay exploring one of the following questions: 'Can reason and evidence tell us everything about the world?' 'Can your own experience alone tell you what is true?' 'If large numbers of people believe something, does that make it likely to be true?'

Extension activities. Introduce the following hypotheses: The earth is flat.
The sun moves around the earth. Cheese creates mice. You can cure plague by putting the herb rue on your windowsill. (These are all early, now discredited, ideas which were proved false by scientists and explorers using reason and evidence.)

Find out more about some of the explorers and scientists who used reason and evidence to disprove earlier hypotheses, in particular Galileo, Magellan, Mendel, and Pasteur.

Students imagine they are 16th and 17th century scientists and explorers who have set out to see if these hypotheses are true or false. They think of experiments which could test the hypotheses by using questions in Worksheet 4a to help them. They write their experiments, creating some suitably 'antique' documents and using the language of scientific enquiry.

Worksheets

Worksheet 4a – Using Reason & Evidence To Decide What is True. Ask yourself: Is there any way of getting evidence, i.e., something you can touch, see, hear, smell, or taste that you can find out more about? Could you do an experiment, i.e., form a hypothesis (have an idea), work out what would happen if your hypothesis (idea) were true and then test whether that is in fact what happens? Is there more than one source of evidence, i.e., could you or anyone repeat the experiment and see if the same thing happens? If you are looking for evidence in history, is there more than one document, picture, letter, etc., which says that the event happened? What is the simplest explanation of the evidence? Is there an explanation which does not require us to believe in things for which we have no evidence?

Worksheet 4b – Is God True – What Do You Think? Choose one of the four thinkers: Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, David Hume. Ludwig Feuerbach.
Read the information and answer these questions: Has this person done an experiment, which proves that god does not exist? Why/why not? Has this person investigated something in the world and said: 'We can explain this without believing that god did it'? Has this person said 'Humans think there is a god, but it's really just our imaginations'? Do you think this person has made a good argument that god does not exist? Why/why not?

What do you think?
Here are four ways of thinking about whether god is true:
Believer - I believe it is true that god exists, even though I can't do an experiment to prove it. Agnostic 1 - We can't ever know whether god exists, because we can't do an experiment to prove it, with evidence but it is possible that there is a god. Agnostic 2 - We can't ever know whether god exists, because we can't do an experiment to prove it with evidence, but it is very unlikely that there is a god. Atheist - There is no evidence that god does exist. Therefore there is no god. Note the statement which is closest to your opinion or write a sentence here to say what you think about whether

god is true and why.

Worksheet 4c – Is God True – 4 Thinkers Give Their Views
Worksheet 4d – My Experiment. The hypothesis is ____. If this hypothesis is correct then ____. To test this, I will ____. What happened in my test was: ____. Therefore I conclude that____.

Class presentation (video slides). What is Humanism? Who are humanists? Select a video on one of the topics [Stars, Ghosts, Henry VIII, Green plants, aliens] Do you agree? The importance of reason. Is there a God? Thoughts on God. What have we learned?

Toolkit 5: How Do You Tell Right From Wrong? (Ages 12 – 14)

Students explore the concepts humanists use to make moral choices and look at ways in which these concepts can be applied to practical ethical decisions. They compare the humanist approach to ethics with their own ideas and with those of people from religious traditions. For humanists the right thing to do is to try to live a full and happy life and help others to do the same. This is what humanists see as the key value in life. Humanists assert that the only guide we have to show us how to do this is our own human nature. We have the ability to reason, i.e.,work out for ourselves how to deal with difficult choices. We have the ability to empathize with others, i.e., imagine how other people might feel.

The concept of 'using reason' involves three basic ideas which humanists apply in any given situation: Ask yourself what will be the effects of your action. Weigh up all the available evidence. Try to work out what will result in the most happiness and the least pain and suffering.

The concept of 'using empathy' also involves three basic ideas:Treat other people as you would like to be treated yourself (the Golden Rule). Treat other people as valuable in their own right and don't use them as a means to an end. Do what you would be happy to see everyone do.

Learning objectives are to express and justify students' own views about what is right and wrong and why, with reference to humanist and other viewpoints; use the concepts of reason and empathy to explain how humanists decide what is right and wrong; and compare and contrast humanist views with a religious viewpoint.

Summary of activities. Students explore a moral dilemma, thinking through what they would choose to do and why and investigating what humanists might choose and why. They compare humanist views with those of a religion, using one of two

options: research and drama, exploring some practical ethical decisions; research and debate, exploring issues of belief and authority. Either of these will enable students to compare and contrast humanist views with a religious viewpoint.

Lesson guide

Preparation. Download the Worksheets and preview the screens. For the activities comparing humanist and religious viewpoints, you will need either information about a religious viewpoint on wealth, war, animal rights, or free speech or information about a religious viewpoint on sources of authority and ethical guidance.

Introductory activities. Using screen 1, the students look at the 'happy human' logo and talk about what they know about it and what they think it makes them think of. They look at the statements on screen and decide which they think is true or false. The aim is to recap prior knowledge and think about the humanist ideas they will encounter. Using screen 2, students watch a short video clip introducing Humanism.

Main activities

A moral dilemma. The students consider the following scenario: You are in the playground at the end of the day. Nobody else is around. You see something on the ground. Going closer, you see it is a ticket, a ticket to a football match. A very expensive ticket to the big match. What do you do with it? What are your options? What do you choose to do and why?

Students think of all the options they could choose in this situation. They write them on Worksheet 5a and discuss which they would choose. They write a sentence explaining what they would choose to do and why. It is the why which is most important as the class explores how humanists decide what is right and wrong.

The students investigate how humanists make moral choices. They use screens 3, 4, and 5 and Worksheet 5b.The key ideas are that humanists believe that the right thing to do is what will best contribute to ones' own and others' welfare and happiness and that humanists use reason and empathy to decide what this is.

The students then look at the options for action which they came up with in the last screen. They discuss which options a humanist might choose and why. They circle or add to their mind maps, in a different color, the options a humanist might choose and write a sentence explaining what a humanist might choose and why.

Comparing humanist views with religious views (1). The class watches a short video

clip -- screen 6 -- of humanists talking about one of the questions listed below. In groups the students prepare an answer to the question. Some prepare a humanist answer; prepare an answer from a religious viewpoint they have studied. Each group presents their answer. This could be done in role with the rest of the class playing other people present at the meeting and questioning the speakers.

The ethical decisions are: Wealth - is it fair to have to pay taxes to fund public services? Tax-payers' lobby group meets with a humanist and a religious representative. War - is it ever right to use violence? An anti-war protest group holds a public meeting and invites a humanist and a religious speaker. Animal rights - is it ever right to use animals in experiments? A university committee which includes a humanist and somebody from a religious tradition decides whether to spend millions on a new animal lab. Dialogue/Freedom - should comedians be allowed to make fun of people's beliefs in public? A humanist speaks with someone whom has a religious viewpoint.

Discuss the following questions: What did the humanist and religious viewpoints agree on? What did they disagree on? How far do you think people should be free to do what they decide to do? How far should empathy extend to non-humans? Would it be better just to have rules to follow rather than to try to use reason and empathy to work things out?

Comparing humanist views with religious views (2). Using screen 7, the students learn more about how humanists do not believe in god(s) or a life after death. Using Worksheet 5d and what they learned from screen 7, students investigate answers to the questions which a humanist might give and which somebody from a religious tradition might give and why: How should you behave in order to be 'good' or 'do what's right'? Who or what tells you what is right or wrong? Why should you try to do what is right? Is there any way in which bad actions are punished and good actions rewarded, like karma, reincarnation, heaven or hell?

The class holds a debate between a humanist and a religious believer on the following motion: 'People need a belief in God and an afterlife to motivate them to behave well.' To follow up the debate, summarize with the students what humanist and religious views have in common and the ways in which they differ. The key issues are:

- Humanists and most religious traditions share the Golden Rule but usually differ about its origins. Humanists assert that the Golden Rule is universal because it arises not from any divine source but from our human ability to reason and to empathize and our need to live together co-operatively and harmoniously.

- Some religious traditions share with Humanism an emphasis on exercising personal judgment and on interpreting principles rather than following rules.
- Some religious traditions differ from Humanism in emphasising following rules and obeying authority.
- In contrast to what humanists believe, almost all religions include the concepts of god or a life after death.

Extension activity. Bring in two contrasting religious viewpoints (e.g., Orthodox and Progressive Judaism) and debate the following: 'Some religious traditions have more in common with Humanism than they have in common with some other religious traditions'.

Plenary (activities in which students work together as a whole class). Invite the students to look back at their ideas about the ticket to the football match and answer the following questions: Would they still choose the same option now? What reasons would they give? In what ways would their reasons be similar to those of a humanist? In what ways would their reasons be different? What other viewpoints might influence them? The students consider: What questions would you want to ask a humanist about how they decide what is right or wrong?

Find a current news story that deals with a question of what is right and wrong. What might a humanist say about this issue and why? Use the principles of humanist ethics to help you answer. What do you think about this issue? Why?

Worksheets

Worksheet 5a– What Would You Do With The Ticket? Keep it? Hand it in?
Sell it?

Worksheet 5b – Right or Wrong? How Do Humanists Decide? Key words: Reason – work things out
Empathize – imagine how other people might feel
Humanists say that the right thing to do is to live a full and happy life and help others to do the same -- Everyone should be free to do what they want to as long as they don't harm other people or the environment.
Our only guide in working out how to do that is our human nature –
We have the ability within ourselves to reason and to empathy with others.

Using reason means: Ask yourself what will be the effects of your action.
Weigh up all the available evidence. Try to work out what will result in the most happiness and the least pain and suffering.

Using empathy means: Treat other people as you would like to be treated yourself (the Golden Rule). Treat other people as valuable in their own right and don't use them as a means to an end. Do what you would be happy to see everyone do.

Worksheet 5c – A Moral Dilemma The question is … An answer from a ……viewpoint would be yes / no because …….

Worksheet 5d – A Summary of Humanist Ethical Views Questions:
1. What should you do, in order to be 'good' or 'do what's right'?
2. Who or what tells you what is right or wrong?
3. Why should you try to do what is right?
4. Is there any way in which bad actions are punished and good actions rewarded, like karma, reincarnation, heaven or hell?
Humanist answers:
1. You should try to lead a full and happy life without harming others. One way to do this is to help other people to do the same.
2. You use human nature to decide what is right and wrong. There is no god or holy book to turn to.
3. The use of reason and empathy helps us live well together in groups. Those who care about others and act on it usually have better relationships and more fulfilling lives - they are happier.
4. The world is full of injustice - but being good and trying to do the right thing generally helps you live happily with other people. There is no life after death. We should make the best of the one life we know we have. We should try to make the world a better place, because we can empathise with the suffering of others. Any rewards and punishments we may receive are here and now.

Class Presentation (video slides of speakers addressing the following questions and topics): What is Humanism? Who are humanists?
Answering moral dilemmas. The importance of empathy to humanists. The importance of empathy. How humanists make difficult choices (videos on wealth, war, animal rights and free speech). Is there a god? What have we learned?

Toolkit 6: What's It All For? (Ages 12 – 14)

The aim is to explore what gives humanists a sense of meaning and purpose in life and why. It focuses on three main points. The first is that humanists base their ideas about the world on reason and evidence. The second is that on the basis of reason and evidence, humanists conclude that this is the only life we know we have. Humanists say that there is no evidence of a life after death. The third is that humanists,

therefore, conclude that as humans we create our own meaning and purposes in life. They say that there is no evidence of a purpose or destiny beyond our own human lives. Humanists say that we create our own meaning and purposes in life using our human attributes, including creativity, intelligence, imagination, wonder, love, and empathy for others. They say that we should make the most of these abilities to live full and happy lives and help others to do the same. This means that we must look to our own human attributes to deal with the problems in the world.

Learning objectives are to understand that humanists use reason and evidence to answer questions about the world around us; on the basis of reason and evidence, humanists say that this is the only life we know we have; humanists say that there is no 'ultimate' meaning and purpose in life but as humans we create our own meaning and purpose; and we should try to live a full and happy life and help others to do the same.

Summary of activities.
The students play a short game exploring what their priorities in life might be. They watch short video clips of humanists giving their views on life after death and where they find meaning and purpose in life. They summarize humanist ideas. A choice of creative activities gives them an opportunity to compare humanist ideas with those from other perspectives and reflect on their own views.

Preparation. Print and copy the worksheets and view the presentation.

Introductory activity. Using screen 1, the students look at the 'happy human' logo and talk about what they know about it and what it makes them think of. They then look at the statements on screen and decide which they think is true or false. The aim is to recap prior knowledge and think about the humanist ideas they will encounter.

Main activities

What's It All For? Explain that the students are going to start with a game called 'Top Priorities'. Using screen 2, they play in groups of three. Each student decides which of the six statements on the screen would be their top priority in life. Each fills in the boxes accordingly from 1 to 6, 1 being top. The winner is the one who can persuade the others of their point of view. Each group then reports to the class on what their top priority in life would be and why. Can they persuade the rest of the class?

Explain that we are going to explore the question of 'What's It All For?' What should our priorities be in life? What is the purpose of our lives? We are going to find out

what humanists say about the purpose of life. We start by looking at two of the most frequently asked questions: Is this the only life we have? Is there an ultimate meaning or purpose to life?

Is this the only life we have? Using screen 3, students watch a short video of humanists talking about the humanist idea that this is the only life we know we have, why they believe this, and what it means to them. The students summarize what they have found using Worksheet 6a. The key ideas are that humanists use evidence to decide what is true and that there is no evidence for a life after death; that humanists, therefore, do not believe in a life after death (or believe that we cannot know what happens after death); that they, therefore, believe that living a full life is important, because this is the only life we know we have.

Extension activity: Students further consider why humanists do not believe in life after death by learning more about reason and evidence using reading Worksheet 6b (Using Reason and Evidence to Decide What is True). They also read the first two quotes on Worksheet 6c. The students discuss how far they agree or disagree with humanist conclusions on life after death. Do they think there is evidence to support these ideas? Why might some people believe in an afterlife? On what do they base their ideas? The students could contrast the humanist view with a religious viewpoint they have studied. What is the same? What is different? Which viewpoint is closest to their own, and why?

Is there an ultimate meaning or purpose to our lives? Recap what we have found so far. Explain that because humanists do not believe in gods or life after death, they do not believe that there is some ultimate meaning or purpose to our lives that comes from outside ourselves. They believe that we have to make meaning and purpose for ourselves in our own lives and that these purposes are different for different people.

Using screen 4, students watch short video clips of humanists talking about what helps them personally to live a full and happy life. They read the first five quotes on Worksheet 6c.

The students record what they have found using Worksheet 6a. The key ideas are that humanists find meaning and purpose in good relationships with family and friends, in helping others, in being good to yourself, in learning and seeking knowledge, and in the beauty of the natural world.

Extension activity. Students read the quote from George Eliot on Worksheet 6c. How might another humanist reply to her? How would you reply?

Using screen 5, students watch a short clip describing why humanists believe that it is important to mark important events in our lives. Explain that this is one way that humanists help to give life a shape and meaning. Students discuss their own reactions to this: Do ceremonies help to give life meaning? What else are they useful for?

Plenary (activities in which students work together as a whole class).
Using screen 6, recap what the students have learned. Choose one or more of the following activities which enable them to reflect on the humanist ideas they have studied and communicate their own responses to them. Does suffering have a purpose and how should we respond to it? What is the humanist view? The students come up with some examples of suffering. They decide which of these have natural causes and which are caused by humans. Choose one example. What might a humanist say about why this suffering exists and what we should do about it? Design a humanist campaign poster on the issue with a logo that reflects a humanist view. Examples of issues could be housing, fair trade, reducing carbon emissions, disaster relief work, or conflict mediation. The students discuss how far humanist views of suffering are similar to and different from religious views they have studied. What is their own view about whether suffering has a purpose and how we should respond to suffering?

What's It All For? How might Christians/Muslims/Hindus/Jews etc. from different traditions reply to a humanist? The students act out a conversation. How far do the two sides agree and disagree? Which ideas do you agree or disagree with? Why? You can use the video clip 'Tracts', available on the website to stimulate discussion. In this clip, Philip Pullman discusses a non-religious response to religious texts and religious ideas that the truth about life and its meaning can be found in them.

Why should we not just 'eat, drink, and be merry'? How would a humanist answer and why? How is the humanist view different from other views you have studied? How far do you agree or disagree with the humanist view and why? Write an essay exploring this question.

Survey opinions on the following questions: Do you think there is a life after death and why? Do you think there is such a thing as fate or destiny and why? How far do you agree or disagree with humanist views? Conduct research and describe your findings and publish it in the school magazine.

Read the quote from Fenner Brockway. Brockway found his purpose in life campaigning tirelessly for peace and racial equality. Reading this quote, what do we find out about the feelings which inspired him? Which other historical and contemporary people have campaigned or are campaigning for peace and/or for racial equal-

ity? What motivates them? In what ways is their motivation similar to and different from that of Fenner Brockway?

Invite a humanist in to speak and prepare questions.

Worksheets

Worksheet 6a – What's It All For? The Humanist View. We have found out several things about humanist ideas. Firstly, humanists say that … Secondly, humanists say that … Humanists base their ideas on … Humanists find meaning and purpose in … and in….

Worksheet 6b – Using Reason & Evidence To Decide What is True. Ask yourself: Is there any way of getting evidence, i.e., is there something you can touch, see, hear, smell, or taste that you can find out more about? Could you do an experiment, i.e., could you form a hypothesis (have an idea), work out what would happen if your hypothesis (idea) were true, and then test whether that is in fact what happens? Is there more than one source of evidence, i.e., could you or anyone else repeat the experiment and see if the same thing happens? If you are looking for evidence in history, is there more than one document, picture, letter, etc., which says that that event happened?
What is the simplest explanation of the evidence? Is there an explanation which does not require us to believe in things which we have no evidence?

Worksheet 6c – What's It All For? Quotes From Humanists

Class preparation (video slides). What is humanism? Who are humanists? Is this the only life we have? Where do humanists find meaning and purpose in life? Marking important times in life. What have we learned?

VII. ADDITIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

The resources of the British Humanist Association provide the foundations of a substantial educational program for children and youth and are clearly the basis on which to begin to build comprehensive programs. The toolkits deal with all aspects of humanism and, as noted, are directly related to the principles in "Humanism and Its Aspirations". They also are excellent "building blocks" and "jumping off points". The purpose of this final section is to suggest additional learning activities for children and resources for teachers and parents on the topics relating to those in the toolkits.

Science for young and older children – reason and evidence

Investigating and discussing Darwinism and "Intelligent Design". In this lesson, middle and high school students learn about "theories of intelligent design". They research and create dialogues between a Darwinist proponent and an intelligent design proponent. Since this resource is under copyright by the New York Times Company, 2005), we briefly outlined the areas you will find when you go to this web site: www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/lessons/evolution.html. The topics are: learning objectives, suggested resources and materials, activities, e.g., notes to teachers, warm-up activities, readings and discussion questions, "wrap-up" suggestions, ideas for evaluating learning and for further study, e.g., writing a brief biography for young students about Darwin's accomplishments and legacy.

Encourage reasoning, rational and critical thinking skills in children.
There are many ways to go about this. Here are just a few suggestions: Encourage children to ask questions and keep asking more questions. Always respond to the questions eagerly. Help them to discover answers on their own. Be open to ideas so that the children are willing to question everything. A "wrong" answer is a learning opportunity. Encourage children to have their own ideas. Help them to be well informed about a topic before coming to a conclusion.

A related resource on teaching children the importance of seeking *evidence* before making judgments is Chris Brockman's *What About Gods*? (Prometheus Books, 1989). Brockman writes that "A god is a mythical character. Mythical characters are imaginary, they're not real. People make them up... Many mythical characters have been invented to explain things that people don't understand." "… When someone

invents a mythical being to explain something, then we have to explain the mythical character, too. People invented gods to explain where the world came from. But when people say that gods made the world they don't explain anything. They only leave another question to be answered: Who made the gods?" The book ends with this good advice for children -- and adults: "Keep on thinking."

An Ethics Primer. Chowning, J.T., and P. Fraser (2007), Seattle WA: Northwest Association of Biomedical Research. The primer is available online at www.nwabr.org. We cannot begin to capture all of the insights and information that is presented other than that the primer is designed to help teachers of science in guiding students to analyze issues in light of the discipline of ethics. It also provides lesson ideas for integrating ethical issues into a science curriculum as well as major ethical theories. Some of the chapter and section titles will give you an idea of what you will find: What is the Relationship Between Science and Ethics? Why Incorporate Ethics into Science Classrooms? Process of Ethical Inquiry. Ethics in Science Sample Rubrics and Assessments Chart. Strategies … and much more.

A major resource organization. While there are numerous resources for science education for children, the one that we would first note is the National Center for Science Education which provides valuable resources for teachers and parents. The NCSE educates the public about the scientific, educational, and legal aspects of the creation and evolution controversy and supplies valuable information to defend good science education at local, state, and national levels.

Humanist values: relationships, responsibility, compassion and empathy

On relationships. One of the best resources for children on "relationships" is *Love Your Neighbor: Stories of Values and Virtues* by Arthur Dobrin. (1999). New York, NY: Scholastic Inc. The following excepts are from a review by Dr. Marc Bernstein, former Archivist, American Ethical Union.

Looking for a children's book that teaches values with a light hand, not a sledgehammer? A book that entertains as well as instructs? Try *Love Your Neighbor*, by Arthur Dobrin, a leader in the Ethical Culture movement for over 30 years. He offers 13 original animal stories that teach lessons about friendship and cooperation, honesty and love, respect for individuality, the costs of stubbornness, and the idiocy of discrimination. Like all good writers, Dr. Dobrin lets the message emerge from the tale, and he ends each story with a provocative question parents can ask a child or a child can ponder alone. Some of the stories contain drama and conflict, but these are resolved in ways that teach good behavior.

… Every story has a different set of creatures as protagonists. In reading these tales, we not only get a moral lesson, we learn a good deal about animals: bees have six legs, spiders eight, rhinos and ostriches are vegetarians. The animals come from different parts of the world; Russian ostriches are appropriately named Boris and Natasha; when they figure out a way to harvest their giant beet, they enjoy some borscht. In this way, the animals inform young readers about different cultures as well as different virtues … Unlike so many books that try to teach virtue, *Love Your Neighbor* will expand your child or grandchild's moral awareness without putting either adult or youngster through the wringer.

Love Your Neighbor: An Exploration of Values—Pre-School thru Elementary Age Children, AEU Religious Education Committee, 2000.

The Love Your Neighbor curriculum accompanies the book by Arthur Dobrin. The curriculum, appropriate for preschool through early elementary aged children, includes lessons to go along with the 13 stories. They include art projects, songs, dramatic play, and discussion questions. The lessons can be used in a Sunday School or at home. For each lesson, key Ethical Core Values are identified, e.g., Ethics is my religion. Every person is important and unique. Every person deserves to be treated fairly and kindly. I can learn from everyone. I am part of this earth; I cherish it and all the life upon it. I learn from the world around me by using senses, mind, and feelings. I am member of the world community which depends on the cooperation of all people for peace and justice. I can learn from the past to build for the future. I am free to question. I am free to choose what I believe. I accept responsibility for my choices and actions. I strive to live my values. The link to the curriculum guide can be found at: eswow.org/religious_education.php.

On relationships: A global view

Our World, Our Rights. Produced by the Educators in Human Rights Network and Amnesty International (UK), this resource is for children ages 8 to 12. The intent is to introduce children to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It includes 20 lessons that can be used in out-of-school setting. Although designed primarily for use in the UK, educators from other countries will be able to extract and adapt lessons to fit their local context. The book contains background information on the organization; suggestions for organizing whole school events; and actions to undertake to promote human rights. A range of teaching methods are presented, including team work, storytelling, visual aids, artistic expression, and role playing. There also are reproducible worksheets. A link to the lesson "*Because I can, I should*" introduces the ideas of rights and responsibilities to young children.

Source: *Our World, Our Rights* by Margot Brown. London: Educators in Human Rights Network. London, 1995. For additional information, contact Amnesty International British Section, 99-119 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4RE, United Kingdom. See also: www.hrea.org/pubs/Primer/our_world.html

Teaching responsibility. Since the material in this resource was printed in *Scholastic* magazine, there are copyright restrictions which prevent us from including the detailed sections of this excellent resource. We will, therefore, direct you to the source—content.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=11536. However, we are able to tell you that this resource includes many valuable suggestions to help young people develop responsibility in various ways: interpersonally, personally, at home, and in the local and global community. It also includes a booklist with such topics as "funny responsibilities", taking care of oneself, taking care of the earth, and special responsibilities.

Teaching Guide: Being Responsible. This resource for children in grades K -5 includes the video "Being Responsible" as well as many thought-provoking discussion questions, activities, writing assignments, and home assignments. Since the materials in the website is intended for non-commercial educational use and is under copyright, we are only citing the link to this very creative resource. Check it out at —www.goodcharacter.com/YCC/BeingResponsible.html

Teaching compassion and empathy is central to humanist education for children and youth and, indeed, for all people of all ages. Below are several learning activities for elementary-age children.

- Discuss various meanings of compassion, e. g., awareness of the feelings of others; awareness of one's physical or mental distress and the desire to relieve it; concern for someone in misfortune; and the desire to help others.
- Talk about people the children know who have shown compassion toward them and others and how they did so. Share experiences when the children showed compassion toward others and how they felt about themselves when they did. List ways compassion can be shown by either word or deed.
- Volunteer service as a family. Plan trips to an orphanage and have the children give some of their toys and clothes to other children. Set aside a certain amount periodically for each family member to give to charity.
- Use stories, folklore and mythology. Folklore and mythology often are associated with positive values and the themes often provide positive lessons in moral and ethical values.
- Talk about real-life heroes, e. g., Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Other suggested learning activities: making lists of things one can do to show

compassion to others in their families, school, and community; talking with family members to learn about some happenings in their lives where they showed compassion or received help from others; writing a paragraph describing someone who showed compassion to you; explaining the meaning of compassion to a younger sibling or friend; taking a part in a role-playing sketch showing compassion.

- Some questions to ask: Who is someone you showed kindness to and what will you do? What did the person do? How did you feel?

Four lessons on compassion -- The following lessons for children in grades 3 to 5 can be viewed in -- www.seedsofcompassion.org/why/curriculum/3-5%20Compassion%20Lessons.pdf. We recommend that users check out the entire resource for the many learning activities and suggested readings:

(1) What does compassion look like? The objectives are to demonstrate an understanding of the concept compassion, identify elements of compassion shown in various images, and develop a vocabulary related to compassion.

(2) Why is compassion important? The objectives are to understand that compassion is being able to recognize when someone is suffering and to respond in ways that recognize the feelings of the person suffering; to understand that compassion begins with feeling empathy with how another person is feeling; and to recognize the lack of compassion.

(3) When is it a challenge to be compassionate? Objectives: to understand that showing compassion sometimes takes courage and that forgiveness can help us to act with compassion when we have been wronged.

(4) How can you be a hero of compassion? Objectives: to develop plans for compassionate action as part of a class project and demonstrate compassionate actions while implementing the plan.

Creative lessons for teaching compassion. *Kids Can Share: Creative Lessons for Teaching Compassion, Respect and Responsibility* by Rhoda Orszag Vestuto, Carthage, IL: Teaching & Learning Company, 2003. Kindness, compassion, respect, responsibility -- children need to understand how important these values are. This resource includes stories, Mother Goose rhymes, crafts, role playing, and projects to involve children in discovering how to demonstrate positive values in everyday situations at home and school. Lessons include a problem, goals for correcting the problem, and ways of teaching children to reach those goals.

Promoting Empathy in Preschool Children by Angela Olson. Ms. Olson begins by out-

lining the skill of taking the perspective of others, thinking about it before acting, and showing awareness of their own feelings and emotions. She then suggests numerous ways to promote empathy and help children recognize their own feelings and the feelings of others. She re-affirms what other have written, i.e., being a role model for appropriate emotional responses. There are many suggestions for parents and teachers as well as an extensive list of reference which can be found at: https://wiki.uww.edu/other/childdevresource/images/7/7d/Promoting_Empathy_in_Children_Angie.pdf -

Kindness Counts: Teaching Empathy. Merry Gordon provides many activities for teaching empathy. One of them is "Making a talking stick". Native American tribes have a tradition of using a "talking stick" as an aid in courteous communication. The idea that the person holding the stick speaks his or her mind. The other persons make a sincere effort to understand that person's point of view until they get the stick and are thus enabled to speak. The stick "represents how people with differences can come to understand one another through mutual respect. For additional ideas, see: www.education.com/magazine/article/Kindness_Counts_Teaching_Empathy

Teaching empathy through role playing. An extensive and valuable resource with many suggestions particularly relating to multicultural education can be found at: findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3935/is_200207/ai_n9128296/

It suggests beginning with easy scenarios, moving to more difficult ones, telling students to act out how they would react to a situation and remembering to look at it from the other person's point of view and to be that person. A number of other ideas are suggested in this resource as well as three specific role playing ideas that are appropriate for older children.

The Golden Rule

Teaching ideas for the Golden Rule. *The Golden Rule: Basis for Morality and Ethics* by Brant Abrahamson and Fred Smith. The Teachers' Press, 3731 Madison Avenue, Brookfield. IL 60513. (nd). Contact information: phone: 708/485-5983; e-mail address: teacherspr@aol.com; website: http://www.teachingaboutreligion.com/teachers_press.htm

The authors indicate that, while this resource is intended for high school age students, teachers can create effective lessons for younger students as well; see the note at the end of the lesson. The resource costs $2.00 and multiple copies are available; however, they also indicate that "we hope that teachers will duplicate the number

needed for students." (This will probably be the wisest investment of $2 that you have ever made.)

A brief overview of the contents. This 30-page resource is in two parts: a student lesson and teacher's manual. The student section includes an introduction to the Golden Rule as a standard for moral/ethical conduct, a brief history of Golden Rule ethics, and when the Rule became the "Golden Rule." The manual includes sections on the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments, using the Golden Rule in difficult situations, the "Golden Rule" from McGuffey's Fourth Eclectic Reader, projects, multiple choice and discussion questions.

Objectives. What is more important than teaching morality and ethics? As the authors state at the outset, "Probably the most basic everyday guideline for human behavior is to treat people as you would want to be treated if in the other's position." The question is -- how? This resource provides excellent insights and information on how to go about teaching, living by the "Golden Rule" and perhaps, most importantly, thinking about the meaning behind this widely known principle.

Suggested procedures. We suggest that you study this book closely with your students, reading parts with them and parts to them. The following are a few of the highlights you might wish to stress.

From the Golden Rule as a standard for moral/ethical conduct: Altruism is defined as people caring about another person's well-being when there is no return favor. Can students suggest times when they behaved altruistically, doing something good when there was no reward? The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* also is cited. The Declaration is a gold mine for students to explore. Check the internet for the many sources that are available. To begin your search: un.org/Overview/rights.html

From A History of Golden Rule Ethics. Students might be surprised to learn that the concept goes back to at least 1700 BCE and that seemingly every civilization has a variation. One of the Native American sayings is, "Great Spirit, grant that I may not criticize my neighbor until I have walked a mile in his moccasins."

From "When the Rule Became the "Golden" Rule. This is a brief history of the use of the term, the Golden Rule. Even Charles Darwin apparently used the term in *The Descent of Man* in 1871.

The Teacher's Manual is replete with much information and many teaching ideas. The Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments section suggests having the students

restate the last seven commandments (as commonly listed) into Golden Rule terms. Several examples are given, e.g., "pay attention when people talk, as you would like them to pay attention to you."

Using the Golden Rule in Difficult Situations is thought-provoking as the authors discuss situations with "difficult" persons, street beggars, ubiquitous telemarketers, and soldiers in combat. They also raise the question of how should young children in particular react to "helpful" strangers.

Background on the Term, "Golden Rule" introduces students to an interesting story which Emma Embury apparently wrote in the 1830s or 1840s and it was later used in the late 1800s. The students discuss the ethical dilemma of Susan, the young girl in the story.

The remainder of the Teachers' manual is devoted to thought questions and projects, 15 multiple choice questions, and more discussion questions. Several of the questions, projects and discussion items are as follows:

- Felix Adler, the founder of the Ethical Culture movement, wrote "Act so as to elicit the best in others and thereby the best in yourself." In your judgment when, if ever, is this guideline an improvement on the Golden Rule? What reasoning supports your answer?
- What will happen in a society if people generally fail to follow the Golden Rule? Will order then be imposed through more and stricter laws and harsher punishments?
- Are these examples of the Golden Rule? Five are listed, including the following: Using "An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth" as a guide when mistreated.
- Use the Internet to find ancient and modern variations of the Golden Rule and to provide the students with a short biography on one person – described in the lesson – who championed the use of the Golden Rule.
- What evidence, if any, shows world-wide progress that has been made in using the Golden Rule as a moral guide?
- Is "following the Golden Rule" all that is needed to live a moral life? Yes or no? Why?
- To what extent are such mottos as "Do a good deed every day" or "Engage in random acts of kindness" like or different from the Golden Rule?

You also will find a copy of The Golden Rule Poster which you can order. The poster illustrates Golden Rule statements from 13 world religions both Western and East-

ern. The last part of the document includes a lesson plan with the topics that have been noted above. For example, the section on the history of Golden Rule ethics includes the relevant rules from ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, East and South Asia, West Asia, the Hebrew scriptures, Islam and Baha'i, various Native American cultures and Africa.

Near the end of the document, the following information is given: The Golden Rule Curriculum -- except for the McGuffey's Reader story -- is available at: http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/golden_rule_curriculum.php. A Golden Rule interactive poster is part of the website along with an opportunity to purchase the poster. One copy of the poster is included when The Golden Rule material is ordered. On page 30, the last page of this resource, the following statement is made in the paragraph on Golden Rule Lesson for all Ages: "In a slow and reflective way, read the 13 versions of the Golden Rule found on the website poster. Spend time imagining what the world would be like if all people recognized that we are connected to each other and to all creation. Imagine what would happen if we cooperated together as one global family. Be as imaginative as you wish. Draw a picture of the global family as you imagine it. Share your picture with the group in a follow-up discussion."

When teaching younger students. Brant Abrahamson has suggested the following considerations when teaching younger students:

- Faithfully practice the Golden Rule. Children will likely treat others as they have been treated themselves.
- Use the term in daily conversation. Almost all parents ask children, "How would you like it if she did that to you?" But don't stop there. Say, "This is not Golden Rule behavior." Beyond talking, obtain Golden Rule artifacts that will keep children thinking about the Golden Rule; pencils, rulers, posters and other articles are available on the web.
- Search local libraries for children's books on the Golden Rule.
- Children want to feel that they are valuable participants in their home and community. Have them work along side you at the local food pantry or other charitable activity that has a Golden Rule basis.
- Use their creative abilities. Draw pictures or posters illustrating Golden Rule behavior.
- Use Golden Rule games, e.g., "telephone." Whisper a rather non-standard variation of the Golden Rule into the first child's ear and see what version

emerges at the end of the line. See if "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" or some other variation emerges. Also have children develop their own Golden Rule wording.

- Provide multiple inter-cultural activities, i.e., times and places where the students work toward common goals with children very different from themselves. Work toward enlarging their perceived in-groups for which they think Golden Rule behavior is appropriate. As adults, they are not likely to be empathetic toward out-group individuals—whether in the community or elsewhere.
- Challenge students to memorize multiple versions of the Golden Rule, identifying each with a religious or secular tradition.
- Have children evaluate their past actions. They can recount (in writing or otherwise) times when they remember using Golden Rule behavior or times when, in afterthought, they could have done so but did not. In this case, ask, "What would you do differently the next time to more closely follow the Golden Rule?"
- Ask how they would feel if somebody used an anti-Golden Rule sayings such as "He who has the gold rules?"
- Discuss whether the Golden Rule can be used to persuade a bully to change his change his or her behavior? If so, how? If not, why not?
- Ask why it is sensible to treat others as they would want to be treated. Why do such actions usually make people feel good about themselves? What good outcomes are likely for result for themselves as others?

Taken together, these suggestions amount to an immersion program such as those that are used to teach a foreign language. As with any subject, think about where to draw the line, when "enough is enough." Children should remain excited about the Golden Rule, not grow tired of hearing about it.

Moral choices and ethical decision making

On God-free ethics and morality. The following two selections are from *Humanism as the Next Step* by Lloyd and Mary Morain. New revised edition, 1998 and 2008, American Humanist Association .The full text is available at: www.americanhumanist.org/what_we_do/publications/Humanism.../Chapter_4:_Answers_to_Some_Common_Questions –

Do Humanists Have God-free Ethics? Yes. Humanists do not expect that dishonest, bad treatment or cruelty to others will be forgiven in a future afterlife or heavenly existence. What we do now is what matters. Concern for others becomes our salvation. Paul Kurtz, a leading force in humanist outreach, in his book *Forbidden Fruit: the Ethics of Humanism*, notes: "The ethical conceptions of tomorrow must be truly planetary in perspective. We must transcend the limits of the narrow loyalties and parochial chauvinisms of the past, and recognize that basic human rights are universal in scope, for all persons are part of a community of humankind." Caring about the welfare of others helps provide inner strength and doesn't depend upon guidance from a God. Feeling at home in the universe and the joy that comes from thinking positively does not depend upon any theistic belief. (pages 56 -57)

What Is the Humanist Basis for Morality? The humanist basis for morality is found in the study of human beings. Actions are evaluated in terms of their consequences. The humanist usually looks with favor on the ethical codes of the traditional religions but points out that in different cultures there are wide differences of opinion as to what is moral. For centuries the roles of men and women in most New Guinea tribes were well defined and observed. Women planted the food crops, looked after pigs, and took care of the children. Men took care of guard duty, participated in tribal clashes and maintained the cultural practices, which called for much philosophizing…. The welfare of each of us is dependent, to some extent, on the welfare of all. We do not have to believe the same things but we need to recognize our common humanity and the need to keep in balance with nature's resources. (pages 46 – 48)

Ethical decisions. Research in this area confirms that teaching ethics to children is not always an easy task. While the most successful learning comes from watching what parents or teachers do, children also can learn ethics through lessons that are taught to them. Here are several suggestions:

- Select books that present and then solve an ethical question. Talk about the scenario in the story and what the right choices are and why.
- Reinforce children's ethical education by helping them see the wrong things that some people do and the consequences that can happen.
- Try answering the many questions that children ask.
- By learning how other people live, children can learn the value of different cultures and different outlooks on life.

Additional resource. *Teaching Right from Wrong: Forty Things you can do to Raise a Moral Child* by Arthur Dobrin. New York: Berkeley Books, 2001. This is how the book has been described on its back cover: "Based on sound psychological theory, drawing on current research-and most importantly, rooted in the real world that parents face today, this book shows how children develop a moral sensibility and what parents can do to refine and reinforce it. Wise, warm, and thoroughly practical, this is an

essential book for all loving parents who want to raise loving children." Dr. Dobrin led the Ethical Culture Society of Long Island for over 30 years. The "40 things" are grouped in the following categories: *Feelings*—Emotions Are the Groundwork of Morality; *Reason*—Feelings Need to Be Guided by Reason; *Self-esteem*—Self-respect Is a Prerequisite to Acting Morally; *Discipline*—Behavior Has Consequences; *Prejudice*—Treating All People Fairly Is Fundamental to Morality; *Values*—Some Values Are More Important Than Others; *Habits*—Morality Is Learned Through Observing and Doing; *Community*—Morality Involves Other People.

Meaning and purpose of life, community problem solving and community service-learning

The meaning and purpose of life from the humanist perspective and for young audiences have been presented very clearly and cogently in the following two resources: the Family of Humanists' *Humanism for Kids* and Helen Bennett's *Humanism, What's That? A Book for Curious Kids*. Community problem solving and community service-learning are the concluding topics since they are what we mean when we say that humanists strive to make this world a better place to live. Service to humanity is the "bottom line" of humanist education initiatives for all age groups.

Teaching ideas from *Humanism for Kids* by Family of Humanists (1997, 2008).

The Family of Humanists and a brief summary of *Humanism for Kids*.
The Family of Humanists is a group of families and individuals from around the United States and abroad who are applying the Humanist philosophy of life to issues of interest to families and family members of all ages. The Family of Humanists works to provide publications of interest to individuals and families, including a monthly newsletter, books *Why Evolution?* and *Humanism for Kids*, as well as pamphlets describing the philosophy. For more information about the programs, additional resources and publications, see: http://www.familyofhumanists.org/

Humanism for Kids, a fabulous resource for Humanist families and children, is an illustrated booklet intended to teach and discuss Humanism for young readers. It is the result of efforts by several adults, youth, and children, growing with each new contribution. The first part of this 38 page booklet (What is Humanism?) includes such topics as what Humanists believe, the Golden Rule, creation, evolution, how nature works by itself, the scientific method, democracy and freedom, and much, much more. The second part (Getting Along with People) includes sections on listening, being sensitive to others, forgiving, sharing, helping and working together (and, again, much more). This book belongs in every Humanist educational pro-

gram for children as well as in every home where Humanists live. The current price of *Humanism for Kids* is $6 for a single copy and $20 for four copies – including postage in the United States. Permission to quote portions of the book has been granted by the Family of Humanists, Inc., PO Box 4153, Salem, Oregon 97302. The director of the Family of Humanists, Lloyd Kumley, can be reached at – Lloyd@familyofhumanists.org

Objectives. The objectives of the book and the lesson plan are quite direct: to understand the major concepts of Humanism and, as importantly, to *practice* its precepts in one's daily life at home, in school and in one's community. The book would be a welcome addition to a library for children in the age range of 8 to 12.

Suggested procedures. Read the book with your students or your children paying particular attention to the questions at the end of practically each section. There is information in each to stimulate students to want to learn more. Here is a brief sampling of what you can explore with your "kids":

- In the section on the Golden Rule, be sure to check "Versions of the Golden Rule in 21 World Religions" at -- www.religioustolerance.org/reciproc.htm.
- On the topic of creation myths, see how many you can find in other sources, e.g., see "A large group of links to Creation Myths from a variety of cultures from around the world" at: www.magictails.com/creationlinks.html
- Have your students "google" the topic of evolution and see how many children's books on evolution you can find.
- Do the same with the topic of nature. Start with How Nature Works/*100 Ways Parents and Kids Can Share the Secrets of Nature* at: www.bestwebbuys.com/How_Nature_Works/100_Ways_Parents_and_Kids_Can_Share_the_Secrets-ISBN_9780895773913.ht...
- For the section on "What does 'God" mean?" how many different concepts can one find?
- "Making good things happen" (p. 11) explores the idea of "Working to make things better is what humanists try to do." It asks students to "make a plan and then get busy!"
- There is an excellent thought-provoking question on p. 13: "When it comes to being good friends, how important is it to have the same beliefs?"
- Try experiments using the five steps in the Scientific Method – p. 15.
- The topic of charity "Or we can volunteer our time to help, too". (p. 16)

- The brief section on democracy and freedom (p.17) can be a springboard to more in-depth study of these two ideas.
- "Be the best you can be" (p.18) is truly a Humanistic value. Discuss this with your "kids".
- On honesty (p. 20): "What have you done that makes people trust you?"
- "What do you do to help our world and the living things in the world? What else can you do?" (p. 21)
- "Think of your best friends. What do they do that makes you know they're your friends?" (p. 23)
- Being sensitive to others, having "a happy attitude", working out disagreements without fighting, thinking of others, apologizing, and forgiving – all are other topics discussed that relate to a Humanistic life stance.
- What to do when people tease you or tattletale, how jealousy hurts us, sharing, keeping things neat, and being on time are also important "kid" issues. So is "Helping and working together." Near the end of the book, this question is raised: "What has someone done to help you? How did it make you feel?" Then turn back to the discussion of the Golden Rule….

To sum up: These are not abstract questions about Humanism. They are Humanism in practice. This is Humanism for kids. This is Humanism for all of us.

Humanism, What's That? A Book for Curious Kids by Helen Bennett
Prometheus Books, Amherst, NY, 2005. Helen Bennett, a former high school and university English teacher, children's librarian and editor, is now a volunteer teacher of adults at the Unitarian Universalist Friendship Fellowship of Pineda, Florida. The following review was written by Bob Bhaerman.

Not very long ago I had a conversation with my then nearly 8-year old grandson. It went like this. "Grandpa Bob, I have a real good friend." "That's wonderful," I answered, "who is it?" "Jesus is my best friend." After a moment of dumbstruck silence, I asked, "How can anyone who may -- or may not – have lived over 2,000 years ago be your best friend?" Of course, there was no answer. Except my daughter-in-law said, "Oh, that's all right. He must have been taught that several years ago when we had him in pre-kindergarten at St. Pius." I also was told by several adults at the table to drop the subject and not give another one of my lecturers on humanism.

My grandson is a pretty sharp kid. And although the cover of *Humanism, What's That? A Book for Curious Kids* indicates that the book is intended for "Ages 10 and

up," I'm not waiting two years until he comes of age. I'm buying it for him soon. We'll read it and discuss it together. That's about all I can do for someone who shares my last name and, hopefully, has inherited some of my skepticism.

I wish I had enough cash on hand to buy Helen Bennett's book for every child 10 and above -- or even younger. In the May 25, 2005 issue of the *Humanist Network News*, the author said that she wrote it "because I wanted to help Humanist children understand and be able to defend their worldview and to show children who have been raised in traditional religions that there is another way of thinking, another means to derive ethics, spiritual enrichment and a guide to life."

The book is in the form of a conversation between Mrs. Green, a science teacher (grade level not specified) and her students. When a fellow student is injured on her way to school, the students wondered why they aren't allowed to pray for her in class. So starting with the concept of the separation of church and state, the dialogue leads to many philosophic and cultural issues and many questions. Why do some people believe in God while others do not? What gives live meaning? In classroom and after-school discussions (with parental approval), Mrs. Green offers a humanist perspective and emphasizes scientific explanations of life and freedom of thought. Other topics as well as the separation of church and state are discussed, for example, the origins of religious belief in God and the meaning of metaphor, myth and symbols. The book also touches on such subjects as abortion and the death penalty and young readers can begin to understand the nuances of these controversial issues. The book also focuses on the affirmations of humanism by emphasizing the essential worth and dignity of *all* people and some of the important humanist philosophers who have helped advance the causes of reason, compassion, and skepticism.

A number of poems also are included (e.g., "Thank You, Life" and "What Humanism Means to Me") as well as the useful instructional activities and discussion questions (e.g., "Humanism is a *positive* philosophy that asserts the potential for goodness in every human being. How does this contrast with the religious doctrine of 'original sin' …that we are all born bad.") I wish we had a Mrs. Green in every public school classroom. I'd even settle for a copy of Helen Bennett's book in each classroom and school library.

Ideas for teaching about *Humanism, What's That? A Book for Curious Kids*

Helen Bennett said it best when she wrote, as noted above, "… I wanted to help Humanist children understand and be able to defend their worldview and to show children who have been raised in traditional religions that there is another way of

thinking, another means to derive ethics, spiritual enrichment and a guide to life." What a great way to state the objectives of lessons based on her book!

The procedures are quite simple and obvious. Teachers and parents should read the book with their students or children. One variation might be for the adult to read Mrs. Green's part and the children read the student's part. The most important part is to conduct as many of the activities as you wish (they all are excellent) and consider all of the important discussion questions.

In the section called "Activities and Discussion Questions" (pp. 71 to 76), Helen Bennett provides ten activities which students can pursue, many of which deal with writing, e.g., stories about humanist heroes and heroines, poems, songs, essays, letters to local newspapers and elected officials at all levels of the government, and letters to pen pals. Also draw a picture of a "Happy Humanist" and explain why he or she is happy. [Note. The web site of the Kochhar Humanist Education Center – www.americanhumanist.org/khec -- includes "Curriculum Resources for the Life Span" which has lists of humanist heroes and heroines which might be used a jumping off point.]

In addition, Bennett provides discussion questions which students can explore in depth. Some examples are as follows:

- Humanism is a positive philosophy that asserts the potential for goodness in every human being. How does this contrast with the religious doctrine of "original sin"? ("Original sin" means we are all born bad.)
- Why are good manners important to humanists? Why should you obey school rules?
- What would you do if you saw someone bullying another student?

Here are some additional discussion questions -- which are Read Only and which might be appropriate with older youth:

- How would you behave if your team won a championship? Would you thank God? Why or why not?
- How would you react if you lost a game or failed a test? Whose fault would it be?
- How can we oppose fanaticism, while still valuing the inborn worth and dignity of the fanatic?
- Since you are tolerant of all beliefs, what would you do if people were treated unjustly in the name of their religion?

- How can we in America come to cherish diversity (differences among people) and overcome prejudice, hatred, and violence?
- Humanism is opposed to violence. Which video games promote violence? Do you think you should play such games?
- What can you personally do to help people, animals, and the environment?

She also includes a "Selected Bibliography for Older Teens and Adults" with books by Steve Allen, Robert Ingersoll, Corliss Lamont, Bertrand Russell, and Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan.

What is community service-learning? Service-learning is a method in which students of all ages (kindergarteners to graduate students) learn through participating in organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of the community (locally, regionally, nationally and/or globally). In is, truly, applied humanism, humanism in action. There are *many* activities and resources available for anyone interested in learning more about this approach. The following is just a brief sampler.

The most complete source of service-learning information is the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (www.servicelearning.org) whose bibliographies provide useful resources on social issues, links to online items, and downloadable materials as well as numerous print resources.

Meeting Human Needs: Hunger, Homelessness and Poverty. It was estimated that there were approximately 744,000 homeless people in our country in 2005. A little more than half were living in shelters and nearly one-fourth were chronically homeless. A majority were single adults but about 41% were in families. The intent of the following activities is to illustrate that there are a number of ways that children can participate in community action programs in this area.

Learning about the issue of hunger. Younger children can draw a picture of someone who is hungry and describe the person they drew and tell how the picture portrays hunger. They can collect and distribute personal care kits; contact a homeless shelter to ask permission to make such kits and to find out what the people need. Items have included combs and brushes, toothbrushes and toothpaste, soap and shampoo, needles and thread, blankets and sheets, towels, and toys and books. Also consider ideas for raising money to buy these items. Older students can gather information on senior citizens, veterans, immigrants, and unemployed people. Invite representa-

tives from local agencies who work with people who are in need of assistance with food to speak with the students.

Additional service-learning activities for upper elementary school-age students include holding clothing drives to collect cold weather items; preparing and serving food at shelters; surveying community members to learn about the need for low-cost housing and collecting signatures of people who support low-cost housing; contacting Habitat for Humanity (www. Habitat.org) to find out if they are planning to build low-cost houses in your community; advocating for programs that support child care, health care and counseling; exploring employment opportunities for homeless people and others who are out of work; and finding out what your local government officials are doing to expand job training and placement opportunities in your community.

Still other activities include finding examples of how homeless or poor people are depicted in literature; studying historic events (e. g., the Irish famine) that have led to hunger or homelessness; reading food labels to find nutritional values and comparing the value of different foods; holding food drives -- finding out from the shelters what types of food to donate; deciding when you will contribute (e.g., holidays or any days?); making fliers and other publicity items to advertise the food drive; collecting grocery coupons to give to a local food bank; collecting vitamins and money for medicines; preparing bag lunches for homeless people and disadvantaged children; and contacting restaurants and grocery stores to find out how much (still good quality) food they discard each day or week and asking if they would be willing to donate the items to a local shelter. Lastly, activities for an anti-hunger campaign include surveying the community to find out what people know about the extent of the problem and the number of children who go to bed hungry each night; drafting a petition to support an anti-hunger campaign; and getting media attention for the campaign.

Additional resources

The National Coalition for the Homeless (www.nationalhomeless.org) is a network of individuals who are experiencing or who have experienced homelessness, activists and advocates, community-based service providers, and others committed to a single mission: to end homelessness.

Oxfam America (www.oxfamamerica.org/) is an international organization that creates solutions to poverty, hunger, and injustice. With individuals and local groups in more than 120 countries, Oxfam helps people overcome poverty and fights for social justice. They are an affiliate of Oxfam International.

Share Our Strength (www.strength.org/) is a national organization that works to "make sure no kid in America grows up hungry". They collaborate with community groups to identify children at risk of hunger and provide them with nutritious food.

The World Hunger Education Service (www.worldhunger.org/) collects and distributes information about the problem of world hunger.

Community development and beautification. Begin by taking walks around the neighborhood and seeing if the children notice any vacant lots, boarded-up houses, clutter, or other unhealthy conditions. Are there recreational areas? Discuss this question: what can be done to improve our neighborhood?

There are many activities in which elementary school- age children might be engaged: removing debris from places where it has accumulated and cleaning up vacant lots; writing to community officials to asking for a vacant lot to be turned into a playground; painting and repairing fences or helping build them where they can improve public safety; advocating for street lights or crosswalks at dangerous intersections; identifying street corners where there are obstructed views for drivers to see children on their way to or from school; planting flowers and trees in vacant lots; researching what trees grow best in the area and what they need to grow; and cleaning stream beds and planting vegetation along its banks.

Still more activities: helping seniors by mowing lawns, weeding, shoveling snow, raking leaves, etc.; holding a "paint-a-thon" or "repair-a-thon" for seniors, low-income people, and individuals with disabilities; writing a proclamation for a community beautification day or week; interviewing people with disabilities to determine their special needs; collecting used furniture which could be distributed to those who need it; interviewing experts to determine what businesses or other developments are being planned and discussing the needs and values of such developments; painting murals wherever needed; removing graffiti; and holding recycling contests.

Activities for planting a community garden. In addition to beautifying a neighborhood, the products grown can be given to those in need. Some suggested activities: researching the types of crops that would harvest the greatest yield with the greatest nutritional value; testing the soil quality and making informed decisions about nutrients to be added in preparation for planting; assisting community members in creating their own gardens by testing soil samples and providing steps for improving the condition of the soil; conducting an experiment to determine the most effective methods to plant flowers; planting gardens at a homeless shelter or senior citizen facility and helping to care for it; developing planting schedules, tips for other garden-

ers, and strategies for dealing with pests; creating a budget for plants and materials to purchase; researching and writing about gardens and herbs; soliciting donations for community gardens; conducting a garden tour for young children or senior citizens.

Additional resources

Kids Gardening (www.kidsgardening.com/) is a program of the National Gardening Association which regularly shares "some tried-and-true advice for launching and maintaining a youth garden program." Their resources include books, curriculum, and additional website linkages.

The National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Wildlife Habitat (www.nwf.org/backyard/) includes resources to create gardens that are habitat-based learning sites in schoolyards.

"How Does Our Garden Grow?" (www.abcdbooks.org/curriculum/garden.html) provides teaching ideas that can be adapted for grades 1-5. The activities can tied to science, social studies, visual arts, and drama.

Below are several resources for youth to apply values associated with character development. For additional information and opportunities, see the "Opportunities for Action" link in www.goodcharacter.com/

Youth Noise (http://www.youthnoise.org)This is a non-profit online network for youth activists. It is a place for young people to communicate about causes, build networks, and promote service-learning projects.

Idealist.org - Kids & Teens (http://www.idealist.org/kt/) Here young people will find resources, project ideas and organizations that will help them get started on service projects.

Do Something (http://www.dosomething.org) Its mission statement says, "We inspire young people to believe that change is possible, and we train, fund and mobilize them to be leaders who measurably strengthen their communities."

Free The Children (http://www.freethechildren.org/) The focus is on wiping out child slavery and helping poor children in third world countries go to school instead of laboring every day in dangerous, inhumane jobs.

America's Second Harvest (http://www.secondharvest.org/index.html) This is the largest hunger relief organization in the US. Their main activity is feeding hungry people by collecting and distributing food.

ServeNet (http://www.servenet.org/) A place to start looking for opportunities to volunteer. It lets users search a database of service roles to find one that fits.

helping.org (http://helping.org/) A place to learn about the causes that young people care and how to volunteer to take action.

Personal note on service learning from Bob Bhaerman. Before becoming Director of the Kochhar Humanist Center, I served for a number of years as Coordinator of School-Based Service Learning in Learn and Serve America, a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service in Washington, DC. I would be very happy to confer with you on planning and implementing community service learning programs in your chapter or affiliate. I can be reached at – rbhaerman@americanhumanist.org. I hope to hear from you….

A Final Word

My Perspective on Our Humanist Sunday School by Armineh Noravian, Humanist Community of Silicon Valley. The complete article was originally published in the Humanist Community Blog , March 2008 (with contributions from Arthur Jackson, president of the Humanist Community in Silicon Valley.) We have reprinted Armineh's concluding thoughts:

> …. one can't really talk about a Sunday school without talking about the community within which it is based. The influence of the other components of the community, some of which I have mentioned here, is crucial in shaping young Humanist minds. Furthermore, the Humanist Community supports a broad spectrum of Humanist perspectives that influence and shape not only the adults, but also the children. It does this, not through indoctrination, but in the traditional Humanistic way of encouraging critical thinking and free inquiry.
>
> But, perhaps, of most importance to Humanist groups is the fact that you can't actually have a Humanist community without a children's program. It takes families to provide the foundation upon which a viable community flourishes. That has been clearly demonstrated in the Humanist Community in Silicon Valley and is a matter that should be seriously considered by any group that wants to grow Humanism. Humanist Sunday schools are an important vehicle for teaching Humanist values, *but it takes a Humanist community to nurture the Humanist child.* (Emphasis added)