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# Philosophy For Children

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with Rich Piscopo

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## Methodology

The methodology utilized in this course is based upon the pedagogy developed by Dr. Matthew Lipman in his Philosophy for Children curriculum. It is referred to as the Socratic Method, or Dialectic. It is based on a logical method of questioning which Socrates further developed and made famous.

This eristic technique of dialogue derives from the ancient Greek concept of Elenchos, which means to cross-examine. In effect, this approach is a process of hypothesis elimination.

One of the benefits of this method is that it empowers the student. The student is treated with respect and it is presupposed that the student's ideas are worthy of examination. This approach is student-centered, not teacher-centered. This means that rather than the teacher imposing his perceptions and opinions upon the student, the teacher becomes self-effacing and subordinates his views to those of the student's. In this manner, the student gains confidence in his perceptions, thereby engendering empowerment.

With this approach, the teacher is more of a facilitator. He or she draws the student's ideas out. The teacher/facilitator creates the conditions for this pouring forth of ideas by fostering an atmosphere of trust. It is within this non-judgmental learning environment where the student feels free to discover and experiment with new ideas.

It is rather like the teacher creates a vacuum before the student and lets the student fill the vacuum of his or her own accord. This gives the student a sense of responsibility and meaning, thereby lending a sense of ownership in his or her learning process.

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## Reasoning Skills

The reasoning skills developed through this course include sequential reasoning, analogical reasoning, deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning, drawing inferences, coming to conclusions, use of evidence, focused inquiry, making sense of phenomena, and being able to see the "big picture".

These are the same reasoning skills one would expect to master in standardized New Jersey high school English, History/Social Studies, and Science courses. Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing all incorporate the same reasoning processes.

## State Standards Met

These standards are taken directly from New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards. They are aligned with college and work expectations.

## Materials

This class began the study of Ethics in the Fall of 2012, utilizing the ethics reader, Lisa. Purchase of the reader is not required.