

Finding Meaning in Friendship

Nicole Fraser

Introduction

Friendship ... is not something you learn in school. But if you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything. -Muhammad Ali

State curriculums do not normally address social ideas such as friendship; however, part of each student's school day is filled with the reality of friendship. Many parents of the students I teach comment at the beginning of the school year that their child could not wait to come back to school to see their friends. This is not exactly where an educator wants their students' attention, but doesn't our job involve finding ways to connect with our students in order to reach them academically?

In my experiences teaching 5th grade, the classroom dynamic has the ability to positively or negatively affect the learning environment. To a 5th grader, an argument with a friend can feel like the end of the world. Over the course of the school year, many friendships follow a roller coaster pattern. Socializing and your position in the social hierarchy become a top priority in a 5th grader's life. When my students find balance and harmony within the classroom social structure my lessons become more productive and my students are more willing to work with anyone in the class on an assignment. As educators one of our goals is to create productive citizens of society. Without friendship I believe we lose our sense of self as we have no one to honestly discuss life with and our accountability to morals also breaks down as we have no one who we care about who will be hurt by our actions. While working in an organization for the homeless, a "neighbor" who uses the center's resources once said to me that the people who do "bad" things only do them because they do not think anyone cares about them. They have no one who will be disappointed in them. Analyzing the meaning and value of friendships will help lead our students to maintaining healthy friendships, which in turn will benefit all of society.

Objectives

The students I teach are high performing, with over 90 percent on or above grade level. The parents support their children in any way possible and most hold college degrees. My class has 25 students with mixed abilities. My students range from above grade level to below grade level. Half of my class is identified as academically gifted and two of my students have learning processing disabilities. Our class does not have much racial diversity, with twenty-one being Caucasian and four being a mix of races. Our school is based in a college suburban town that has the feel of a small town. Students often "walk

to town” and many families know each other from the various extracurricular activities my students participate in.

This curriculum unit will challenge students to critically think about ideas connected to the theme of friendship. I have chosen friendship as an overall theme because my students can relate to the topic. They have all built friendships and had varying experiences with friends. I think tackling a topic that my students can relate to will create meaningful thought and discussion. Within my classroom are students who have lived in the area since they were born, and students who have moved once, as well as those who have moved numerous times over the course of their lives. Having the different perspectives on friendship and how it has affected them will add to our discussion and thought.

The unit will use literature to dig deeper and analyze different aspects of friendship. As stated above, friendship is not necessarily covered in the state curriculum, but analyzing literature for a deeper meaning holds a large place in literacy instruction. In most fictional work, interactions between characters make up a large portion of the meaning behind the story. Through analyzing these interactions my unit will challenge my students to critically think about the story and apply these ideas to their own lives. Through applying the ideas discussed in the novel to their own lives, the students will create more meaning from their reading.

The first objective of this curriculum unit is to create a philosophical climate in the classroom. It seems at some point during the school year it begins to snow during the school day. The effect of the snow on my students never ceases to annoy me. It only takes one student to run to the window for the rest to follow. There are countless examples of nature that seem to have the same effect on my students: birds, bugs, reptiles, etc. Showing annoyance to my students during these times does not foster a questioning atmosphere. My students are amazed at the smallest things, while grownups (including myself) have become jaded by our surroundings. This wonderment is also evident during class when my students come up with crazy “what if?” and “why?” questions. Instead of embracing the moment and taking advantage of my students’ curiosity, the pressure of fitting all of the curriculum often takes precedence and I miss the moment. Setting up a system in the classroom that welcomes the “what if?” and the awe will tap into my students’ excitement and hopefully keep them excited about learning. My students also seem to think there has to be a right or wrong answer. I want my students to have classroom discussions where they keep their minds open to their classmates’ ideas. Oftentimes my students get stuck on being right instead of having a philosophical outlook of analyzing all points of view. My goal is for my students to critically think about what is being discussed and to create meaningful questions that will push the conversation further.

The second objective of this curriculum unit will explore the idea of why we have friends. It will dig deeper into unearthing the value of friendship and attempt to discover the meaning of friendship. Friendships fall across a spectrum and often we call someone a friend when maybe we shouldn't. The 5th grade students I teach have interactions with peers in class, in their neighborhoods, and at extracurricular activities. Many of these interactions are acquaintances but at the age of 10 it seems anyone you see on a regular basis that you enjoy is your friend. I hope to make my students aware of the spectrum of friendship, from acquaintance to best friend. I want to lead my students to contemplate the value of friendship. If we call everyone a friend does friendship lose value in our life? Can you have more than one best friend? For most 5th graders friendship comes naturally to them. Even a new student on the first day of school is quickly taken in by other students in the class. However, I don't think many of my students have wondered why we have friends. What are the benefits of friendship? What does it mean to be "best friends"? How would our life be different without friendship? Do I have to be friends with everyone?

The third objective challenges my students to define the characteristics of a "good" friend. The term friend is used so often I think it is important to force my students to stop and think what makes someone a good friend. I have witnessed many of my students strongly influenced by their friends. During this time of their life it is crucial to choose the right "crowd" because they can have such a huge impact on the decisions you make as an individual. If my students have taken the time to define a good friend, it may help them to make wiser decisions socially. The characteristics of loyalty, trustworthiness, honesty, accountability, and reliability all come to mind when I try to define a "good" friend. Once we have defined a good friend many questions come to mind. Do all my friends have to be a good friend? How many times do you have to make a mistake to stop being a good friend? Are my interactions with good friends different than with bad friends? Is there a benefit from having a bad friend? What if you are the bad friend? The fourth objective examines the obstacles of friendship. When my students experience a conflict in their friendships it seems they are ready to throw the friendship away. I want my students to realize conflict in friendship is normal, and that true friendship will experience conflict. I want them to reach a point where they acknowledge conflict as a growing point in their friendship, not the end of it.

Many 5th grade friendships run into conflict due to lack of communication. After spending a lot of time together things usually begin to happen that get on the other's nerves. Instead of talking about it, the issues build and then one of the friends blows up and everything comes out at once. What often makes it worse is when the friend talks about the issues behind his/her back to others in the friendship circle. While examining communication in friendship I want my students to realize that friendship comes with responsibility and one of those is communication. However, with communication comes the question of how much should you tell your friends?

Another obstacle to friendship is stereotyping. I'm sure that throughout my life I have missed out on many great friendships due to stereotyping. Whether it is conscious or subconscious our predetermined ideas of people may keep us out of contact with certain people. In 5th grade I think that the stereotypes associated with gender and different social labels (sporty, girly, nerdy, etc.) dictate friendships. Through this unit I want my students to challenge their thinking about who is an acceptable friend.

The last obstacle of friendship I would like to explore involves cliques and exclusion. It seems throughout one school year social circles can change a few times. Many times within a friendship circle there is a leader who has the most influence on the group. Sometimes this leader will try to dictate who others can be friends with. Also, when the leader is in an argument with another, the friends in the middle often are forced to choose sides. I want my students to explore maintaining their individuality in their friendships. In order not to be sucked into the drama of a clique one must muster a lot of courage to stand up for what is known to be right. Often times this may leave you out of the social circle. Many times students place all of their friendship energy into one person. Then when that student is absent or they are in a conflict he/she has no one else to turn to. I think it will be valuable for my students to evaluate this type of exclusive grouping.

Rationale

Why should we teach philosophy in elementary school?

When reading this question many teachers have visions of Aristotle, Plato, Socrates and a boring philosophy professor lecturing. Philosophy is so much more than learning what people think. It is about finding out what you think! Philosophy is not another subject to add to the curriculum but a practice that cuts across the curriculum. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia, philosophy invites students to reflect on relationships, and to make sense of their educational experience, which ultimately will add meaning to their education. In education today educators are bogged down with standardized testing. In 2007 The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented conducted a study of the effects of standardized testing on teachers and students and concluded that "Teachers and students feel a tremendous amount of pressure associated with high-stakes testing to produce high student test scores" and "the pressure felt by teachers associated with highstakes testing results in drill and practice type of curriculum and instruction"(1). No matter our view on testing we have the pressures of preparing our students to achieve high levels of success. The amount of curriculum we are trying to expose our students to often leaves philosophical thinking out. However, if we would embrace thinking about thinking (philosophy) we would actually be preparing our students for high success on standardized tests, and even more importantly on developing thinking skills. In a study of GRE scores from 2001-2004 it showed that philosophy majors scored the highest verbal, and analytical writing out of all majors and the highest in quantitative reasoning out of

any humanities or art major. “This suggests that the study of philosophy develops a set of skills important for success in a very broad range of fields” (2).

Through philosophical inquiry students openly and respectfully exchange ideas, develop good listening skills, become responsive to what others say, are willing to support one’s ideas with good reasons, and open their mind to the possibility that he/she could modify his/her beliefs (3). All of these skills are expected of our students, but we do not always provide them opportunities to fine-tune these skills. How many times have you told your students you need to listen? Maybe if we show our students why they should listen we would see improvement.

Philosophy also brings to mind formal logic. The formal logic we learned in college does not necessarily have a place at the elementary level, but informal logic does. Informal logic requires giving reasons, considering evidence, agreeing and disagreeing, giving examples & counterexamples, and making comparisons (4). These skills all have a place in analyzing literature, history, and many other subjects in the curriculum. Philosophy enriches our curriculum and adds rigor to the curriculum taught. Teachers also think that teaching philosophy requires knowing everything about philosophical literature. On the elementary school level this is not the case. In fact Professor Thomas E. Wartenburg, from Mount Holyoke College, teaches philosophy a few times a month at a Massachusetts charter school and his goal isn’t to teach what philosophers thought, but to get the students in the practice of doing philosophy (5). As a teacher of philosophy in elementary school the only requirement becomes facilitating a philosophical discussion. This includes allowing students to develop their own ideas, and for teachers not to always have an answer (share the puzzlement with your students) (3). Through philosophical dialogue students attempt to discover a range of ideas and to see ideas from different points of view (4). The skill of considering another’s point of view has endless benefits throughout life. Training students to think through their beliefs may help to create a more empathetic society. In the end of a philosophical dialogue the goal isn’t for one right answer but for everyone to decide what he/she thinks is most reasonable, whether that puts him/her with the majority, minority, or alone (4). Students often rely on the teacher to communicate the “right” answer to the class, but philosophical thinking helps students begin to think for themselves, to find reason to their own beliefs.

At some point in their undergraduate degrees teachers have learned the ideas of Jean Piaget. According to Piaget children under twelve are not capable of abstract thinking (5). I find this hard to believe when thinking back to all the questions children have asked me over the years; What happens when you die? Is it right to get revenge? Can you own the air? Can a rabbit eat meat if he was starving? It seems more natural to conclude that young children are naturally inquisitive. Often as parents and teachers we do not foster this type of thought but find it amusing or give an answer without encouraging thinking. Professor Matthew Lipman from Columbia University also did not agree with Jean

Piaget. He was teaching during the 1970s and believed many Americans were too accepting of authoritative answers and slow to reason themselves (5). He believed that children could think abstractly and philosophical thinking could help them develop reasoning skills (5). Professor Gareth Matthews of the University of Massachusetts also disagreed with Piaget and sided with Lipman (5). After these professors worked with children they both concluded that “their curiosity and sense of wonder make children ripe for philosophical inquiry” (5). As a teacher one of my goals is to make my students life-long learners. I believe that to excite my students about learning I have to tap into something important to them, to create experiences they enjoy and long to recreate. Philosophical dialogue gives students the opportunity to explore ideas that relate to their experiences and are already meaningful for them (4). Philosophy isn’t another topic to tackle but one that will create life-long learners who think for themselves. Professor Thomas E. Wartenburg believes “a lot of people try to make philosophy into an elitist discipline, but everyone is interested in basic philosophical ideas; they’re the most basic questions we have about the world” (5). When did your questions start about the world?

Critical Thinking

Our state curriculums are jam-packed with objectives of what the students should know and be able to do by the end of the year. Critical thinking applies to all subjects taught across grade levels. Thinking is a process that includes a person’s opinions, deliberations, skills, and imaginings (6a). It is not just a statement of one’s opinion, but a consideration of how a person arrived at a conclusion. In all subjects there is a knowledge base students must know, but critical thinking challenges students to apply that knowledge. As teachers we are coaches of thinking, giving us the responsibility to lead students to think along valid paths that correlate with the subject matter (6b). Stopping your instruction at the knowledge level will not teach your students how to think through their opinions, decisions, and problems. In our country today critical thinking is imperative as we are flooded with information from the media on various topics. Also, the internet has a plethora of information, but how much is credible? We need to teach our students to question and think critically instead of just accepting the knowledge we present to them. As an educator I often hear the phrase critical thinking, but haven’t stopped long enough to define its meaning. Kenneth Hawes defines it as “thinking which is characterized by some kind of reasoned or reasonable evaluation” (6c). When planning lesson plans, the term critical thinking is often used without the activity requiring evaluation. These activities do require careful judgment and reflection; however, they are not evaluative but productive or creative (6d). To plan for critical thinking takes a lot of preparation on the teacher’s end. We must have a knowledge base of the subject matter on hand in order to lead our students to the evaluative stage.

Kenneth Hawes identifies four aspects of critical thinking: purpose, method, the thing evaluated, and the result of thinking (6e). Best practices of teaching include setting a purpose for learning. This includes activating prior knowledge and setting a reason for

our learning. In critical thinking we also must set a purpose in order to direct our activity and to give it meaning. The method of critical thinking is how we will accomplish our purpose. In school settings the method is usually set in a familiar structured way; however, in non-school settings we have to decide our own method (6f). A challenge as educators is to find a balance between the two. If we always set the method in a step-by-step fashion we will not teach our students how to think of ways to solve problems outside of school. Each student has different characteristics and different ways of learning. As good educators we are always trying to find a way to reach each learner through their own way of learning. With determining a method in critical thinking this concept still applies. The method has many forms which are limitless to the creativity of your students. Identifying the subject or topic for evaluation should be done wisely. There is a balance between showing students many things are open for evaluation and not pushing students to evaluate ideas they are not ready to visit yet. Challenging students to keep an open mind and to evaluate topics they never thought of as open for debate will begin to mold your students' minds to thinking critically on their own. We must also keep in mind that some of our beliefs feel as part of us and we are not open to consider revising these ideas (6g). If we push our students too far we risk shutting them off from an open mind. After going through the process of critical thinking we reach the result of thinking. The result can be successful in two ways: 1) we reach a result that meets our purpose, or 2) we correctly complete the method (6h). All thinking takes place in the mind and cannot be shown in the physical form. The experiences we have shared stay within us and contribute to our critical thinking. These experiences affect our judgment, sensibilities, convictions, and tendencies and are modified by thought (6h). The greatest result of critical thinking will not be in a project, or written composition, but in the changes that occur in our mind, which we will carry with us for the rest of our life. Throughout this curriculum unit my students will have various writing tasks. I chose writing as a main part of responding to the idea of friendship because writing is a form of thinking. Throughout my own education I have often been taught that writing is a form of communication. I have also taught my own students that writing is written for an audience, and they need to be mindful of their audience. Writing does include the objective of communicating but it also entails a greater goal. According to Paul Wagner the primary goal of writing is to understand and to then make that understanding available to others through writing (6i). In my personal experiences writing has always helped me sort out what I was thinking and to find meaning. Oftentimes new ideas pop into my head when I do not have time to think through them, so I always write the idea down to come back to later, or else it seems to get lost in the sea of my mind. Paul Wagner describes writing as thinking on paper, as "anything set down to help you remember, organize, relate, deduce, explain, evoke, express; in other words, anything that aids your understanding of the topic on hand" (6j). For students, writing is a tool that often gets a bad name. My students get stuck on the final product, the communication piece of the writing. Through the writing tasks in this curriculum unit I hope to foster the idea that writing helps us make meaning of new ideas. When focusing on understanding first we use words to pursue our thoughts, instead of our thoughts to pursue words (6k).

Our energy turns to the ideas floating in our mind, to making sense of our thoughts. Without the worry of finding the right words, or getting it right the first time, this classroom view on writing will enable students to write meaningful pieces instead of what they think the teacher desires. The assignments of writing included in this unit will not necessarily be read by anyone but the student, so the student can begin to feel the primary goal of writing, thinking on paper. (The teacher may read these writings, but with the focus of reading thoughts, not a finished paper. The student should not feel as though he/she will be assessed on these writing pieces.) Then with their ideas worked through in writing the students can use their writing as a reference in classroom discussion.

Background Information

The following is a brief synopsis of various philosophers' views on friendship. This list does not include all ideas by the chosen philosophers, or all the views out there about friendship. As mentioned above, bringing the big idea of friendship to your students does not require the teacher to know specific philosophers and their beliefs. However, the following will help teachers with questioning in the classroom. Presenting different philosophical views of friendship in the classroom will help to facilitate a meaningful discussion. I have also included a list of philosophers with views on friendship to serve as a resource in further study of philosophical writings on this topic.

Aristotle

In Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* he describes three types of friendship. The first form is based on usefulness. In this type of friendship people do not feel affection toward the other but toward the good they get out of the friendship. This type of friendship fizzles as the people change and are no longer useful to the other. Friendships based on usefulness are most commonly found among old people, and those in early or middle life who are pursuing their own advantage. People in these stages of life are focused on finding relationships that are mutually beneficial. People in this type of friendship may not spend much time together, because they may not even find each other pleasant. The second form of friendship is based on pleasure. Friendships in young people are often based on pleasure. When young your life is ruled by emotions and pursuing what you find pleasant. As you age, and even day to day, your view on what you find pleasant changes. This leads to friendships that form quickly, and just as quickly end. In this type of friendship the friends wish to spend all their time together because the affection of the friendship is the pleasure they find in each other. The third form of friendship is based on goodness. Only the friendship between those who are good, and similar in their goodness, is perfect. In this type of friendship you wish goodness for your friend for your friend's sake, making this type the only one who are true friends. You love each other for what the other is, not what he/she can give you. This kind of friendship contains usefulness and pleasure, but adds the aspect that each is intrinsically good. Friendships based on

goodness are permanent because they contain everything friends need and are based on some similarity between the parties. These types of friendships are rare, because people of goodness are hard to find. They also need time and intimacy to develop trust. (7a)

Aristotle's ideas of friendship focus on the friendship of virtue because to him this is the only friendship. In friendship he states that friends are the other self. Our friends represent a mirror view of our character, both the good and the bad. Through our friendship we can evaluate our own character by reflecting on the choices our friend makes. He believes we can only evaluate our own life through friendship due to self deception. He also believes part of friendship is a singleness of mind, with sympathy for others' emotions and shared argument and thought. (8)

Cicero

In Cicero's writing "On Friendship" he states that friendships should be ahead of all other human concerns. He believed that nothing could mean so much, in good times or bad. Things people place before friendship include wealth, health, power, honor, and pleasure. The joy of friendship is not what we gain from our friend but the love of the friend. Like Aristotle, Cicero states that friendship is impossible without virtue. He strongly believes that friends need to be chosen wisely based on their qualities. The qualities of a friend include reliability, being well adjusted, loyalty, trustworthiness, honesty, unpretentiousness, and interests & concerns like our own. He also states a few principles of friendship. We must not ask wrongful things of our friends, or do them if we are asked. There must be no element of deceptions or hypocrisy. We must refuse to listen to accusations made by anybody against our friend, and be above suspecting him of any wrongdoing. He also states that an essential part of true friendship is to offer and receive advice. This advice should be offered courteously and should be received with forbearance. He writes that we should not tell friends only what they want to hear because this is not speaking the truth. (7b)

Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett

Cocking and Kennett do not believe that friendship requires extreme similarity to each other as in Aristotle's mirror view or that we must share private information to establish and maintain intimacy (9). Their definition of the self in friendship is openness to being directed and interpreted, leading to being drawn to each other (9). Directing allows your friend's interests and values to shape yours. A characteristic of friendship is developing interests or activities in response to your friend's interests. The fact that you are open to trying things because your friend likes them characterizes friendship. Another characteristic of friendship comes through interpreting. Interpreting brings understanding of your strengths and weaknesses through your friend's view. Our friends notice traits we didn't realize we had, which can have an impact on how that character trait continues to show itself. They see friends as active through directing and interpreting us as it may

cause a change within us. Cocking and Kennett see the self as relational, developed and molded through friendship, which is central to the establishment and maintenance of friendship (9). They believe friends can be different from each other, and that becoming alike is an effect of friendship. They also do not think secret sharing creates friendship, but trust in your friend's goodwill towards you, your friend's judgment concerning your best interests. (9)

Other Ideas on Friendship

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia, friendship is grounded in a special concern each has for the other. Both friends must care for the other in order to find the friendship worthwhile or valuable in some way. Friends normally have shared activities which may include making something together, playing together, talking together, or shared experiences. These shared activities lead to intimacy within the friendship. Within friendships we also hold "special duties," obligations to aid and support each other that go beyond how we would help a stranger. (8).

When analyzing our friendships it is important to keep in mind that if our friends are involved in things harmful to their well-being it makes it hard to break away from that behavior ourselves. According to Ray Pahl friendship is not the important thing but the trust, security, feelings of self-esteem, and feelings of being loved that come out of it. If these traits are not coming out of a relationship then is it true friendship? (10)

Other Key Philosophers on Friendship

Seneca, Epicurus, Kant, bell hooks, Karl Jasper, Plato

Rules By: Cynthia Lord

Rules is told from the point of view of a twelve year old girl named Catherine. Catherine is on summer vacation and her best friend, Melissa, is away for the summer. Her brother, David, is autistic and often embarrasses her in front of others. Catherine is anticipating her new neighbor moving in who is also a twelve year old girl. David goes to occupational therapy (OT) once a week, and Catherine goes with to be with her mom while they wait for David to finish. One of her main interests is drawing. During her first visit to OT Catherine begins to draw a sketch of a boy, Jason, who is in the office for OT. Jason is in a wheelchair, and uses a communication book to talk with others. Jason's mother becomes angry with Catherine for drawing the picture.

Throughout the book Catherine is trying to impress Kristi, her new neighbor. She also begins a friendship with Jason on her weekly visits to OT. It turns out Jason and Catherine have many shared interests, and Catherine begins creating new words for Jason's communication book. Catherine's community center is having a dance and Kristi

really wants Catherine to go and to bring Jason. Catherine has not told Kristi about Jason's disability. Jason has a birthday party on the same day as the dance. Catherine uses the birthday party as an excuse not to go to the dance. However, at the birthday party Jason asks Catherine if she wants to go. When she says she doesn't dance Jason takes it personally and thinks Catherine is embarrassed by him.

After going home Catherine calls Jason to apologize and to beg him to meet her at the dance. Jason does show up for the dance and the truth comes out to Kristi. Kristi becomes angry with Catherine, and Jason and Catherine dance the night away! Throughout the book Catherine has great visions of the friendship she will have with Kristi. She thinks of Jason as her "clinical friend" at first, but by the end of the novel she considers him her real friend. Catherine is always trying really hard to impress Kristi, but with Jason she is herself and genuine.

Strategies

Read Aloud

The book *Rules* will be read aloud to the students over the course of several weeks. The reason for delivering the reading to the students this way comes from wanting the students to focus on the critical thinking that will come from the ideas found in the book. I want the students to hear the book read with fluency. Since the book will be read aloud it will not take away from the students' guided reading groups. I already have a time that I read aloud each day so I will not have to "find time" to fit this book into my curriculum.

Socratic Seminar

In a Socratic Seminar the teacher tries to talk less and let the students discuss open-ended questions with no right or wrong answer. The focus is on an open dialogue that causes meaningful generation of new ideas. The teacher acts as a facilitator posing the questions and then allowing the students to maintain a dialogue. The students should sit in a circle and make eye contact around the circle. Students also do not raise hands but begin talking when there is an opportunity, just as in a "real life" conversation. When responding to another student, the students should begin with "I agree with... or I disagree with..." (using each other's names) and a short paraphrase of the comment he/she is referring to. Before participating in a Socratic Seminar I will show students a rubric that reviews the expectations of the dialogue. The rubric will include these questions: How well did I listen attentively to others' ideas? How well did my answers show an understanding of the text? How often did I make original responses of generalizations and big ideas? How well did I support my answers with evidence? How well did I evaluate myself, and others' ideas and information? How well did I connect the text to myself, other texts, or the world? Then the students will reflect on their participation and "grade" themselves based on the rubric. This will not count as a grade in my grade book but as a reflective

tool for the students to refer back to as we have Socratic Seminars over the course of the unit.

For more information on Socratic Seminars please visit this website <http://nwabr.org/sites/default/files/learn/ethicsprimer/SocSem.pdf>.

Philosopher Journal

This journal will be used for various reasons throughout the curriculum unit. The journal will serve as a place for the students to record their ideas and respond to questions. An important part of discussing big ideas is defining words, such as “friend,” so everyone in the discussion will have an understanding of what is meant by the word. Many times we begin to use a word in a discussion and assume everyone knows what we mean by the word. Defining the word will help eliminate assumptions and often lead to thinking that challenges our thoughts. Students will record their definitions in this journal. The students will also record their reflections of how they participated in Socratic Seminar in this journal. The journal will belong to the student but other students and the teacher may also write in the journal. They may write in response to a writing piece or to pose a question to that student.

Classroom Activities

Timeline

The amount of time needed for this unit depends greatly on how much time you devote to it each day. The book will be read aloud over a month and a half period with activities taking place before, during, and after. I plan to read the book 15-20 minutes a day and to spend 45 minutes a week on the various activities.

Focus for Activities

Determine the value of friendship and explore if we miss out on friendships by limiting our friends to those who are like us.

Ways People Can Be Different From Us

Religion, Race, Abilities (academic, physical), Beliefs, Family Structure, Gender, Age

Activity 1: Interviews

This activity will be completed before beginning to read aloud *Rules*. It will serve as an introduction to the book and set the purpose for reading.

To begin this activity, first have the students define friendship in their philosopher's journal. Do not have the students share their definitions yet. Tell the students that you want them to find out more about friendship and what other people think about it. Explain to the students that over the next few months we will be exploring these ideas: why we have friends, what makes someone a "good friend", and obstacles to friendship. The students will interview someone younger than them, a teenager, a parent, and someone older than their parents (possibly a grandparent). Lead the students through a brainstorming session to come up with possible interview questions. These may include the following questions:

1. How would you define friendship?
2. What makes someone your best friend?
3. When should you stop being someone's friend? Explain.
4. Are your friends similar to you? How or How not?
 5. Why do you have friends?
 - 6.

The students will record the interviews in their philosopher journal and answer the questions themselves as well. As a class the students will then combine all of the ideas for the person younger than them, the teenager, parent, and someone older than their parent. This could be done on the computer with a document set up for each category. The students could take turns inputting their data. After the data is compiled the teacher can print off and enlarge the answers to the question. The enlarged documents should be hung in the classroom to reference for the remainder of the curriculum unit.

In their philosopher journal the students should also record their thoughts from the interviews focusing on what surprised them and any patterns they noticed when the data was compiled. Over the course of the curriculum unit the interviews should be referred to and discussed as ideas come up that connect with the information.

Activity 2: Friendship Tracking with Rules

In the book *Rules* Catherine has 3 friendships that influence her life (Melissa, Jason, and Kristi). In their philosopher journal the students will have a page for each friend with the name of the friend as the heading. After the book is read aloud each day the students will have 5 minutes to write down their thoughts about each friendship. These should be deep ideas and not surface level. Encourage the students to focus on the objectives of the unit (why we have friends, what makes a "good friend", and obstacles to friendship) when recording their thoughts about Catherine's friendships. Along with their thoughts and ideas they should also record questions they have about her friendships.

Activity 3: Writing Prompts

At various points in the novel the students will respond to questions about friendship that centers around a quote from the book. These writings should be recorded in the students' philosopher journals. After writing the teacher should collect all the notebooks and randomly pass them back out. The students will then respond to what the owner of the notebook wrote. Either agreeing or disagreeing and backing up his/her opinion with supporting details.

1. Page 19 "Looking closer at something can make something beautiful." Why do we judge people on their outward appearance?
2. Page 42 "I know Jason can't help it, but sometimes the sounds he makes are loud and creepy." Why do the actions of our friends embarrass us?
3. Page 70 "No. I mean. Catherine. My. Friend. "Sure," I say, even if I think of us more as clinic friends than always friends." Jason views Catherine as his real friend while Catherine only thinks of Jason as a clinic friend. When do you think you become "real" friends with someone?
4. Page 143 "I wish it wasn't so expensive to call California. I want to tell Melissa everything and hear her say "It's Okay, Catherine." But it'd take too long to explain and maybe she'd be mad I cared so much about Kristi being my friend." If someone is a good friend should you care what they think about you? Why or why not?
5. Page 196 "I'm sorry," I say. "I should've told you the truth. " "Yeah," she says flatly, not looking at me. "You should've. I'll see you around." After finding out about Jason, Kristi responds with the above statement. Is there ever a time you should keep a secret from a friend? Why or why not?

Activity 4: Socratic Seminars with Philosophers' Ideas

The following Socratic Seminars will focus on writings from Aristotle, Cicero, and Dean Cocking/Jeanette Kennet. These may be held anytime during the reading of *Rules*. I have included quotes and questions to use in the seminar, but you may go in a different direction based on your students' responses throughout the seminar. After each Socratic Seminar the students should write a reflection piece in their philosopher journal on their thoughts and ideas from the dialogue. At the top of their notebook page you should have them glue a copy of the quotes used in the seminar to aid in their reflection, and to use for the final project.

1. Aristotle- Focus: Types of Friendship (Using quotes/paraphrasing from the text *Nicomachean Ethics*)

Are there different types of friendship?

"In other words, the friend is loved not because he is a friend, but because he is useful or pleasant"

What general examples are there of friends of usefulness? Do you think they are not real friends?

“Friendship of young people seems to be based on pleasure. For their lives are guided by emotion, and they pursue most intensely what they find pleasant and what the moment brings. As they advance in years, different things come to be pleasant for them. Hence they become friends quickly and just as quickly cease to be friends”

Are friendships of young people less valuable than those of older people?

“The perfect form of friendship is that between good men who are alike in excellence or virtue”

Should you only be friends with people who have similar values/character traits as you?

“The wish to be friends can come about quickly, but friendship cannot”

How much time does it take to become friends?

What do you think about Aristotle’s view of friendship?

Cicero- Focus: Giving and Taking Advice: Not only telling what the other wants to hear. (Using quotes/paraphrasing from the text “On Friendship”)

“All I can do is to urge you to put friendship ahead of all other human concerns, for there is nothing so suited to man’s nature, nothing that can mean so much to him, whether in good time or in bad”

Do you agree with Cicero that friendship should be your top priority?

“Some people place wealth ahead of it, some good health, some power, some honors, a good many even pleasure”

Why do you think some people place these things in front of friendship?

What do you place in front of friendship?

“It is an essential part of true friendship, then, to offer and to receive admonition”

When do you think you should offer advice to your friends?

“There is no danger more deadly to friendship than servility, sycophancy, flattery – put as many names as you like upon it, but let it be branded as the vicious practice of

disloyal, untruthful men who measure everything they say by what people want to hear, and never anything by the truth”

Are there times when you should tell your friend what he/she wants to hear and not the truth?

If the truth will hurt your friend should you tell him/her?

As a friend what responsibilities do we hold with communicating to our friends?

3. Dean Cocking/ Jeanette Kennet- Focus: Friends Can Be Different Than You

Becoming alike is an effect of friendship. (Using quotes/paraphrasing from “Friendship and the Self”)

“It is a common feature of close friendships that within them, each person is receptive to developing interests or activities, which they do not already pursue, primarily because they are the interests and activities of the other”

Do you agree that you may go with a friend to an activity mostly because he/she wants to go? If so why do you go if it is not your interest? If not why wouldn’t you go?

“On the basis of this receptivity to my friend’s interests, aspects of my character may change in ways that they otherwise might not have and such changes may persist beyond the friendship”

Do you think your character can change because of a friend?

If it changes based on your friend, should that impact who you choose as a friend?

“It is commonplace that two people can be very similar in respect of their interests and indeed their characters and yet have no inclination toward friendship”

Besides common interests and character what else do you think is needed to spark a friendship?

What benefits could there be from having a friend who is different than you?

Activity 5: Final Project

Students will use ideas from the interviews, writing prompts, and Socratic Seminars to answer the question “What is the meaning of friendship?” Students will use the website <http://www.toondoo.com/> to create a comic that shows what they have concluded is the meaning of friendship.

Requirements: Answer the question “What is the meaning of friendship?”

Include at least one quote from Aristotle, Cicero, or Dean Cocking/Jeanette Kennet

Use at least 3 ideas written in philosopher journal (highlight ideas used)

The final products will be printed and placed on each student’s desk. The students will then take a “gallery crawl” and read each other’s work. The final comics should then be posted in the hallway for other students to read. As other students read the comics the students’ work will inspire others to ask themselves “What is the meaning of friendship”?

Classroom Materials

1. A notebook for each student

2. *Rules*-A copy for each student to follow along with and to use as a reference in the final project

3. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* (pg. 67-70 Norton Book of Friendship)-Have several copies available for reference in the final project.
4. Cicero "On Friendship" (pg. 71-79 Norton Book of Friendship)- Have several copies available for reference in the final project
5. Friendship and the Self (*Ethics*, Volume 108 Issue 3, pg. 502-527) Have several copies available for reference in the final project
6. Computer Access to create ToonDoo

Bibliography

Teacher Books

Cocking, Dean, and Jeannette Kennett. "Friendship and the Self." *Ethics* 108, no. 3 (1998): 502-527.

This primary source offers two modern day philosophers' thinking on friendship. They provide examples of their viewpoints that make their ideas easy to understand.

Gillet, Suzanne. *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship*. Albany, New York: State University Of New York Press, 1995.

This book breaks apart Aristotle's ideas of friendship focusing on the idea that a friend is another self. She critically writes about his ideas and finds ways to make sense of it all for the modern world.

Howard, V. A.. *Varieties of Thinking: Essays from Harvard's Philosophy of Education Research Center*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

A collection of essays focusing on bringing philosophy into the classroom. The author's include practical arguments and ideas for integration in the classroom.

McCarty, Marietta. *Little Big Minds: Sharing Philosophy with Kids*. New York: Penguin Group, 2006.

Each chapter in this book focuses on a big idea that could be approached philosophically with children. The author provides background information and ideas for how to bring them into your classroom.

Price, A. W.. *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle*. London: Oxford University Press, 1997/1989.

The author dissects writings by Plato and Aristotle and analyzes the deeper meaning of friendship. Throughout the book the author tries to relate their ideas to modern life.

Welty, Eudora, and Ronald A. Sharp. *The Norton Book of Friendship*. New York: Norton, 1991.

A collection of various types of writing that connect with the idea of friendship. These writings include essays, letters, poetry, and short stories.

Teacher Websites

" Teaching Elementary School Philosophy : PLATO: Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization." PLATO: Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization. <http://plato-apa.org/getting-started/teaching-elementary-school-philosophy/> (accessed September 18, 2011).

This website includes resources and organizations for teaching philosophy in schools. A great place to begin exploring ideas and rationales for activities that promote philosophical thought.

"Friendship (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/friendship/> (accessed September 5, 2011). This website explores the nature of friendship, the value and justification of friendship, and friendship and moral theory. It also includes an extensive bibliography to guide in further research.

"Friendship Theory: Some Philosophical and Sociological Themes ." contents @ the informal education homepage. <http://www.infed.org/biblio/friendship.htm> (accessed September 25, 2011).

This website provides an overview of ideas about friendship from classical writers through modern thought. It also has an extensive reading list to guide you to further resources.

Goodnough, Abby. "Philosophical reasoning taught in the second grade. - NYTimes.com." The New York Times - Breaking News, World News & Multimedia. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/18/education/edlife/18philosophy-t.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed September 18, 2011).

This article from April 2010 explains how philosophy is used in a second grade classroom. It includes a rationale for teaching philosophy as well as quotes from the teachers and students from specific lessons.

"Philosophy for Children (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/children/> (accessed September 18, 2011).

This article explores children's abilities of philosophical thought and organizations that promote philosophy in the classroom. It also includes a list of books, articles, and websites for further research on this topic.

"Socratic Seminar." Teaching Background.

<http://nwabr.org/sites/default/files/learn/ethicsprimer/SocSem.pdf> (accessed October 30, 2011).

This website provides background information on Socratic Seminars and explains how to set them up in your classroom. It also provides students handouts that could be used along side Socratic Seminars.

"Wondering Aloud: Philosophy With Young People." Wondering Aloud: Philosophy With Young People. <http://philosophyforchildren.blogspot.com/> (accessed September 5, 2011).

Each blog entry provides a book that could be used to explore big ideas in the classroom. It includes the author's ideas about philosophy and how the books could tie into philosophical thought. She also includes her own experiences of teaching philosophy with young children.

Student Books

Cannon, Janell. *Stellaluna*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1990.

In this book a baby bat is raised as a bird. She is reunited with her mother and has to learn how to be a bat. The book leads to questions about being friends while having so many different qualities (between the bats and birds). Book Level: 3.5

Estes, Eleanor, and Louis Slobodkin. *The Hundred Dresses*. ed: Harcourt, Brace And Co., 1944.

In this book Wanda, a polish immigrant, wears the same dress every day. One day Wanda says she has 100 dresses at home and from then on a group of children tease her each day about how many clothes she has. The story is written from the perspective of one of the teasing girls. The story leads to questions about participating in teasing, knowing its wrong but not speaking up in fear of losing your friendships. Book Level: 5.4

Lord, Cynthia. *Rules*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2006.

Catherine has an autistic brothers and longs to have a “normal” life. However her developing friendship with Jason will change her view of friendship and normalcy. Book Level: 3.9

Pfister, Marcus. *The Rainbow Fish*. New York: North-South Books, 1992.

In this book the rainbow fish has beautiful shiny scales that makes him unique. The other fish want him to share his shiny scales but he doesn't want to give them away. The book explores the ideas of individuality and conformity, and the value of friendship. Book Level: 3.3

Stead, Rebecca. *When You Reach Me*. New York: Wendy Lamb Books, 2009.

In this book Miranda is trying to solve the case of anonymous notes she receives that seem to break the laws of time and space. Throughout the novel she is also dealing with her broken friendship with Sam, and forming new friendships. This book explores the ideas of courage, trust, and the nature of friendship. Book Level: 4.5

Steig, William. *The Real Thief*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973.

In this book Gawain the goose is unjustly convicted of stealing from the king. In turn he is deserted by his friends and the real thief struggles with his conscience. This book leads to questions of trust, forgiveness and loyalty. Book Level: 6.1

Varga, Judy. *The Dragon who Liked to Spit Fire*. New York: William Morrow, 1961.

This book tells the story of a dragon who forms a friendship with the young prince Frederic. It leads to questions of identity in friendship and if compromises are required in friendship.

Student Websites

"It's My Life . Friends | PBS Kids GO!." PBS KIDS: Educational Games, Videos and Activities For Kids!. <http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/friends/index.html> (accessed October 23, 2011).

This website includes games, videos, and advice on friendship. It includes the topics bullies, when friends fight, crushes, gossip & rumors, summer camp, and nicknames.

"ToonDoo - World's fastest way to create cartoons!." ToonDoo - World's fastest way to create cartoons!. <http://www.toondoo.com/> (accessed October 23, 2011).

This website allows you to create comic strips. It includes various characters, props, and formats for your comic. The website is free but you must register. Once you have a username and password you can begin creating comics and save your work along the way.

Notes

1. <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcgt/moonbrja.html> This website explains the study and states all conclusions of the study.
2. <http://libarts.wsu.edu/philos/overview/excel.asp> This website includes the data stated in my unit along with other statistics supporting the study of philosophy in schools.
3. "Philosophy for Children (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/children/> (accessed September 18, 2011).
4. "Teaching Elementary School Philosophy : PLATO: Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization." PLATO: Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization. <http://plato-apa.org/getting-started/teaching-elementary-school-philosophy/> (accessed September 18, 2011).
5. GOODNOUGH, ABBY. "Philosophical reasoning taught in the second grade. - NYTimes.com." The New York Times - Breaking News, World News & Multimedia. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/18/education/edlife/18philosophy-t.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed September 18, 2011). In this article Professor Matthew Lipman is quoted for his thoughts on using philosophy with children. He has written several books that would challenge the traditional classroom dynamics. Some of his titles include, *Philosophy in the Classroom*, *Thinking in Education*, and *Philosophy Goes to School*.
6. Howard, V. A.. *Varieties of Thinking: Essays from Harvard's Philosophy of Education Research Center*. New York: Routledge, 1990. a. Page 6 b. Page 8 c. Page 47 d. Page 49 e. Page 54 f. Page 57 g. Page 60 h. Page 58 i. Page 84 j. Page 85 k. Page 88
7. Welty, Eudora, and Ronald A. Sharp. *The Norton Book of Friendship*. New York: Norton, 1991. a. Pages 67-70 *Nicomachean Ethics* b. Pages 71-79 "On Friendship"
8. "Friendship (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/friendship/> (accessed September 5, 2011).
9. Cocking, Dean, and Jeannette Kennett. "Friendship and the Self." *Ethics* 108, no. 3 (1998): 502-527.
10. "Friendship Theory: Some Philosophical and Sociological Themes ." contents @ the informal education homepage. <http://www.infed.org/biblio/friendship.htm> (accessed September 25, 2011).