**Statement of Purpose**

In my classroom in Louisville, KY I have many students who are lost, looking for some guidance from an adult. I teach in an urban district where many of my students support their parents, siblings, and even extended family members. These freshmen students are able to do this through drug sales, prostitution, and government aid. It is clear that these students, many of whose parents have been locked up for the majority of the child’s life, are lacking a responsible parental figure. The lack of parental involvement due to parents being incarcerated is staggering, across the country, “*Ten million more children have experienced the incarceration of one or both parents during their childhoods*” (Walker, 2005). Many of these students will make a connection with a teacher and will work their tails off in order to make that teacher proud of them over their high school career because they feel as though their parents do not care, or will not know about their progress. As a teacher, it is important to establish these bonds with students, “An essential aspect of significant relationships is that the partners[teacher and student], particularly the youth, feel that they are special to the other person. It apparently does not matter to the youth that the elder may be working with other young people, so long as he or she gets one-on-one time and attention” (Freedman, 2005). Years ago, teachers knew that their students were going home to a good home that was educating them about right from wrong. Today, especially in urban districts with high rates of crime, that isn’t the case. It is our responsibility to educate the whole student. In order to do this, moral and ethics need to be a focus in the English classroom. I plan to do this through a focus on character and ethics in literature and writing.

Morals and ethics in education are imperative to society. Because so many parents are away from their children be it from imprisonment, working multiple jobs, or seeing professional help of their own; students are not getting the education on how to be a good person that students once received at home. This education is vital to our success as a society. Moral / ethics education is important to all students, or all races, religions, cultural backgrounds. Dr. Weinstein makes a note in his article to mention that, “[moral education is] defined differently in different parts of the world, but they are cross-cultural and expected among all groups of people. . . they should extend beyond the walls of the sanctuary and should be taught and expected in homes and classrooms as well” (Weinstein, 2006). We need to be building respectable, responsible citizens who can one day lead this country / community with empathy, compassion, patience, and understanding whether their parents are involved in the students life or not. Students need to know how and why to be accepting of others. They need to know how to make good decisions, take responsibility for their actions, treat others as they would like to be treated, and they also must learn how to cope when things don’t go their way. It is our responsibility as teachers to provide this education.

English is a subject that would enable students to look outside of their own lives to reflect on and relate to moral and ethics. I plan to use *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson, A Child Called It by Dave Pelzer, and She Said Yes by Misty Bernall to teach a few main morals / ethics. I will focus on 1) treating others as you would like to be treated, 2) taking responsibility for your actions, 3) decision making, 4) coping skills. I believe that these reading choices would be a good unit to approach these ideas because the students are the same age as the characters in many of the books, many of them have had their “first love” or are about to, and many of them rush to judgments or their emotions overtake them as in the reading selections. All in all, my students really relate to these texts, so using this as a platform to teach morals / ethics would also be easily relatable to their lives. Literature is a great place to start this kind of education, “engaging in purposeful discussion, agreeing and disagreeing with the ideas expressed, synthesizing and building on ideas through conversation and consensus, questioning and testing arguments, and using evidence to bolster opinions, students can gain insight into making personal choices. . . . accept responsibility for their behavior. . . Ultimately, the idea is to respect and promote human rights and social justice among all people” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). Moral / ethics education is important to all members of the audience, to all students, as they will one day be adults and everyone needs to have a moral or ethical base, no matter what field they may study later in life.

This unit is designed to teach ethics and morals. My goal in moral and ethics education is that the students, especially those who lack parental figures, start to gain a sense of right and wrong as well as learn to empathize, understand, reflect, and be patient with others. I want them to learn how to make good decisions. I anticipate that students will understand some of the ideas, but will struggle with others, specifically they will struggle with decision making, taking responsibility for their actions, and coping skills. I anticipate the students will be able to recognize elements of treating others as they would like to be treated.

Works Cited

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