

# Mental Health and Ethics Class

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## Detailed Description

I am proposing a class integrated into the school year that teaches mental health, ethics, and morals among other things. The goal of this program is not to controversially teach children about God and the divine by how the instructor sees it. With the way it is ideally carried out, my program will not dip into individual beliefs, but rather enhance our current knowledge about ourselves and the ever changing world around us. Here is a list of the topics I wish to cover over the term of this course. Please keep in mind that any topics deemed unsuitable can be changed. Also note that this list is very brief. Much can be added.

1. Good Friendships and companionships(opposite)- Before forming a relationship with another person you first need to start a friendship. This topic is not trying to change any parental or child rules on these relationships, but would be helpful to many. I myself would have loved this, and I know many others who would love this topic.
2. Equality in matters of race, gender, creed, sexual orientation and disability(diversity)- With all that has been happening in our country lately, discrimination has overrun sensibility and compassion. This negative energy should not flow into our schools, so a very helpful barrier could be to inform students about loving each other the way they are and learning to treat others with compassion and respect. I know that many will object because they are afraid of political controversies. This topic is not intended to broach any of these controversies. When taught correctly, this subject could very well make us the more informed global citizens of the future.
3. Behavior Etiquette in the Workplace- Whether it is greeting your professors, mentors, or bosses, we always need a cordial attitude.

When taught at a younger age, it will be easier for the student to apply this etiquette training more fluently when necessary. This skill will also teach them something about self discipline.

4. Health (Mental and Physical) In middle school, the pinnacle of our education, we are all going through change. Although decidedly awkward and hard to broach, physical health is a topic that is of utmost importance. We should not have to deal with this alone. As of now, only 5th graders are given an explanation, albeit a non personal one with a teacher that obviously has much else to teach and explain. All grades should have a solid period that talks about physical change. Now comes mental health. Even the state of NY has been toying with the idea of introducing new mental health regulations in this state. They want to implement mental health education in classrooms because they want to, to quote the New York State Education Department's Continuum of Well Being Guide "Provide support to students with concerns about the mental health of self, friends and family" Please view link at the end to view more about the NY State's press for mental health education. They want curriculums to include self-care to promote mental health and overall well-being, resiliency, feelings, relationships, communication skills, empathy, compassion, acceptance, and much, much more. My proposed class covers all of these topics and fits under all the categories NY wants to introduce in mental health. The benefits are endless! At this age, we are confused and it is very important to broach mental health before things like self degrading, self harm, and even suicide has a chance to tell us that we're too late. Also, set mindsets about hate and criticism of people with differences will carry over into adulthood. These skills and lessons are very important to teach before something goes wrong and the person gets into trouble. Mental health is very important.

5. Problem solving and practical approaches- When we are children, there are parents, teachers, and other adults giving us advice and guidance, although I do admit that we don't always listen. But often when we grow up we are frustrated when children come to us with all their problems. If we talk children to problems they would become more independent. We, as children, need to learn how to problem solve and approach conflicts sensibly and practically so we can help ourselves and teach the next generation to help themselves. For example, when a fire drill is conducted, one of my teachers appoints one person to lead the procession out of the building. This is building sensible independence in us. It is also nurturing a can do attitude, which helps with our mental mindset and perspective.
6. Our role in the world- For many at this age, what our career is going to be is a very distant topic. But, our current role in society is very important too. Our job is not just to learn, but also serve and help others, develop a sense of camaraderie, and so many more aspects important to society. Learning our place in the world will help so many kids feel less anxious about themselves and will assist in dispelling the doubts of self worth. It will again assist in mental health.
7. Speaking Skills/Interacting with peers and adults- Communication skills are very important. I cannot list the numerous amounts of times I have wished that I had been taught how to convince and professionally talk to adults. Often I find myself not taken seriously when I speak more colloquially, and vice-versa find my opinions being heeded and evaluated by the adult if I speak professionally. I myself like using a more refined voice and vocabulary because I find them to make a very good impression on whomever I am speaking to, especially if it is an adult.

Effective communication with peers and adults is a very important topic. Why be scolded for inappropriate speech in the classroom and not be taken seriously when you can learn how to speak in a calm sensible manner? Conveying messages to one another is a very crucial life skills that reappears in school, in the workplace, and the outside world. Learning the trick now can save us from a lot of anxiety and confusion in the future.

8. Vocabulary for better communication- This is a continuation of the previous topic. I have often notices children in my class writing “poopy head meany” in our literary discussions. Age appropriate vocabulary, especially when vying for a special position or arguing your perspective, is of good importance. People will understand your point of view better if you communicate with effective sophisticated vocabulary. I myself learned a lot of useful words through reading. So, in a sense, this topic will encourage kids to do better in ELA, one of our core subjects, and also give us some deeper learning.
9. Real World Risks and Dangers- This topic is very self explanatory. Of course they have education such as this in high school, but even then I feel as if it is too late. Sometimes kids do get into trouble. I think that with the friendly, respectful environment this class will provide students such topics can be broached within reason. As the saying goes, “a stitch in time saves nine.” Action now will prevent not only trouble, but also sticky situations in high school where every child will have their own set opinion. It is best to confront these topics when our minds are not as stubborn receiving information, which I assure you they become. I think teaching this topic now is crucial.
10. Compassion, Sympathy, and Respect for Human Emotions- Again, this topic is listed under the needed mental health education in the Continuum of Well Being Guide, and for good reason. I feel that we have lost our sensitivity to human emotions and frankly, the world around us. Many of today’s crucial issues stem from the fact that humans lack these simple factors called sympathy and empathy. We as humans also lack compassion and acceptance. How many times

do we need to get hurt in order to realize our mistakes? Whatever your opinion on current affairs, you have to agree with me on the basis that compassion and acceptance are necessary. That realization is one that we have not lost yet. In order to preserve what is left of our basic emotions, we have to teach kids how to respect each others in the classroom and eventually outside. From teaching them why it is never ok to use degrading words, why telling people I see you is so important to their mental well being, and frankly, their lives. I feel like so many people, if given this education, would not bully, harm, or discriminate, which can prevent major things like suicide, and minor things like hurt feelings. Children need to help children if there is to be equanimity in us. I know that I would be afraid to tell a teacher if I was struggling, but I would love to see that a student, a child, a potential friend cared enough about me to show sympathy, or even empathy. Telling a suffering kid that I'm here for them also makes me happy because I feel I have a purpose. Such emotions do wonders to a person's mental well being and path of self discovery. Teaching us how to identify struggles and provide compassion every step of the way opens up a new side of us, a side where everyone is divine, or even one with a more primordial face of ourselves. This works even if you don't believe in god. Peeling away the different facades people put up, we really notice that we're one and the same. This will lead to acceptance, and eventually, to a more peaceful existence where violence is a rarity. We still have an enormous way to go, but I wanted to list all the possibilities that this topic might open up. As one district, we can impact a lot of kids. We can be pioneers.

So, as you can tell, the list of topics I wish the program to include are multitudinous but very important. Next, I wish to specify upon what efforts and daily tasks will be need to be undertaken to practically implement this class into our curriculum.

## Concrete Description of Efforts and Tasks Involved

Practically inserting this program into our schedules will need a little thinking. When developing ideas, I based them upon the fact that said student has no study hall so I could make sure the class would work with all schedules. I came up with two ideas. Both will need to be implemented in the beginning of a school year as it involves changing the schedule.

- 1) My first idea is more complex, but I feel that it will work with a bit of effort. It is to take FACS, 21st Century or Digital Literacy, and my proposed class and combine them to make two separate classes. One could teach the moral/ self care aspects of FACS, 21st Century/Digital Literacy, and the Ethics class, and the other could teach the practical life skills like cooking, mending, computer skills, and all that. This will keep our schedule cycle the same(keep it in 2 classes) but will have to the change the curriculum of both, which is hard.
- 2) My second idea is a little more doable, but it tinkers with our schedule cycle. As of now, the schools follow a 6 day cycle. Classes alternate between days 1 and 2, 3 and 4, and 5 and 6. If the Mental health and Ethics class were to be introduced as a full on individual class, it could follow the rotation like so.

1	2	3	4	5	6
21st Century/ Digital Literacy	FACS	Mental health and Ethics	21st Century/ Digital Literacy	FACS	Mental health and Ethics

Band and Chorus could go in a rotated schedule with study hall if needed, and so on. The advantage to this program is the class curriculums will not need to be changed. The disadvantage is, of course, our current base of two alternating days will need to be changed to a base of three alternating days.

Mostly, those would be the scheduling efforts. The tasks needed from the instructor is figuring how to teach the class. They might need to formulate an appropriate basic curriculum. Besides that, I think there are not many major efforts needed.

## Cost Analysis

When looking at the school saving money, it may not save a ton. The small savings will come from possible staffing cost reduction by hiring multi-certified teachers. Individual school costs will mainly come from paying teachers and staff a bit more initially to formulate an appropriate curriculum. But, I would like to point out that the minor costs are more than offset by the positive effects overtime for the students and the state. If children are taught how to avoid risks, dangers, and practice good habits early, it will save the state money that goes into mental rehabilitation after overdoses and other mind related trauma. According to statistics measured in 2010, the expenditure in NY state for mental health services comes to a whopping \$4,965,000,000. This includes help after DUIs, substance abuse, domestic abuse, and other. The early education/intervention will decrease the need for mental health services in the future, saving money. The money saved will eventually come back to the amount allocated for education in the state, therefore eventually winding up in the district and increasing

school resources, services, and money for purchases. But, again, I would like to point out that monetary gain should not be placed next to or above providing the leaders of the next generation's society proper mental tools to succeed.

## Implementation Timeline

The best time scale to implement the class is probably over the course of the 2019/2020 school year. The class would be too much of a change to implement this year. Depending on how the program is practically, a smaller scale will be chosen, which is completely okay. Over the course of the next school year, the program would be put through the test of effectiveness and ease of implementation.

## Anticipated Outcomes

If the program is carried out correctly, it will give so much to the learners in the district. It will provide students an in depth education about themselves, learn basics in societal skills, and provide us with very valuable life lessons that will be very memorable in our lives. I don't anticipate to "win" or to get fame. I go into this to make a difference. I truly feel, and have felt for a long time, that education such as this would make such an impact to our lives. I feel very strongly about it, and I am satiated that I have implanted the idea in the district representatives' brains. I feel as if the mere idea of such a change will introduce new, better changes to occur. I am proud to have started that thought process.

## Effectiveness Evaluation Of Proposal

The effectiveness will be self explanatory if and when this proposal is implemented. I think that the program would be deemed effective when we start to see more positivity and greater thinking in students. Positive



impacts will be hard to spot right away as the impact is emotional rather than physical. But, over time, when students are asked what good it has done, I feel that we will respond differently than if we were asked about the amount of emotional education as of today. We could also evaluate based on a set of non-graded evaluations, interactive or written, before or after the topic is taught. This will guide instructors on how to teach better. But, I want to make sure that the program is not implemented solely based on money or self gains. Always, the sweetness will be in the changes this class would have made in the mentality of students in this district. I feel that the change will be of more value than any spending, saving, or personal gain.

## Conclusion

Mental health and Ethics are important parts of what we consider today's world. They need to be taught in order for students to grow up to become well-respected, knowledgeable global citizens. The next generation is dependant on deeper education today. We need it. That is why the program I propose will have a very extensive impact on the mental well being on this district's students. The program has benefits for students, teachers, and the district. If taught now, this district's students will grow up to be fine, happy, and prosperous people. And, we will be a poster child, a pioneer I daresay, of change in mental health education. Now isn't that something to be proud of?

