Wittenberg University Philosophy Department
Stand-Up Ethics Program collaborative effort with the
Clark County Juvenile Detention Center

Stand-up Ethics Program (STEP) Mission Statement

The Stand-up Ethics Program (STEP) seeks to provide young adults with tools, such as critical reasoning, evaluative, and implementation skills, that are needed to recognize, assess, and respond to moral problems. Furthermore, STEP seeks to develop ethical sensitivity to a variety of perspectives that are generated by complex moral issues.

STEP takes Wittenberg University’s motto “Pass it on” to the community with its commitment to fostering moral literacy and ethical leadership in and among young adults in the Springfield Community.

Statement of Values

1. It is important to provide space to have conversations about everyday moral issues.
2. The ability to think critically and engage ethically is an important skill for all people. Moral literacy is one way to develop this skill. We define moral literacy as the ability to recognize, assess, and evaluate moral issues and to develop the capacity to consider alternative perspectives.
3. Moral literacy is fostered and developed in communities. The Juvenile Detention Center offers a valuable opportunity to foster these skills that help lay the groundwork for a meaningful and responsible adult life.
4. Wittenberg’s mission and strategic plan values community relationships and “encourage[s] students to pursue knowledge and truth with moral courage and reflection....” The Philosophy department embraces these values by engaging students in our community in active conversations about moral development and ethical leadership.

Potential Outcomes for detained students in STEP:

1. Students are assisted in “mainstreaming” back into the school system and daily life, as well as making more aware life choices.
2. Increased awareness in one’s relationship with others and broader community. Assessed by students’ willingness to become involved or initiate community projects and students’ frequency of newspaper reading and interest in local and national issues.
3. Increased sense of one’s ability to think through complex ethical issues. Assessed by in-group and blogging engagement and discussion of issues, the desire to initiate discussion of pertinent issues, and the willingness to listen well and critically to other views.
4. Develop a sense of oneself as an ethical leader. Assessed by students’ ability to stand up to serve as leaders during the workshops; students willingness to serve as peer educators in the program after “graduating” from the program; and by students’ willingness to serve as leaders in their community.

STEP is a collaborative project between Wittenberg’s Philosophy Department and the Clark County Juvenile Detention Center. The project will originate out of Dr. Nancy McHugh’s upper-division Philosophy course Fall of 2011. The Wittenberg students will serve as co-learners with students in the detention center, at the same time they also function in the roles as facilitators of knowledge and model leaders in a classroom situation with the youth detainees. This type of engagement will function through a variety of collaborative learning interactions in the detention center where the Wittenberg students work with the detainees to:

1) assess philosophical materials, including excerpts from novels, plays, films, music, news and philosophical texts;
2) consider their moral and practical import;
3) develop responses to the material, consisting of creative responses, academic writing responses and practical community based responses;
4) consider our own moral obligations and ethical responses;
5) interrogate the questions, “How ought I to act in this situation?” and “What moral actions can I and should I expect of others?”