

Excellence through Ethics™

Session 9

Understanding Child Labor



Middle School



Junior Achievement®



Excellence through Ethics
Middle Grades
Session 9

Understanding Child Labor

Content: Ethics and Child Labor

Methods: Role-Playing

JA Foundational Pillars: Ethics and Financial Literacy

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Acknowledgements

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Understanding Child Labor

Overview

Students will debate the ethical and economic issues surrounding the child labor used to produce some U.S. imports. Students will role-play the points of view of those involved.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define child labor and give reasons for its existence.
- Explain the role of child labor in international trade.
- Evaluate ways to discourage the use of child labor.

Preparation

Review the activity. Prepare the necessary copies and session materials. Copy and separate the case studies and organize a packet for each group. Each group of six students will need one packet of case studies (one case study per student, six different case studies per group).

Group work is incorporated into this session. You may consult with the teacher to determine how best to form the groups.

Post Key Terms and definitions in a visible place.

- **Ethics:** The standards that help determine what is good, right, and proper.

Recommended Time

This session typically takes 45 minutes to complete. Ask the teacher to help you keep track of time.

Materials

- Child Labor Case Studies (1 packet of 6 per group)
- Pens or pencils (1 per student)

Presentation

Introduction (10 minutes)

Tell students that today they will examine a current topic of discussion in international trade and economics. The topic concerns workers and families in developing countries, American corporations, exports, imports, and consumer prices. The topic is child labor.

On the board, write “child labor”. Under that, write 5-15—not in school; under that write 5-18—hazardous work. Explain that, according to U.S. and international law, a child is anyone under the age of 18. Child laborers typically are children aged 5-15 doing work that prevents them from attending school or is considered dangerous or hazardous. Older children performing hazardous work also are counted as child laborers.

Ask students to raise their hands if they help out by doing chores around the house. Ask two or three to describe the jobs. Refer them to the board. Then ask the class if they think this work could be called “child labor.” Why not?

Ask if any of the students have occasional paid jobs around the neighborhood. Ask them to list some of those jobs (such as baby-sitting, dog-walking, mowing lawns, delivering papers). Refer them to the board again, and ask if this work is child labor. Why not?

Point out that the International Labor Organization estimates that about 250 million children around the world are child laborers. Write this number on the board. Many of them help to make products that are exported to the United States stores. Because the children are paid so little, the products they make usually can be sold more cheaply than American-made products.

Tell students they will be reading about a few child laborers and their jobs.
(The cases used here are adapted from “All Work and No Pay,” a 2001 study by Human Rights Watch.)

Activity

Child Labor Case Studies (25 minutes)

With the teacher’s help, separate the class into groups of six. If fewer than six students remain, decide whether to add them into other groups or participate in the activity as a smaller group. Note: It is important that each group has copies of all six case studies.

If you end up with more than six students in a group, one student can be the official group reporter; in groups of six, ask one student to volunteer to work with a case study as well as be a reporter.

Ask the group reporters to do the following during their group’s discussion:

- List the jobs performed by the child laborers.
- In two columns, list the advantages and disadvantages of child labor to all concerned.

Distribute the six case studies to each group and ask each student to take one case and read it silently. While students read, write the above directions on the board as a reminder for all.

As soon as most students have finished reading, tell them to start working on the tasks noted on the board. Urge each student to contribute so that the group responses will be complete. Remind students to keep their voices low so as not to disturb other groups. While they are working, you and the teacher can walk around to see how the groups are doing and help when necessary.

After about 10 minutes, call time. Ask each reporter to read his or her group’s list of jobs. Write these on the board. Then, ask for each group’s list of advantages and disadvantages and write these on the board under the appropriate headings.

Give the groups their final task. Ask them to choose the advantages and the disadvantages they agree are the strongest, then be prepared to explain their choices.

When groups have made their decisions, once again have the reporters read their choices to the class. If groups disagree, lead a brief discussion to see if a consensus can be reached. Note: Agreement is not essential; the enhanced understanding that comes from discussion is what is important.

Now, ask for a show of hands to see how many students believe we ought to encourage child labor somehow. How many would like to see us discourage it?

Ask how people in the United States could help discourage child labor overseas. **Possible Answer:** Our government could refuse to allow certain goods to be imported or could charge discouragingly high tariffs on them. Consumers could refuse to buy certain goods. We could ask the United Nations to outlaw child labor in its member nations.

When students have finished sharing their ideas, explain the following:

- According to the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the U.S. government cannot discriminate against imports from individual countries.
- The United Nations has already taken a stand against child labor.
- Most underdeveloped countries have more urgent uses for money (food, clean water, supplies, healthcare) than building schools.

What can consumers do to discourage child labor? **Possible Answers:** Boycott goods made by children. Encourage multinational corporations headquartered in the U.S. to make sure they are not using child labor in their overseas factories. Have our government urge and encourage foreign governments to end child labor.

Discuss with the class the merits of these ideas. Make certain students understand how difficult it is to find out what goods are made using child labor. Some of the products we do know about, such as rugs, soccer balls, sneakers, and chocolate, have been reported by travelers, journalists, and human rights organizations. As a result of those reports, some agreements have been reached. Rugs produced without using child labor are certified under the RUGMARK label. The international soccer organization, FIFA, marks acceptable soccer balls with their insignia. In other cases, public pressure caused a clothing company and an athletic shoe manufacturer to change the way workers are hired overseas.

Summary and Review (10 minutes)

Briefly review the vocabulary introduced in the session.

Tell the class you are going to read a final case study about a child laborer:

My name is Roberto, and I am 13 years old. My family and I work on orchards and farms, picking fruits and vegetables. We travel from place to place with our foreman, going where the crops are ripe and ready to be picked. We live in cheap, wooden shacks, usually with outdoor bathrooms that farmers allow us to use while we work on their land. Because we move so often, I cannot go to school for more than a few months during the winter season.

My family and I work from sunrise to sunset, with a half-hour break for lunch. Sometimes, when it is very hot, I wish the foreman would bring us more than two, small bottles of water. But, I know if I complain, it might cause problems for me and my family. Sometimes I can barely breathe because of the pesticides that have been sprayed on the fields, and I get terrible rashes from the chemicals. I don't know if there are laws that keep kids my age from working on farms, or telling the bosses how long we can work, or how much we must be paid. I think I make about \$2 per hour.

Ask students to guess what country Roberto lives in. Students may be surprised and shocked. The organization Human Rights Watch calls his story typical of some migrant workers in the United States. Roberto is in the United States legally.

Ask students how they feel about having child laborers in their own country. Do they think they can do anything to discourage it? Is there anything they might be able to do when they get older?

Point out that laws exist to prevent children from being exploited by employers. For example, youths below the age of 16 cannot work in occupations declared by the government to be hazardous. Handling or applying toxic agricultural chemicals is considered hazardous, but exposure to treated crops is allowable. Youths 12 and 13 years of age can work on farms only outside of school hours and if their parents are employed or with their parents' written consent. Roberto should be attending class during the school year. Minimum wage laws differ from state to state, with some states having no minimum wage. While students won't resolve associated problems in this class period, you may have planted some seeds for further thought.

Session Outline

Introduction

- Greet the students.
- Tell them that during today's session, they will learn about child labor and how it relates to international trade.
- Define child labor.

Activity

- Distribute case studies to groups of six students.
- Groups report on types of child labor and its advantages and disadvantages.
- Discuss how child labor can be discouraged overseas.

Summary and Review

- Review the Key Terms for the session.
- Read the case study of a child laborer in the United States.
- Ask how child labor in the United States can be discouraged.
- Thank the students for their participation.

Child Labor Case Studies



Faiz

I am 12 years old, and I live in Pakistan. When I was 9 and 10 years old, I worked in a soccer ball factory 80 hours per week. The boss liked to hire children like me because we had small hands and fingers and could sew the little pieces of leather together more easily than an adult. I never got to play with any of the soccer balls myself. They were exported to the United States and Germany.

I earned \$1.20 a day and gave the money to my mother to buy food for our family. My father was badly injured, and my wages, and my older brothers' wages, were essential for our family. My younger sister helped by living with another family as a cleaning and laundry girl.

When I was 11, I asked to leave my boring job, start school, and get an education to better myself, but the school fees were too high. Now our family has moved to a small farming village, and I do a man's work in the fields from sunrise to sunset. If the rains come on time, we will have enough to eat this year.



Nelson

I am 10 years old, and I live in Peru. I work with my uncle, who makes gold jewelry for tourists. My job is to mix the ore with mercury so that the gold can be extracted. Sometimes, the mixture splashes onto my skin. I work from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., six days each week. Sunday is my day off.

I am happy to help my family with the work. I hope I can learn all that my uncle knows about making jewelry and help my family even more in the future.

A neighbor told me that working with mercury can be dangerous. It can cause brain damage, making walking difficult and affecting intelligence. This may be true, but I must continue doing my work. My whole family depends on selling our gold jewelry.



Ashok

I am 42 years old and live in India. My family's money allowed me to set up a carpet factory. My 15 workers spend six, long days each week, knotting short pieces of wool around the strong threads on their looms. Because this kind of work is done best by small fingers, my employees are all young women and children. I sell my carpets to an exporter in Bombay, who ships them to the United States and Europe.

My youngest worker had no birth certificate to show me, but he claimed to be 13, the age when boys have finished primary school, if they go at all. He looked more like 10. I did not want to hire him, but I felt sorry for him and his family. I knew they needed the money and that if I did not hire him someone else probably would. He looked underfed and desperate when he asked for the job.

My workers do not have to stand all day at their looms; I have given them wooden benches to sit on. Electricity to light their work area is too expensive for me, but I think their young eyes are able to adjust to the darkness of the early mornings and evenings.

Merrick

I am over 50 years old and live in California. I am a manager for a large, multinational garment company that indirectly employs hundreds of workers in Vietnam and Myanmar in Southeast Asia. I say “indirectly”, because they actually are hired and paid by the local contractors we use. Once trained, these Asian workers do an excellent job. They cut and sew clothing for about \$2 per day, compared to the \$6 per hour we used to pay American workers. Our cheaper labor costs enable us to compete successfully with other garment-makers and stay in business. American consumers like our clothing because it is well made and costs less than similar items made in the United States. It leaves them more money to spend on other things.

Some people criticize companies like mine for not hiring unemployed American workers. Actually, it was not always easy to find Americans who wanted to work for \$6 an hour. Critics also say we take advantage of the foreign workers: we pay them very little and make them work 14 hours a day, conditions American workers would not stand for. My response is that some overseas countries have a 50-70 percent unemployment rate, so our workers are lucky that we are providing jobs.



Shandra

I am 32 and the mother of five children in Togo, West Africa. A year ago, a man came to our village and offered my husband and me \$50 if we would allow him to take our 11 year-old son, Pierre, to a cacao plantation to work. He said our son would earn money each month and send it back to us. His job would be to climb cacao trees, pick and slice the pods of cocoa beans, and set them out to dry. These beans are used to make chocolate, a very profitable item for export.

Fifty dollars is about one quarter of a year’s income for my family, so we took the money and entrusted our son to this man. We wanted to send at least one of our children to elementary school, but could not afford the school fees, shoes, and books until we were given this extra money. Now, our oldest son is going to school, but we have heard nothing from Pierre and received no money. We miss him very much and worry about his safety. Our government does not protect the rights of our children, so there is nothing we can do but hope that he is learning a practical skill that will support him in the future.



Malik

I am the Trade Minister for my country in South Asia. Those of us in the president’s cabinet are concerned about child labor in our country. We would be much happier if multinational companies hired adults instead of children. We would like the multinational companies to refuse to hire child workers and hire their parents instead. We also would like them to pay higher wages so families could live better and help improve our whole economy with their spending. We know they have to pay more when they hire workers in their own country.

We do have laws against hiring children for full-time work. However, it is difficult to enforce these laws. One reason is that we have only a few factory inspectors for our whole country. It is also difficult to keep track of contractors that provide children to a factory and then move on. Many employers prefer to hire children because they are more easily controlled than adults. Some claim that because our country does not provide birth certificates, they cannot really tell a child’s age.

For economic reasons, our government is not able to provide free education to all our children. In the countryside, schools may be too far from where some people live. Poor families need everyone possible to work. If there is no requirement or possibility for children to go to school, they may as well help out.

Appendix

Welcome to Junior Achievement's *Excellence through Ethics*

As a Junior Achievement (JA) volunteer or teacher, you are joining other teachers and volunteers from across the United States in providing students with a unique educational experience. Junior Achievement's *Excellence through Ethics* offers students learning opportunities to share knowledge and information regarding ethics in business. JA strives to show students how business works, and to better evaluate organizations that conduct their operations in the right way.

Excellence through Ethics is designed to equip volunteers and teachers with supplemental, ethics-based activities for use with JA in-class programs for grades four through twelve. All these activities provide students with current and essential information about business ethics.

These activities are designed to reinforce students' knowledge and skills, teach them how to make ethical decisions, assist them in learning to think critically, and help them to be better problem-solvers. All the activities are hands-on, interactive, and group-focused to present the material to students with the best instructional methods.

Within these supplements, you will find sections to help you effectively implement the activities in your volunteer experience. Materials include: (a) an introductory discussion of business ethics, marketplace integrity, and the growing capacity of students for ethical decision-making; (b) activities and student materials that connect to and expand current classroom-based Junior Achievement programs; and (c) a functional glossary of terms relating to a wide spectrum of ethics, quality, service, and social responsibility considerations in business.

JA greatly appreciates your support of these important and exciting activities. If you have comments about the *Excellence through Ethics* program content, curriculum, and/or instruction, please access <http://studentcenter.ja.org.aspx/LearnEthics/> and choose the “*Excellence through Ethics* Survey” link located in the middle of the page.

Appendix

Introduction and Overview

- *How do I do the right thing in this situation?*
- *Should I be completely honest, even if it puts others in jeopardy?*
- *What kind of community do we want to be?*
- *How do we do what's best for the long term?*
- *Who should cover the cost of "doing the right thing"?*

These are all questions having to do with business ethics. They are valid and necessary questions, and good business people have asked them for generations. They form the backdrop of vital discussions as business, community, and political leaders grapple with significant issues. Many students would ask these questions, even if Junior Achievement hadn't developed this ethics curriculum.

Business Ethics Discussions Are Here To Stay

Business ethics has been in the spotlight for much of the past decade, especially as examples of wrongdoing come to light in the media. New technologies and international competitive pressures cause a steady focus on the question, "Is it possible to be competitively successful in business today and still operate in an honest and ethical manner?" The past decade has seen individuals search for deeper personal meaning in the workplace, which has contributed to lively ethics discussions in the business realm. For these reasons, the discussion of business ethics is not a passing fad; it's here to stay.

Many graduate schools of business have either required ethics coursework or integrated ethics principles throughout all areas of study. That is commendable. We believe this vital area of exposure and instruction also should happen at earlier ages and continue throughout the students' educational journey. Many of today's students haven't had access to a well-rounded education in economics and free enterprise or have come to see these in a very negative light. They have limited awareness of the extent to which good business leaders engage in the challenging exercises of ethical decision-making amid heavy competitive pressures. As students learn the general principles of economics and business, it's critical that these be underpinned with a strong foundation in ethics. This will accentuate the best in American business traditions, while laying the groundwork for students' continued evolution into future generations of leaders.

Integrity in the Marketplace?

Many adults and young people choose to believe that the marketplace is driven only by greed. They view it as bringing out only the worst in human behavior, demoralizing the human spirit, and driving out any sense of idealism. While elements of greed and extreme self-interest among some individuals cannot be denied, solid research has shown time and again that companies with a long-term focus on ethics and a broad consideration of stakeholders' interests are much more profitable than those lacking such a focus.

James A. Autry, in his book *Love and Profit: The Art of Caring Leadership*, said it well: "I do not doubt the presence of greed in the marketplace because I do not doubt the presence of greed in people. But, I also do not doubt the ennobling aspects of work, of the workplace, of the community, of endeavor, of

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the marketplace. So I choose to believe that most of the marketplace is driven by people who want to do good work for others and for themselves.”

Excellence through Ethics accepts the challenge of educating youth in the basics of economics and business while establishing a positive balance on the side of well-informed, ethical business practice. This may appear to place a heavy burden on Junior Achievement volunteers, who are not trained ethics experts. The following informational pages will not turn you into an ethics expert. That’s not what we’re striving for here. What students need most is meaningful interaction with people who are willing to engage in a discussion of these vital issues.

Lively Practitioners Rather Than Dry Theorists

This program is more about day-to-day ethics practice than the nuances of ethics theory. Some believe that working in business requires a disconnect from one’s personal ethics. We do not believe this is the case. Students need to know that what they learn about fairness and honesty in general also applies to business. While business ethics may address some specific areas of business practice, it’s not a separate and distinct specialty to be set apart from the general ethical principles that apply in other areas of life. Young people need to encounter the wisdom of age and experience that volunteers bring to the classroom.

Students’ Growing Capacity for Ethical Decision-Making

Excellence through Ethics is designed to foster discussions at the appropriate level for each age group. The curriculum developers have designed the ethics activities with sensitivity to student’s mental maturity. At the late elementary and middle-grades levels, students’ capacities for ethical reasoning tend toward good personal behavior as determined by adult rules and authority. In relationships, personal trust, loyalty, and respect are of paramount importance. For these students, corporate ethical behavior is viewed in much the same light as their own personal behavior: it’s governed by rules.

As students advance into high school, their ethical decision-making moves into the larger arena of social contracts and systems that guide and govern societal and group behavior. Here the rationality and utility of laws are scrutinized, as students become more capable of higher-ordered, principled thinking. Students are increasingly aware of the diversity of values among different cultures and communities. At this level, students’ capacities for processing the complex, ethical dilemmas that may be encountered in business are greatly enhanced.

You will gain confidence as you come to realize that conducting a robust, provocative discussion with students is more important than “having the right answer.” The activities have been designed to leave room for lively discussion and multiple points of view. Having the courage to share your own experiences is very valuable to students.

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You don't have to apologize for the excesses students may see in business. Don't assume responsibility for actions that are not your own, and do not try to defend the indefensible. While accentuating the fact that most businesses operate ethically, it's okay to scrutinize the unethical players in the marketplace who give business in general a bad name.

Continuing Education

Teaching this material to students will no doubt strengthen and enhance your own ethics awareness and continuing education. Some students will challenge your best reasoning capacities. Having your own support network of professional colleagues with whom you can share and discuss some of these issues is very valuable. It's also helpful to seek out colleagues with philosophical views that differ from your own. This serves as a valuable "cross-pollination" function because you will be able to understand and discuss a variety of views with students, as well as share students' perspectives with your colleagues. In this way, everyone learns.

Finally, please be assured that your contributions here have tremendous value to students and will serve to upgrade business ethics in the future. We're dealing with the future generation of leaders in their formative years. We can take pride in the fact that we've had a hand in shaping the very people who will be responsible for business ethics and social responsibility in the future.

Appendix

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Many educators, economists, businesspeople, and consultants have contributed to the development of *Excellence through Ethics*. We would like to acknowledge the following individuals and groups for their efforts, creative talents, and support in creating these materials:

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Appendix

Excellence through Ethics Evaluation

Junior Achievement has discontinued all paper versions of program surveys. However, we greatly appreciate your comments and feedback about *Excellence through Ethics*. Please help us improve the quality of *Excellence through Ethics* by sharing your comments through our new online survey process. The online survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

If you have comments about the *Excellence through Ethics* program content, curriculum, and/or instruction, please access <http://studentcenter.ja.org/asp/LearnEthics/> and choose the *Excellence through Ethics* Survey link located in the middle of the page.

Thank you for participating in JA!



Excellence through Ethics Volunteer Survey

1. Including this session, how many individual sessions of Excellence through Ethics have you presented? _____

2. Do you feel that the students were engaged through this session?
 - A. Not at all
 - B. Somewhat engaged
 - C. Engaged
 - D. Very Engaged
 - E. Unsure

3. Do you feel the session was relevant to students?
 - A. Not relevant
 - B. Somewhat relevant
 - C. Relevant
 - D. Very relevant
 - E. Unsure

4. Do you feel students are more prepared to make ethical decisions after participating in this session?
 - A. Significantly more prepared
 - B. Somewhat more prepared
 - C. Somewhat less prepared
 - D. Significantly less prepared
 - E. Unsure

5. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being excellent), how would you rate the overall quality of the Excellence through Ethics session? _____

6. After this JA experience, how likely are you to volunteer for JA again?
 - A. More likely to volunteer
 - B. Less likely to volunteer
 - C. No more or less likely to volunteer
 - D. Unsure

7. What comments or suggestions do you have regarding the overall session (including format, content, etc.)?

Optional: City _____

State _____ Country _____

Email _____

Excellence through Ethics Student Survey

1. What grade are you in? _____

2. Please fill in the circle that best describes how you feel about the following statements.

There is no right or wrong answer.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This topic is very important.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to apply what I learned in this session to the real world.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The activities were interesting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I learned something about ethics from this session.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Do you feel more prepared to make ethical decisions after participating in this session?

- A. Significantly more prepared
- B. Somewhat more prepared
- C. Somewhat less prepared
- D. Significantly less prepared
- E. Unsure

4. I saw someone at my job taking money from the cash register, I would:

- A. Ask someone I trust what I should
- B. Tell a supervisor
- C. Talk to the person taking the money
- D. Do nothing
- E. Not sure

5. To help us better understand who you are, please answer the following questions: How do you describe your ethnicity (family background)? (Fill in all that apply)

- A. African American
- B. Asian American
- C. Latino (a) or Chicano (a)
- D. European American (white)
- E. Native American
- F. Other – how do you identify yourself? _____

6. Do you have any additional comments regarding this session?

Optional: City _____ State _____ Country _____