**Introduction to the Self & the Concept of Reality**

**Overview**:

What is the Self and how do we define it? When thinking about abstract concepts such as gravity, how do we determine/distinguish between reality vs. imagination? What makes an idea real and what makes it fake? The lesson is divided into two parts, the first being the background discussion establishing definitions and ideas, and the second being an activity to share ideas based upon what was discussed in the first half. This lesson can take between 35-45 minutes.

**Goal**:

The goal is to get students to think about who they are and how to express themselves, while also having students think about the imaginary world and its comparison to reality. This lesson will get students to think about simple questions with complex answers to practice critical thinking, as well as promote them to develop a philosophical argument.

**Lesson (15-20 min)**

The lesson will start out with some simple ambiguous questions that can be answered in a big discussion. Depending on each response, try to press further by asking more questions based on their answer to get the kids to think and dig deeper. Below are questions to ask the kids related to *The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity* reading by Dan Dennet (more simplified than the actual reading for K-5th). Feel free to ask more questions depending on each answer a student provides but, here are the main questions:

* What does self mean? Give an example of what it means to be yourself.
* When we drop a pencil what happens? Why? (Introduce the concept of gravity)
* Imagine if you were to drop a pencil where there’s no gravity, like on the moon, what would happen?
* What does it mean for something to *not* be real? Can anything be real?
* Can your sense of self fall if you can’t touch it?
* How do you imagine things?
* Can you imagine anything, why?

**Note**: After asking these questions get your students to come to a consensus on the definition of real and the definition of imaginary. Keep track of the definition to use for the group activity.

**Fun activity game: “Real or not Real” (15-20 min)**

In this activity there will be a word, and then you ask the kids if it is real or imaginary. Use the definitions that they came up with before and see if the words will fall into the category based on how they defined it. Get everyone to explain their reasoning on whether or not they think the words below fit into the categories they chose. The goal is to see if the definitions can truly determine what is real vs. what is imaginary, as well as to acknowledge the complexity of such concrete labels.

Example words to use:

Family

School

The Sun

Gravity

Shadow

Light

Happiness

Sadness

Love

The self

With each word asked, try to be a devil's advocate and say something opposite of what they say, continue to ask counter questions as well. For instance if they say that happiness is real because they can be happy, then ask them a counter question such as, “but can you touch happiness?” to continue to get them to think about it more. You can even flip the script and have one of the kids volunteer to give a word and the rest of the class can debate whether or not that word is real.

**Conclusion (5 min)**:

At the conclusion of the lesson ask the children what they thought about all the questions you asked previously. Was this lesson easy or hard? Why or why not?