



## ETHICS AND EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE

New York State  
School Boards Association  
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### WHAT ARE WE GOING TO TALK ABOUT?

- ETHICS AND VALUES
  - WHAT ARE THEY?
  - WHAT INFLUENCES THEM?
- ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND ISSUES WITHIN SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE
  - WHAT ARE THEY?
  - SOLVING THEM
- STRATEGIES TO MINIMIZE POOR ETHICAL DECISION MAKING AND BEHAVIOR

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#### DISCUSSION 1 (Study Guide)

#### WHAT IS ETHICAL BEHAVIOR AND CULTURE?

- A. What does being “ethical” mean to you as a school board member?
- B. What would be some behavioral indicators that a school board member is acting “ethically”?
- C. How would you describe an “ethical culture” in a school district?

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## WHAT ARE ETHICS?

- **Ethics**
  - Comes from Greek “ethos” meaning “customs” or “usages” of a group, later with notion of “approved” ways of acting
  - A code of moral standards of conduct for what is “good”, “right”, “fair”, and “caring” as opposed to what is “bad” or “wrong”
- **Ethical Behavior**
  - That which is “right” or “good” in the context of governing moral code
  - Ethical behavior is value driven
- **Ethical Dilemmas**
  - Situations that require deciding between two “rights”

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## WHAT DOES “BEING ETHICAL” MEAN TO US?

- **CHOOSING RIGHT OVER WRONG (JUSTICE)**
  - Respecting others’ (moral/legal) rights
  - Discharging our own (moral/legal) obligations
- **CHOOSING FAIR OVER UNFAIR (FAIRNESS)**
  - Impartially considering and balancing all affected parties’ interests
- **CHOOSING GOOD OVER BAD CONSEQUENCES (CARING)**
  - Promoting good consequences
  - Avoiding and minimizing bad consequences
- **LIVING VALUES SERIOUSLY (CORE VALUES)**
  - Choosing and living core values that guide *right*, *fair* and *good* human conduct
- **CULTIVATING GOOD CHARACTER**
  - Integrity; Honesty; Responsibility; Accountability; Caring

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### DISCUSSION 2 (Study Guide)

#### FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP DIFFERENCES IN THE MEANING OF ETHICS

- A. What factors can influence the ethical value system of you as a person and as a school board member?
- B. What factors can influence different perspectives in a school district’s constituency groups that then create difficult public relations for you as a school board member?

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**WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE OUR ETHICAL VALUE SYSTEMS?**

- **PEOPLE:** gender; age; professional study
- **EVENTS:** 9/11; school district history
- **FAMILY:** children; family history and interests
- **RELIGION:** views on issues such as suicide; homosexuality
- **SCHOOLS:** size; geography; USA location
- **MEDIA:** newspaper; TV—local; national; global
- **POLITICS:** town, county, city, school \$ interests
- **TIME:** generational gap; time of school year
- **TECHNOLOGY:** use of cell phones; My Space; Face Book
- **CULTURE:** body language; trust; importance of education

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**TIME**

TABLE 5.2

People and events have influenced the formation of values for three groups of Americans: Matures, Baby Boomers, and Generation X. These three generations were recently joined by the Millennial generation, whose life events are still happening. This means that today's work force represents the broadest range of ages and values in American history.

Matures (born 1928–1945)	Baby Boomers (born 1946–1961)	Generation X (born 1962–1972)
Eisenhower	Television	AIDS
MacArthur	The Cold War	The Wellness movement
The A-bomb	The space race	Watergate
Dr. Spock	The Civil Rights Act	War with Iraq
John Wayne	The pill	Glasnost
Mickey Mantle	The drug culture	The Oklahoma City bombing
The Great Depression	Gloria Steinem	MTV
World War II	The Vietnam War	The World Wide Web
The New Deal	John Travolta	Health care reform
Andy and Opie Taylor	JFK and MLK assassinations	Work/life balance concerns

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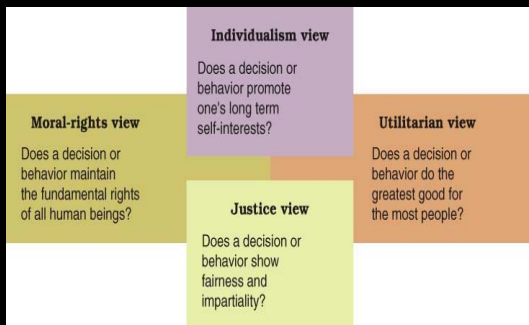
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**MORAL REASONING FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES  
 WHY DECISIONS CAN BE VERY DIFFICULT**




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**CULTURAL RELATIVISM VS. MORAL ABSOLUTISM:  
 WHY WE GET INTO TROUBLE AND WHY WE DISAGREE**




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**SOLVING EDUCATIONAL ETHICAL DILEMMAS**

- **A DILEMMA OF YOUR OWN:** Using the Questionnaire work sheet in your packet, think of a school board experience when you had to make a decision that was very difficult for you. The reason the decision was difficult was that your choices created a values conflict for you.

- Briefly describe the situation.
- What were the conflicting values?
- What was your decision and why?
- In retrospect, would you do anything differently if faced with a similar situation again?

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**AN ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

- Describe the Ethical Dilemma. What are the Conflicting Values?
- Factors that can influence your decision:
  - What do relevant laws and policies dictate?
  - What do professional ethics dictate?
  - What are the public, community and societal (national, global) values and interests around this issue?
  - What are any political interests?
  - What are economic or financial implications?
  - What are your school and school district cultures around this issue?
- Who are the individuals involved and what are their interests?
- What are your choices?
- What are the results and ethical ramifications of each choice?
- Who will be happy and who will be unhappy with each choice?
- What decision can you live with professionally and ethically?
- What can you do to minimize any negative impacts of the decision?
- How can you prevent the issue from happening again (or reduce the incidences or impacts of the issue)?

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### SIMILARITIES IN ETHICAL DILEMMAS

- Ethics are frequently about difficult choices
- Ethical choices come up in our personal (and professional) lives every single day in ordinary and, sometimes, difficult situations
- Our ethical choices affect people (ourselves and others) and their important interests (well-being, welfare, good)
- Getting to the “best” ethical answers frequently involves discussion with others and detailed reasoning

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### OUR LEADERSHIP ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY

*Nothing is more powerful for employees than seeing their managers behave according to their expressed values and standards: nothing is more devastating to the development of an ethical environment than a manager who violates the organization's ethical standards.*

Dan Rice and Craig Dreilinger  
Authors, *Rights and Wrongs of Ethics*

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### “ETHICAL VIOLATIONS IN EDUCATION” (STUDY GUIDE)

- A. What do you think are the most common areas of ethical violations for school board members; for administrators?
- B. As you review the ethical violations you've shared, what do you think are some reasons why an individual might make a bad ethical decision?
- C. What are some of the impacts on students of these types of violations?
- D. What are some proactive and preventative practices you can put in place in your school district?

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**ETHICAL ISSUES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION** or  
 "What were they thinking?", 2006-07

- **Administrators and Money:**
  - Roslyn, New York: \$11 million embezzlement
  - Baltimore: \$1,600 school district funds for fishing outing for school and city officials
  - New Orleans: \$400,000 in work awards kick-back schemes
  - Dallas: Taking bribes for \$40 million worth of contracts
  - Charter school directors, FLA, CA; several hundred thousand dollars
- **Sex:**
  - \$250 school funds for viewing porn, Union City
  - Middletown superintendent: sex with junior high school boy
  - NYC Assistant principal, soliciting minors for sex on internet
- **Lying:**
  - NY Superintendent lied on resume; hired a friend who was convicted sexual offender as a consultant (in 2 districts); hired in Michigan, then Illinois (increasingly larger districts)
  - NYC and Touro College: Administrator and teachers—cash for grades and transcripts
  - Miami, Dade County: 35 teachers fired for selling phony credentials

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**ETHICAL ISSUES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION**  
 "What were they thinking?", 2006-07

- **Students:**
  - Texas: 14 yr old—"I love Alex" on wall-4 months in Alternative Education school
  - NY: teacher wrapped student's head and mouth with tape because he talked too much (ADHD); 30 suspension—1 week lost pay
  - Texas: "Fab-Five" Cheerleaders
  - Arkansas: opening gay student had to read passages from Bible out loud
  - Virginia: teacher, outside of school, smears paint on his rear end and presses against canvass (fired)
  - Memphis: administrators tampered with tests (54% - 95% student improvement in one year)
  - Penfield: 200 student drinking party (125 athletes present)
- **BOE (not all 2007):**
  - Greenwood, NY: BOE member caught growing fields of marijuana
  - District south of Syracuse: BOE member gets out of seat, goes into audience and yells profanity at rest of Board
  - Hornell, NY: BOE member campaigns against BOE approved capital project

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**MOST COMMON ETHICAL CONFLICTS**  
 with Boards of Education

- Abusing limits of authority
- Having a special "interest" or "issue"
- Confidentiality issues
- Respect; bullying of others
- Nepotism
- Conflicts of Interest
- Open meetings law
- Breaking the law
- Staff, parents, community with different values
- **OTHERS** from your experiences?

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**REASONS WHY SOME SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS MAKE POOR ETHICAL DECISIONS**

- Knowledge gaps
- Arrogance; Ego
- Special Issue(s)
- Personality flaws
- Frustration
- Stress
  - Professional: Pressure from individuals or groups within school and/or community
  - Personal

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**STRATEGIES FOR ETHICAL DECISION MAKING IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

- Policies and Standard Practices
  - Codes of Ethics, Conduct, and Core Values
  - Clear and consistently applied District Policies
    - Regular review of BOE Policy Book (ex: 3 year revolving review)
  - Personnel Hiring and Retention practices
    - Job descriptions; interview committees; interviewer training; interview established format, questions and ratings
  - Character Education programs: applied to all school activities
    - District-wide with community interaction; Bullying prevention
- Reviewing and Communicating Expectations
  - To BOE—annual: review of Code of Ethics, Core Values, communication expectations
  - To Staff—annual orientation: harassment and discrimination (sexual and others); confidentiality; bullying prevention; codes of conduct
  - To Students—annual orientation; code of conduct review; programs such as sexual harassment; bullying prevention; sportsmanship
  - To community—website; parent meetings; newsletter

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**THE NSBA BOARD ENDORSES THE FOLLOWING CODE FOR LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS:**

- As a member of my local Board of Education I will strive to improve public education, and to that end I will:
- attend all regularly scheduled board meetings insofar as possible, and become informed concerning the issues to be considered at those meetings;
  - recognize that I should endeavor to make policy decisions only after full discussion at publicly held board meetings;
  - render all decisions based on the available facts and my independent judgment, and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special interest groups;
  - encourage the free expression of opinion by all board members, and seek systematic communications between the board and students, staff, and all elements of the community;
  - work with other board members to establish effective board policies and to delegate authority for the administration of the schools to the superintendent;
  - communicate to other board members and the superintendent expression of public reaction to board policies and school programs;
  - inform myself about current educational issues by individual study and through participation in programs providing needed information, such as those sponsored by my state and national school boards association;
  - support the employment of those persons best qualified to serve as school staff, and insist on a regular and impartial evaluation of all staff;
  - avoid being placed in a position of conflict of interest;
  - take no private action that will compromise the board or administration, and respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged under applicable law; and
  - remember always that my first and greatest concern must be the educational welfare of the students attending the public schools

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