

Personal Code of Ethics

As an educator, and possible future educational leader, my personal code of ethics is one that encompasses integrity, communication, respect, shared goals, compassion, open-mindedness, and confidentiality. A leader knows what is right and uses it to do the right thing regardless of personal risk. I will use this personal code of ethics when making decisions involving ethical dilemmas and to guide my profession.

The educational leader:

1. Provides services in a nondiscriminatory manner
2. Accepts responsibility for his or her own actions
3. Seeks to improve the profession through professional development and research
4. Fulfills professional responsibilities with honesty and integrity
5. Makes the well-being of students the primary value in decision-making
6. Protects students and staff from conditions harmful to health and safety
7. Protects the civil and human rights of all individuals
8. Implements and obeys local, state, and national laws
9. Honors all contracts until fulfillment or release
10. Commits to serving others above self
11. Avoids using professional position for personal gain
12. Maintains confidentiality of staff and students unless compelled otherwise due to federal, state, and school district policies

13. Shall not accept gifts or favors that impair professional judgment
14. Fills positions that require licensure with appropriately licensed persons that have been approved by the school board
15. Avoid conduct that involves dishonesty, fraud, or misrepresentations of professional duties
16. Communicates the vision and values with staff and stakeholders
17. Respects employees as equal partners
18. Focuses on shared goals rather than personal agendas

### **Reflection on thoughts of two philosophers**

Rebore, R. W. (2001). Ethical Considerations in Leadership at the School-District Level. In D. Stollenwerk (Ed.), *The Ethics of Educational Leadership* (pp. 103-131). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a philosopher during the modern period that was influenced by freedom and lived his life through citizenship. In Rousseau's book, *Emile*, he maintained that the "process of education should promote and encourage the natural creativity of children rather than act as a curb and hindrance to their natural tendencies" (Rebore, 2001, p. 104). He believed that children should learn through direct interaction rather than verbal instruction. He also suggested that parents are the natural teachers of their children. Parents will be more effective teachers if love and sympathy, rather than rules and punishment, are used to teach because children are naturally good.

Rousseau maintained that "what the majority wants may not always be good and just. However, it is the process that is important, and the process tends to be self-correcting" (Rebore,

2001, p. 105). Rousseau's social-contract theory was developed based on the notion of human freedom. School districts, for example, exist to serve the citizens, provide the best education to all children, and to involve the community in decision-making. Therefore, according to his theory, "public discourse should be an ongoing method of fulfilling the compact" (p. 108). People should not place personal beliefs before their duty to be a good individual, or citizen.

I agree that people are born free and good, as maintained by Rousseau. Society's evils create an unjust system. I also strongly agree that a child's greatest teacher is his parent. Parents teach their child life lessons and values that will shape the child as an adult.

I do not agree, however, that parents should avoid the use of rules and punishment to teach their children. Love and sympathy is very important. Every child must learn these traits in order to have empathy, show respect, and be a caring individual. Rules and punishment create a system of order and dependability. Children need guidance. We cannot simply provide love and sympathy at all times.

As an educator I see Rousseau's theory very practical. Troubled children are typically not taught important values by their parents at a young age. The school then has to make up for the lack of teaching of love and sympathy. It is very difficult to teach core values that should have been taught to the child at a young age. I believe that society, including parent influence, has shaped many students at a young age. It is very difficult to re-teach values and re-create the child who was once born free of evil.

Society's evils will continue to be problematic for school children. We cannot take away these evils. Parents and educators need to teach children how to make good choices. Techniques that use love, logic, and nurture can help children develop the sense of right and wrong. After all, the goal of education is to create life-long learners. If we give our children the tools they need to

make appropriate decisions, they will become citizens that make decisions for the greater good, as suggested by Rousseau.

Rebore, R. W. (2001). The Issue of Gender and Educational Leadership. In D. Stollenwerk (Ed.), *The Ethics of Educational Leadership* (pp. 185-214). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Edith Stein was a philosopher during the contemporary period that focused her studies on gender issues. In her studies, she analyzed the human species, the woman species, and the individual. "Stein believed that the soul of a woman is a different species from the soul of a man; but she further believed that woman and men share the same human soul" (Rebore, 2001, p. 190). The extent of how female or male a person becomes is dependent on the education they receive. She suggested that education will be most beneficial when human beings have continuous interaction with each other.

I agree that the male and female species appear to have different characteristics. She argued that men have tendencies to perfect individual abilities whereas women seek empathy toward others (Rebore, 2001, p. 191). I agree that there are many very obvious differences between men and women. These differences are not always true. Some men possess a greater drive for empathy over perfection of individual differences.

In past decades, women were not allowed to attend school or use thinking abilities. Mathematical reasoning skills were most common among males. However, as society has changed women have become more driven to perfect individual abilities. Therefore, in my opinion, society shapes how masculine or feminine a person becomes.

As an educator I will use this philosophy to incorporate individualization. Each individual possesses different character traits. I do not believe that boys and girls should be separated. The two species should be placed together to learn from each other. If males and females encompass different souls, as suggested by Stein, then the greatest achievement is to use communication and collaboration to create species that can benefit from masculine and feminine traits.

It is important that we recognize these differences and use them to make instruction appropriate for each learner. Each species' different perspective is part of the reason we live in a dynamic society. People think differently. We each encompass our own values, beliefs, and habits. Let's use those differences to make each other stronger.

### Virtues

Rebore, R. W. (2001). *Developing a Personal Approach to Ethics*. In D. Stollenwerk (Ed.), *The Ethics of Educational Leadership* (pp. 19-54). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

### Prudence

Prudence includes memory, foresight, imagination, and docility (Rebore, 2001, p. 30). Rebore (2001) suggests that "the prudent person attempts to recall past experiences and similar experiences when he or she faces an issue or problem that requires a decision; he or she also tries to predict the possible consequences associated with various options" (p. 30). Prudence, in my opinion, is one of the most important virtues that an effective administrator should possess. A successful administrator learns from past experiences and uses those experiences to become a more experienced administrator.

As a teacher, I have used prudence to make many decisions. It has always been my motto to live and learn. In the past, I had a disruptive student in my class that was inhibiting the learning of others. This year I had a similar situation. Using my past experience, I decided it would be best to remove the disruptive student from the classroom and place the student outside the classroom doors. The student was able to hear the lesson and I was able to see the student at all times. My past experience reminded me that I should not sacrifice the learning of other students and keep that student in the room.

As an administrator, prudence will be a very vital tool to use in decision-making. All situations should have a variety of solutions. Picking a solution can be a daunting task. However, prudence allows the administrator to use past experiences to influence decisions. Administrators can use ideas that have worked well to pick the best solution. Effective administrators must have a powerful amount of prudence.

### Justice

According to Rebore (2001), "justice is concerned with the individual's relationship to others in the various communities in which he or she lives" (p. 30). Justice comes in three forms: individuals are obligated to society, society is obligated to individuals, and relationships among individuals are regulated (Rebore, 2001, p. 30). Justice is served in many ways throughout the day. Administrators must provide individuals in the school district appropriate rights and responsibilities that follow each individual's society.

Justice is also served in the classroom. Each student is entitled to a free and appropriate education. Therefore including students with disabilities in the general education classroom serves as a type of justice. Providing consequences to students that do not follow school or

classroom rules also serves as justice because it helps regulate relationships among individuals and promotes legal justice.

### Fortitude

Rebore (2001) maintains that “fortitude not only helps people moderate their fear and anxiety, but also helps individuals overcome their weaknesses in the pursuit of doing good in their private and public lives” (p. 31). Administrators that are afraid of criticism or fear will not be able to effectively manage the system. Those that take the safe route when making decisions will also be very ineffective. An administrator that has fortitude will overcome obstacles and be a strong leader.

As a classroom teacher, I am still working on acquiring fortitude. It’s a difficult task to overcome the fear of making mistakes when you’re an educator. Once I have acquired fortitude, I will be able to move forward with confidence. This year, my fortitude has become stronger. I had three students that I also taught in first grade that were in my class again this year. I found my confidence level and fear of making mistakes less with these students and parents. As I gain more teaching experience, I feel my fortitude will increase. This will also increase my fortitude as an administrator.

### Temperance

Rebore (2001) recommends that administrators have temperance in order to maintain a desirable lifestyle. He suggests that “temperance is a flexible virtue and as such requires the individual to learn his or her limits in order to recognize when gratification begins to obscure other values” (p. 31). My own principal has warned me that any principalship can be a daunting task. It acquires a great deal of time outside of the school day. With the high standards a principal must meet, it’s easy to become professionally exhausted.

To help maintain sanity, principals must find balance between work and personal interests. I believe that work issues should be left at school. When I must take work home with me, I save it for a time that will not impact my family. Family and interests must be maintained otherwise my professional responsibilities will take over my life and I will have nothing left but those responsibilities. However it is also important not to let the pleasure overtake the responsibilities.

### Classroom Ethical Issue Reflection

Someone shared a situation about a parent that pulled her student out of school because the student was going to have in-school suspension for two days due to the breaking of a student handbook policy. The parent kept the student at home because she claimed she was the only one that could discipline her child. She kept her student out of school for five days.

This situation is very familiar and is one that probably occurs in many schools. Parents that do not respect student handbook policies or understand consequences make administration a difficult task. In this situation, I think it's very important that the parent understands the ramifications for breaking school policies. The parent should also revisit the school's mission and be reminded that the school is not punishing students. The school is trying to provide a safe learning environment that provides an appropriate education for all students.

Parents that are not compliant with school policies should be encouraged to be part of a committee that reviews the mission and sets school policies. The parent also needs to understand that taking the student out of school will negatively impact her child's education. No matter how long her child is out of school, her child will still have to serve two days in suspension. By keeping her child out of school, she is breaking the Compulsory Attendance Law. As an

administrator, it is your ethical duty to follow local, state, and federal laws. It is also your ethical duty to make sure each child is receiving an appropriate education.

### Personal Dilemma

In my own experience, I have been faced with many ethical dilemmas. I had a child in my elementary classroom that continually disrupted learning for all students with violence and verbal outbursts. The student made many threats and consistently lashed out at other students with physical violence in my classroom, on the playground, and at lunch. The threats were documented, as were the physical encounters.

However little was being done at the administrative level to stop the violence from reoccurring. In my own classroom, I was able to remove the student from the classroom during times of conflict. The violence was becoming more prominent and many parents were voicing their concerns. I was also very concerned because it is my ethical duty to ensure the safety of all my students. I would not have felt safe with my own student in a class with this child.

Therefore I met with the school counselor and administrator and set up a policy for his behaviors. The student was placed on a behavior chart that was sent home daily for parents to review. There was also a plan implemented that had levels of consequences for physical behavior. For example, one physical offense in a week resulted in a half day of in-school suspension. Eventually the student would be sent home for a full day of suspension when four offenses occurred within a week. The parent was very adamant about not missing work for a suspended child. We felt this was the best way to show the parent that their child's inappropriate behavior was very serious.



If I was put in this situation again, I would do many things differently. First of all, I would file a grievance against the student when he threatened me, which happened on more than one occasion. I would fill out harassment forms when verbal threats were made to other students.

Overall I handled the situation to the best of my knowledge. It was only my second year of teaching. I provided more than enough documentation for the student to proceed with RtI the following year in second grade. The data I collected was useful for the teacher and the special education staff. This situation demonstrates the importance of zero tolerance for bullying and violence and strict adherence to handbook policies.

#### Power of the Office

Rebore, R. W. (2001). The Use of Power in Schools and School Districts. In D. Stollenwerk (Ed.), *The Ethics of Educational Leadership* (pp. 56-62). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

#### Inspirational Power

The inspirational leader learns how to meet the needs of others and makes it a top priority to inspire others to be their best. An educational leader must be able to influence people, based on their ability to influence others to want to model themselves after the leader. This power allows the leader to create a positive learning environment where all student and staff thrive.

I need to gain confidence in my own ability so I can develop a confident leadership style that others will want to follow. Through modeling ethical behaviors, I hope to inspire others to do the same. I will serve to be a proactive administrator rather than a reactive one. Therefore I will think about possible solutions to ethical conflicts before acting and always think about what's best for the system at large. I feel one of the most important ethical codes is to provide

communication about visions, goals, and ethical beliefs with staff members and stakeholders. Communication will allow others to understand the importance of my values and why they are important to me as an administrator.

### Charismatic Power

In order to possess charisma, I will attempt to possess and display positive characteristics. I will adjust my personality to meet the needs of the job. By dressing and presenting myself professionally, maintaining professional relationships, and articulating my competence I will try to create charisma among my staff. This type of power will develop, among staff members, through conduct that involves honesty and integrity. I will continue to show others my level of competence regarding school matters. This means I will stay informed through research and professional development. I will also continue to relate to others through social interaction but not become overly involved that I create a personal relationship.

### Expert Power

In order to have expert power, I will bring specialized talents, experiences, and skills to the job. As I continue my education in Educational Leadership, I am gathering a specialized skill that most teachers do not possess. I hope to have expert power in administrative areas such as conflict management, federal and state regulations, and curriculum processes. I will continue to take part in leadership roles such as curriculum pilots, the RtI team, and the data analysis team. These areas are very specialized and most teachers do not possess the skills I will have obtained from these experiences. Therefore I hope to demonstrate to staff that I possess expert power in these areas that are necessary to be an effective administrator.

### Persuasive Power

The ability to manipulate rewards allows an administrator to possess persuasive power. In order to have the power to persuade others, I feel that teachers must value and respect the administrator. Therefore the principal must serve as a mentor and even demonstrate inspirational power. Staff that wants to do well, and is inspired by a principal, will be easily persuaded to join committees or take on different roles. It is also important to understand individual needs and inspirations. The principal can use personal wants and needs to persuade individuals to be part of things that will fulfill the person's desires.

### Knowledge Power

This type of power is similar to expert power. To possess this type of power, the principal should have access to staff members, colleagues, parents, and other stakeholders. The principal should also have access to the superintendent and other specialists that provide knowledge regarding school issues. Resources provide knowledge, and knowledge is power. Therefore, continual professional development and awareness of resources will allow my knowledge power to grow. This type of power is vital in protecting the civil and human rights of all individuals and implementing local, state, and national laws. My knowledge of legal information will allow me to provide a safe learning environment. Therefore I will have a great deal of knowledge power in this area.

### Coercive Power

This type of power should be used least by administrators. Fortunately I do not have coercive power nor do I see myself using this type of power often. In drastic measures, I might need to use this power as a last resort. For example, a teacher that refuses to teach mandated curriculum may need to have an unsatisfactory evaluation completed. I hope to never use

coercive power to threaten to terminate someone's employment. It is much more effective to lead others through influence and modeling of ethical behaviors. The same is true for students. In most cases, love and nurture can be used to reinforce good behaviors. However, sometimes it is appropriate to apply coercive power and implement consequences. Something I do not look forward to.