



# Academic Integrity E-Update

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*Ethics in action  
creates character*

*Ethical judgment is  
strengthened by:*

1. *Making an ethical third-party analysis*
2. *Recognizing consequences on people and things*
3. *Evaluating actions with core values*

## Strengthening Ethical Judgment

David B. Wangaard, Ed.D.

A student’s ability to demonstrate ethical judgment has long been recognized as one of several meaningful components to help support ethical action. Other components (described in earlier newsletters- see archive on SEE’s Integrity Works webpage) include ethical awareness (recognizing ethical circumstances), ethical commitment (make a personal commitment to an ethical choice) and ethical behavior (successfully acting on an ethical choice).

There are many published models to strengthen ethical judgment. Central to most of them is the concept that rules, social norms or core values are recognized and used to evaluate consequences of potential actions to any party that might be impacted. Core values were defined in our September newsletter. If we look at ethical judgment through a developmental lens, one might consider obeying rules to avoid punishment as the most basic form of ethical judgment, while honoring social norms to get along in society may require a greater sensitivity to others. Finally, an individual who seeks to uphold core values, which may conflict with social norms, is seeking an ethically principled decision. Someone defying old Jim Crow laws out of respect for its victims would provide one example of an ethically principled decision that violated both civil laws and social norms at the time.

One framework for making ethical judgments includes a third-party approach where the individual answers the question, “What would an ethical person do in this situation?” The point of this step is to attempt to remove the decision maker from personal emotions and possible bias within a situation. As best as possible, framing the question to seek the ethical third-party can help the analysis proceed without being clouded by emotion.

The steps of an ethical decision can be outlined as described below where the individual has recognized an ethical problem and proposes several solutions that are analyzed for their consequences and the core values that are demonstrated.

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| Describe ethical problem:                                 |  |  |
|   | Consequences (who and what are impacted) | Core values demonstrated in action alternative |
| Action Alternative 1                                      |  |  |
| Action Alternative 2                                      |  |  |
| Action Alternative 3                                      |  |  |
| Describe choice of an ethical person:                     |  |  |
| Explain why this choice demonstrates best of core values: |  |  |

The outline provided here is dependent on a clear understanding and application of the definitions of core values. The process also requires practice. Students will not typically seek to outline multiple action alternatives and carefully analyze consequences or the core values demonstrated by their actions. Practice can be accomplished through class discussion with characters in literature, history or current events (local, national or international in scope). As educators we have the choice to help strengthen our students’ ethical judgment while maintaining our focus on academic content.

*Character-based  
decision making  
strategy described  
at  
[ethicsed.org/golden-compass](http://ethicsed.org/golden-compass)*



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### **On-Line Teaching Tool to Resist Plagiarism**

SEE offers teachers an on-line lesson to teach strategies to resist plagiarism. Designed for high school students, the two-part lesson will help students define plagiarism, recognize plagiarism as an ethical failure and learn strategies to complete assignments with integrity. The lesson follows an outline cited by research to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism in college students. The E-lesson is created for self-paced instruction as a homework assignment. Teachers can assign the lesson and supply their students with the necessary URL and login information or have the class complete the lesson in a school computer lab. The lessons are presented in PowerPoint slides and use the dialogue of avatars representing high school students to communicate lesson objectives. Each of the two lessons should require less than 30 minutes to complete and each has a summary "quiz" to demonstrate lesson completion. For more information, visit SEE's website at [ethicsed.org/academic-integrity](http://ethicsed.org/academic-integrity) and click on the E-Lesson link in the right column.

### **Character-Based Decision Making with the Golden Compass**

SEE invites those interested in teaching a character-based decision making strategy to purchase our Golden Compass text and receive a free two-part professional development webinar to support implementation of the book. The two, 25 minute webinars support the strategies outlined in SEE's *The Golden Compass* workbook. More information can be found at [ethicsed.org/golden-compass](http://ethicsed.org/golden-compass) and the text is available on SEE's E-Store.

### **Ethics Blog for Class Discussion Starters**

Find and "Like" The School for Ethical Education on Facebook to discover our weekly ethics blog. The blog is being piloted as a commentary on recent news stories where students are encouraged to analyze the story through the lens of core values that include: fairness, caring, loyalty, authority, sanctity/integrity and liberty. We welcome comments or feedback on how to make the blog useful for teachers as a discussion starter for student ethical analysis.

### **About SEE**

The School for Ethical Education is a not-for-profit teaching agency in Milford, CT with the mission to advance strategies to put ethics in action to create character. As a non-sectarian 501(C)3 organization, SEE is partly supported by fees for service, grants and donations. For more information, visit our website at [ethicsed.org](http://ethicsed.org)

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