Integrity E-Update

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Ethics in action creates character

Defining ethics should help--

1. *Recognize principles that govern behavior*
2. *Support student analysis of ethical situations*

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We're on the Web!

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Defining Ethics

SEE recently completed video interviews of college students. One of the responses we sought from them was to define ethics. As one might expect, some students were confused by the request and a few had a clear if not narrow definition of ethics. Selected student interviews can be found on SEE's homepage at www.ethicsed.org.

We plan to use these student interview responses in an upcoming Achieving with Integrity Seminar that will be placed on SEE's Integrity Works! webpages. The three-lesson teacher professional development seminar will provide strategies to help students cultivate their ethical awareness, judgment, commitment and behavior. These components of ethical functioning are essential to sustain civil classrooms and our democratic republic. It is all based on the assumption that we can define ethics.

Adapting a Merriam-Webster definition, we state that ethics is a set of principles, rules or guidelines that govern behavior to support a flourishing community. Easily stated while the hard work begins when you attempt to identify the governing "principles, rules or guidelines" for behavior.

SEE recognizes there are a variety of ways to define ethical principles, and without going into a lengthy description of ethical models (deontological or utilitarian ethics to name just two ethical models) SEE has chosen to adapt a virtue-based approach to ethics.

In practice, virtue-based ethics can be described as using core ethical values to analyze behaviors in a given situation to determine what is ethically right or wrong. Core values are those values that cultures across the globe have affirmed as reasonable guidelines to help a community to flourish. Core values include terms such as respect, integrity, caring and responsibility and can extend to lists that include twenty to thirty values. The law of reciprocity or the Golden Rule is often included in these lists and adds a powerful leveraging agent when applying core values such as integrity or care to a situation.

To help students practice ethical analysis with core values, SEE provides a free weekly Reasoning with Ethics Blog, which publishes case examples taken from the media. Each week, students have an opportunity to practice analysis of a current case using core values. In addition, the blog site contains resources to support facilitation of classroom discussions. SEE welcomes teachers to the website and encourages the use of the resource to help students practice ethical reasoning as defined by applying core values to analyze ethical situations.

About SEE

The School for Ethical Education is a not-for-profit teaching agency 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.

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