

*Nurturing Character in the
Middle School Classroom*

Guide Booklet 1

*Introduction
to the Project and Framework*

Community Voices and Character Education Project
Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning
and the University of Minnesota

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Booklet 1
Introduction to the Project and Framework

Table of Contents

I. THE “COMMUNITY VOICES AND CHARACTER EDUCATION” PROJECT

- A. Purpose and goals of the project
- B. Purpose and goals of the *Teacher Guides to Nurturing Character in the Middle School Classroom*
- C. Organization of the Teacher Guides

II. SHOULD TEACHERS TEACH VALUES?

Teachers teach values all day long

III. WHAT SHOULD BE TAUGHT?

Ethical Processes and Skills

- Ethical Sensitivity
- Ethical Judgment
- Ethical Motivation
- Ethical Action

IV. HOW SHOULD CHARACTER BE TAUGHT?

Development through Levels of Expertise

V. WHO DECIDES WHICH VALUES TO TEACH?

The local community

VI. WHAT IS THE STUDENT’S ROLE?

VII. WHEN SHOULD CHARACTER BE TAUGHT?

During regular instruction

Sample Skill section: *Communicating Well*

References

Minnesota’s “Community Voices and Character Education Project”

Purpose of the Project¹

At the beginning of the 21st century, children are less likely to spend time under adult supervision than they were in the past. As a result, children’s ethical education has become haphazard, and subject to strong influence from popular media. To help the development of children, we seek to assist educators develop curricula that teach character while simultaneously meeting regular academic requirements.

Goal of the “Community Voices and Character Education” Project

The overarching goal of “Community Voices and Character Education” is to facilitate ethical development that might not otherwise occur. The project applies a researched-based approach, at the same time emphasizing the importance of context-specific, community values. We apply research and research-based theory to instruction for ethical development, using a process model of ethical behavior that is based on research and applied to ethics education. We provide participating teachers with teacher guides that help them integrate graduation standards and comprehensive goals with ethics education in the classroom.

***The Teacher Guides For
Nurturing Character in the Middle School Classroom***

Purpose of the Teacher Guides

The guidebook is a set of booklets that provide links between ethics education and regular academic requirements. The guides have been written to accompany the workshop, “Nurturing Character in the Middle School Classroom.” We encourage educators interested in ethical development to attend a workshop or consult with the University of Minnesota Design Team (listed in the credits) to learn how to best use the guides.

¹ If you are interested in more information, please contact Leilani Endicott, 150 Peik Hall, 159 Pillsbury Dr. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455. (PHONE: 612-626-9296; Email: gjell001@tc.umn.edu). The University Design Team also conducts workshops.

4 Introduction to Community Voices and Character Education

Goals of the Teacher Guides

- ❖ This set of teacher guidebooklets is intended to promote a conscious and conscientious approach to helping students build character.
- ❖ The guides have been created to help teachers deliver instruction that both addresses academic goals and fosters ethical development.
- ❖ The guides are intended for educators who work at the middle school level. Even so, the basic information about ethical education may be appropriate for other levels.
- ❖ We suggest links to Minnesota’s comprehensive goals. Although we suggest links between our ethical skills and only a select group of graduation standards, we encourage teachers to use the material with any standard.

Organization of the Teacher Guides

The Teacher Guides are organized with first-timers to ethical education in mind. We have two explanatory booklets to provide a background for the subsequent booklets. We encourage you to read these first. Our conceptual outline is as follows:

I. Introduction and Foundations Booklets

Booklet 1: Introduction to the Project and Framework

Booklet 2: Foundations of the Framework

II. Classroom Application Booklets

Advisory and Homeroom Activity Booklets

Process 1: Ethical Sensitivity: Skills, Subskills, and Ideas for Teaching

Process 2: Ethical Judgment: Skills, Subskills, and Ideas for Teaching

Process 3: Ethical Motivation: Skills, Subskills, and Ideas for Teaching

Process 4: Ethical Action: Skills, Subskills, and Ideas for Teaching

Subject Matter Activity Booklets

Social Studies

English and Language Arts

Performing Arts: Music, Theatre, and Dance

Visual Arts

Mathematics

Science

General Booklets

General Activities

Building a Climate for Ethical Development

Should Teachers Teach Values?

They already are

To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.

Theodore Roosevelt

What do you think about the cultural health of our nation? The United States at the end of the 20th century has reached a new pinnacle. There is more prosperity throughout the society than ever before. There are more equal rights across groups than in the history of the world. There are comforts for all citizens that exist only for a few in few countries (e.g., clean water, sewage, inexpensive clothes, and food). Then why are children around the nation shooting their peers at school? Why do so many lament our public behavior and sense of community? Why do some argue that our social supports are the worst among industrialized countries of the world?

What do you think of current standards for public behavior—are they better or worse than in the past? What do you think of popular culture? Television shows use language, discuss topics, and show interactions that would not have been broached just a few years ago. Is that all right? Does it matter? Professional athletes can be felons and still receive acclaim from fans and the news media. Should we care? Many have noted that citizens are increasingly impatient, self-absorbed, and rude in public. Have you noticed? Most notably, people are harming and killing others over traffic offenses (Road Rage Summit, Minneapolis, April 29, 1999). Do you agree with communitarians that individuals in the United States overemphasize their rights with little thought for their responsibilities to others—overemphasizing individualism at the expense of collective goals (Etzioni, 1994; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985)? Everyone seems to be rushing from one activity to another with little thought for neighbors. The patience that is learned from long-time interaction with neighbors is not being fostered. Instead, impatience with others seems the norm. Miss Manners says that we have a civility crisis.

What do you think about today's families? At the dawn of the 21st century in the United States, it is normal for parents (supported by corresponding laws and social beliefs) to think of themselves as individuals first and family members second, making it easy to divorce a spouse even when there are children. As the single parent works hard to support the family (or both

parents work to maintain a standard of living formerly supported by one income), many are unable to provide the support and supervision their children need (Steinberg, 1996). Children are not getting enough adult attention. Instead, experts say that they turn to their peers for values, support, and goals.² Children spend more time with television, with all its contemporary crudities, than with their parents.

“So what?” you might say. “I don’t teach values in my classroom. I try not to make judgments. I let the students make up their own minds.” Really? Is any behavior acceptable in your room? If not, you *are* teaching values—you are indicating that some behaviors are better than others. Which students get rewarded and which get punished and for what behaviors? Teachers are making decisions about how “the benefits and burdens of living together” are distributed (Rest, 1986). **In other words, teachers are teaching values all day long.**

TEACHERS’ ETHICAL DECISIONS

We urge teachers to be both conscious of and conscientious about the values they are teaching.

There are many morally-relevant situations in schools in which teachers make decisions that affect student welfare. Here are a few concrete examples of value teaching:

- When teachers **divide the class into groups**, they are conveying what they value and what the students should value (e.g., cooperation, achievement).
- When teachers **discipline** students, the students learn what behaviors are important in that classroom (or in the hallway, depending on where the disciplining takes place).
- The **school rules the teacher enforces (or doesn’t enforce)** reveal how seriously the students should take the rules.

² Unlike most other industrialized nations, there are few social supports outside the home that are built into our system—it was designed to rely on the strength of the nuclear family and extended family. A high rate of single parenting, both parents working and the resultant guilt, lack of parenting skills, lack of extended family support, and a cultural milieu oriented to pleasure rather than self-sacrifice all contribute to the decline in communal satisfaction. Instead of child raising being shared across society, the schools are shouldering the many needs that growing (and neglected or abused) children have.

- The **standards a teacher applies** to behavior, homework, and attitudes are practiced (and learned) by the students in the classroom.
- When teachers have needy students, **the teacher must decide which student(s) will get his or her attention** (one of the most valuable commodities in the classroom).
- **The way a classroom is structured physically** and the way the teacher sets up procedures (and which ones) demonstrate the values held by the teacher. For example, if the teacher wants to emphasize creativity he or she may have colorful décor, alternative seating arrangements, and may allow freedom of choice in selecting academic activities.
- **The teacher's communication style** (quiet and firm, or playful and easy going) can set the classroom climate and convey the expectations for behavior.
- Whether or not and how teachers **communicate with parents** show how parents are valued.
- **Grading policies** are another way that teachers distribute the benefits and burdens available in the classroom—norm-referenced or criterion-referenced or contract grading?
- **Curriculum content selection** can convey a high regard for one culture over another, one viewpoint over another. Whether or not teachers assign homework over religious holidays (and whose holidays) reveal the teacher's expectations and values.
- **The teacher's cultural assumptions** about the social context and his or her instinctive responses to students convey nonverbally who is valued and who is not. This may be one of the most important features of a classroom for a minority student whose success may be at risk.

In short, teachers teach values whether or not they realize it.. We urge teachers to be both conscious and conscientious about the values they are teaching. Hence this book has goals for teacher development. As teachers develop curricula using our principles, they will learn the principles to use in their professional behavior. First, we will discuss the process of ethical behavior. Then we will discuss how to apply this knowledge in the classroom-- for both curriculum and for general climate in the classroom. Based on these materials, teachers will be able to design activities and a classroom that promote ethical behavior.

This is not to say that teachers currently are without guidance as to promoting an ethical classroom. Teachers have a code of ethics to which they subscribe when obtaining a license and a position. Notice the tables from the National Education Association's Code of Ethics (Table

8 Introduction to Community Voices and Character Education

1.1) . These codes affect much of what teachers decide and do. Notice that the NEA code is not one of “doing no harm,” but is *proactive*, that is, “doing good.”

Table 1.1
FROM THE CODE OF ETHICS OF THE EDUCATION PROFESSION
(National Education Association, 1975)

Principle 1: Commitment to the student.

In fulfillment to the student, the educator---

1. Shall not unreasonably restrain the student from independent action in the pursuit of learning.
2. Shall not unreasonably deny the student access to varying points of view.
3. Shall not deliberately suppress or distort subject matter relevant to the student's progress.
4. Shall make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety.
5. Shall not intentionally expose the student to embarrassment or disparagement.
6. Shall not on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, marital status, political or religious beliefs, family, social or cultural background, or sexual orientation, unfairly:
 - a. Exclude any student from participation in any program;
 - b. Deny benefits to any student;
 - c. Grant any advantage to any student.

The NEA code requires teachers:

- to present more than one viewpoint,
- to present the full gamut of subject matter relevant to the student,
- to protect the student from harm.

These are actions that require conscious deliberation. For example, questions the teacher might consider are: What are multiple viewpoints on this topic? What content should be included?

What harms students and how can I design an environment and classroom atmosphere that is least harmful? If the teacher does not deliberately plan around these issues, chances are there will be only mainstream viewpoints presented, the subject matter will be narrow, and the student may have to tolerate insults and other harm from peers.

Even if a Minnesota teacher does not subscribe to the NEA or its code, there is a code to which a teacher must subscribe: the Minnesota Board of Teaching's Code of Ethics (Table 1.2). This code also emphasizes that a teacher protect students, act in a "non discriminatory manner" and provide an "atmosphere conducive to learning." In order to accomplish these things, teachers must make ethical decisions and choices.

Table 1.2 FROM THE MINNESOTA BOARD OF TEACHING'S CODE OF ETHICS	
Subpart 2: Standards of professional conduct. The standards of professional conduct are as follows:	
A.	A teacher shall provide professional educational services in a nondiscriminatory manner .
B.	A teacher shall make reasonable effort to protect the students from conditions harmful to health and safety.
C.	In accord with state and federal laws, a teacher shall disclose confidential information about individuals only when a compelling professional purpose is served or when required by law.
D.	A teacher shall take reasonable disciplinary action in exercising the authority to provide an atmosphere conducive to learning .
E.	A teacher shall not use professional relationships with students, parents, and colleagues to private advantage.
F.	A teacher shall delegate authority for teaching responsibilities only to licensed personnel.
G.	A teacher shall not deliberately suppress or distort subject matter .
H.	A teacher shall not knowingly falsify or misrepresent records of facts relating to that teacher's own qualifications or to other teachers' qualifications.
I.	A teacher shall not knowingly make false or malicious statements about students or colleagues.
J.	A teacher shall accept a contract for a teaching position that requires licensing only if properly or provisionally licensed for that position.

We believe that there is more to ethical education than even following a code of ethics. Promoting ethical behavior in students requires a deliberate effort. But it is not always clear what direction these efforts should take. That is the topic of the next section.

The Process Model of Ethical Behavior

When a curriculum claims to be educating for character, what should it mean? What are the aspects of ethics that should be addressed? As a framework for analysis, we use the Process model of ethical behavior as described by Rest (1983) and advocated by Bebeau, Rest, and Narvaez (1999). The model includes ethical sensitivity, ethical judgment, ethical motivation, and ethical action. See the framework outlined below and described in the next section.

THE PROCESS MODEL OF ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

ETHICAL SENSITIVITY

NOTICE!

Involves picking up on the cues related to ethical decision making and behavior; Interpreting the situation according to who is involved, what actions to take, what possible reactions and outcomes might ensue.

ETHICAL JUDGMENT

THINK!

Involves reasoning about the possible actions in the situation and judging which action is most ethical.

ETHICAL MOTIVATION

AIM!

Involves prioritizing the ethical action over other goals and needs (either in the particular situation, or as a habit).

ETHICAL ACTION

ACT!

Involves implementing the ethical action by knowing how to do so and following through despite hardship.

HOW THE ETHICAL PROCESS MODEL WORKS

A kindergarten student in New York City dies midyear from longstanding child abuse at the hands of a parent. The community is shocked that the teacher and school did not prevent the untimely death.

The star of the boy's basketball team is flunking English. If he gets a failing grade, he won't be able to play on the team. Should the teacher give him a passing grade so that the team has a chance to win the championship and boost school morale?

An American Indian student won't look the teacher in the eye nor volunteer answers in class. How should the teacher respond?

From large effects to small, the ethical behavior of teachers-- or its lack thereof -- influences children's lives on a daily basis (e.g., Bergem 1990; Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990). Decisions about grading and grouping; decisions about curriculum, instructional style, assessment; decisions about the allotment of time, care, and encouragement (which students, when, where and how?)—all these are ethical decisions the educator faces each day. How can teachers sort out the processes of ethical decision making?

First, one must know what ethical behavior looks like. When thinking about ethical behavior, it is often helpful to think of ethical failure. For example--an extreme one, think of the teacher whose student dies from child abuse. How is it that the teacher did not take ethical action and intervene? There are many points at which failure might have occurred. First, the teacher would have to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse, and have some empathic reaction to the child's circumstance. Having noticed and felt concern, the teacher would need to think about what action might be taken and what outcomes might occur. Then the teacher must reason about the choices and decide which action to take. (In order for ethical behavior to eventually occur, the teacher would need to select an ethical action.) Next, the teacher would need to prioritize the chosen (ethical) action over other needs, motives, and goals. Finally, the teacher would need to know what steps to take to implement the decision, and persevere until the action was completed. It is apparent that there are a lot of places where things can go wrong—for example, the teacher may not see the signs or may make a bad judgment or may have other priorities or may not know what to do or may give up in frustration. In effect, ethical failure can stem from any one or more of these weaknesses.

Rest (1983) has asked: what psychological elements are involved in bringing about an ethical action? He has suggested that there are at least four psychological processes of ethical behavior that must occur in order for an ethical behavior to ensue. These four processes are: (1) *Ethical Sensitivity*: Noticing the cues that indicate a moral situation is at hand. Identifying the persons who are interested in possible actions and outcomes and how the interested parties might respond to the range of possible actions and outcomes. (2) *Ethical Judgment*: Making a decision about what is ethically right or ethically wrong in the situation. (3) *Ethical Motivation*: Placing the ethical action choice at the top of one's priorities, over all other personal values at the moment. (4) *Ethical Action*: The necessary ego strength and implementation skills to complete the action despite obstacles, opposition, and fatigue.

In an effort to make these processes clear, let us look at a specific situation in a classroom to which we will apply the processes. Let us imagine that Mr. Anderson has a classroom of children in which Abraham is hitting Maria. Now let us look at each of the processes in relation to this event.

Process 1: Ethical Sensitivity

***Picking up on the cues
related to ethical decision making and ethical behavior
Interpreting the situation according to who is involved,
what actions to take, what possible reactions and outcomes might ensue***

Teachers need to be able to detect and interpret environmental cues correctly in order for the other processes of ethical behavior to be initiated. For example, if Mr. Anderson completely fails to see Abraham hitting Maria, there will be no consideration of action choices or action taken. In order to perceive the action, such an occurrence must be salient because, for example, it is unusual. On the other hand, Mr. Anderson may not notice the hitting if it is a daily class-wide event, or if it is an agreed-upon sign of affection.

ETHICAL SENSITIVITY

Notice a problem (sensibilities)

What kinds of problems are salient to me, my family, my community, my affiliative groups?

State the situation (critical thinking)

What is the problem? How did the problem come about? *How much time is there to make a decision?* How does my community identify the problem? How do elders in my family identify the problem? How does my religion or family cultural affect my perceptions?

State the interested parties (critical thinking)

Who are the people who will be affected by this decision (family, community, affiliative groups)? Who should be consulted in this decision? Who has faced this problem before? With whom could I talk about the problem?

Weigh the possible outcomes (short-term and long-term) (creative thinking)

What the possible consequences to me my family/community/affiliative groups for each possible action? What are the possible reactions of these interested parties? What are the potential benefits for me, my family/community/affinity groups for each possible action? Who else might be affected? How will my choice affect the rest of the world now and in the future?

List all possible options (creative thinking)

How could the problem be solved? What are the choices I have for solving the problem? How would my community/family/cultural group solve the problem? What are the choices my family/cultural/community allow? Should I consider other options?

In intercultural/intersocial-class situations, cue misperception may take place, leading to improper action or no action at all. For example, a middle-class teacher in the U.S.A. may subconsciously perceive the downcast eyes of a Native American student in conversation with her as a sign of disrespect toward her authority. But in the student's own culture, the opposite is the case. However, out of ignorance the teacher may take an action to re-establish her authority, for example, punish the child. In contrast, a child may exhibit disrespectful behavior for his own

subculture, such as severe slouching for some African-American communities. However, this action is not really noticed since it is not considered out of the ordinary by the non-African-American teacher or interpreted as a threat to her authority (which it is intended to be) but is considered to be an acceptable expression of frustration on behalf of the student. In this case, the teacher interprets (subconsciously) the child's behavior as a personal freedom issue rather than the challenge to authority (a responsibility issue) that it is.

Ethical sensitivity includes subconscious processing which is often culturally based. As such, teachers need to become aware of their culturally-based expectations and to broaden their understanding of other cultural perspectives in order to circumvent misinterpretation of student behavior.

Not only is Mr. Anderson faced with many perceptual cues to sort through each day, he is also faced with countless situations in which he must make decisions with partial information. Before making a decision, he must interpret situations contextually, according to who is interested in the outcome, what actions and outcomes are possible and how the interested people might react to each. Many problems are much more complicated than in our example (e.g., whether or not to promote a student to the next grade). Here, it is obvious that hitting is generally wrong.

In our incident with Abraham and Maria, Mr. Anderson has noticed the action and finds it out of the ordinary and unacceptable. Now he must determine who is interested in the decision he makes about the incident-- certainly Abraham and Maria would be interested, as well as their parents and families, the school administrator, not to speak of the other children in the classroom. Next, he thinks about the actions he could take in this situation and the likely outcomes and reactions of interested parties. For example, he might quickly think:

Well, I could stop what I am doing and verbally intervene in front of the whole class. Maybe that is not such a good idea because it would disrupt everyone's work. If Abraham does not stop, other children might notice and perhaps think that hitting was permissible. I could walk over there and physically intervene--grab Abraham's hand. That would stop it and still draw attention from the others--- maybe they would learn something. Or, I could ignore it, since Abraham tends to do this when he gets excited-- he means no harm. But how would Maria react to that? If I don't do something, Maria's parents might complain to the administrator....

Ethical sensitivity involves attending to relevant events and mapping out possible actions and their effects. It includes a subtle interaction between both conscious and subconscious processing.

ETHICAL SENSITIVITY SKILLS

- ES-1: Reading and Expressing Emotion
- ES-2: Taking the Perspectives of Others
- ES-3: Caring by Connecting to Others
- ES-4: Working with Group and Individual Differences
- ES-5: Controlling Social Bias
- ES-6: Generating Optional Actions
- ES-7: Identifying the Consequences of Options

Process 2: Ethical Judgment

Reasoning about the possible actions in the situation and judging which action is most ethical

Following this exploration of possible action and reactions, the ethical actor must decide on which course of action to take. Ethical judgment is the process of making a decision about which action of all the options is the most moral action. Lawrence Kohlberg (1984) defined different ways that people make decisions about how to get along with others (see the chart on the other side of this sheet). Whereas in ethical sensitivity, cultural differences are particularly important, in moral judgment, the types of thinking Kohlberg found are developmental and have been identified in dozens of countries around the world. Although there are other types of criteria individuals use to make ethical decisions, Kohlberg's framework has extensive empirical research support. In addition, the vast majority of research shows no gender differences.

ETHICAL JUDGMENT

Make a decision

What is the best action to take? What choice should I make? Why?

Ethical Judgment concerns choosing the ethical action from the choices considered in the process of Ethical Sensitivity--this decision will be influenced by the ethical reasoning structures of the decision maker. In other words, Mr. Anderson selects the action that is the most ethical in the particular situation according to his level of ethical judgment development. In our scenario, Mr. Anderson may decide that, out of the choices we listed above, going over to Abraham and physically intervening is the most defensible ethical action:

It prevents further harm to Maria, and has ramifications for future behavior by Abraham and the rest of the class. It sends a clear signal both to Abraham and the rest of the class about how the students should NOT treat each other. I can use it as an opportunity to discuss the importance of following rules to keep order and safety in the classroom.

ETHICAL JUDGMENT SKILLS

- EJ-1: Understanding Ethical Problems
- EJ-2: Using Codes and Identifying Judgment Criteria
- EJ-3: Developing General Reasoning Skills
- EJ-4: Developing Ethical Reasoning Skills
- EJ-5: Reflecting On The Process And Outcome
- EJ-6: Planning To Implement Decisions
- EJ-7: Developing Optimism

**SIX CONCEPTUAL STAGES ABOUT COOPERATION
AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS**

(From Rest ,1979)

PRECONVENTIONAL LEVEL

Stage 1: The ethicality of obedience: Do what you are told.

- Right and wrong are defined simply in terms of obedience to fixed rules.
- Punishment inevitably follows disobedience, and anyone who is punished must have been bad.

Stage 2: The ethicality of instrumental egoism: Let's make a deal.

- An act is right if it serves an individual's desires and interests.
- One should obey the law only if it is prudent to do so.
- Cooperative interaction is based on simple exchange.

CONVENTIONAL LEVEL

Stage 3: The ethicality of interpersonal concordance:

Be considerate, nice and kind, and you'll make friends.

- An act is good if it is based on a prosocial motive.
- Being ethical implies concern for the other's approval.

Stage 4: The ethicality of law and duty to the social order:

Everyone in society is obligated to and protected by the law.

- Right is defined by categorical rules, binding on all, that fix shared expectations, thereby providing a basis for social order.
- Values are derived from and subordinated to the social order and maintenance of law.
- Respect for delegated authority is part of one's obligations to society.

POSTCONVENTIONAL

Stage 5: The ethicality of consensus-building procedures: You are obligated by the arrangements that are agreed to by due process procedures.

- Ethical obligation derives from voluntary commitments of society's members to cooperate.
- Procedures exist for selecting laws that maximize welfare as discerned in the majority will.
- Basic rights are preconditions to social obligations.

Stage 6: The ethicality of non-arbitrary social cooperation: How rational and impartial people would organize cooperation defines ethicality.

- Ethical judgments are ultimately justified by principles of ideal cooperation.
- Individuals each have an equal claim to benefit from the governing principles of cooperation.

Process 3: Ethical Motivation

Prioritizing the ethical action over other goals and needs (either in the particular situation, or as a habit)

Following Mr. Anderson’s decision about which action is most ethical, he must be motivated to prioritize that action, that is, be ethically motivated. Ethical motivation can be viewed in two ways, as *situation-specific* and as *situation-general*. *Situation-general* motivation concerns the day-to-day attitudes about getting along with others. It is a positive attitude towards ethical action that one maintains day to day. Blasi (1984) and Damon (1984) argue that self-concept has a great deal to do with ethical motivation generally, including attending to professional ethical codes. For instance, if one has a concept that one is an ethical person, one is more likely to prioritize ethical behaviors. *Situation-specific* ethical motivation concerns the prioritization of the ethical action choice in a particular situation. If all goes well, matching one’s professional and personal priorities with possible actions results in ethical motivation, prioritizing the ethical action.

ETHICAL MOTIVATION

Value identification

What are the values of my family/religion/culture/community? How should these values influence what is decided? How does each possible option fit with these values?

Prioritize the action

Am I willing to forego the benefits of NOT taking this best action?

Ethical motivation means that the person has placed the ethical course of action—which was selected in the process of Ethical Judgment-- at the top of the list of action priorities. In other words, all other competing actions, values and concerns are set aside so that the ethical action can be completed. In other words, does a teacher put aside another priority at the moment, such as taking a break, in order to take an ethical action, such as stopping one student from insulting another? In our situation with Mr. Anderson, in order to continue along the route to completing an ethical action, he would have to put aside any other priority (such as teaching the lesson) and focus on performing the ethical action.

ETHICAL MOTIVATION SKILLS

- EM-1: Respecting Others
- EM-2: Developing Conscience
- EM-3: Acting Responsibly
- EM-4: Helping Others
- EM-5: Making Peace and Cooperating
- EM-6: Valuing Social Structures
- EM-7: Developing Ethical Identity And Integrity

Process 4: Ethical Action

Implementing the ethical action by knowing how to do so and following through despite hardship

Once Mr. Anderson has determined his priorities, he must complete the action and this requires ethical action. Ethical action involves two aspects: *ego strength*, the ability to persevere despite obstacles and opposition, and *implementation skills*, knowing what steps to take in order to complete the ethical action.

ETHICAL ACTION

Judge the feasibility of the chosen option

What is my attitude about taking this action? Do I believe it is possible for me to take this action? Do I believe that it is likely I will succeed?

Take action

What steps need to be taken to complete the action? Whose help do I need in my family/community/affiliative group? What back up plan do I have if this doesn't work?

Follow through

How do I help myself follow through on this action? How can others help me follow through? How do I resist giving up? How do I muster the courage to do it?

Reflect

What were the consequences of my decision? How did the decision affect me/my family/community/affiliative groups? Did the results turn out as I planned? In the future, should I change the decision or the decision process?

In our situation, Mr. Anderson might be very tired and have to draw up his strength and energize himself in order to take action. The implementation skills required in our scenario might include the manner of Mr. Anderson's intervention (e.g., severe and degrading reprimand versus a kind but firm reproach; or a culturally-sensitive approach that saves a student's 'face')

Let us consider another example. Perhaps a teacher knows that one of her students is smoking when he goes to the lavatory and she believes that it is best to stop him. Ethical action means that she has the action or fortitude to complete the ethical course of action. Many obstacles can arise to circumvent taking the ethical action. For example, if the student is 6 1/2 feet tall, she may feel physically threatened by the thought of confronting him and not even try. On the other hand, she may or may not know what steps to take to handle the situation. For example, to overcome fear for personal safety, she could ask another (bigger) teacher to help her or may inform the head of the school.

ETHICAL ACTION SKILLS

- EC-1: Communicating Well
- EC-2: Resolving Conflicts and Problems
- EC-3: Identifying Needs and Acting Assertively
- EC-4: Taking Initiative as a Leader
- EC-5: Developing Courage
- EC-6: Developing Perseverance
- EC-7: Working Hard**

Need for All the Processes

These processes—ethical sensitivity, ethical judgment, ethical motivation, and ethical action—comprise the minimal amount of psychological processing that must occur for an ethical behavior to result. They are highly interdependent. That is, all the processes must be successfully completed before ethical behavior takes place. If one process fails, ethical action will not occur. For instance, if a teacher is highly sensitive to her students and environment but makes poor decisions (e.g., bargaining with students for their cooperation each day), poor outcomes may result. Or, a teacher may be sensitive to the situation, make a responsible ethical judgment, be highly motivated, but lack the backbone to follow through when a student challenges his action.

The processes also interact. That is, one may be so focused on one of the processes that it affects another process. For instance, the teacher who fears for her own safety or who values peace within the classroom may not challenge the students but try to keep them happy by not confronting any miscreant behaviors. Or, a teacher who is extremely tired and wanting to go home to rest may also be less sensitive to the needs of his students and miss cues that indicate ethical conflict.

Teaching Students Ethical Skills

The four-process model outlined here is helpful when thinking about designing instruction to promote ethical behavior. Like teachers, students face ethical dilemmas and situations each day. They have countless opportunities to demonstrate civic and ethical behavior. Their responses may be thoughtful and considerate or may be thoughtless and harmful to self and others. The teacher has a unique opportunity to help students nurture thoughtfulness and consideration of others. Our framework is intended to provide tools for teachers to do so.

We parcel each of the four processes into skills. The category of skills is not exhaustive. The skills we have included can be taught in a public school classroom. There are other aspects of the processes that are either controversial or difficult to implement in the public school classroom. Below, we list the whole set of skills that are discussed in the guide booklets.

ETHICAL BEHAVIOR SKILLS FOR EACH PROCESS

Booklet 3: ETHICAL SENSITIVITY

ES-1: Reading and Expressing Emotion

ES-2: Caring by Connecting to Others

ES-3: Working with Group and Individual Differences

ES-4: Taking the Perspectives of Others

ES-5: Controlling Social Bias

ES-6: Generating Optional Actions

ES-7: Identifying the Consequences of Actions and Options

Booklet 4: ETHICAL JUDGMENT

- EJ-1: Developing General Reasoning Skills
- EJ-2: Developing Ethical Reasoning Skills
- EJ-3: Understanding Ethical Problems
- EJ-4: Using Codes and Identifying Judgment Criteria
- EJ-5: Reflecting On The Process And Outcome
- EJ-6: Planning To Implement Decisions
- EJ-7: Developing Optimism

Booklet 5: ETHICAL MOTIVATION

- EM-1: Respecting Others
- EM-2: Developing Conscience
- EM-3: Acting Responsibly
- EM-4: Helping Others
- EM-5: Making Peace and Cooperating
- EM-6: Valuing Social Structures
- EM-7: Developing Ethical Identity And Integrity

Booklet 6: ETHICAL ACTION

- EC-1: Communicating Well
- EC-2: Resolving Conflicts and Problems
- EC-3: Identifying Needs and Acting Assertively
- EC-4: Taking Initiative as a Leader
- EC-5: Developing Courage
- EC-6: Developing Perseverance
- EC-7: Working Hard

How Should Character be Taught?

Development Through Levels Of Expertise

Each process of the Ethical Behavior Model is divided into several skills. The skills in each process are elements that we think are fundamental and have aspects that can be taught.

We present the skills in terms of expertise development. Think about how a young child learns to talk. *First the child is exposed to sounds of all sorts, rather quickly learning the specialness of speech sounds in the environment. The child begins to make sounds, later to mimic and have mock conversations with a responsive caregiver. After many months, an actual word is spoken. From there, the child adds to his or her vocabulary little by little and then in floods.* Think of how many hours a child has heard speech before age 2. Think of how much there is to learn yet after age 2. There are many phases of development in language acquisition and mastery. These phases (or levels) are movements towards expertise—towards the eloquence of an Eleanor Roosevelt or William F. Buckley, Jr. We use the notion of expertise in making recommendations for instruction.

For each skill in a process, we have condensed the complex acquisition of expertise into five skill levels (a larger number would be unmanageable). The purpose of the levels is to give teachers an idea of what students need for developing the given skill, knowledge, or attitude, or what kinds of behavior exhibit a certain level of expertise development. The levels refer to phases of development as both a process (ways to learn a skill) and a product (skills learned). Within each level are many sublevels and supplementary skills that we have not attempted to name. Instead, we use terms that point to the broad processes of building expertise in the domain. The levels are cumulative, that is, each level builds on the previous level. Further, within each skill are many domains. To develop new skills in a domain, the individual circles back through the levels to develop expertise.

Below is a brief description of each level of expertise. More details can be found at the end of Booklet 2: Foundations for the Process Model.

Brief Description of the Levels

LEVEL 1: IMMERSION IN EXAMPLES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Attend to the big picture, Learn to recognize basic patterns

The teacher plunges students into multiple, engaging activities. Students learn to recognize broad patterns in the domain (*identification knowledge*). They develop gradual awareness and recognition of elements in the domain.

LEVEL 2: ATTENTION TO FACTS AND SKILLS

Focus on detail and prototypical examples, Build knowledge

The teacher focuses the student's attention on the elemental concepts in the domain in order to build *elaboration knowledge*. Skills are gradually acquired through motivated, focused attention.

LEVEL 3: PRACTICE PROCEDURES

Set goals, Plan steps of problem solving, Practice skills

The teacher coaches the student and allows the student to try out many skills and ideas throughout the domain to build an understanding of how these relate and how best to solve problems in the domain (*planning knowledge*). Skills are developed through practice and exploration.

LEVEL 4: INTEGRATE KNOWLEDGE AND PROCEDURES

Execute plans, Solve problems

The student finds numerous mentors and/or seeks out information to continue building concepts and skills. There is a gradual systematic integration and application of skills across many situations. The student learns how to take the steps in solving complex domain problems (*execution knowledge*).

Who Decides Which Values to Teach?

The community

So we have a set of skills that are to be taught developmentally, helping students build expertise. But what do the skills really mean? For example, what does “Respecting others” look like? If one were to travel around the world, there would be different answers to that question. While respect is a value worldwide, each community has its own understanding of it. For example, to show respect in some cultures, one speaks quietly and demurely with little eye contact. In other cultures, respect involves looking others in the eye and expressing one’s opinions openly. Likewise, “communicating well” or “identifying consequences” vary across communities.

The “Community Voices and Character Education” emphasizes the importance of embedding the skill categories in community cultural contexts. We encourage communities to be involved in the specific aspects of skill development. We hope that the actual day-to-day practice of the skills be determined on site, by the community. Doing this allows teachers to tailor the classroom work to the local understanding of the skill. Students can gather information about the skill from the community (parents, elders) and bring back that information to the classroom. The teacher can tailor the classroom work to the local understanding of the skill. If there are many interpretations of the skills because of diverse families, this diversity is brought into the classroom by the students themselves.

The goal of any character education program is to build good community members for it is in communities that students will express their values, make decisions, and take actions. To be an effective community member in the United States, students need skills for democratic citizenship. These skills are included in the list previously described.

What is the Student's Role?

To decide his or her own character

*Character cannot be counterfeited,
nor can it be put on and cast off as if it were a garment to fit the whim of the moment.*

Day by day....we become what we do.

This is the supreme law and logic of life.

Madame Chiang Kai-Shek

The student is not a passive trainee in a Community Voices classroom. Through classroom posters and bookmarks, each student is encouraged to think about the following questions: “Who should I be? What should I become?” As teachers approach each skill, these are the questions that should be raised. The teacher can ask students about each skill category, “How do you want to be known, as _____ [a good communicator, a problem solver, a leader]?” Sometimes the teacher has to identify a particular adult that the student trusts and ask, “What would [so and so] want you to be?” Every day students should feel empowered with the knowledge that they are creating their own characters with the decisions they make and the actions they take.

The Community Voices and Character Education Project includes both skills for personal development and skills for getting along with others. All skills are necessary for ethical personhood. The better one knows oneself, the better one can control and guide the self, the better able one is to interact respectfully with others. On the next page we list the categories and the primary focus of each one, the self or others.

ETHICAL BEHAVIOR CATEGORIES FOR EACH PROCESS

The Categories are skills the individual needs to develop for reaching individual potential and skills for living a cooperative life with others.

<i>Process Skills</i>	<i>Focus</i>
<i>ETHICAL SENSITIVITY</i>	
ES-1: Reading and Expressing Emotion	Self and Others
ES-2: Caring by Connecting to Others	Others
ES-3: Identifying with Social and Assigned Groups	Self and Others
ES-4: Taking the Perspectives of Others	Others
ES-5: Controlling Social Bias	Self
ES-6: Identifying Options and Interpretations	Self and Others
ES-7: Identifying the Consequences of Actions and Options	Self and Others
<i>ETHICAL JUDGMENT</i>	
EJ-1: Developing General Reasoning Skills	Self
EJ-2: Developing Ethical Reasoning Skills	Self
EJ-3: Understanding Ethical Problems	Self and Others
EJ-4: Using Codes and Identifying Judgment Criteria	Self
EJ-5: Reflecting on the Process and Outcome	Self and Others
EJ-6: Planning to Implement Decisions	Self and Others
<i>ETHICAL MOTIVATION</i>	
EM-1: Respecting Others	Others
EM-2: Developing Conscience	Self
EM-3: Acting Responsibly	Self and Others
EM-4: Helping Others	Others
EM-5: Making Peace and Cooperating	Self and Others
EM-6: Valuing Traditions and Institutions	Self and Others
EM-7: Developing Ethical Identity And Integrity	Self
<i>ETHICAL ACTION</i>	
EC-1: Communicating Well	Self and Others
EC-2: Resolving Conflicts and Problems	Self and Others
EC-3: Identifying Needs and Acting Assertively	Self and Others
EC-4: Taking Initiative as a Leader	Self and Others
EC-5: Developing Courage	Self for Others
EC-6: Developing Perseverance	Self for Others
EC-7: Developing Optimism	Self
EC-8: Working Hard	Self

When Should Character be Taught?

During regular instruction

The Community Voices and Character Education Project stress the importance of embedding character education into regular, academic and standards-based instruction. We believe that character education should not stand alone but be incorporated into the entire spectrum of education for students. Regardless of the curriculum, teachers can always raise issues of ethics in lessons.

The following is an excerpt from the booklet on Ethical Action. It gives the reader an idea of how the booklets are structured for teacher use.

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