
Educator Toolkit: Exploring Ethics

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Why This Matters Now

Many of us want to build lives of meaning and purpose — up to and including teenagers. In doing so, we need to learn what it means to have a moral foundation and values that guide the decisions that we make, whether they involve personal actions in our lives and careers, business leadership, or even money management. Some surveys suggest that younger generations embrace a “winning at any cost” mentality. Still others recognize that tomorrow’s leaders have a deep commitment to doing right and doing good when it comes to issues like climate change and school violence. Whatever the case, they need to have intentional discussions about what it means to develop an ethical mindset.

Students in the U.S. have recently been competing in the high school Ethics Bowl, a competition that challenges teams of high school students to work through complex ethical problems through a lens of civility and open-minded discussion. Among the cases discussed in 2019 were whether it is more morally objectionable to pay for fake followers on social media than to pay for celebrity product endorsements, whether humans have a moral responsibility to bring back species driven to extinction by human activities, and whether a government is justified in restricting firearm ownership. Luana Uluave, a high school teacher in Utah who coaches teams in the competition, said, “My experience in a long career of teaching high school is that 100% of high school students want to sit around and talk about moral issues and be heard.”

Resources

Article

[The World of the White Hat Hacker](#)

One strategy for approaching the topic of ethics is to introduce the concept of right and wrong – and what better way to do that than by taking a look at hackers, who are infamous for breaking into systems and stealing data, bitcoin, or whatever they can access. This article explores the emerging field of ethical hacking, where young, digital natives choose to use their computer skills for good, not evil. “We’re fortunate to live in a time where the easiest path to get started in hacking is the legal and ethical path,” says 18-year-old Jack Cable. Use the topic of black hat and white hat hackers to spark conversation about choosing an ethical path. Bonus: students learn about a growing career in cybersecurity.

Lesson Plan

[Global Business Ethics and Social Responsibility](#)

Ethical behavior and decision-making are important foundations for successful careers and strong corporate leadership. This lesson introduces students to the idea of business ethics and social responsibility from a global perspective. They watch the video “The Story of Stuff” and consider the ethical implications. The emphasis is on unveiling the hidden costs of production and consumption and how students, as individuals, are implicated in this system. This lesson is the first of a four-lesson unit that explores ethics and socially responsible behavior in the business world. It can be used as a launching point for studying social responsibility and ethics in a variety of ways. Refer to the “Additional Resources” section of this toolkit for links to the other three lesson plans.

Hands-on Learning

As you drill down into ethical choices, one theme repeatedly emerges – money. Making money motivates a capitalist economy and can lead to questionable ethical behavior on the part of companies and the managers who lead them.

In this exercise, students will consider different ethics-inspired scenarios involving their own money. Use the examples

in the KWHS article [It's Tempting, But Is It Ethical?](#) to design your own "What Would You Do?" challenge. Divide your class into several different teams and give them each a finance-related dilemma inspired by the lessons in the article. Ask them to discuss the ethics of the situation, decide where they land as a team and then figure out a solution. If they need more guidance, they can consult Rotary International's test for truly ethical behavior: (1) Is it the truth? (2) Is it fair to all concerned? (3) Will it build good and better relationships? (4) Will it be beneficial to all concerned? Encourage them to share their situations, debates, and ethical outcomes with the class.

Video Glossary

Provide an extra layer of learning for your students with our video glossary. Here, Wharton professors define terms: Business Ethics

KWHS Quote of the Month

"I think that in all circumstances it is up to the seller to determine a fair and ethical price for their product or service. This idea can apply to a student who cannot afford to go to the college of their dreams, as well as to an adult who simply cannot afford proper health care." – *Oliver Centner, student, Syosset High School, Syosset, N.Y.*