Ethical Decision Making

How Good People Make Tough Choices
Today’s Opportunity - Intentions

- Provide you with an understanding of difficult decisions and a framework for resolution
- Provide table time to wrestle with the examples
- Provide further resources for follow up
- Show examples to watch for
Resources

- Rushworth Kidder
- The Institute for Global Ethics
What leaders are asked to do.

- Make a decision
- Balance competing demands and values
- Public dialogue that is transparent and fair
- Based on a...
The nature of difficult problems

Least Difficult
- Right vs. Wrong
- It’s about compliance

Most Difficult
- Right vs. Right
- It’s about values.
- It’s about dialogue.
Ms. Brown is a first-year teacher at a rural high school. As a way to review and improve her teaching skills, the administration has approved placement in her classroom of a video camera that is recording constantly throughout the school day. All of her students and their guardians have been made aware of the camera and have signed an agreement stating that: "the footage obtained will be used by the classroom teacher to observe, reflect, and improve on her teaching practices."

Mrs. Brown has supervision duty for a period each day. After one such period, she returned to classroom to find the door ajar, several student projects damaged, and derogatory language on her chalkboards. The administration was notified of the issue and, upon a brief inquiry, found that none of the surrounding classroom teachers or other adults saw anyone enter or leave her room. An announcement asking for anonymous information from the student body also turned up no leads.

Mrs. Brown knows that the video tape should have caught the perpetrators. Should she choose to view the tapes to catch those responsible?
The nature of difficult discussions

- When you are having a difficult conversation or exploring a difficult issue - keep it in the moral realm – about values.

- Avoid the policy realm – it’s about compliance.

- If you can keep it about values, then you can unearth the values behind a person’s position as opposed to understand the rule to which they want to comply.
Unexcused Absences

- We have a school policy that says that if a student misses 5 classes unexcused, there is a letter home. At 10 unexcused absences, the student is removed from the class.

- Jordan is in grade 12 (18 years old) and has missed 10 classes of English 12. His current mark is 47%. He does well on tests but often misses assignments. Each time he is absent, he has “excused himself” by writing a note to the teacher ahead of time indicating that he is unable to attend class the next day (or days). When asked, he refuses to give a reason for the absence. When the teacher wrote a letter home and phoned home to follow up, the parents say that Jordan is responsible for his own attendance and learning. They will not be excusing any absences.

- You are the vice-principal. The teacher has come to you asking to follow up and withdraw Jordan from class where there currently are 31 students. The teacher has followed protocol perfectly with records.

- What do you do?
Values – what do we hold dear?

TRANSFER VALUES
FOR THINGS THAT MATTER MOST
How do values translate to a code of ethics for public discourse?

COMPASSION. Communities prosper through mutual caring. I will strive to use my posts to elevate and ennoble, rather than to lambaste, tear down, or harshly criticize others. Seeking to promote kindliness and good will, I will treat other people and their ideas with the same sense of caring attention I would want from them.

HONESTY. Communities thrive on transparency. I will strive for candor, openness, and truth telling in my posts. I will avoid gossip, innuendo, unsourced data, and deceptive spin, but will seek to reflect accuracy, completeness, and relevance — the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth — in my comments.
What is Right vs. Right?

• District No. 99 is facing a budget crunch for the third straight year. They’ve already made major cuts in several areas. This year, they are looking at increasing class size or reducing support for students with special needs.

• The Board needs to cut $500,000. How would you decide which of these two areas are more important?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Four paradigms</th>
<th>Right vs. Right</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Truth vs Loyalty</td>
<td>Justice vs Mercy</td>
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</table>
Truth vs Loyalty

- You are part of an HR committee and have made a decision on hiring a school principal. One of the candidates was a good friend of yours and was not shortlisted. She is heartbroken and wants to improve but doesn’t feel that the information she’s received about why she wasn’t shortlisted is helpful. She just wants to know how to do better next time and wants your perspective. You know that the reason she wasn’t shortlisted was her record of conflict with staff. She was told that she was not shortlisted because it was a tough field and she simply doesn’t have enough experience.

- You are obligated by the work of the committee to confidentiality but want to help your friend.
Justice vs Mercy

- A woman caught shoplifting food from Safeway to feed her grandchildren has been placed on probation for 12 months.

- According to Crown prosecutor Bruce Morrison, Linda Marie Marlow, 54, stole $32 worth of meat so she could give her grandchildren a solid meal.
Short Term vs Long Term

- We can use some of our built up local capital funds to offset our annual deficit but we can only do that at the rate of $500,000/year for the next 2 years.

- We can either deal with our $1.0M annual deficit now, or we can subsidize our current level of spending by exhausting local capital for the next 2 years.

- Basically, we can maintain our level of service now but we cannot sustain it and must face the cuts at some point.
Individual vs Community

• “The athletic training rule is in effect for student-athletes during the athletic season. Student-athletes found to be in possession of and/or using tobacco and/or alcohol products will receive a minimum 14 calendar day suspension from athletic participation.”
  
  • George Wythe High School Athletic Handbook

• It is the provincial finals of AAA basketball in two days. Two players who are the stars of the team are found by the coach with a pack of cigarettes while they are being chaperoned by another adult. They are not smoking. The coach is a stickler for rules. He also knows that if his two starters don’t play, the team stands no chance of winning and they have worked all year. The chaperone is horrified that the students have cigarettes as she knows the rules.
## Three Resolutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ends Based</th>
<th>Care Based</th>
<th>Rule Based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do the greatest good for the greatest number.</td>
<td>Treat others as you would like to be treated.</td>
<td>Everyone plays by the same rules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The “Golden Rule.”</td>
<td>The categorical imperative of one universal law.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which decision?

Ends Based
Greatest Good

Care Based
As if yourself

Rule Based
One universal law

Which paradigm?

Truth v Loyalty

Justice v Mercy

Short term v Long Term

Individual v Community

Moral issue
Back to the coach and his integrity

- It is the provincial finals of AAA basketball in two days. Two players who are the stars of the team are found by the coach with a pack of cigarettes while they are being chaperoned by another adult. They are not smoking. The coach is a stickler for rules. He knows that if his two starters don’t play, the team stands no chance of winning and they have worked all year. The adult is horrified that they have cigarettes as she knows the rules.

- Does the coach support the rules he wrote or does he let the boys play?
A nine point checklist

1. Is this a moral issue?
2. Am I a major player in the resolution?
3. What are the facts?
4. Is it right v. right or right v. wrong?
   - Stench test
   - Front page test
   - Mom test
5. Which paradigm fits?
6. How might the resolution principles apply?
7. Is there another option? A trilemma?
8. Make a decision
9. Revisit and reflect upon the decision
The importance of values-based decision making and a discourse of integrity

Can't anybody see who I am or want to be?

21st Century work place skills!

Academic achievement!

Life options, experience, & outcomes!

Standards, standards, standards!

Basic skills and good behavior!
“Ethics is obedience to the unenforceable”

or

“obedience to a self-imposed law.”

Lord Moulton, 1924
With thanks and acknowledgment

- To Rushworth Kidder and his framework and resources as referenced throughout this presentation.