

Principles and Ethics for Elementary and Junior High School Teachers

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## Abstract

The rules and principles approach for developing educators' ethical judgment may be less effective than a centered approach. A centered approach being one that focuses solely on the elementary and junior high teachers. Educators understand the moral and ethical convolution of their role; possess expertise in interpreting their behavior and penetrating its influence on students, and act ethically within the context of professional responsibility. It's importance of programs focusing on addressing the ethics. "Ethics are rules of conduct that are recognized in respect to a particular class" (Webster online, 2009). As ethics are rules of conduct the principles are the acceptance of the ethics.

When developing educators; we must know that the educator will in return be recognized as a leader. They are leaders amongst students, in the schools and most importantly a leader working for Christ. What are leaders for Christ? What do they look like and/or what traits do they possess? The focus of this paper will identify professional principles and ethics for teachers that are mandated by Christ.

### ***Seven things detestable to God***

Proverbs 6:16-19, identifies seven things God hates, “haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood , a heart that delivers wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil , a false witness who pour out lies, and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers. These are seven traits that cannot be exhibited amongst elementary and junior high teachers. As a guide teachers can illustrate meanings through the “Ten Commandments” simply phrased as the “distillation of religion and morality”. God’s words are: “You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord. Remember the Sabbath day, by keeping it holy. Honor thy father and mother. You shall not murder. You shall not steal. You shall give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor’s house” (Exodus 20:1-17) God’s word should be implemented in everyday situations along with guidance on how to live as a Christian educator.

### ***Characteristics of a Christian educator***

“Christian educators have a purpose that is god driven and they pursue things of God rather than the pleasures of the world” (Leadership principles: lesson 3 slide 3). Their has to be an idea of a Christian point of view through the eyes of the educator. The educator must not involve themselves of worldly matters that would only bring destruction and in return would not be able to fulfill their duties as a Christian leader. ”The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Knowledge, fools despise wisdom and discipline” (Prov. 1:7). An educator must know the Lord and an instilled fear should be

within them knowing the consequences of not obeying God's words. A Christian leader that encompasses knowledge also inhabits wisdom. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding in all your ways acknowledges him, and he will make your paths straight" (Prov. 3:5-6).

Righteousness is a key factor of a Christian educator and also a component within principles. "In the way of righteousness there is life, along the path is immortality" (Prov.12:28). Educators within elementary and junior high must exhibit signs of righteousness for the sake of their students. The students at the grade level presented are mentally dealing with issues that have outweighed their abilities to believe and have faith in educators today. In return educators that possess such qualities can regain the trust of the student once again. "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people" (Prov. 14:34). Other characteristics that are vastly important in the principles and ethics of teachers are: (1) Christian educators seek the truth instead of relying on another's word. (2) They are expected to be just and fair, "for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair"(Prov. 1:3). Lastly, (3) they are expected to act ethical.

### ***Ethical Organizations***

There are five nationally known professional organizations that will be discussed, three that have joined together to identify and address specific ethical issues of significance to teacher educators. They are: the Association of Associate Degree Early

Childhood Educators (ACCESS), the division of Early childhood of the council for Exceptional Children (DEC), and the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE). The remaining organizations not joined are: the National Education Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

ACCESS is a national, non-profit 501(c) (3) membership association. The purpose of this organization is to support and advocate for associate degree programs that provide professional development to those who teach and care for young children from birth through age 8 across a variety of settings - public elementary schools, Head Start programs, child care centers and homes, and other community early childhood programs. This organization is expected to uphold ethical values throughout professional endeavors and seek God's guidance throughout their achievement Members of this association include: full-time and adjunct faculty with early childhood assignments at associate degree programs, campus child care/lab school faculty, and other individuals who share this organizations interest in early childhood teacher training and education. All these members are looked upon as leaders and are expected to act accordingly.

The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) is an international membership organization for those who work with or on behalf of young children with disabilities and other special needs. Their mission is to promote policies and advance evidence-based practices to support the optimal development of young children with special needs.

NAECTE members are people from all across the United States and from countries around the globe. They have joined together by one common interest in Early

Childhood Teacher Education. Their purpose is to promote professional growth, discuss educational issues specific to their purpose, advocate for improvements in early childhood teacher education, provide forums for consideration of issues and concerns of interest to educators of early childhood teacher educators, provide a communication network for early childhood teacher educators, facilitate the interchange of information and ideas about research and practice, use, as vehicles, the Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, conferences, resolutions, position papers, and other publications, cooperate with other national and international organizations concerned with the study and education of young children,

The National Education association adopted the code of ethics in 1975. Criticism that NEA's code is brief and general and will not serve as a functional standard in cases of any ambiguity (Strike, 1990, p.207) and fails to provide sufficient practical help for teachers when they address the real life, hands on problems of their work (Strike & Soltis, 1985). The code of ethics developed by the Council for Exceptional Children similarly provides general guidelines to support special educators (Council for Exceptional Children, 1996).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is the largest nonprofit association in the United States representing early childhood education teachers, experts, and advocates in center-based and family day care. NAEYC is dedicated to improving the well-being of all young children, with particular focus on the

quality of educational and developmental services for all children from birth through age 8. NAEYC is committed to becoming an increasingly high performing and inclusive.

### *Code of Ethics*

An educational leader's professional conduct must conform to an ethical code of behavior, and the code must set high standards for all educational leaders. The educational leader provides professional leadership across the district and also across the community. This responsibility requires the leader to maintain standards of exemplary professional conduct while recognizing that his or her actions will be viewed and appraised by the community, professional associates and students.

The educational leader acknowledges that he or she serves the schools and community by providing equal educational opportunities to each and every child. The work of the leader must emphasize accountability and results, increased student achievement, and high expectations for each and every student.

To these ends, the educational leader subscribes to the following code of ethics.

The educational leader:

1. Makes the education and well-being of students the fundamental value of all decision making.
2. Fulfills all professional duties with honesty and integrity and always acts in a trustworthy and responsible manner.

3. Supports the principle of due process and protects the civil and human rights of all individuals.
4. Implements local, state and national laws.
5. Advises the school board and implements the board's policies and administrative rules and regulations.
6. Pursues appropriate measures to correct those laws, policies, and regulations that are not consistent with sound educational goals or that are not in the best interest of children.
7. Avoids using his/her position for personal gain through political, social, religious, and economic or other influences.
8. Accepts academic degrees or professional certification only from accredited institutions.
9. Maintains the standards and seeks to improve the effectiveness of the profession through research and continuing professional development.
10. Honors all contracts until fulfillment, release or dissolution mutually agreed upon by all parties.
11. Accepts responsibility and accountability for one's own actions and behaviors.
12. Commits to serving others above self.

— Adopted by the AASA Governing Board, March 1, 2007

Early childhood educators have committed themselves to a code of ethics composed of

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- (1) Appreciating childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human cycle
- (2) Based work with children on knowledge of child development
- (3) Appreciate and support close ties between the child and family
- (4) Recognize the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual
- (5) Help children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust, respect, and positive regard (Feeney & Kipnis, 1992, p.3). As one can see the teacher takes on the role of many facets and wears a heavy burden of student acceptance. Students are relying on educators to provide a safe and comfortable environment where students can be lead, counseled and taught.

A precise code of ethics is said to be inadequate if left on the shelf. If teachers are going to be prepared to abide by ethics they must know their professional code and know how to apply it confidently and competently (Strike, 1990).

## ***Ethics and AERA***

The American Educational Research Association, or AERA, was founded in 1916 as a professional organization representing educational researchers in the United States and around the world. The purpose of AERA strives to advance knowledge about education, to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education, and to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good. The AERA code shares a relationship with the educational code of ethics. Both, the code of ethics and AERA, are designed to persuade the members of the profession to adopt common values and to convince the public that the profession holds these values (Kultgen, 1998).

## ***Biblical worldview ethics***

First is the sufficiency of the Bible to provide principles that govern all problems that we encounter, even in the complexity of modern science (1I Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:3). Second is the Bible as the starting-point for these principles. Too often, Christians start with the positions that other Christians take rather than what the Bible says. Although their ethical principles may be Biblical, they still must be proved by Scripture. Finally, the third biblical worldview is the authority given to Scripture.

\*Biblical ethics build on the knowledge of other Biblical scholars. Furthermore, all believers are dependent on other believers (I Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11-16).

\*Biblical ethics defines the way of "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6) and "the narrow way" (Matthew 7:14).

\*Biblical ethics requires certain motivational gifts. Motivational gifts derived through Christians necessary to develop Biblical ethics are teaching, wisdom, knowledge, and discernment.

### ***Biblical worldview principles***

In order for education to be consistent, the teacher must self-consciously teach in the framework of biblical authority. To accomplish this we must have a practice that guarantees its biblical character. The proper method is to use the Bible in each and every course both directly and indirectly. It is applied directly when we derive our understanding of each topic from the actual statements of the Bible, and use the text of Scripture appropriately in both levels elementary and junior high school. It is applied indirectly as we work out the implications of biblical truth as the proper framework for understanding each facet. Biblical rules regulate the way we teach and learn. One important goal of Christian education is to teach the student to reason biblically. Because of this, the educational process must show how the doctrinal truths of God's Word provide the Christian worldview. This worldview is a unified system of principles that guides the way we educate. It requires that every thought be made captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

### ***Ethical methods used***

The Bible tells us that parents have a moral responsibility before God to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). For a biblical curriculum to be profitable, it is necessary for the teacher to practice a biblical method of

teaching. Both the mind and the will of the student need to be trained and brought into subjection to God's authority. The teacher should pray and have inner strength to submit to God's authorization. The mind needs to be trained to submit to Scripture and be able to make wise decisions. False ways of thinking need to be rebuked and the mind brought to humility before God. Not only should the teacher teach the student to reason in a consistent, biblical, organized manner, but to exercise proper biblical discipline to reach the goal of conscience ethical behavior.

A biblical method of teachers to their students is to guarantee that they grow in their knowledge of the Word of God and learn the mind of Christ through their teacher. They must learn to reason in terms of biblical truth, and develop a truly consistent biblical worldview. By Christian instruction and precept, through scriptural wisdom, students are to develop their God-created minds unto Christian maturity. They must be taught how to rightly discern and judge all things in the light of Scripture. Christian education fails if it does not instill the pattern of thinking after God's words and logic. If a student learns to think in terms of himself or the creature, his decisions regarding right and wrong, truth and error, reality and fantasy, will be humanistic or naturalistic. Without realizing it, he will be acting as his own god, determining for himself good and evil (Genesis 3:5).

#### ***Four main types of teacher responsibility***

(1) Responsibility to students

-give them a sense of hope

-show them that they can love God

-help identify their own personal walk with God

-heal any hurts

(2) Responsibility to parent/guardians

-knowing that they will lead, counsel and teach their children

(3) Commitment to colleagues

-be open to new ideas

-to have mercy

(4) Responsibility to community

-to protect from bitterness

-to thank God

Biblical ethics finally rests within the conscience of individuals. Theory becomes practice in the situation where individuals live. It is hazardous for Christians to ignore the teaching and counsel of others. We have discussed the impossibility that one Christian can even begin to accomplish all that is required to know through Biblical principles. Preferably, individuals are taught in schools and parents should seek this teaching with

their children in local churches. This would be to ensure the knowledge of biblical ethics and principles. “And if this were not enough in your sight, O God, you have spoken about the future of the house of your servant. You have looked on me as though I were the most exalted of men, O Lord God.”(1 Chronicles 17:17)

### ***Bridging Together***

The Christian leader that encompasses principles and ethics will also be a competent leader, because he or she will do what is required in the job the right way. Worldly ethics does not differentiate between the morality of the leader and the morality of his or her leadership. The more we understand how ethics and effectiveness are inextricably related, the easier we will understand leadership. The educational study of ethics provides a critical perspective from which we can examine the assumptions behind leadership and leadership theories. It offers another level of analysis that should be integrated into the growing body of observed research in the field of educators. The ethics of leadership has to be examined along a variety of dimensions that cannot be understood separately.

The dimensions are the following:

1. Self-knowledge, discipline, and intentions, and so forth
2. How they treat others

3. Their process of leadership
4. What the leader does or does not do

These dimensions give us a picture of the ethics of what a leader does and how he or she does it. As we combine these dimensions together with godly perspectives of their worldviews for educators to mediate to their students the power of Christian principles and ethics.

“God is exalted in his power. Who is a teacher like him?”(Job 36:22)

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