

Guideposts for Success: Lesson Plans and Activities

Developed by the Institute for Educational Leadership

LESSON 26: WHAT DO ETHICS HAVE TO DO WITH ANYTHING?

AT-A-GLANCE

Ethics, or positive moral values, are things such as honesty, trustworthiness, loyalty and integrity. Understanding ethics and demonstrating ethical behavior are ways young people get ahead. It's not always easy, though, and we sometimes we find ourselves in situations where it might be difficult to be honest or loyal. Understanding what it takes to demonstrate ethical behavior can help a young person go a long way!

Icebreaker Quote

A good objective of leadership is to help those who are doing poorly to do well and to help those who are doing well to do even better.

-Jim Rohn

Icebreaker Discussion

Think about Rohn's quote. Why do people help others? There is an expression called WIIFM—or What's In It For Me...what does helping others do for us?

Lesson/Activity

Discuss the term "ethics." How do we know when something is "ethical?" What does it mean to be ethical?

Use the Ethics Worksheet to have students assess themselves (the worksheet looks at the following characteristics: trustworthiness, responsibility, integrity and honesty). This is a very informal assessment and it is recommended that the activity be used for discussion and reflection only. It is not recommended that students share their scores, as this is a personal activity to be used for self-examination and potential goal setting.

Once students score themselves, discuss some of the ways people set goals to better themselves. Ask for recommendations to share for those who would like to improve their trustworthiness, responsibility, integrity and honesty. Remind students that we all struggle with these issues from time to time—and it is through discussion, reflection and practice that we improve our ethical behavior.

Reflection

Some people think you can't get ahead by being honest. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain.

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Extension

Use the following scenarios to discuss ethics in the workplace.

1. There is an old saying that "the customer is always right." What do you think that means? Do you agree with it? Explain. What would you do if you thought a customer was dead wrong?
2. Suppose you are a sales clerk in a store and some of your friends want you to let them shoplift. Think about and discuss the following:
 - a. If you refused to let them shoplift, would that make you a disloyal friend? Explain your answer.
 - b. How would you respond if your friends said to you:
 - i. "Just turn your back. You won't even be involved."
 - ii. "Don't let it bother you. Everybody does it."
 - iii. "The store will never miss it."
 - iv. "This store rips everybody off. We're entitled to get even."
 - c. If they shoplift despite your objections, what would you do?
3. Suppose you have some personal problems that are troubling you. Is it okay to attend to these problems while you are at work? To what degree (or under what circumstances) do you think it's okay to deal with your own personal affairs on company time?
4. When you accept a job, what does the employer owe you, and what do you owe the employer?

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Ethical Behavior

Always	Mostly	Sometimes	
			I keep my promises; I am a person of my word
			I am reliable; I follow through on commitments
			I am honest
			I keep secrets; I never betray a confidence or a trust
			I have integrity; I don't cave into temptation
			I am loyal when loyalty is appropriate
			I am truthful, sincere, and straightforward
			I don't lie, cheat, or steal
			I don't intentionally mislead others
			I always try to do what is right, even when it is difficult
			I am true to my very best self
			I live up to the highest ethical standards
			I don't compromise my values by giving into temptation
			I do what needs to be done
			I am reliable and dependable
			I am accountable for my actions; I don't make excuses or blame others
			I use good judgment and think about the consequences of my actions (before I act)
			I exercise self control
			TOTAL

Total number of ✓ in the "Always" column: _____ x 3 = _____

Total number of ✓ in the "Mostly" column: _____ x 2 = _____

Total number of ✓ in the "Sometimes" column: _____ x 1 = _____

GRAND TOTAL = _____

Your score can range anywhere from 18 to 54.

The higher your score, the more ethical behavior you demonstrate on a regular basis. If you scored low, or are unhappy with your score, it just means you have a little more work to do 😊. We are ALL a work in progress—and we can ALWAYS choose to change our behaviors. If you think you would like to talk to someone about your score, please show this paper to a teacher or an adult you trust.

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Adapted from www.GoodCharacter.com