

Beyond Your Board's Code of Ethics

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Two Goals

- **Wake You Up!**
- **Leave with some helpful ideas:**
- **How ethical issues arise**
- **Some moral principles**
- **The dangers of ethical issues**
- **Can we reframe ethical issues?**

Ethical Issues

- **How do ethical issues arise?**
 - People's welfare is affected
- **Some kinds of cases in board's code**
 - **Misbehaving:** Misleading, confidentiality, personal advantage, being partial, etc.
- **Some kinds are *not***
 - "Cub Scouts on the SB"!

Cub Scouts on the SB!

- **Many choices we make trade-off the welfare of some people for the welfare of others:**
 - **Salary scales:** new vs. experienced teachers
 - **Salary/PTR:** Teachers vs. Students?
 - **Average students vs. special students**
 - **Snow routes:** Supported st's vs. unsupported
 - **Meeting standards vs. caring for kids**
 - **Some school vs. another school**
 - **Other cases?**

Some Moral Principles

1. **Do what will produce the greatest good overall, regardless of who is benefited.**
2. **Do what will benefit those least well-off.**
3. **Do what will benefit those who most deserve it.**

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- Salary scales: new vs. experienced teachers**

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Salary/PTR: Teachers vs. Students?

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Average students vs. special students

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Snow routes: Supported st's vs. unsupported

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Meeting standards vs. caring for kids

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How decide between these principles?

Dangers of Ethical Issues

- Cases where people dig in their heels, and are not willing to accept trade-offs:
- Mascot issues
- Sex ed, Gay-Straight Clubs, Evolution, Math texts!
- Others?

Dangers of Ethical Issues

- Labeling an issue as “moral” puts everyone on the defensive.
- Calm, reasoned discussion becomes very difficult.
- School boards, as political bodies, are suited for search for common ground, compromise, and “majority rules”.

Dangers of Ethical Issues

- Once an issue is labeled as “moral,” compromise is often ruled out as betrayal, common ground is difficult to find, and “majority rules” is anathema.
- Playing the “morality card” can be a substitute for having to gain popular support for your position.
- Moralists vs. Populists

Reframing Ethical Issues

- Can we avoid moral issues?
- Not always. Examples?
- Can we minimize people’s framing issues as moral issues?
- We can try to avoid doing it *ourselves*!
- Don’t give up on the responsibility to marshal political support for your views.

Reframing Ethical Issues

- Moralistic decisions, made without popular support, are not generally sustainable in the long run.
- Moralists do the right thing, regardless of what others think.
- Moralists don’t make the best leaders.
- Good leaders encourage a process that might *lead* people to do the right thing.

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