

Ethics in the Neighborhood

Written by Jerami Johnson

Adopted from Philippa Foot's "The Trolley Problem"

Goal 2: Life Skills

Narrative: In a residential environment, it is imperative that students learn skills that will help them lead healthy, independent lives in their adolescence and beyond. Students will display growth as/evolve into competent, self-sufficient individuals that are capable of overcoming personal and professional challenges.

Learning Outcomes: Students will demonstrate competence in personal life skills required to live independently. Students will practice steps for positive decision making. Students will develop an ethical mindset to approach difficult situations

Goal 4: Intrapersonal Intelligence

Students will become more proficient in identifying and verbalizing their needs, ideas, thoughts and values. **Learning**

Outcomes: Students will explore personal values and identity

Students will discuss and demonstrate how they use ethics to make decisions.

Students will explore the flexibility of their ethics depending on the situation.

Students will understand how bias may affect their ethical decision making.

Audience: All students but might work better for juniors and seniors. The activity can be adjusted to focus on IMSA lie situations.

Purpose:

To engage students in a conversation in which their frame of reference for Ethics is challenged. Help students begin to clarify their own ethical code. Helps students understand how culture and bias play a part in the formation of ethics. Students can explore how they use ethics in their relationships and day to day lives. Help students to recognize that not every ethical principle can be applied to every situation fairly.

Pre Activity:

Asks the students to explain what ethics are. (if no one can come with a definition use this one: ethics-1: the principles of conduct governing an individual or a group professional ethics, 2 : a guiding philosophy, 3 : a consciousness of moral importance). We often hear terms such as morals, honor, chivalry, or virtue in books and movies as character traits or rules that governs a society. We use ethics to judge not only ideas, but as we can use them to examine ourselves or the people we surround ourselves with. Ask students to provide an example of an ethical rule they have for themselves (if students cannot come up with one you could talk about The Hippocratic Oath taken by physicians or how IMSA employee's cannot accept gifts larger than \$100). Though ethics are complex they can be categorized into groups based on the criteria they use to judge actions. Some of those groups include but are not limited to:

- Virtue theory- emphasizes the value of virtuous qualities rather than formal rules or useful results. (aristotle)
- Social contract- where people give up certain rights to the government in exchange for security and common benefits.
- Utilitarianism- Emphasizes not rules but results. An action (or set of actions) is generally deemed good or right if it maximizes happiness or pleasure throughout society.
- Deontology- Requires that we put duty first, act rationally, and give moral weight to the inherent equality of all human beings.

Explain to the students that the activity that we will be doing will test how ethical they truly are.

Directions:

Split the students up into groups of no more than 5. Read the setting in the scene paragraph below to the students. There will be 3 rounds in which you will reveal new information about each neighbor (during round round one you will give the initial info and round one info at once). Allow students two minutes between rounds to discuss which neighbor they would like to be friends with. After the 2nd round allow the groups another two minutes to decide who they should choose as president. After they decide, bring all groups together and go into the fire round where the entire group will need to decide who to save. Give the group 5 minutes to decide in the fire round. After the fire round go into the debrief questions.

Activity (10 minutes):

Setting the Scene: You've just moved into a new neighborhood and the block is a buzz. Block Club elections are today and your 5 of your neighbors have gotten together to throw a block party for the election. At the end of the night you will have to elect a new president to represent your neighborhood

based on the conversations you've had tonight. Be warned not everyone at the party gets along so you may find out more than you originally bargained for.

Fire Round: A mysterious fire has started in the neighborhood and the fire department is too far away to help. The houses of your five neighbors are on fire and they are trapped inside. You only have enough time and energy to save one neighbor. Who will it be?

Houses throughout the rounds:

	Mr. Pink	Ms. Green	Mr. Grey	Mrs. Purple	Mx. Blue	
Initial Info	College Student	Software Engineer	Spent 20 years in prison	Doctor	Retired firefighter	
Round 1	White male political science major	Mexican Woman that has been working for charities for the last 8 years	Black man wife.	White woman who was kicked out of Yale for cheating	Non- binary person who is active in a gang and involved in multiple homicides	
Round 2	Has a history of alcoholism	On trial for embezzling millions from her charitable organizations	Multimillionaire	Just created a cure for cancer in their basement lab	Gang goes after serious criminals and offenders as a sort of unofficial vigilante	
Fire Round	Lives with a sick parent	Used the stolen money to fund impoverished families in the community	Is a preacher working for the incarcerated	Was using children of color to test their new treatment without parental consent	Thinks he is 2 months pregnant	

Debrief Questions (10 minutes):

(For time sake only allow one student to represent each group for the first two questions)

1. Who did you choose to elect and please explain how you made that decision?
2. Did you find yourself at any point reconsidering your initial judgements, why? (You may need to stop and inform students that ethics are influenced and formulated based on culture, personal experience, personal gain, bias, etc. so it is only natural that you would change your mind based on the situation.)
3. Was the person you chose to elect after the party the same person you saved from the fire? Why?
4. What does this teach us about ethics in the real world? (At this point students should be hinting at the fact that ethics must be adaptable and realistic to the situation at hand, if they have not you will need to nudge them into this.)

(Note: students may ask if there was a right answer when it came to the election or fire rescue but is not one this activity was only to how difficult being ethical can be when making complex decisions.)

Reflection

By: Ben Lepak

I think this is a fantastic program that will be able to challenge most students on what they might choose after the various rounds. As the information they are learning is or can be based off of real things if we choose to do so and make it IMSA like situations. Which can potentially bring it closer to them and make it even harder for them to make a decision during the different rounds. As well as it is a program that can be adapted to either face students who are just entering IMSA if we wanted to target Sophomores or we can do it toward Seniors talking about some of the things that they might face during college. So it is a very versatile program that would be very well received I think. As there are a variety of different points that can be brought up and can be a great conversational piece as it will start a conversation be it among different students or different groups on campus or the wing about what they felt was the right decision. The only thing that I can see as maybe a potential problem or triggering situation is that we just have to be careful as this can start an argument between students. Since this might tie into their own social upbringing as there might be some people who get really into the situations and start to disagree on the various people of friend, president, and who to save. So I'd just make sure to bring up something along the lines of that this is just some situations that people might face and that each person has their own way of deciding and that no person's decision is worse or better than someone else's. This program I feel will be able to work in all wings and halls across campus and that there doesn't appear to be any reason why a hall or wing can't participate. As this program is also pretty easily modified.