Ethical Leader Statement

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Introduction

Overview

The reader can expect two types of discussion: my ethical commitments and how I plan to enact my ethical commitments. I will explain my ethical commitments to myself, students, parents, profession, current and future employers, and community members using two professional codes of ethics as a framework, class readings, and my own personal experiences and research. In the enacting ethical commitments section, I will explain how I am currently following the codes of ethics and how I plan to enact those commitments in future instructional technologist roles. Again, I will use class readings and my own personal experiences and research to provide context for the reader.

Purpose

The purpose of my ethical leadership statement is for me to reflect upon what it means to be an ethical leader and to think about how my personal beliefs mesh with the codes of ethics I am charged with to uphold. As an educator, I have been presented with ethical dilemmas where I have had to make decisions and recommendations in response to those situations. As an aspiring instructional technologist, I will continue to face ethical dilemmas where I will have to make decisions, recommendations, and perhaps even policies in response to those situations. In sum, I plan to accomplish further clarification of my thinking about what it means to be an ethical leader by crafting this ethical leadership statement.

Ethical Commitments

As an educator and aspiring instructional technologist, I am deeply committed to being an ethical professional. The Tennessee Teacher Code of Ethics and the Association for

Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) Code of Professional Ethics are the two

frameworks I will use to reflect upon my ethical commitments to myself, students, parents,

profession, current and future employers, and community members. Tavani (2013, p. 107)

outlines a number of ways code of ethics guide professionals. He says Bynum and Rogerson

(2004) feel code of ethics should inspire, educate, guide, hold accountable, and enforce. In

addition, Tavani (2013, p. 107) says Perlman and Varma (2002) explain how codes should

strike a balance of being not too broad in scope, yet not too specific either. It is with these ideas

in mind that I will examine my commitments to those I come in contact with on a daily basis.

To begin with, I look to the Tennessee teacher and AECT codes to help mold my core

values as a professional not just because they are written down somewhere on paper but because

following them is the right thing to do. In my role as a classroom teacher, students are my

number one priority. As outlined in the Tennessee code, I strive to foster a spirit of inquiry, a

love of learning, and a creation of worthy academic goals within my students. Further examples

of my ethical commitment to students include that I pledge to allow my students access to

different points of view, cultivate a safe learning environment, value diversity, maintain

professional relationships with students, and protect students' privacy. In being ethically

committed to my students' best interests I am by extension committed to their parents as well as

the community in which I live and teach.

My ethical commitment to the teaching profession is evidenced by my "raising

professional standards, promoting a climate that encourages the exercise of professional

judgment, achieving conditions which attract persons worthy of the trust to careers in education,

and assisting in preventing the practice of the profession by unqualified persons" (Teacher Code

of Ethics, 2010). By the same token these ideals translate to the commitment I have to the high school where I work and school district that hired me.

While I am not an official member of AECT, I plan to be in the future and look to their code of professional ethics for further guidance of how I can demonstrate my ethical commitments now and in the future. The AECT code outlines individual, society, and profession commitments. A number of these commitments are shared by the Tennessee Code of Ethics. Therefore, I am also committed to upholding guidelines like "shall make reasonable efforts to protect the individual from conditions harmful to health and safety, including harmful conditions caused by technology itself" and "shall promote current and sound professional practices in the use of technology in education" (AECT, 2007). As a teacher at a high school where students will have their own laptop for the 2013-2014 school year, I believe my role as an informal instructional technologist will be even more pronounced. I will be able to look to the AECT code for guidance in addition to the leadership provided by my principal and school district officials. One area that I can foresee as an issue I could provide assistance might be helping colleagues and students understand and interpret copyright laws since the ubiquitous technology will make it easier to access a plethora of copyrighted material online.

Enacting Ethical Commitments

How I go about enacting my ethical commitments are just as important as the previous discussion of to whom I am ethically committed. I currently enact my ethical commitments as a professional by following the Tennessee Teacher Code of Ethics. As such, I have two main obligations under that code: to my students and to my profession. The question, though, is how

do I go about following the code in my day-to-day life? There is more than one way I make sure I follow through on my commitments.

One element that guides my ethical commitments are my own values. Tavani (2013, p. 38) defines a value as "having worth or being of worth. Values are objects of our desires or interests; examples include happiness, love, and freedom." I discovered my top two values by completing a core values exercise I found online at ethicalleadership.org (see Appendix for core values exercise). My initial eight core values included peace, happiness, friendship, justice, integrity, family, truth, and wisdom. From there I was instructed to narrow the list down to five, then three, and finally two. After much reflection and research, I decided upon integrity and wisdom as my two core values.

According the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, being a person of integrity means "first, that integrity is primarily a formal relation one has to oneself, or between parts or aspects of one's self; and second, that integrity is connected in an important way to acting morally, in other words, there are some substantive or normative constraints on what it is to act with integrity" (Cox, La Caze, & Levine, 2001). Cox et al. (2001) go on to cite Cheshire Calhoun's argument that integrity is primarily a social virtue, one that is defined by a person's relations to others (Calhoun, 1995). And so I not only must stand up for what I believe is right, but I must also consider how others feel about the situation.

An example of integrity in my classroom would be whether I follow my own classroom rules consistently. If one of my rules is for students to raise their hand before they speak, then I should not acknowledge students who do not raise their hand and instead call out answers. By allowing some students to comment without raising their hand while insisting others do, I create

an atmosphere that lacks integrity on my part because I am not following through on the classroom rules that I have set forth.

Wisdom is the second core value I consider to be a part of my guiding principles in my quest to be an ethical leader. There are "five general approaches to understanding what it takes to be wise: (1) wisdom as epistemic humility, (2) wisdom as epistemic accuracy, (3) wisdom as knowledge, (4) a hybrid theory of wisdom, and (5) wisdom as rationality" (Ryan, 2007). The one that speaks the most to me as an educator is wisdom as rationality theory, which "does not require knowledge or perfection. But it does require rationality, and it accommodates degrees of wisdom" (Ryan, 2007). And so for me that is important because I am not afraid or embarrassed to admit that I do not know everything. I do know how to search for knowledge if that is what I need to do.

How will wisdom guide me in my classroom to be an ethical leader? By taking the time to thoroughly examine situations where there are no clear right and wrong answers using my past experience along with my current knowledge of the situation to make an informed judgment will not only benefit myself but more importantly will benefit my students. Even being able to admit that I do not know everything there is to know about my subject area, and that I can learn from my students just as much as they can learn from me will open doors to the power of wisdom.

Another element that guides my ethical commitments is my understanding of James Moor's just-consequentialist theory. His theory combines parts of consequence-based and duty-based theories with character-based theory presupposed. Moor offers a strategy to use to frame our understanding of ethical issues or situations that are not so black and white. First, he suggests that one "deliberate over various policies from an important point of view to determine whether they meet the criteria for being ethical policies" (Tavani, 2013, p. 69). Moor defines an ethical

policy as one that "does not cause any unnecessary harm to individuals and groups and supports

individual rights, the fulfilling of duties, etc." (Tavani, 2013, p. 69). The second step is to "select

the best policy from the set of just policies arrived at in the deliberation stage by ranking ethical

policies in terms of benefits and (justifiable) harms" (Tavani, 2013, p. 69). In order to do this,

one must "weigh carefully between the good consequences and bad consequences in the ethical

policies, and distinguish between disagreement about facts and disagreements about principles

and values, when deciding which particular ethical policy should be adopted" (Tavani, 2013, p.

69-70). It is with this two-step approach that I can enact ethical commitments and contemplate

other ethical dilemmas.

Perhaps the most straightforward approach to being an ethical leader who has to wrestle

with an ethical dilemma takes the form of four simple questions devised by Patricia Pinnell and

Shirley Eagan:

> 1. Kid on your shoulder: Would you do it if your kids were watching?
>
> 2. Front page of the newspaper: Would you like to see it published on page 1 of your
>   local newspaper?
>
> 3. Golden rule: Would you be happy being on the receiving end of the decision or action?
>
> 4. Rule of universality: Would it be okay if everyone did it? (Rabinowitz, n.d.)

The above questions serve me well in the classroom and are especially insightful for

helping high school students to grapple with everyday ethical situations. The fourth question is

particularly good to highlight, for example, when students are tardy to class by a second after the

bell rings and to show them how if everyone came to class a second late and there were not any

consequences, then having a tardy policy would be quite meaningless.

In future professional roles, I plan to enact my ethical commitments as a professional by continuing to reflect upon the way I currently go about being an ethical professional. After comparing the Tennessee teacher code with the AECT code, I can see there is not too much difference in the expectations of the standards except for the AECT code's focus on technology. I have started to think about how my own classroom will look different in the fall because our school was selected to participate in Knox County Schools' technology initiative that will provide each student their own laptop. There will be many issues in the coming school year where I imagine I will have to call upon the thoughts and strategies I have outlined in this statement to guide my actions in the classroom as well as outside of the classroom. For example, our principal has encouraged the faculty to embrace Twitter as a communication tool to use with students, parents, colleagues, and community members. Questions remain about policies relating to this form of social media, especially since it is blocked on the school's network.

Concluding Remarks

In this statement I intended to accomplish a reflection upon what it means to be an ethical leader and to think about how my personal beliefs coincide with the Tennessee Teacher Code of Ethics and AECT Code of Professional Ethics. I examined my ethical commitments to myself, students, parents, profession, current and future employers, and community members. I also looked at how I am currently following the code of ethics and how I plan to enact those commitments in future instructional technologist roles. I accomplished this by using class readings and my own personal experiences and research to provide context for the reader. The impact on my current and future practice is that my ideas and views will always be evolving just as the technologies and world in which I live in will continue to change; however, I will be able

to use professional code of ethics and my own personal beliefs regarding ethics and morality as a

basis on which to make informed ethical decisions.

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Appendix

The full version of the Self-Guided Core Values Assessment can be found at

http://ethicalleadership.org/publications/free-resources-1. Below are the instructions and Core

Values Exercise I completed.

Instructions

1. Review the values on the assessment worksheet. At the bottom notice there are a few blank

lines. Use these lines to add any values that are important to you, but are not listed.

2. Put a star next to all of the value words that are very important to you, including any you may

have added. This will become your personal set of values.

3. Narrow the list to your top eight values by crossing off less important ones or circling more

important ones. Take two to three minutes to do this.

4. Now narrow the list to five, using the same process.

5. Now narrow the list to three.

6. And finally, choose your top two core values.

Core Values Exercise

Peace

Wealth

Happiness

Success

Friendship

Fame

Authenticity

Power

Influence

Justice

Integrity

Joy

Love

Recognition

Family

Friends

Truth

Wisdom

Statue

_____ (additional value not listed)

_____ (additional value not listed)