LESSON 5

MY COMMUNITY: WHAT ARE ITS VALUES?

"It's a grand mistake to think of being great without goodness; and I pronounce it as certain that there was never yet a truly great man who was not at the same time truly virtuous."

—Benjamin Franklin

My Community: What Are Its Values?

Prework for students: Ask students to read and complete "Defining Community Values."

Objectives

By the end of this two-part lesson, students will understand the difference between ethical values and other kinds of values, they will be able to describe the important features of a code of ethics, and they will see that it is possible for a community to come to agreement on a core list of shared ethical values.

Part A: Defining Key Terms

Opening

"What do you think is the main point of William Stafford's poem 'Traveling Through the Dark'? What does the poem have to do with values?"

Strategies

- Follow instructions for the Defining Key Terms activity: After discussing the Stafford poem, review the key terms listed on the Key Terms overhead and defined in the reading assigned for homework.
- Next, identify other types of values and discuss the differences between those values and ethical values. Have students review the values they listed in the homework assignment. Which of those values still seem to be ethical values? Which do not?
- Review and discuss the Sample Codes of Ethics handout.

Reflection Questions

- What are ethical values? How are they different from other kinds of values?
- What are the essential characteristics of a code of ethics? Are codes of ethics important? Why or why not?

Closure and Transition to Part B

"In the next class we will see if we can build our own code of ethics."

Part B: Building a Code of Ethics

Opening

"Imagine our school needs a code of ethics—a handful of principles to live by—that can be mounted over the door as you come in so everyone knows what we stand for. It needs to be a code that the entire community can agree to. Our task is to define that code."

Strategies

- Carefully follow the process instructions for the activity Building a Code of Ethics. The group's task is to achieve a final list of five to eight *ethical* values on which everyone can agree.
- When the list is in place, post it in a prominent place in the classroom. You will be using the list in a number of ways later on.

Reflection Questions

- Are there shared ethical values we can all agree to?
- How do the values we select compare to other sets of values?

Closure and Transition

"Now that we've drafted a code of ethics, how might we operationalize (or define) each of the values we selected for our code? Is there some way this code can help us as we plan and prepare for our service-learning projects?"

Homework Assignment

Have students complete the worksheet, "So We Have a Code, So What?," found in Lesson 6.

Lesson Assessment: Revisions for Next Time _____

DEFINING COMMUNITY VALUES

TRAVELING THROUGH THE DARK

Traveling through the dark I found a deer
dead on the edge of the Wilson River road.
It is usually best to roll them into the canyon:
that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead.

By glow of the tail-light I stumbled back of the car
and stood by the heap, a doe, a recent killing;
she had stiffened already, almost cold.
I dragged her off; she was large in the belly.

My fingers touching her side brought me the reason—
her side was warm; her fawn lay there waiting,
alive, still, never to be born.
Beside that mountain road I hesitated.

The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;
under the hood purred the steady engine.
I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red;
around our group I could hear the wilderness listen.

I thought hard for us all—my only swerving—
then pushed her over the edge into the river.

—*William Stafford*

- Why did the actor stop? He or she didn't have to.
- Once the actor decided to stop, what dilemma did he or she face?
- Can you think of people who might not even consider stopping in such a situation? What do you think makes the actor in the poem different from them?

- What do you think the actor's values were?
- Where did these values come from?
- Did he or she do the right thing?

In many ways, Stafford's poem is about ethical values. What are ethical values anyway?

- The word *ethical* refers to behavior that conforms with the principles of right conduct.
- The word *value*, though, has at least two very different meanings:
  1) It can refer to the relative worth or importance of just about anything (such as monetary worth, artistic worth, or cultural worth).
  2) It can be used, more specifically, to define those principles or standards that are worthy in and of themselves, without regard to any other purpose.

Values that are not ethical in nature (see definition number 1 above) include musical values (do you like rap or rock?), artistic values (do you prefer oil paintings or cartoons?), and food values (do you like hamburgers or rice and beans?), among others. In and of themselves, these preferences for one value over another have nothing to do with distinguishing right from wrong.

Ethical values, on the other hand, belong under definition number 2 of the word *value*. They are values—such as truth or honesty—that have *intrinsic* worth; that is, they are essential and important in and of themselves and not for some other, larger purpose.

Ethical values are about forming the *ideal* human character. An ideal person would be a perfect person, but we all know that nobody's perfect. So when we talk about trying to be ethical, we are talking about striving toward an ideal, but not about being perfect.

Why do we need ethical values? Because, for one thing, we are social beings. The reality is we need to get along. Stanford University professor

John Gardner puts it this way:

> *The accomplishment of any group's purpose generally requires shared values firmly held. Survival may hang on whether the group does in fact have a deep allegiance to the values in question. [While] scholars are fascinated with* divergence *in value systems, the men and women who must keep a society functioning are always seeking the* common ground *that will make concerted action possible. They have no choice.*

What are the ethical values that society requires we identify and pledge to uphold?

What would you put on your list? Imagine, for example, that you are on a student committee charged with the task of coming up with a code of ethical values for your school. What would be on it?

▶ *Brainstorm some of your ideas here:*

1. _____	7. _____	13. _____
2. _____	8. _____	14. _____
3. _____	9. _____	15. _____
4. _____	10. _____	16. _____
5. _____	11. _____	17. _____
6. _____	12. _____	18. _____

Part A
Defining Key Terms

Purpose

- To acquaint students with the nature of different types of values and with the role of language in any discussion of values.

Preparation and Materials

Prior to class, carefully review the poem, "Traveling Through the Dark"; the definitions in the reading, "Defining Community Values"; and the Sample Codes of Ethics handout. Prepare overheads of the poem and key terms, if desired. Have available a number of dictionaries for students to refer to during the discussion. Copy the Sample Codes of Ethics for distribution and discussion during class.

Process

1) Read and discuss the poem, "Traveling Through the Dark."

- Why did the actor in the poem stop? He or she didn't have to.
- What was the actor's dilemma?
- What did it have to do with moral, or ethical, values?
- What do you think the actor's values were?
- Where did these values come from?
- Did he or she do the right thing?

2) Ask: What are ethical values?

Discuss the terms defined in the reading, "Defining Community Values."

3) What other kinds of values are there? How are moral values different?

Examples are almost unlimited, and the class will easily uncover many of them.

Consider:

- Economic values—"get the best bargain you can" versus "always buy the best even if it costs more"
- Musical values—rock 'n' roll, country, classical music, etc.

Ethical values are different because they are about creating virtue, the ideal human character, the highest sense of good. They tend to be intrinsic (essential, inherent in and of themselves) rather than instrumental (serving as a means to an end, essential or not).

4) What are codes of ethics? How are they constructed?

Go over the sample codes included with the lesson. Typically, they are:

- Statements of shared, basic values
- Brief and easily memorized
- General, not detailed

Discuss the nature of codes of ethics, using the examples included with this unit and others of your own choosing. Point out that a code of ethics forms the *moral environment* within which other values—such as education values and business values—operate. Now you are ready to begin the process of building a code of ethics.

Traveling Through the Dark

Traveling through the dark I found a deer
dead on the edge of the Wilson River road.
It is usually best to roll them into the canyon:
that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead.

By glow of the tail-light I stumbled back of the car
and stood by the heap, a doe, a recent killing;
she had stiffened already, almost cold.
I dragged her off; she was large in the belly.

My fingers touching her side brought me the reason—
her side was warm; her fawn lay there waiting,
alive, still, never to be born.
Beside that mountain road I hesitated.

The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;
under the hood purred the steady engine.
I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red;
around our group I could hear the wilderness listen.

I thought hard for us all—my only swerving—
then pushed her over the edge into the river.

—William Stafford

KEY TERMS

ETHICS: The study of standards of right and wrong behavior

VALUE: That which has intrinsic worth or a principle, standard, or quality that is worthwhile

ETHICAL VALUES: Intrinsic values having to do with right and wrong

CODES OF ETHICS ARE:

- General, not detailed
- Brief and easily memorized
- Statements of shared, basic values

Sample Codes of Ethics

The Girl Scout Law

West Point Honor Code

The Institute for Global Ethics List of Personal Values

The 4-Way Test

The Caux Round Table Principles for Business

The Greens/Green Party USA: 10 Key Values

Izaak Walton League Hunter's Pledge

Islamic Code of Sports Ethics

Ten Commandments of Computer Ethics

Gandhi's List of Evils to Remember

The Ten Commandments

You'll find a copy of each of the above codes of ethics on the pages that follow.

The Scout Laws

The Girl Scout Law

A scout is:

Trustworthy
Loyal
Useful
Friendly
Courteous
Kind to animals
Obedient
Cheerful
Thrifty
Clean in thought, word, and deed

The Revised Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be
honest and fair,
friendly and helpful,
considerate and caring,
courageous and strong, and
responsible for what I say and do

and to
respect myself and others,
respect authority,
use resources wisely,
make the world a better place, and
be a sister to every Girl Scout.

Girl Scouts of the USA
New York, New York, 1996

West Point Honor Code

A cadet does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do.

United States Military Academy
West Point, New York

The Institute for Global Ethics List of Personal Values

Respect for self
Respect for truth
Respect for community
Respect for the environment
Respect for the future

From Personal Ethics and the Future of the World *(VHS, Varied Directions)*

The 4-Way Test

Of the things we think, say, or do:

1) Is it truth?
2) Is it fair to all concerned?
3) Will it build goodwill and better friendships?
4) Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

Rotary International
Evanston, Illinois

The Caux Round Table Principles for Business

1) The responsibilities of business: beyond shareholders to stakeholders
2) The economic and social impact of business: toward innovation, justice, and world community
3) Business behavior: beyond the letter of the law toward a spirit of trust
4) Respect for rules
5) Support for multilateral trade
6) Respect for the environment
7) Avoidance of illicit operations

Caux Round Table, 1994
Caux, Switzerland

The Greens/Green Party USA: 10 Key Values

Ecological wisdom
Social justice
Grassroots democracy
Nonviolence
Decentralization
Community economics
Feminism
Respect for diversity
Personal and global responsibility
Future focus

The Greens/Green Party USA

Izaak Walton League Hunter's Pledge

Respect the environment and wildlife
Respect property and landowners
Show consideration for nonhunters
Hunt safely
Know and obey the law
Support wildlife and habitat conservation
Pass on an ethical hunting tradition
Strive to improve outdoor skills and understanding of wildlife
Hunt only with ethical hunters

Izaak Walton League of America
Gaithersburg, Maryland

Islamic Code of Sports Ethics

(as Inspired and Practiced by Hakeem Olajuwon)

I swear by God the Almighty that I will:

Regard God in carrying out my sport
Promote sportsmanship at all stages
Keep my fans' trust and confidence
Always be an instrument of God's mercy, extending sportsmanship to friend and enemy
Strive in the pursuit of knowledge
Respect my coach, teach my juniors, and be a brother to members of the sports industry
Live my faith in private and public, avoiding whatever may blemish me in the eyes of God, His Apostle, and my fellow faithful.

The Islamic Society of Greater Houston
Houston, Texas

Ten Commandments of Computer Ethics

Thou shalt not use a computer to harm other people
Thou shalt not interfere with other people's computer work
Thou shalt not snoop around in other people's computer files
Thou shalt not use a computer to steal
Thou shalt not use a computer to bear false witness
Thou shalt not copy or use proprietary software for which you have not paid
Thou shalt not use other people's computer resources without authorization or proper compensation
Thou shalt not appropriate other people's intellectual output
Thou shalt think about the social consequences of the program you are writing or the system you are designing
Thou shalt always use a computer in ways that ensure consideration and respect for your fellow humans

Computer Ethics Institute
Washington, D.C.

Gandhi's List of Evils to Remember

Wealth without work
Commerce without morality
Science without humanity
Pleasure without conscience
Politics without principles
Knowledge without character

Mahatma Gandhi,
leader of the Indian Nationalist movement

The Ten Commandments

I. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

II. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, or serve them.

III. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

IV. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

V. Honor thy father and thy mother.

VI. Thou shalt not kill.

VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VIII. Thou shalt not steal.

IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

X. Thou shalt not covet.

From The Bible
Exodus 20:1–17

Part B
Building a Code of Ethics

Purpose

- To provide practical experience in negotiating a set of values that reflects a group's common ethical ground
- To demonstrate that there are values on which all members of the group can agree

Preparation and Materials

It will be helpful to have two flip charts and heavy-duty markers for the values brainstorming session. With masking tape, post completed flip-chart sheets on the wall in full view of all students. Have available a number of dictionaries for students to refer to during their discussions.

Process

1) Values Brainstorming Session

a) Set the stage for the exercise

"Imagine our local school needs a code of ethics—a handful of principles to live by—that can be mounted over the door as you come in so that everyone knows what we stand for. It needs to be a code that everyone can agree to. Our task is to define that code."

b) Blue-sky session

In an open brainstorming session, ask students to toss out as many possible values as they can. Students who are new to an understanding of ethical values may need prompts to stimulate their line of thinking. Some useful approaches might be:

"Think of someone you admire. What qualities do you admire in that person?"

"Name some important heroes in history. What values did they have?" You may need to make suggestions to get ideas rolling (Nathan Hale, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., etc.)

Refer them also to the list of values they made when they filled out the Defining Community Values Exercise. Agree to use positive noun or noun-phrase statements. List every word or short phrase on the blackboard or flip charts. Try to get several dozen words on the list before proceeding to the next step. (You

might find that words come in fits and starts, but we've never seen a group that couldn't find at least 60 words, and many groups come up with 80 to 100.) Apply the general rules of any brainstorming session: Move things along at a quick pace, and allow no discussion or judgments.

2) Narrow Down the List

This step of narrowing down the list works best when it is performed in a series of smaller steps. We like this way the best:

a) Suggest some parameters after the brainstorming process has been completed.

- A word such as *ethics* does not belong on the list because it is an overarching term—what the exercise is really all about.
- Some words are nearly synonymous, and, since the number of words to be included in the final list is limited, it is a good idea to narrow synonyms down to one word and to also make sure that no word on the list is in fact a subset of another word. If some students, for example, choose *honesty* and others *truth* and others *integrity*, can they come to agreement on the one word that most accurately represents what they mean to convey? What word will be best, given the group's overall purpose?
- Tell them to make sure that each word selected is indeed an *ethical* value. For example, during the blue-sky session, someone might suggest *creativity* or *humor*. But if either of these is included in the final list, then what the group is saying is that if a person lacks creativity or humor, then he or she is an *unethical* person.

b) Individual process

Ask each student to pick his or her top eight values from the list. Allow five to ten minutes for this step.

c) **Small-group process** (If desired, use the Small-Group Instructions overhead.) Next, have students form groups of five to six and select a recorder for each group. The task is to take their individual lists and combine them into one list of eight values. In this setting, students will question each other and work to negotiate a list that has no more than eight values on it, and includes only those values on which *all* members of the group can agree.

3) Arrive at Consensus with the Whole Class

Finally, with the whole class, repeat the previous exercise (c) by working to combine the lists of each of the small groups into one final list. Encourage discussion and debate. By now, the students should be very involved in the topic and have a fair amount to say. Remember to point out that words—by their very nature—are inexact

and often variable in their meanings. Students are not trying to create the world's best code of ethics. They are experiencing a process of discovery with the objective of seeking out commonalities.

4) Compare and Contrast

Share the list of eight values developed by Rushworth Kidder and published in his book, *Shared Values for a Troubled World: Conversations with Men and Women of Conscience* (Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994). For this book, Dr. Kidder asked 24 highly regarded individuals from 16 countries the question: "If you could create a code of ethics for the 21st century, what would be on it?" Ask: How is Dr. Kidder's list similar to our list? How is it different? Why? (For example, we find that we, as Americans, often do not include freedom on our core list of values. Perhaps this is because we take it for granted and do not consider it to be moral in nature. For some people from other cultures, freedom is not taken for granted and is openly prized.) Refer also to the Mary E. Taylor Middle School and the Five Most Commonly Selected Community Values lists.

Finally, if your school already has a code of community values ethics in place, ask the class to compare their values list with that code.

SMALL-GROUP INSTRUCTIONS

1) Select a group recorder.

2) Recorder will:
   - Ask someone to name a value on their list.
   - Then ask how many others have that same value on their list.
   - Record the number of times the value was selected.
   - Repeat the process—asking each group member in turn—until all values have been listed.

3) Develop a final list containing no more than eight values. Keep in mind that:
   - Some values can be combined into one.
   - Some values may be subsets of others.
   - Some values may not be ethical values.

SHARED VALUES

From: *Shared Values for a Troubled World: Conversations with Men and Women of Conscience* **by Rushworth M. Kidder**

- Love
- Truthfulness
- Fairness
- Freedom
- Unity
- Tolerance
- Responsibility
- Respect for Life

This book documents 24 highly personal testimonies that advocate a universal quest for values. Included are interviews with influential thinkers such as Reuben Snake, Oscar Arias, Jill Ker Conway, John W. Gardner, and Jeane Kirkpatrick. Published by Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1994.

Mary E. Taylor Middle School

Values List

- Honest
- Respectful
- Fair
- Loyal
- Trustworthy
- Sensitive
- Tolerant
- Self-reliant

Camden, Maine
January 1994

Five Most Commonly Selected Community Values

- Honesty
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Compassion
- Fairness

Subject Adaptation Suggestions

History and Social Studies

- Explore the question: How do ethical values relate to civic values? If ethical values form the moral environment within which other values operate, can we define which civic values go with which ethical values (e.g., under responsibility, civic participation; under justice, equality and democracy; under respect, tolerance; etc.)?
- Have students reread the Declaration of Independence and/or the Bill of Rights. Which of the ethical values on their list can be found in these documents?
- Ask students to study the voting process in their community. Have them set up an information booth at some public place and develop a mailing list for those wanting more information. For homework, have them craft their case for why voting is important in terms of the ethics language they have learned.

Language Arts

- Using the values list the class came to agreement on, have students write a brief essay, including a paragraph on what each value means. Include an introductory paragraph on what a code of ethics is and a concluding paragraph on why it is important.
- Analyze literature being discussed in class in terms of the list of values.

Math and Science

- Ask students to draft a survey instrument for the school that asks students what five values they would select from a longer list (perhaps 15). Tabulate results to see if there is any agreement. To make this exercise more sophisticated, gather demographic data from respondents (e.g., grade level, male or female) and, using a statistics package, see if there are any statistically defensible conclusions that can be drawn.

Visual Arts

- Using the values list the class came to agreement on, have students create a drawing for each value. Or, suggest that they illustrate a situation involving one of the values. For example, for compassion, they might draw a picture of a teenager helping a young child to cross the street.