LESSON 6

BUILDING AND OPERATIONALIZING A CODE OF ETHICS

"Values . . . are the stuff from which real vision is made."

—Rushworth M. Kidder

Building and Operationalizing a Code of Ethics

Prework for participants: Ask participants to prepare for cooperative argumentation in advocating certain values for inclusion in the final class list.

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Explain the process by which a group comes to an agreement on a core list of shared ethical values
- Identify the most commonly selected ethical values
- Operationalize a value
- Describe the meaning and use of the Values-Tactics Ladder

Opening

In our last session we began the process of defining our shared values. Today we will continue to build this code of ethics to mount over the entrance to our campus. After we review the ground rules to which we all agreed at our first session, we will work toward consensus as a group to combine our lists of values into one final list. We will compare our list to those of other groups and then operationalize our list of values or put these abstract ideals into behavioral terms.

Strategies

This lesson continues the work begun in Lesson 5. Review the ground rules since the values discussion may get intense. Also, have a dictionary available to more precisely define terms. Carefully continue to follow the process instructions for the Building a Code of Ethics (Part II) exercise. 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, ask, "How can we use this list in a meaningful way?"

Introduce the next activity, Operationalizing the Code, and hand out the worksheet, So We Have a Code, So What? Allow each student to work individually for approximately five minutes to list examples of behavior congruent with each value. Then continue the activity by asking the class as a whole to generate more examples of behaviors which demonstrate each of the values selected by the large group for their code of ethics. When the exercise has been completed, post the operationalized lists prominently as a reminder, during the remainder of the sessions, of the group's agreed-to ethical values. Distribute or post on overheads examples of other operationalized lists for comparison. Finally present the Values-Tactics Ladder (overhead) to emphasize the importance of returning to shared values when decisions are to be made by groups or organizations (see *Tough Choices*, pp. 100–101).

Key Questions

- Can we agree upon a set of shared values?
- How do the values we select compare to other sets of values?
- Is it enough simply to identify a list of ethical values? Why or why not?
- What does it mean to be an honest (or responsible or respectful—use actual words on the group list) person?
- What are some examples of how values can be put into action?
- How does the Values-Tactics Ladder help us to work toward consensus when planning programs or problem solving in groups?

Closure & Transition

Our code of ethics can guide us in making difficult decisions. In fact, one definition of ethics is the conflict of "right versus right," when two core values on our list come into conflict. But first, let's consider the concept of right versus wrong.

Homework Assignment for Lesson 7

Read "Three Ways to be Wrong" (Chapter 1, pages 38–45) in *How Good People Make Tough Choices*, or the reading, "Right versus Wrong: Knowing the Difference."

Lesson Assessment: Revisions for Next Time

Building a Code of Ethics (Part II)

NOTE: This is a continuation of the activity, Building a Code of Ethics (Part I).

Opening

At the end of the previous class, participants met in small groups and combined their individual lists of values into one list for the group. Now the task is to work as a class to negotiate a list of values on which all members of the class can agree.

Process

1. Arrive at Consensus with the Whole Class

With the whole class, repeat step (2c) from the previous lesson. Work to combine the lists from 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.

2. 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.* For this book, Dr. Kidder asked twenty-four highly regarded individuals from sixteen countries the question: "If you could create a code of ethics for the twenty-first 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 other values lists included with this lesson.

SHARED VALUES

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

From Shared Values for a Troubled World: Conversations with Men and Women of Conscience *by Rushworth M. Kidder. This book documents twenty-four 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. Paperback version forthcoming, 2002.*

Five Most Commonly Selected Community Values

- Honesty
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Compassion
- Fairness

Universidad Francisco Marroquín Values List

- Honestidad (Honesty)
- Responsabilidad (Responsibility)
- Lealtad (Loyalty)
- Humildad (Humility)
- Justicia (Justice)
- Respecto (Respect)
- Sabiduría (Wisdom)

Guatemala City, Guatemala
October 2000

Camden Hills Regional High School Values List

- Respect
- Responsibility
- Integrity
- Honesty
- Loyalty

Camden, Maine, U.S.A.
September 2000

Operationalizing the Code

Purpose

To identify behaviors appropriate to demonstrating each of the values selected by students for their code of ethics

Preparation & Materials

Prepare handouts of the So We Have a Code, So What? worksheet and of the sample operationalized codes. Using the list of eight (or fewer) values, write the words or phrases on separate sheets of flip-chart paper. Use bold lettering that will show up clearly when the chart paper is posted. Provide fine-point markers to list examples under each heading on the flip chart. You will need as many markers as you have sheets of paper. Emphasize that each group's recorder will need to be able to print or write legibly.

Process

Ask: What next? How might we use this list of values that we have created? One way the list of values might be used is to define, in more detail, what it means to be an ethical student, an ethical teacher, etc. (Illustrate using the handouts provided.) Here is one strategy for operationalizing the shared values list:

- Hand out the So We Have a Code, So What? worksheet. Allow each student to work individually for five minutes to list examples of behavior consistent with each value.
- Next, arrange the class into small groups, one group per value on the list.
- Distribute the previously prepared flip-chart papers, one paper per group.
- Explain that each group is to use a prescribed amount of time to list as many examples of their value as possible. Ask: How do people who are [honest, responsible, etc.] behave? What sets them apart from people who are not [honest, responsible, etc.]? Students should refer to the worksheets they have completed prior to class. Encourage groups to discuss each example before writing it down, so as to arrive at examples that are specific and easy to understand. Explain that once the time is up, their list of examples will be passed to another group to be read, analyzed, and expanded.
- Give clear signals for when to start, and time the activity, allowing for more time to complete the first few lists and less time for the last few rounds. After an appropriate interval, stop the groups and rotate the papers. Time the groups again, as they work through the same process of listing examples. Circulate and coach the groups, noting any particular student needs that might be more effectively

addressed at another time. Make sure groups are discussing and honing their examples before recording them on the sheets, so that each example is specific and clear.

- Once all groups have worked on all sheets, post the sheets. Invite students to vote on the most effective examples for each value. (**Optional:** Provide colored dot stickers for students to apply next to their choices.)
- Consider displaying posters listing the basic code of ethics and an operationalized version on the bulletin board. Encourage students to refer to and add to these posters throughout the semester.
- Use the handout examples of operationalized values to explore different ways that values can be put into action. Make the point that a growing number of organizations, including businesses, are using values as the foundation for their behavior and decision making. Invite students to explore codes of ethics in their own environments. Do their parents work for companies that have codes of ethics? Are there other organizations in the area that have put their values into action?

See also the Defining Wrong activity in the next lesson. Sometimes operationalizing what *not* to do can be as constructive as listing positive behavior examples.

So We Have a Code, so What?

In class, we followed a process of thinking and collaboration that led us to agree that there are some ethical values we all can accept. But now that we have this list, how can we use it in our everyday world?

1. Write the values on the agreed-to list here:

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

2. For each word on the code, write down a few examples of "what it means to be" that value in your school setting. For example, if *trustworthy* is one word on your list, you might write:

Trustworthy:
—Always keeps his/her promises
—Can be counted on to show up for activities he/she signs up for
—Can keep a secret if told something in confidence

Word	Meaning
1. _____	_____
	_____
	_____
2. _____	_____
	_____
	_____

WORD	MEANING
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____
8. _____	_____

The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity

Honesty—An academic community of integrity advances the quest for truth and knowledge by requiring intellectual and personal honesty in learning, teaching, research, and service.

Trust—An academic community of integrity fosters a climate of mutual trust, encourages the free exchange of ideas, and enables all to reach their highest potential.

Fairness—An academic community of integrity establishes clear standards, practices, and procedures, and expects fairness in the interactions of students, faculty, and administrators.

Respect—An academic community of integrity recognizes the participatory nature of the learning process and honors and respects a wide range of opinions and ideas.

Responsibility—An academic community of integrity upholds personal accountability and depends upon action in the face of wrongdoing.

—The Project on Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity
The Center for Academic Integrity
Duke University
October 1999

Standards for Ethical and Responsible Behavior: Core Values for Maine

A person who is RESPECTFUL of others and self

DOES . . .

- Appreciate and honor diversity
- Tolerate views and beliefs that differ from personal views and beliefs
- Support and contribute to healthful habits and safe environments for self and others

DOES NOT . . .

- Engage in harmful behavior such as substance abuse or sexual promiscuity
- Participate in activities that have the potential to cause physical or emotional harm
- Make derogatory statements about another's gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, religion, disability, intellect, or appearance

A person who is HONEST in all academic endeavors and interpersonal relationships

DOES . . .

- Seek to speak the truth, respectfully
- Understand the difference between collaboration and collusion
- Recognize that trust is an essential component of all relationships, including relationships with peers, parents, teachers, and coworkers

DOES NOT . . .

- Plagiarize the work of others, including fellow students, siblings, or parents
- Engage in secretive, sneaky, fraudulent, or manipulative behavior
- Take or damage the property of others

A person who is COMPASSIONATE in dealing with the limitations and sufferings of others

DOES . . .

- Treat all people with kindness
- Possess an ability to empathize with fellow human beings
- Lend a helping hand to those in need

DOES NOT . . .

- Tease or taunt those who are different
- Seek to judge others, but rather seeks to understand others in terms of our common humanity
- Seek to draw undue attention to another's shortcomings

A person who is FAIR in dealing with others

DOES . . .

- Seek to strike a balance between the needs and desires of the individual and the needs and desires of the community
- Understand the distinction between justice and vengeance
- Treat others the way she or he would like to be treated

DOES NOT . . .

- Engage in malicious criticism of others
- Seek to steal from or cheat others
- Attempt to further one's own interests or desires at the expense of another

A person who is RESPONSIBLE for personal actions as an individual and a member of the community

DOES . . .

- Acknowledge making a mistake
- Accept the consequences of personal actions or failures to act
- Report harmful or hateful behavior to a trustworthy authority figure

DOES NOT . . .

- Evade the just consequences of personal actions
- Seek to advance one's own interests or desires at the expense of the school or the larger community
- Rationalize or make excuses for unacceptable behavior

A person who is COURAGEOUS in the face of ethical challenges

DOES . . .

- The right thing even if it's not popular
- Seek the advice and/or assistance of a trustworthy adult when making difficult decisions or when in a dangerous or troublesome situation
- Hold high aspirations for self and community

DOES NOT . . .

- Say, "I cannot," but instead says, "I will try," when faced with difficult challenges
- Stand idly by while others engage in unethical or harmful behavior
- Sacrifice aspirations when confronted by academic or ethical setbacks

From Taking Responsibility: Standards for Ethical and Responsible Behavior in Maine Schools and Communities
The Commission for Ethical and Responsible Student Behavior
Maine Department of Education
February 2001

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Our Credo

We believe our first responsibility is to the doctors, nurses and patients,
to mothers and fathers, and all others who use our products and services.
In meeting their needs, everything we do must be of high quality.
We must constantly strive to reduce our costs
in order to maintain reasonable prices.
Customers' orders must be serviced promptly and accurately.
Our suppliers and distributors must have an opportunity
to make a fair profit.

We are responsible to our employees,
the men and women who work with us throughout the world.
Everyone must be considered as an individual.
We must respect their dignity and recognize their merit.
They must have a sense of security in their jobs.
Compensation must be fair and adequate,
and working conditions clean, orderly, and safe.
We must be mindful of ways to help our employees fulfill
their family responsibilities.
Employees must feel free to make suggestions and complaints.
There must be equal opportunity for employment, development,
and advancement for those qualified.
We must provide competent management,
and their actions must be just and ethical.

We are responsible to the communities in which we live and work,
and to the world community as well.
We must be good citizens—support good works and charities
and bear our fair share of taxes.
We must encourage civic improvements and better health and education.
We must maintain in good order
the property we are privileged to use,
protecting the environment and natural resources.

Our final responsibility is to our stockholders.
Business must make a sound profit.
We must experiment with new ideas.
Research must be carried on, innovative programs developed, and mistakes paid for.
New equipment must be purchased, new facilities provided,
and new products launched.
Reserves must be created to provide for adverse times.
When we operate according to these principles,
the stockholders should realize a fair return.

Johnson & Johnson

Ethical Behaviors on the Job

Dependable

- Show up for work on time.
- Always be there—no holding back.
- Complete work on time.
- Be able to relate to others.
- Pride yourself on being on time!
- Be at work every day.
- Work well alone and with others.
- Come in on days off when called in.

Compassionate

- Be courteous to other employees.
- Care for others.
- Be understanding of others' points of view—how they do something and why.
- Be able to relate.
- Be open minded of others' ideas.
- Talk to the other person and ask what is wrong.
- Consider other people's feelings.
- Say a kind word to your enemies.
- Be fair to yourself and others.

Honest

- Be faithful; do not gossip about other employees.
- Be fair to others.
- Be truthful to employers and employees.
- Never take something that does not belong to you.
- If someone asks for an opinion, tell them the truth.
- If a mistake is made, be honest enough to admit it.
- Be true to yourself and others.
- Be truthful about others' work (good or bad).

Considerate

- Be kind to others.
- Respect others and customers.
- Be aware of people's feelings at all times and try to help.
- Remember things that are special to others (names of their children, birthdays, etc.).
- Compliment others on a job well done.
- Be helpful in any way to other employees.
- Be thoughtful to others.
- Always be aware of what is going on around you.

Dedicated

- Be committed to getting the job done.
- Be willing to work overtime or on days off.
- If you can't say something good about the company, don't say anything. Always talk about the company in a positive way.
- Do the job to the best of your ability.
- Give it your all at all times.
- Do more than is expected.
- Be on time and get the job done.
- Be willing to do other jobs, be helpful to others, work wherever needed.
- Take pride in your work.

Courageous

- Ask if you don't understand how to do something.
- Stand up for what is right.
- Stand up to people in a higher position for what you want to see changed.
- Ask for pay raises.
- Ask for what you want and believe in.
- Say no to something you don't believe in.
- Be bold—say what you need to say in an assertive or aggressive way.
- Stand up and say no to someone if you don't want to do something.

—Raleigh County Jump Start Class
March 2001

VALUES-TACTICS LADDER

Supplemental Activities

Personal Code of Ethics

How will you live an ethical life on a daily basis? Create your own personal code of ethics and operationalize it. Format, sign, and date this code and post it for a daily reminder.

Codes of Ethics in My Community

Read and discuss the honor code or code of conduct at your own college or university. How was this code developed? Are the values expressed in the code shared by the entire community? Is the code effective? Why or why not? How similar or different is this code from the one developed by the class?

Descriptive Essay

What is a code of ethics, what does each value mean in real terms, and why is a code important?

Illustration of Values

Visually conceptualize each value or the value in action and illustrate in some artistic medium.

Discipline/Major Adaptation

Ask students to research codes of ethics or standards of practice statements in their chosen field. Which of the values on the class code of ethics appear in these codes or statements? What differences exist? What would they change if they could?