Research Guide
College and Career Competency:
Integrity/Ethics

Definition:

People of integrity will behave in accordance with the principles they believe in (Musschenga, 2001). Those principles are grounded in ethics, which are rules based on what is considered morally good and bad (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Integrity and ethics are often used interchangeably; however, if differentiating between integrity and ethics, integrity can be thought of as an internal system of beliefs that guides behavior, and ethics as external moral principles defined by society.

Essential Components for Students:

1. Believe in personal principles such as trust, honesty, respect, and justice.
2. Adhere to these principles over time and consistently, in public and private.

Research:

- Individuals with integrity can follow their principles regardless of situational and contextual factors because they have motivational self-sufficiency that enables them to "resist normal pressures and normal temptations" (Musschenga, 2001, p. 230). This allows them to do the right thing regardless of the situation or what others are doing.
- Integrity can be considered part of a larger domain called character education, which teaches children about basic human values (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). In a review of 109 research studies, researchers found that character education has positively impacted academic achievement, including grades, test scores, and promotion to the next grade (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). See page 15 of *What Works in Character Education* for a list of the programs with strong evidence of supporting academic achievement.
- Teaching students about integrity addresses troubling trends related to cheating (Dichtl, 2003; Price-Mitchell, 2015). For example, studies of students at colleges and universities found that academic dishonesty was learned from peers and, when unaddressed, established a climate of cheating (Dichtl, 2003).
- A study by the Josephson Institute of Ethics (2012) indicates that a significant number of high school students value ethics in theory but are skeptical about applying ethics to real-world situations. The nationwide study, which gathered information from over 23,000 respondents, reveals that the vast majority of students (98%) believe that trust and honesty are very important qualities in a relationship (p. 9). However, more than half of all students (57%) believe that successful people will cheat to get ahead in the workplace, and more than a third (36%) believe that one must lie or cheat in order to become successful (pp. 11–12). Of the students surveyed, close to a quarter (24%) admitted to cheating on a test, and more than half half (51%) indicated they had copied homework two or more times (pp. 47–48).

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- Integrity is considered to be "the basis of social harmony and action" (Price-Mitchell, 2015). By teaching integrity in the classroom, teachers can help students believe in themselves and apply principles of integrity in other aspects of their lives.
- According to Chaillé and Halverson (2004), ethics can be taught in the classroom in a variety of contexts and through a variety of methods with classroom character curriculum (see Instructional Strategies, below). Teachers can seamlessly embed ethics lessons into classes dealing with language arts (Freeman, 2014), social studies (Pass, 2006), and economics (Niederjohn et al., 2010), among others.
- Devaney et al. (2005) argue that social and emotional learning (SEL) programs can combat the development of unethical behavior by shaping ethical standards and promoting necessary self-management skills among children. This view is upheld by a meta-analysis of over 200 SEL programs that demonstrates SEL's clear ability to reduce unethical and problematic behavior among students in a range of K–12 environments (Durlak et al., 2011).
- Civic learning opportunities can have a direct impact on the development of students' ethical norms and behavior. Kahne and Sporte's (2008) study of more than 4,000 high school students shows that classroom-based civic learning opportunities and community-based service learning opportunities "are highly efficacious means of fostering commitments to civic participation" (p. 754). Consequential learning programs, such as those discussed by Shelton (2014), involve students in authentic learning contexts where they create something of value for public groups. Along the way, consequential learning builds character and teaches students how to become conscientious and engaged citizens. Research across the spectrum stresses the importance of community and school partnerships in helping students to develop the ethical framework necessary for making positive contributions to the world around them.
- The internet has given rise to a new branch of applied ethics: cyberethics. Cyberethics is concerned with how humans employ computer technology and interact with one another in computer-mediated environments. Cyberethics serves as a set of principles for guiding appropriate behavior throughout such interactions, helping to ensure academic integrity. According to Baum (2005), Whittier (2013), and others, it is important for teachers to become familiar with cyberethics and for schools to start incorporating cyberethics education into their curricula in order to better equip students to handle the inevitable ethical dilemmas they will encounter online.

Assessments:

Please note that the assessments listed here reflect what is currently being used in multiple disciplines to measure integrity/ethics. Not all of these measures will be easily used in classroom settings or by classroom teachers. However, the general knowledge that these measurements exist and the ability to review particular items from these assessments is valuable.

- The Character Growth Index (CGI) is a brief character assessment tool for students in grades 4–12 (Liston et al., 2014). The tool examines sixteen factors related to ethics and prosocial behavior across a 9-point scale, ranging from *totally agree* to *totally disagree*. Survey items include "I am honest and keep my promises" and "Despite their faults, I love my friends and close family members."
- The Defining Issues Test (DIT) gauges the development of students' (adolescent through adult) ethical judgments over time. The DIT employs a 5-point Likert scale to capture student responses to moral dilemmas. An example of a dilemma posed in the assessment: when his family is starving because of a famine, is the head of household justified in stealing food from a

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wealthy villager? The DIT-1 uses six dilemmas, and the DIT-2 uses five. Information about the DIT-1 and DIT-2, including the cost, is available from the Center for the Study of Ethical Development (n.d.).

- The Academic Motivation and Integrity Survey (AMIS) is an online instrument that uses a 5-point Likert scale to capture students' views and practices regarding academic integrity. AMIS consists of 40 items, along with two optional open-ended questions, and is intended for students in grades 7–12. See Stephens and Wangaard (2013) for more details on AMIS. Additional information on the instrument, which costs $399 to administer, is available at the School for Ethical Education (n.d.-a).
- Junior Achievement's (n.d.) *Excellence Through Ethics* provides teachers with ethics-based activities. Students can take the Ethics Poll Questionnaire and compare their results to the responses of other teenagers across the country. Some sample questions are "How would you characterize the pressure on you to succeed in school no matter what the cost?" and "In the past year, have you…downloaded a song without paying for it?"

InstructionalPractices:

- Teachers can create a culture of integrity in the classroom by being clear about their expectations of academic integrity, such as not cheating or plagiarizing, and by acknowledging students for their "courage, hard work, determination, and respect for classmates" (Price-Mitchell, 2015).
- Examples of ways to infuse integrity in the classroom every day can be found on Brent Vasicek's (2010) post. The approaches include focusing on the definition of integrity during the first week of school, then having students write essays or stories during the first month of school that demonstrate an understanding of integrity.
- Teachers can use writing assignments to help students learn integrity. For example, students could identify someone in public life who demonstrated a lack of integrity, and write a letter to the person. Students could also develop a checklist for evaluating the integrity of political leaders. For more ideas and teaching material, see "Teaching Guide: Integrity" (Good Character, n.d.).
- The Utah Education Network website includes a lesson plan on character and integrity (Robinson, 2003).
- Junior Achievement's (n.d.) *Excellence Through Ethics* provides teachers with ethics-based activities. Role-playing scenarios are also provided to help students practice making ethical decisions while being pressured to be unethical.
- The School for Ethical Education (n.d.-b) provides free resources for students and teachers on academic integrity. Educators can also order a toolkit for creating a culture of academic integrity. The toolkit includes planning templates and classroom activities.
- The University of Nebraska–Lincoln (n.d.) supplies teachers with tips on how to demonstrate ethical teaching behaviors in the classroom. The list provides examples of how to address a number of crucial ethical principles.
- The *"Everyone Else Does It!" Ethics Project* (Hajewski, 1998) provides teachers with materials for teaching high school students about business ethics and preparing them for ethical decision making in the workplace. Along with a lesson plan, the project equips teachers with an overhead master, outcomes/product assessments and standards matrix, and a list of 13 ethical dilemma scenarios.

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- Common Sense Education's (2019) K–12 digital citizenship curriculum gives teachers easy access to an array of well-developed resources related to cyberethics. Along with a curriculum that includes an interactive scope and sequence, teachers can get posters, iBooks, assessment tools, and other materials through the site.
- "Using Fairy Tales to Debate Ethics" (Lindy, n.d.) is a lesson plan that uses world literature to examine ethical issues such as honesty and benevolence. The lesson is geared towards civics and English courses and can be adapted for students in grades K–8.
- The Northwest Association for Biomedical Research (2009) has created an ebook, *An Ethics Primer: Lesson Ideas and Ethics Background*, dedicated to exploring significant ethics issues in secondary science classrooms. The ebook includes an extensive chapter on lesson strategies, including student handouts, starting on page 29.
- Drawn from a unit in the High School Human Genome Project ethics curriculum (Hansen & Durfy, n.d.), the American Society of Plant Biologists offers high school science teachers a lesson on decision making models in bioethics.
- The EthEx curriculum was developed by teachers and researchers working in collaboration (Chaillé & Halverson, 2004). It encompasses four ethical behavior processes: ethical sensitivity, ethical judgment, ethical motivation, and ethical character.

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