

Mary Wegner

ED642 Educational Governance: Analysis of Ethical Decision-Making

First, I would like to say how much I enjoyed the process of viewing the case studies through the various ethical lenses of Justice, Critique, Care, and Profession. I found the process of examining the case studies coupled with the leadership quote discussions to be a powerful learning combination that has helped me grow in my ability to be an effective leader. I also believe the process has helped me to gain skills in looking at situations from different points of view, which will be helpful when dealing with challenging situations, and will also help me when communicating with the media. Specifically, this process can help me with the media because I now have more facility in viewing situations through different lenses, which can help me sidestep saying something that might fuel a fire that was unintended.

Mary's Key Considerations:

1. **There are no easy answers when it comes to moral situations:** Any decision that is made will have some ramification, so let the ripples be that of what is right for humanity first and foremost while honoring the established process and expectations. Specifically, my job as a leader of a public school district is to make sure that the rights of every student and staff is valued, and that they know that their viewpoint and contribution matters. Others may not agree with my decision, but as long as I am being thoughtful in my decision-making process, then at least they cannot fault me for caring.

ISLLC Standard 3: Management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment:

- Taking risks to improve schools
- Accepting responsibility

ISLLC Standard 5: Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner:

- The right of every student to a free, quality education
- Bringing ethical principles to the decision-making process
- Accepting the consequences for upholding one's principles and actions
- Using the influence of one's office constructively and productively in the service of all students and their families

2. **There are many lenses/viewpoints in all situations:** My second key consideration flows from my first one, as I understand that I am making value judgements through my decisions, and that others may view the situation through a different lens. By looking at a situation through the various lenses before I make a decision, I am not only helping myself to come to the best decision possible, but I am also helping me articulate why in each situation I have selected the course of action I have, which in turn helps others understand and hopefully agree that there is logic in my choice. By being mindful that there are always multiple lenses at play, it helps me to keep in check my personal beliefs vs. what is the right thing to do to protect students, staff, and the process of education.

ISLLC Standard 1: Vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community:

- A willingness to continuously examine one's own assumptions, beliefs, and practices

ISLLC Standard 5: Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner:

- Bringing ethical principles to the decision-making process
- Subordinating one's own interest to the good of the school community

3. **Ethical case studies aren't identified as such when in the middle of the situation:** The saying *Hindsight is 20/20* fits the study of ethical situations; however, in the midst of leading a school district, you never have the benefit of hindsight when in the middle of the situation. In our class we have been able to have the luxury of disconnection from the issue in that we were not a player involved in any of the case studies, we were able to look at all of the details after the fact to see where the logic worked and where there were holes, we had a research-based resource (aka ethics text book) to help guide us through the process and a knowledgeable professor, and most importantly we benefited from the discourse amongst our cohort colleagues. As we were reading and discussing the case studies, I often found myself wondering - if the case studies were real, would the players have known they were in the midst of making decisions that are influenced by ethics? Our application of ethics needs to be mindful and mindless at the same time, meaning that we always have to be respectful of the ethical lenses and at the same time we have to live respect for individuals and process at such a core level that it is like breathing, as we may never know until after the fact that what seemed like an everyday decision was really heavily influenced by ethics.

ISLLC Standard 1: Vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community:

- A willingness to continuously examine one's own assumptions, beliefs, and practices

ISLLC Standard 3: Safe, efficient, and effective learning environment:

- Trusting people and their judgments

ISLLC Standard 5: Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner:

- The ideal of the common good
- Bringing ethical principles to the decision-making process

4. **Supporting diversity is demonstrating ethical actions:** Understanding that each person has rights and that not only do we each have a different lens from which we view the world, we also benefit from the multitude of opinions and perspectives. Tolerating others is insufficient to truly honor diversity, as we must embrace the unique perspectives and voices that will help get us to our goal – that of student success. Diversity is much more than ethnic heritage or religious beliefs, it also includes respect for the various roles people play in the lives of students and staff - both in and out of school, and it includes perspectives and voices that differ from ours in conversations. The goal is not to get everyone to think like me, but rather to honor the multitude of voices and move us all to actions that respect our students, staff, and ourselves... without a doubt. Only when we achieve this true and unmistakable valuing of diversity, will we really have a school culture that is welcoming.

ISLLC Standard 1: Vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community:

- A willingness to continuously examine one's own assumptions, beliefs, and practices

ISLLC Standard 2: School culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth:

- The benefits that diversity brings to the school community
- A safe and supportive learning environment

ISLLC Standard 3: Safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

- Trusting people and their judgments
- A safe environment

ISLLC Standard 4: Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources:

- The proposition that diversity enriches the school
- Families as partners in the education of their children
- The proposition that families have the best interests of their children in mind

ISLLC Standard 5: Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner:

- The ideal of the common good
- The right of every student to a free, quality education
- Bringing ethical principles to the decision-making process
- Using the influence of one's office constructively and productively in the service of all students and their families
- Development of a caring school community

ISLLC Standard 6: Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context:

- Recognizing a variety of ideas, values, and cultures

5. **Trust but verify:** As we were reading and discussing the various ethics case studies, I kept seeing situations where trust was either relied upon too much or was not present – another perspective to look at Fuller's too tight-too loose dilemma. Trust is foundational and the key to ensuring that diversity is honored because if you don't trust others, then you don't trust other's decisions and ideas. As leaders we must trust others, but not blindly. For if we blindly trust then we may be inadvertently hurting students or staff or our system of public education. So yes, respect others and trust them, and also verify that you are all moving forward to a common goal. I believe this consideration will also help us to be more humane in working through issues that will inevitably arise – including when we make a poor choice, as the mindset will be that of respect for all people involved – assuming positive intent – and in the end everyone wins and students succeed!

ISLLC Standard 2: School culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth:

- A safe and supportive learning environment

ISLLC Standard 3: Safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

- Taking risks to improve schools
- Trusting people and their judgments
- A safe environment

ISLLC Standard 5: Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner:

- The ideal of the common good
- Bringing ethical principles to the decision-making process
- Accepting the consequences for upholding one's principles and actions
- Using the influence of one's office constructively and productively in the service of all students and their families
- Development of a caring school community

ISLLC Standard 6: Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context:

- Recognizing a variety of ideas, values, and cultures

How the Study of Ethics Impacts my Leadership Behavior

Now... what does this mean to me, Mary Wegner, Superintendent of the Sitka School District? I hope I have lived in my life in a manner that has demonstrated respect for diversity; however, I also know that I have much to learn and have made many mistakes in my life's journey. The more I know about me, the more I can accept my own faults and challenges, and the more that I can be a reflective practitioner, the better I will do at making the best ethical decisions in my day to day work. The study of ethics has helped me to be reflective and introspective and yet from an analytical perspective, which was constructive to the process of growth and refreshing! Studying ethics was like professional therapy designed to help me do the best job possible for my students, staff, and community. Thank you!