

A Note from Don Smith

Winter Break is just around the corner. The break will be a time to relax and spend time with friends and family.

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you happy holidays.

Donald R. Smith, CFE, CPA

Embodying Ethics

Delores was as anxious and excited about the upcoming holidays as the students. She was a first year teacher, and the last few months had been extremely challenging. She'd thought about quitting several times, but her mentor, Mr. Harris, encouraged her to stick with it. The stories Mr. Harris shared about his first year made her laugh and gave her hope that things could get better. He was an excellent teacher and his classroom management skills were exceptional. Because of him, she was sure that if she could make it through this year and learn from any mistakes she might make, she could be a good teacher, too.

Her students were completely unruly the week before the break. Delores struggled to maintain a semblance of order in the classroom. Whenever she had to take her students out into the common areas of the school, the noise coming from her group was twice as loud as it had ever been. Some of her co-workers had even given her "that" look. Delores' frustration level was at an all time high. She was embarrassed by the students' behavior and her inability to change it.

Earlier in the day, Delores and her class left the room to watch the school's Christmas program. As her class stood in line for water after the program, Marco, one of the most boisterous students talked and laughed at the top of his lungs. Delores asked him to stop the noise. He stopped for a few seconds and started right back up. Although Delores didn't believe it was possible, he was even louder this time. Delores shushed him to no avail.

After standing and watching Marco's misbehavior escalate, Delores found herself unconsciously moving towards him. He was finally quiet because it was his turn to take a drink from the fountain. Before she knew it, Delores had grabbed Marco by the scruff of his neck and pushed his face into the stream of water bubbling up from the fountain. Through clenched teeth she said, "I've been asking you to be quiet. I don't think you heard me. Do you hear me now?" She released her grip and walked toward the back of the line before he could answer. Marco, crying uncontrollably, left the fountain and took his place in line.

When they got back to the classroom, Marco sat whimpering in his seat and the other students were unusually quiet. Delores decided this would be a good time for her to run to the office to sync her Palm to the system and download her students' assessment results. She quickly gave the class a short assignment, answered clarifying questions and left the room.

When Delores got back to her room, Ms. Stewart, the teacher from across the hall, was standing inside the door talking to Marco whose nose was bleeding profusely behind a wad of tissue. Ms. Stewart had Delores step into the hallway.

Ms. Stewart explained that as she was coming down the hall to her classroom, she heard someone from Delores' room yelling, "Teacher, Teacher!" She went into the room to find out what was wrong and found Marco bleeding from his nose. She asked the class what had happened. The students explained that another student, Hilda, was playing around in the classroom, and Marco told her to stop so that everyone would not get in trouble. Instead of stopping, Hilda started teasing Marco. Then he and Hilda started chasing each other around the classroom. Hilda tripped Marco and he hit his nose on one of the tables.

As Delores and Ms. Stewart were talking, Mr. Harwick, the principal started to come down the hallway. What should Delores and Ms. Stewart do?

- A. Delores should ask Ms. Stewart to divert Mr. Harwick's attention so she can take Marco to the lounge and clean him up.
- B. Delores should go back into her classroom, give the students another assignment and use her cell phone to call her mentor for advice.
- C. Delores must take Marco to the nurse immediately. Ms. Stewart should report the incident to the campus principal and call the Child Abuse Hotline.
- D. Both of them should wait for Mr. Harwick to arrive and let him decide on a course of action.

See the bottom of the first column of page 2 for the answer.

Past and Present Ethical Thinking

"You can't build a reputation on what you're going to do."

Attributed to Henry Ford

Dallas ISD Policy You Need to Know

Most district employees would never think it was appropriate to raise a hand to strike a student in their care. However, this month the policy reminder in this section will serve as a reinforcement of staff's knowledge of the district policy on corporal punishment. The Board of Trustees voted to prohibit corporal punishment in 2005. According to policy FO (Local), "Students shall not be spanked, paddled, or otherwise physically disciplined for violations of the Student Code of Conduct."

To read all of FO (Local), visit the Board Policy page on the district's website.

Integrity in the Headlines

New York

Illinois's governor, Rod Blagojevich, was arrested and charged with multiple acts of corruption including conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud and solicitation of bribery

From the Chicago Sun Times

Beijing

Public officials in one Chinese province have been institutionalizing citizens who tried to expose corruption or protest the unfair seizure of their land. Some individuals were institutionalized for up to two years and forced to take psychotropic medications

From the International Herald Tribune

New York, NY

A New York City chinese restaurant is charging patrons a 3% surcharge for any all you can eat buffet food they took but failed to eat.

From WCBSTV.com

Ethics, Integrity and You

"Regifting", or wrapping up a recently received gift and giving it to someone else is a good way to save money during the holiday seasons. But is the practice of regifting ethical?

According to the Ethics Scoreboard, the ethics of regifting depends upon the thought behind the act. If you can honestly explain to the recipient why you are regifting without disappointing them or hurting their feelings, the act is ethical.

The correct answer is C. The severity of the injury to the child must be established by having him examined by the school nurse. Delores must certain will face consequences for leaving her students unattended; but those consequences should be the least of her concerns now.

As a school district employee, Ms. Stewart is obligated by law to report this incident to CPS. The number to call to report child abuse or neglect is (972) 502-4180 or (888) 572-2873

Making Ethical Decisions



People make ethical decisions every day. However at times a situation presents itself that poses a decision-making dilemma. This section will feature common ethical decision-making models that may prove useful to readers when they are trying to address an ethical dilemma.

A second Five Steps decision making model may be helpful.

Step 1 - Is it an ethical issue?

Being ethical does not always mean following the law. And just because something is possible doesn't mean it is ethical. Determine if you are really facing an ethical issue.

Step 2 - Get the facts

What do you know, and just as importantly, what don't you know? Who are the people affected by your decision? Have they been consulted? What are your options?

Step 3 - Evaluate alternative actions

There are different ethical approaches which may help you make the most ethical decision.

- Utilitarian Approach - which action results in the most good and least harm?
- Rights Based Approach - which action respects the rights of everyone involved?
- Fairness or Justice Approach- which action treats people fairly?
- Common Good Approach - which action contributes most to the quality of life of the people affected?
- Virtue Approach - which action embodies the character strengths you value?

Step 4 - Test your decision

Could you comfortably explain your decision to your mother? To the man in the street? On television? If not, you may have to re-think your decision before you take action.

Step 5 - Just Do It - but what did you learn?

Once you've made the decision, then don't waste time in implementing it. Set a date to review your decision and make adjustments if necessary. Often decisions are made with the best information at hand at the time, but things change, and your decision making needs to be flexible enough to change too. Even a complete about face may be the most appropriate action further down the track.

Contact Us For Questions About Employee Ethics and Integrity or to Report Fraud, Waste or Abuse

Visit us in person at 2909 N. Buckner Blvd., Room 804
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Dallas Independent School District