

The logo for the Miami Herald, featuring the words "Miami Herald" in a white, gothic-style serif font centered on a solid blue rectangular background.

Beyond the Classroom: The importance of ethics in education

BY LAURIE FUTTERMAN - LFUTTERMAN@DADESCHOOLS.NET

03/31/2015 6:00 AM | Updated: 03/31/2015 4:33 PM

“The first step in the evolution of ethics is a sense of solidarity with other human beings.”

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Ethics is a branch of moral philosophy. Among others, it involves defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct. In discussion however, ethics can become eclipsed by comingling concepts of values and morals. They all provide behavioral rules so what are the differences? ()

- Values are rules from which we make our personal decisions about what is right and what is wrong, good or bad. Values help direct us to what is more important and past what is less important. This helps guide us when making decisions.
- Morals tend to be broad yet are more far reaching because of their strong link to good and bad. We judge others by their morals rather than their values.
- Ethics, in contrast, are a set of rules that tend to be adopted and upheld by a group of people. This could include medical ethics, journalism and advertising ethics and educational ethics. So ethics or intent, tends to be viewed as something upheld and adopted internally, such as professionalism, while morals are ideals we impose on others.

As Mary Ann Cutter Ph.D. explains, ethics can be applied to almost everything. Biologists have learned an extraordinary amount about the genetic code that shapes mice and men. The ethics of these professionals guide them in how to use these new genetic

technologies and the information that comes from it. In addition to cloning animals and sequencing the human genome, amazing revelations have been presented. So while we are gaining information everyday – the genetic footprints breast cancer and Alzheimer s disease, what we know about the genome still pales in comparison to what we do not yet know and the implications what lies in between.

Ethics and ethical behavior are no less prevalent or important in education.

We are all too familiar with the sordid tales of the unethical choices that a few educators have made, as well as stories of parents who have been dishonest about their residence in order for their child to attend a school outside their boundary, or have been compelled to do their children s projects so they could a higher grade. We have also heard stories about educators, parents and community partners who have and continue to step up and selflessly give their time and/or funds to improve education.

Where there is good will, there is always someone trying to take advantage. Ethics and ethical behavior belongs to everyone. And until everyone realizes that their choices impact everyone, a truly fair and just educational system will remain elusive.

There are an infinite number of ethical topics that lend themselves to the practice of education or the system itself. Let s look at a few practical, nonetheless pivotal issues that affect students, parents and educators on a daily basis.

- **How much should teachers help students?** Meeting the needs of students promotes better learning. Teachers work hard to make themselves available to their students. Many offer students in need multiple ways to contact them. Many arrive early and stay late. Internet technology extends classroom time and some teachers even provide home telephone numbers and emails. Does this pose a potential problem for teachers? However, requests for special treatment has become an ethical dilemma some teachers feel they face when faced with repeated requests for help from certain students.

- **Should teachers and students be friends?** Teachers are better able to structure their content and presentation methods when they have an understanding of their individual students and the way they live. For some teachers, this means being available to them as often as possible and sharing experiences. Moments that diminish the perception gap where students see teachers as out of touch with their world, promotes friendship.

Befriending students is not a problem. But where does friendship end and how does a teacher make sure he/she does not become friendlier with some students than others? Preferences are inevitable and can influence classroom behavior on the part of both teacher and student.

- **Right to Education: does it really pertain to everyone, equally?** Historically, formal education was reserved for the privileged. Today it is universally recognized as a basic human right. Shortly after its birth in 1945, the United Nations created The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Originally adopted by 58 countries in 1948, the number grew to 170 countries by 1993. Yet in last week's Wall Street Journal, an article by Charles Murray (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/charles-murray-why-the-sat-isnt-a-student-affluence-test-1427238664?KEYWORDS=charles+murray>) discussed the murky link between income and parent IQ on standardized tests outcomes, specifically the SAT college entrance exam. The richer the parents, the higher the children's SAT scores. Some view the SAT simply as another weapon in the inequality war.

- **Awareness** We all need to be reminded from time to time to step back and think about our decisions. As parents and educators, we all have ethical behaviors that society expects from us. It is up to us to uphold them. As I say to my students, the sign of a truly ethical person is one who does the right thing, in whatever capacity, even when no one is looking.

At an upcoming conference May 1-2, 2015 at the University of Miami Storer Auditorium and Miami Senior High School, the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust, along with the University of Miami and Miami-Dade County Public Schools will be presenting Ethics in Education: A-Z.

The program will focus on universal topics for parents and educators from private, public and charter schools and the issues relate to K-12 and higher, such as turning around troubled schools, student testing, school choice and even "tiger moms." The conference is intended for teachers, students, parents, educational administrators and concerned citizens. Miami-Dade School teachers and administrators can earn up to 12 Master points.

I hope you will consider attending and spread the word through your schools, organizations, websites, calendars, newsletters, social media outlets and personal email lists. Here is a direct link to the website: <http://ethics.miamidade.gov/ed-conf-2015.asp>

(<https://portal-mail.dadeschools.net/owa/redir.aspx?>

[SURL=ywuzFS18AggQAPgj9NqcmSi7nvYptLqeysGNLc3KHC8ekyZeRTXSCGgAdAB0AHAAO3a%2f%2fethics.miamidade.gov%2fed-conf-2015.asp](https://portal-mail.dadeschools.net/owa/redir.aspx?SURL=ywuzFS18AggQAPgj9NqcmSi7nvYptLqeysGNLc3KHC8ekyZeRTXSCGgAdAB0AHAAO3a%2f%2fethics.miamidade.gov%2fed-conf-2015.asp)).

Laurie Futterman ARNP is a former Heart Transplant Coordinator at Jackson Memorial Medical Center. She now chairs the science department and teaches gifted middle school science at David Lawrence Jr. K-8 Center. She has three children and lives in North Miami.

IF YOU GO

What: Ethics in Education: A to Z

When and Where: There will be an opening reception on May 1 at the University of Miami's Storer Auditorium and a full day of presentations and discussions on May 2 at Miami Senior High.

Friday Highlights: Local notables will present the Lifetime Achievement Award for Ethics in Public Service to former Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court Gerald Kogan. Principal Baruti Kafele, a former high school and middle school administrator who gained fame for turning around troubled inner city schools in New


Jersey will speak on "The Intentionality of Ethics in Education."

Saturday Highlights: Miami Hurricanes Head Football Coach Al Golden and former Miami Dolphin and current County Court Judge Edward Newman are among the panelists discussing how to balance education with the allure and power of school sports. Local 10 Broadcast Journalist Glenna Milberg will moderate a discussion on the immigration influx with Miami-Dade School Superintendent Alberto Carvalho and Harvard Professor Andres Alonso. Other sessions will address civics education, bullying, social media and the role of school police, among other topics. The day includes an "ethics bowl" demonstration and a discussion among high students on race and justice, moderated by Ethics Investigator and veteran South Florida columnist Robert Steinback.

Cost: \$50 for both days, which includes three meals and all supplies.

For more information: For a complete list of participants, a detailed program and to register, visit [ethics.miamidade.gov](https://portal-mail.dadeschools.net/owa/redir.aspx?SURL=x8oDxPMVYFHKSjZ7AHe-HNnALAtswJTni-) (<https://portal-mail.dadeschools.net/owa/redir.aspx?SURL=x8oDxPMVYFHKSjZ7AHe-HNnALAtswJTni->

0f1fdxsAMekyZeRTXSCGYAaQBsAGUAOgAvAC8ALwBDADoAXABVAHMAZQByAHMAXABY,
3a%2f%2f%2fC%3a%5cUsers%5crhonda%5cDocuments%5cEd%2520Conf%25205-15%
5cethics.miamidade.gov) or call 305-579-2594.

Sponsored Content  **H&R BLOCK** ([http://c.jsrdn.com/i/1.gif?
r=iqd5&k=ZAI1cy1IYXN0LTFiCWgJaS0zOGEyMjFjNAI1CWQ2MzZjMTBkLWE2YjctNDcyZC
3A%2F%2Fwww.hrblock.com%2F](http://c.jsrdn.com/i/1.gif?r=iqd5&k=ZAI1cy1IYXN0LTFiCWgJaS0zOGEyMjFjNAI1CWQ2MzZjMTBkLWE2YjctNDcyZC3A%2F%2Fwww.hrblock.com%2F))

We Know Them All

Read More ▶ (<http://c.jsrdn.com/i/1.gif?>)

