

Master Class in Ethics for Educators  
Baldwin Wallace College  
January 30, 2002

## PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS FOR MUSIC EDUCATORS

Peggy D. Bennett, Ph.D.  
Visiting Professor of Music Education  
Oberlin Conservatory

### Thinking About Ethical Behaviors

*Values* and *ethics* are not interchangeable. Values are what we consider good and desirable; and ethics are what we consider good and right. Ethics are our moral principles for right conduct, yet both cultural context and religious standards affect our sense of morality. (Corey, Corey, & Callanan)

*Law* offers the minimum standards that society will tolerate, and *ethics* are the ideal standards set by a personal sense of "rightness."

*Much of the unethical behaviors we may exhibit are not the gross violations, but the subtle, inadvertent practices that compromise the best interests of our students, friends, or colleagues.* (Bennett & Bartholomew)

Kitchener's model (1984) of ethical decision-making is based on four basic moral principles:

1. *Autonomy*: Promotion of self-determination.
2. *Beneficence*: Promoting good for others.
3. *Nonmaleficence*: Avoiding doing harm.
4. *Justice or Fairness*: Providing equal treatment to all people.

*Informed Consent* is students' right to know enough about what is expected of them to make informed choices. Informed consent is also an ongoing process. "Informed consent entails a balance between telling [students] too much and telling them too little." (Corey, Corey & Callanan) The foundation of informed consent also places the responsibility for learning and behaving with both the teacher and the students.

If the ultimate goal of teaching is autonomy and *self-determination* for students, we should be cautious about encouraging their dependence on us. Although several reasons may exist for causing this dependence, ethical practice would suggest that we guard against placing our need for dependence over their growth toward independence. (Bennett & Bartholomew)

When we aim for *collaborative* rather than *manipulative* teaching, we practice the ethics of engaging students in a partnership for learning and of progressing toward their self-determination. "[Teachers] who have plans for what they want their [students] to do or to be and who keep these plans hidden are manipulative." (Corey, Corey, & Callanan)

Rusk's idea of *Ethical Persuasion* "is an approach that persuades people to treat each other with greater respect, understanding, caring, and fairness. This method is equally applicable to intimate relationships, friendships, families, and professional environments." (p. xi)

### Three Phases of Ethical Persuasion

(Rusk xvi-xvii)

#### Phase 1: Exploring the Other Person's Viewpoint

1. Establish that your immediate goal is mutual understanding, not problem solving.
2. Elicit the other person's thoughts, feelings, and desires about the subject at hand.
3. Ask for the other person's help in understanding him or her. Try not to defend or disagree.
4. Repeat the other person's position in your own words to show you understand.
5. Ask the other person to correct your understanding and keep restating his or her position.
6. Refer back to your position only to keep things going.
7. Repeat steps 1 through 6 until the other person unreservedly agrees that you understand his or her position.

#### Phase 2: Explaining Your Viewpoint

1. Ask for a fair hearing in return.
2. Begin with an explanation of how the other person's thought and feelings affect you. Avoid blaming and self-defense as much as possible.
3. Carefully explain your thoughts, desires, and feelings as *your* truth, not *the* truth.
4. Ask for restatements of your position—and corrections of any factual inaccuracies—as necessary.

#### Phase 3: Creating Resolutions

1. Affirm your understanding and confirm that you are both ready to consider options for resolution.
2. Brainstorm multiple options.
3. If a mutually agreeable solution is not yet obvious, try one or more of the following options:
  - Take time out to reconsider, consult, exchange proposals, and reconvene.
  - Agree to neutral arbitration, mediation, or counseling.
  - Compromise between alternate solutions.
  - "Take turns" between alternate solutions.
  - Yield (for now) once your position is thoroughly and respectfully considered.
  - Assert your positional power after thoroughly and respectfully considering their position.
  - Agree to disagree and still respect each other; then, if you can, go your separate ways on the particular issue.

#### References

- Bennett, P. D. & Bartholomew, D. R. (1997). *SongWorks 1: Singing in the education of children*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Corey, G., Corey, M. S., & Callanan, P. (1993). *Issues and ethics in the helping professions*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.
- Kitchener, K. S. (1984). Intuition, critical evaluation and ethical principles: The foundation for ethical decisions in counseling psychology. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 12(3), 43-55.
- Rusk, T. (1993). *The power of ethical persuasion: Winning through understanding at work and at home*. New York: Penguin Books.