

Part I: Personal Code of Ethics

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Part I: Personal Code of Ethics

My ethics have largely been formed thorough my Christian worldview and my relationship with God. It is also the product of my experiences as a family member (wife and mother), educator, and citizen.

I believe the purpose of education is to sustain democracy. It is my responsibility as an educator enable students to solve complex problems, show respect for individuals and ideas, and have a desire to continuously learn about themselves and their environment. One way I can do this is by demonstrating these values in my own life.

I believe leadership is an act of service to others. I act with integrity and fairness to build trust among those I serve. In addition, I cultivate new leadership by distributing responsibility and encouraging others to act as leaders themselves.

I believe in the value of diversity, encourage the expression of multiple perspectives, and challenge myself to see varying points of view. As a leader I am aware that what I say and do matters to those I serve and I demonstrate a high level of respect for self and others. I am committed to prayer and reflective inquiry that results in personal transformation.

My Code

- I **Trust God**, acknowledging that He is in control.
- I act in **Service to Others**. My work is to nurture families, advocate for children, and to help students realize their potential and find their place as productive citizens.
- I **Respect all People** without prejudice. I will treat others justly and with equity.
- I act with **Integrity**. People are able to count on me to do what I say I will do. I will do right in the face of opposition.
- I pursue **Excellence** through self-reflection and God-granted transformation.
- I commit to **Lifelong Learning**.

Part II: Personal Code of Ethics Case Study

Should Public Money be Used to Fund Private Schools?

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Part II - Should Public Money be Used to Fund Private Schools?

What can families do when public schools don't meet their expectations or the needs of their children? One option is to apply for a school voucher. In 1962, Nobel Prize winning economist Milton Friedman proposed the idea of school vouchers (Pisciotta, 14). School vouchers are coupons issued by the government to parents who can then use the voucher to pay for schooling for their children. These vouchers can be used at a variety of schools - secular or parochial private schools and public schools that are not in the families' attendance zone. Each family with a voucher is able to decide on the school they believe will best meet the needs of their child. But, are vouchers a useful tool for school reformers? Do they solve the problems low income families are facing in public schools?

School vouchers were largely engineered to provide school choice to at-risk and low-income students "because their children are the ones least well served by traditional public schools" (Peterson, 6). Farrell says school vouchers are a response to "serious problems in effectively educating African American and other minority students" (519) in urban public schools. In 1990 the citizens in Milwaukee were very concerned with the achievement gap between minority students and their white counterparts. As a result, conservative whites and liberal minorities joined together to support a school voucher program (Farrell & Matthews, 519). Milwaukee was the first city in America to approve a school voucher system. The results of their efforts are conflicting. Some studies say gains have been made for students in voucher programs while others report no significant difference in the performance of minorities in public schools when compared to voucher schools.

Voucher programs are continuing to grow in popularity. Today Arizona, Colorado, D.C., Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Ohio, Oklahoma, Utah, Vermont, and Wisconsin all offer school voucher systems. Voucher programs vary by state and offer vouchers to a broad demographic of families.

A complaint of some opponents is that in some instances voucher systems serve not only low-income families but middle class families as well (Vevea, para 2). Other families served are rural families without neighborhood schools, families with neighborhood schools that are underperforming, families with special education students, and, in some states, families who prefer to send their children to private schools. "Michael Joyce, the late president of the Bradley foundation - a long-term financial supporter of pro-voucher efforts - stated that vouchers should be for everyone, irrespective of income status" (Farrell & Matthews, 5). Parents argue why should they "have to pay for schooling twice (in both taxes and tuition)" (Vevea, para 3). Although the public is softening to the idea educators and policymakers continue to question the validity of school vouchers as a useful method of public school reform and many wonder whether it is ethical to use public money to fund private schools.

Ethical Analysis

Stakeholders & Their Stake (R. Edward Freeman)

Students - to receive a quality education

Parents - to obtain the best possible education for their child

Educators - to maintain their employment and the resources necessary to educate students
from diverse backgrounds

Unions - to protect educators

Lawmakers - voter approval

Taxpayers - return on investment

Employers - a qualified labor force

Major Ethical Issue

- Is it ethical to use public money to fund private schools?

Alternatives to Voucher Programs

- End all voucher programs

- Expand voucher programs
- Accountability for voucher programs
- More charter schools
- Vouchers for everyone
- Community schools
- Parent education/parent involvement
- More autonomy for teachers and public schools
- More special interest programs

Absolutes Being Violated

- Truth - some parents are donating money to a scholarship fund getting a tax benefit and then using a scholarship from the same fund to pay for private school.

Laws

- School vouchers while constitutional or not lawful in all states
- Texas is reaching its max allowable for charters
- Our private schools breaking IDEA laws by using tax money and not providing services to students with special needs

Moral Philosophies

Utilitarianism - The greatest good for most (John Stuart Mill)

- Schools already provide the greatest good for most. Vouchers only benefit those who have vouchers and it is not clear if the achievement of those students increases.
- Adding accountability for private schools would mean more work for the private school but could have the effect of serving more low income students who are the target demographic.
- Community schools could coordinate services for at risk families.
- Parent education/ involvement could impact student achievement.

Deontological - Rights (Immanuel Kant)

- All citizens have a right to a free education.
- Parents believe they have a right to choose a school.
- Employers have a right to expect schools to produce for worthy employees.
- Taxpayers have the right to know that their money is spent well.
- Students have the right to attend safe schools where learning is paramount.

Justice - Fair distribution of benefits and burdens (John Rawls)

- As things stand, some students are served while others slip through the cracks.
- Community schools share benefits and burdens with family. Adults are burdened while students benefit.

Ethical Choice

Is ethical to use public money to fund private schools?, Well, it is legal in some states and it is certainly constitutional.

But ethical doesn't just mean is it legal. What about is it fair and just? Here is my thinking. Public schools successfully serve the majority of students. However they often fail the poorest students who are also minorities. These families may pay no taxes yet in America a free education is a promise and we rely on it to grow competent citizens. It is not enough to say its free. It needs to also be adequate to serve its purpose.

If public schools fail a large number of students because of what appears to be race and socioeconomic status then the system requires reform. It is unethical for educators and legislators to serve high-income families while neglecting those of low-income. School vouchers may be ethical because they provide an alternative to these low-income families but if voucher schools are not held at least to the low standards of the failing public schools it seems wrong to offer hope where there may be none.

As an upper middle-income mother I face the challenge of paying for private school for my son and the chance to have those costs covered by a school voucher is appealing. When I consider only my family it seems ethical to take public funds to pay for private school. After all, it was my tax money to begin with. However, when I consider the American people as a whole and America as a place I want to live I am beginning to see it differently. I believe that my tax money would be better spent reforming public schools in other ways. I'd suggest building stronger ties between schools and the communities that they serve. Spending money on school vouchers will only encourage these bonds to break widening the divide between people. School vouchers are a quick fix for some but not a long term solution for all.

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