

**STUDENT SUSPENSION:
UNDERSTANDING THE ETHICS BEHIND THE DECISION**

MARTHA JOHNSON

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the ethics behind student suspension is the focus of this project. The author uses a case study approach to present information on ethical decision-making to a group of Educational Administrators. This approach examines the 'pre' and 'post' responses to an ethical dilemma which has student suspension as its focus. Responses are analyzed to determine if a change has occurred in the decision process and/or the decision content. The findings of this study are consistent with other research which has demonstrated that practicing ethical decision-making will improve the quality of decisions made.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I reflect upon the experience provided by this project, I am reminded of an inscription which appeared on the frame below my high school graduation picture. This gift to my parents read "Thank you for the educational opportunities you have given me." This same sentiment seems now, also, to be appropriate.

Thank you to my supervisors, Dr. Eugene Falkenberg and Dr. Jane O'Dea. Your constant and untiring support was instrumental in helping me to reflect upon the difficult and challenging notion of the ethics involved in student suspension.

Thank you, to my partners in Educational Administration in Lethbridge School District #51. You allowed me to share my thoughts, feelings and concerns on student suspension with you, even though you were sometimes challenged or unnerved by what I said.

Finally, thank you to my family. Your presence, both physically and spiritually, helped me to carry on, especially during times when I wasn't sure I could. By understanding and supporting my need to grow and learn, you have enhanced my life more than you will ever know.

"Ethical reasoning is both possible and important for educational administrators."

Strike, Haller and Soltis (1988.)

INTRODUCTION

Philosophical trends in Educational Leadership have seen a dramatic shift during the last decade. According to Brandt (1992), to say that "Instructional Leadership is Out and Transformational Leadership is In" would be an over simplification. However, a mere scanning of recent education journal articles would seem to confirm that a major shift in perspective is occurring. Titles such as: *The Move Towards Transformational Leadership*, *The Ethical Reasoning of School Administrators*, *A New Slant on Leadership Preparation*, and others occupy spaces which used to be filled with articles on *Instructional* styles of leading. (See Appendix I.)

When searching the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) for topics related to Instructional vs. Transformational Leadership, the shift in perspective became strikingly clear. In the last ten years, 215 articles were devoted to the topic of Instructional Leadership while only 42 titles were found for Transformational Leadership. Of great interest is the shift in coverage which has occurred since 1990. Close to 50% of the original 42 articles on Transformational Leadership were written since 1990, while less than 20% of the articles on Instructional Leadership were written during the same time period. Obviously, Transformational Leadership is current and popular. Although not yet identified in The ERIC thesaurus as a separate leadership style, Transformational Leadership is clearly becoming the 'catch-word' for leadership in education circles.

Many authors attempt to sell Transformational Leadership as a notion that is 'New or Improved' or 'Better for You.' I don't think that Transformational Leadership is necessarily a 'new' phenomenon, nor it is necessarily 'improved.' I prefer to think of it as leadership envisioned through a 'different set of glasses'. My intuition says that good leaders have most likely made use of this method of leading without realizing that they were utilizing a 'definite' method. They did the kinds of things that Transformational Leaders do, just because they made good sense.

By acknowledging that Transformational Leadership is neither 'new' nor 'improved', I don't mean to imply that the philosophy doesn't deserve attention. On the contrary, I hope that we in education will acknowledge, encourage and thus, enhance Transformational Leadership as a realistic and authentic style. As the educational community continues to change and continues to become more complex and at times, even hostile, Transformational Leadership will become the method of necessity. Gone are the days of leading by 'managing'. Our complex world will demand that we utilize a more flexible and authentic style of administrating.

How might Transformational Leadership result in a more 'authentic' style of leading? I believe that Transformational Leadership has taken the previously existing notion of the 'science' of leadership and added it to the 'art' of leadership. Words such as 'Professionalism', 'Vision Building', 'Moral Authority', 'Expert Opinion', and others have replaced terms previously associated with the more scientific notion of Instructional Leadership (for example, words like 'Clinical Supervision', 'Managerial Leadership', 'Decision-making Processes', etc.). I accept and welcome the addition of the 'art' of leadership to the prevailing philosophy guiding those of us in Educational Administration.

I have come to the realization that Transformational Leadership has wide-ranging implications. Thus, in order to undertake a manageable task, the purpose of my project shall be limited to an exploration of the impact of this 'art' of leading on one tiny process of an Administrator's daily reality -- the impact on the aspect of **Decision-making**.

THE QUESTION

Part one

In order to deal with the 'art' of decision-making, we need to move beyond models which suggest a lock-step approach to making decisions. In order to deal with the 'art' of decision-making, we also need to address that which involves the 'ought to' component of decisions. This is what I interpreted as the 'Ethics' of decision-making.

The 'ethics' of decision-making in and of itself is a topic worthy of extensive study. A large research project might logically examine how ethical considerations might be incorporated into any decision-making model. However, I chose to further narrow the scope of my project by limiting my study to the impact of ethics on one decision . . . one that I believe is among the most difficult a principal ever has to make . . . the decision to suspend a student from school.

For the purposes of this study, suspension was defined as temporary exclusion of a pupil from a class or school. The School Act gives principals, alone, the right to make this difficult decision. (See Appendix II, Section 19.) However, the policy doesn't give advice on when to invoke it. Complicating the situation is the fact that individual School Boards are left to develop their own interpretation for the term 'suspend.' (See Appendix III.) As a result, the principal is left to make a decision to suspend based on a number of confusing and perhaps conflicting policies or definitions (the 'science' of the decision) **and**, his/her own 'gut' reactions.

By narrowing my focus to this one particular decision -- the decision to suspend a student from school, my purpose evolved to extensively examine the impact of Ethics on this decision. Thus, the key guiding research question became:

HOW DOES ETHICS IMPACT ON THE DECISION TO SUSPEND A STUDENT FROM SCHOOL?

Part two

As with all ethical choices, the decision to 'suspend' has no definitive answer. No matter what choice a school principal makes, he/she is left wondering if it is the right one. The heartache, guilt and grief caused by this dilemma is unquestionably great for every stakeholder in the situation including the student, the student's parents, the teacher of the student and of course, the person with the final word on the matter -- the school principal. Therefore, I believe it is critical for principals to be aware of all the factors impacting on this difficult decision. As Strike, et al (1988), would say, "It is critical that people in places of power and influence over the lives of others have the ability to **reflect** ethically on their choices and actions."

My study and practice of ethical decision-making, through my involvement in the University of Lethbridge class, Education 4381, The Ethics of Teaching, helped me personally to become more '**reflective**' regarding ethical issues. As a result of the class, I am more conscious of the decisions I make and how/why I make them. According to Strike, et al (1988), this self reflection will allow me to learn how to utilize and apply the methodology in 'real' situations. In addition, I will be able to move the decision-making beyond a 'gut level' decision to one which has been systematically and accurately tested.

However, besides increasing my own understanding of the impact of ethics on the decision to suspend, I wondered if other administrators might also benefit from increasing their level of understanding on the topic. (My

assumption here was that they had limited exposure and practice with ethical decision-making.) Thus, a second guiding research question became: CAN AN UNDERSTANDING OF ETHICAL ISSUES SURROUNDING STUDENT SUSPENSION ENHANCE THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS?

The guiding questions behind this study are based on the importance of self awareness and self reflection when it comes to decision-making. I wondered if school principals were aware of the impact of 'ethics' on their decision-making process? I wondered if they could enhance their decision-making skills by becoming sensitized to the way ethical decisions are made? I wondered if they might benefit from some direct instruction on ethical decisions and then, some subsequent 'reflection?' I wondered if this would change the decisions they made when dealing with suspension situations, and/or if this would impact on the process by which they come to their final decisions?

My hope was to take principals beyond their '**gut**' **reactions = results** method. I hoped to convince them that there was a definitive method by which ethical decisions can be made. This method compares Utilitarian (Consequentialist) Decision-Making with Kantian (Non-Consequentialist) Decision-Making. I focused more on the process by which a decision is made rather than on the result.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS STUDY

It is no mystery that educational administrators make hundreds of decisions on any given day. Some of the decisions made are based on factual information. These decisions are determined by rules, policies, laws, etc., and as such, they are straight forward as they result in a 'true/false' or 'yes/no' type of response. These are what I have already referred to as 'scientific' decisions. Many theories have been applied to the 'science' of decision-making. Some like Newsome and Gentry (1984), have broken educational decisions down into defined categories: Routine Decisions, Rational Decisions, Group Decisions, and Persuasive Decisions. Others like Schoen (1963) have scientifically examined the motives for decisions. He and others, (Lewin, 1935 and Berline, 1957), have reduced decision-making to a series of either psychological approach or avoidance tendencies. Lacey and Lacey (1958), have even gone as far as to measure skin response (physiological response) to explain variability among decision makers. This is the 'science' of decision-making in the ultimate sense. True, the science of decision-making is concrete, but, as verified by Newsome and Gentry (1984), it is time to include philosophy in decision-making. They (and I) are not suggesting to replace the 'science' with the 'art' of decision-making. Instead, we need to accept that philosophy (ethics) has an important function to play in the formulation of 'ought to' decisions.

Because of their many roles as organizer, leader, budget maker, evaluator, counselor, etc., an administrator makes many decisions which involve an 'ought-to' component. These decisions are 'ethical' ones -- decisions to which there is no definitive answer. These require that the administrator be "just, fair, equitable, humane and democratic." (Strike, Haller, Soltis 1988.) There is no factual way to determine the best course of

action. Ethical decisions are grounded on 'universal' principles such as: respect, justice, quality of life, health and happiness.

Thompson (1967, p. 24), identified four strategies which are commonly used to make decisions: Computational, Compromising, Judgemental, and Inspirational. He notes that these strategies are influenced by beliefs about the cause/effect relationship of the decision as well as by preferences regarding possible outcomes. The resulting decision matrix would appear as follows:

		Preferences Regarding Possible Outcomes	
		Certain	Uncertain
Beliefs about Cause/Effect Relationships	Certain	Computational Strategy	Compromise Strategy
	Uncertain	Judgemental Strategy	Inspirational Strategy

In my opinion, only one of these four kinds of decisions **would not** involve an element of 'ought to.' The Computational decision involves the kinds of guidelines and clear results which I have previously referred to as scientific decisions. Of interest, then, is the possibility that the remaining three categories (Compromising, Judgemental, Inspirational) **do** involve an element of 'ethical' decision-making. If Thompson's model is accurate, we can see how heavily the element of 'ought-to' weighs on the daily life of a school administrator, and thus on a decision to suspend a student from school.

Millerborg, (1991), examined issues like those noted above where decisions 'legal' in nature, (policy driven) were compared with those which

were ethical in nature. Of particular interest were the results she found when administrators were forced to make decisions where the 'legal' and the 'ethical' were in conflict. She found that in this situation, the resulting decisions clearly favored the ethical over the legal response.

This preference for ethical over legal decisions leaves the principal on heavily 'value laden' territory. This creates situations where "value conflicts are inevitable" (Newsome and Gentry 1984.) This demands that the administrator be clear in his/her decision-making process. The process needs to become so much part of you, so as to result in quick decisions (vs. delayed judgements.) In order to do this, principals must have had practice in working through issues and thinking up alternatives. My choice of method, **case studies**, will serve to do exactly this, to provide principals with critical situations in which they can practice their decision-making.

Is this 'elementary and unnecessary?' Is this flogging a dead horse? Is this overkill? No, say Mills, Quick and Wolfe (1976.) In fact, they say "during no other period in recent times has the administrator in the school been so vitally interested in critical incidents in school administration. This need arises from wanting to know the right 'standards' by which to judge any problem." Thus, in a sense, we need to consider the methods by which to judge a problem and then add the standards by which to judge it.

ETHICS - AN OVERVIEW

Webster's Seventh Collegiate Dictionary defines ethics as the discipline that deals with what is good and bad, and with moral duty and obligation. What are the traits of educational decisions which involve these types of elements? Strike, Haller and Soltis (1990), suggest that there are three critical elements which make a decision ethical:

1. It concerns what is the 'right' thing to do.
2. Usually, the dilemma can not be settled by the facts.
3. The decision-maker's moral sentiments conflict.

With these traits in mind, one would be hard pressed to think of any one 'scientific' method of decision-making which would ensure satisfactory results. Ethical decisions can not be answered the 'right' way. This is what makes them so difficult.

Schools, in particular, are prone to the kinds of issues which involve an ethical component. Millerborg (1991), suggests that in fact, schools are the most complex organization of any, in terms of ethical relationships. Our mere presence in schools demands that we maintain a minimum level of command over ethical issues. Again, this is not to suggest that there is ever a right way to solve each ethical dilemma. Rather, because ethical decisions often demand that one difficult choice is made at the expense of another, it is important to understand the principles underlying our decisions.

According to Strike, Haller and Soltis (1990), all ethical principles can be separated into two large theories:

1. The Principle of Benefit Maximization
2. The Principle of Equal Respect

As it suggests, the Principle of Benefit Maximization has do with making decisions which result in the most good or greatest benefit for the most people. This theory relies on weighing the pros and cons of consequences, and so has alternately been labeled the **Consequentialist Theory**.

Part of the problem in understanding this theory results from difficulty in defining what is 'good.' A strict Consequentialist would say "that which is intrinsically valuable is that which is good." Therefore, a Consequentialist values traits such as: happiness, health, friendship, love, human life, and knowledge.

Another difficulty in interpreting this theory comes when we attempt to place a definition on the term 'maximization.' In order to 'maximize' happiness, a Consequentialist would say that you should produce the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. The best choice becomes the one which results in the most happiness at the end. We measure consequences of each choice as being good or bad and weigh the pros and cons of each. (Good - Bad = Utility of the Decision.)

The **Principle of Equal Respect** is also known as a **Non-Consequentialist Theory**. Non-Consequentialists don't see the consequences of their choice as a central issue in the decision. Instead, they apply the 'Golden Rule' to decision-making Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Those who support this philosophy see people as an 'end rather than a means,' as 'free and moral agents', and as 'beings of equal value.' Non-Consequentialist theory has the following as its guiding principles:

1. We must be totally impartial.
2. We must be consistent.

3. There are no exceptions to the rule.

This principle supposes that all people are intrinsically valuable and that they are all deserving of individual respect and dignity.

As we might expect, Consequentialist and Non-Consequentialist theories are often at odds. Not only are these principles in conflict when two people have opposing beliefs, in fact, say Strike, Haller and Soltis (1989), "We as individuals probably have both theories competing within our own moral/ethical make-up." What is crucial then, is not so much an understanding of why the two theories are conflicting, as an understanding of what motivates you to go one way or the other.

Neither principle can stand on its own. We can never be sure that we have the 'right' answer in an ethical dilemma. The important thing is to have carefully thought through 'why' you made the decision you did.

THE ETHICS BEHIND STUDENT SUSPENSION

Changing times and increasing social concerns will remain as an unfortunate 'given' over the next few years. One only has to turn to polls such as the CEA 1990 Poll or the 1990 Gallop Poll on Education (which found that issues such as drugs and discipline were the key concerns) for evidence that schools may continue to be unpredictable and challenging climates. Thus, more and more students will have student suspension become part of the repertoire of their educational careers.

According to Collins, (1985) student suspension continues to take precedence over other forms of discipline. Therefore, we in school administration must be sure that we are achieving our goal . . . that of protecting the educational interests of the majority so as not to be disrupted by the misbehaviors of a few, while still respecting the rights of the individual.

Student suspension had its historical roots in a transition from a severe, physical kind of discipline to a more progressive, humane type of approach (Collins, 1985.) It was hoped that involvement of the parents would help to rehabilitate the offending student and create a better classroom environment for all. It was hoped that suspension would be more than a 'bandaid' solution, and that it would reduce the number of 'offensive' incidents. Unfortunately, this has not happened.

Crowson (1989), has done research which suggests that more than half of the ethical decisions made in any organization are ones where an 'organizational rule', if applied, would be at odds with the 'site-level' considerations and concerns. Student suspension is one such decision which clearly falls into this category.

The policy regarding student suspension in Lethbridge School District #51, (see Appendix III) if followed to the letter, would likely result in suspensions which were either not in the best interest of the student or the school. We can find support for this hypothesis in the literature. Collins (1985), suggests that we must begin to take a closer look at the effectiveness of suspension, so as to be sure that we are achieving the level of efficacy we are desirous of. He notes that suspension clearly has problems in terms of being self-defeating, sexist and racist, among other things. In other words, we continue to suspend lower class, ethnic minority, repeat offender, males without achieving the desired results.

Besides the above noted factors, another issue arises which demands that we be clear in our decision to suspend a student from school. One hopes that the administrator responsible for the decision has carefully thought through his/her choice, ensuring that the best interests of all are being met. Unfortunately, evidence seems to weigh heavily in favor of the teacher/school. Granted, the initial purpose of suspension was intended to alleviate the problem at hand and force involvement of the parents (Collins, 1985), however, it seems that in conflicts involving teacher/staff vs. parent/pupil, the professional norm is weighted heavily on the side of supporting the teacher (Crowson, 1989.) This results in further implications for administrators who are struggling with the ethical dilemma of suspending a student from school.

Thus, it is clear that student suspension, as an ethical issue, is well deserving of an extra measure of consideration if we are to be assured of treating students in a fair and just manner. We must move beyond the 'science' of applying the policy to the 'art' of decision-making. In this way,

we will be sure that we have utilized all the evidence possible in order to make this very important decision.

In order to understand the ethics behind student suspension, we must return to the aforementioned theories of Consequentialism and Non-Consequentialism. We need to explore student suspension from both perspectives in order to understand all the factors coming to bear on this decision.

Let us imagine, for a moment, that 'student X' has been sent to the office for the third time today. His/her offense has been complete and total disrespect for classroom and school rules. He/she has deliberately sabotaged every attempt by teachers, counselors and administration to remedy the situation. Accordingly, a decision on whether or not to suspend has arisen.

Based on the consequentialist theory, we should make the decision which would result in the greatest amount of happiness for the largest number of people. According to this theory, we should weigh the 'positives' or 'happiness' achieved by suspending this student from school against the 'negatives' or 'unhappiness' resulting from the same decision. If the happiness outweighs the unhappiness, a consequentialist would argue that our decision has already been made. The student should be suspended.

It is easy to envision how quickly the evidence would stack up against the student according to this manner of thinking. We might have assumed that 'one student's happiness', (and perhaps that of his parents), is easily outweighed by that of his/her classmates, his/her teachers and the rest of the school.

However, if we were to stop our decision process here, we would be guilty of forgetting some very important elements of the decision process.

These are elements which are either lacking or ignored in the consequentialist process. . . .

1. While it may be true that the short-term results will produce happy consequences for many of the stakeholders in this situation, we have no way of measuring the long-term consequences of this decision. It may be that our decision to suspend 'student X' from school will result in serious, long-term consequences for him/her, and perhaps, our society. Perhaps, we have just turned away from school the future leader of our country. We have no way of predicting this.
2. In the most pure sense, a consequential position lacks any personal element. Thus, it would not matter to a consequentialist if the student's behavior in school was the result of some critical incident or situation in the home. The past is an irrelevant characteristic for the pure consequentialist -- the present is the only relevant characteristics.
3. The final area of concern comes in measuring the success of our decision. Is the classroom really better off because 'student X' is gone? Are the parent's of 'student X' really assisting in the rehabilitation of their child? These are difficult questions to answer.

In light of the above noted difficulties, we need to consider another set of ethical issues, in addition to the consequentialist ones, when we are deciding whether or not to suspend a student from school. These are the Non-Consequentialist elements. From this perspective, we need to ask ourselves if we could apply the 'Golden Rule' to the decision to suspend. We would need to ask ourselves, "If I was 'student X' or the parents of 'student X', would I want to have suspension be the resulting decision." This necessitates our thinking about whether or not we could make a universal

law which could apply one set of standards (suspension) to every situation, consistently.

While consistency seems to be an ideal objective, we can see how difficult it would be to 'never make exceptions to the rule.' All of a sudden, the past seems to have more relevance, and it becomes important to take into account the historical facets of the dilemma.

According to the Non-Consequentialist theory, if we can not ensure that there will **never** be an exception to the rule, then we have to think carefully about the times we do. As we can not be totally impartial, as we can not treat everyone the same and as exceptions to the rule are necessary, a Non-Consequentialist would insist that you look at each case individually. Your goal would be to work out the best decision for that person, in relation to his/her particular situation. If we were able to finalize the decision using a 'pure' non-consequential position, 'student X' would undoubtedly have a better chance of avoiding suspension.

By working through the preceding case, we can see how the consequentialist and non-consequentialist ethical philosophies can be at odds with one another. One supports intentions for the good of the group while the other supports the individual. Remember though, that ethical decisions never have 'one correct' answer. However, some general rules, a 'Code of Ethics for Discipline', will serve to ensure that both theories are given their due. These rules adhere to ethical principles of discipline and can serve as a basic guideline. **The Ethical Code for Discipline** might include rules such as:

1. Don't take misbehavior personally.
2. Discipline should only fall on the guilty.
3. The guilty must be determined by evidence.

4. Students must be aware of the consequences of their actions.
5. Rules should be fair and just.
6. Discipline must be economical.

By utilizing both theories and by following the broader guiding 'Code', the decision-maker has not limited him/herself to a narrow, limited set of criterion. Instead, the decision will be based on all the evidence available. How does a person do this? How does one practice working through an ethical dilemma, so that he/she ensures that all possible avenues have been explored?

METHOD OF STUDY

The method of study I have chosen to enhance ethical decision-making is a case study approach. Mills, Quick and Wolfe (1976), suggest that by creating situational circumstances and by working through them, it is possible to stimulate thinking. Merriam (1988), suggests that a case study approach is ideally suited to gain an in-depth understanding of a situation and its meaning for those involved. The interest is in the **process** rather than the outcomes, in the **context** rather than specific variables, in **discovery** rather than confirmation. Millerborg (1991), further suggests that by **reflecting** upon what determines administrative decisions, one can actually improve his/her quality of judgement. What better way to reflect upon administrative decisions than by using realistic scenarios to stimulate thinking. Thus, it seems that case study research is ideally suited to the kinds of 'how' and 'why' questions I am asking.

THE PROCESS

In re-visiting my guiding research questions, it is apparent that I am trying to enhance my own background on the ethics behind student suspension, and also, the awareness of a group of Lethbridge School District #51 administrators. In a one-hour 'Lunch and Learn' session, my intent was to walk principals through an overview of the impact of 'Ethics' on the decision to suspend a student from school. (See Appendix IV for a workshop overview.)

Initially, a package was distributed to all Lethbridge School District #51 principals. In it was included: an invitation to a Lunch and Learn session, a consent letter and a Student Suspension Survey (see Appendix V.) The information collected was used in two ways:

1. To gain understanding of the 'realities' of student suspension from a principal's perspective.
2. To create a fictional case study for use at the Lunch and Learn session.

All Lethbridge School District #51 administrators who attended the April 20, 1993, Lunch and Learn session were invited to learn about how ethics are involved in the decision-making process. The session began with the distribution of a written case study. Leeanders and Erskine (1978), define a case as an "administrative decision or problem, normally written from the point of view of the decision-maker involved." They further suggest that there are two methods for developing case -- the "real" method and the "armchair" method. The 'real' case is descriptive of a real-life situation. An 'armchair' case is a hypothetical situation written without the benefit of advance field research. Which ever method is used, what is of the utmost importance is the believability of the case. The case should provide enough information so as to allow the decision-maker to identify with the

problem. In addition, according to Strike, Haller and Soltis, (1988), the case should contain a genuine moral dilemma. That is, the case should not have one clearly correct response.

The sample case was written up using a combination of 'real' and 'armchair' methods. By using the preliminary survey information received from the administrators as well as my own experience with student suspension, I created what I believe is a 'credible but difficult' ethical dilemma. The scenario represents a fictional situation involving the real possibility of student suspension.

This case was presented to the group of Lethbridge School District #51 administrators. They were then asked to respond, in writing, as to what decision they would make and why.

At this point, principals were presented the background information on the impact of ethics on the decision-making process. Next, and more specifically, 'ethics' were applied to the issue of student suspension.

After exposing school principals to the 'ethics' of student suspension, they were distributed the original case study dealing with student suspension. As my one-hour allotment was used by this time, administrators were asked to take the case study with them, and to reanalyze their decision. It was requested that pre and post case study responses be returned to me via the Lethbridge School District #51 Board Office.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The method of analysis employed was content analysis. This involved the comparison of principals' responses, before an introduction to ethical decision-making, to principals' responses, after an introduction to ethical decision-making. By reading and re-reading principals' before and after responses to the case study, it was hoped that evidence which demonstrated a change in their decision process would become apparent. According to Merriam (1988), this is a valid method for analyzing cases as it will allow one to "come up with reasonable conclusions and generalizations based on a preponderance of the data."

In addition to comparing the content of the pre and post responses, I looked for evidence that there had been a change in the reasons **why** the administrators made the decisions they did. Would it be possible to find evidence that the administrators now recognized the **reasons** for their decision? If they could move beyond a "legal or policy driven response" to one based on all the evidence, including the ethical issues, this would allow them to "persuade others that their views are correct", or to allow themselves to be "persuaded to change their minds" (Strike, et al, 1988.)

If change had occurred, I assume it was a result of the self-exploration and self-reflection process which administrators' were exposed to and which I believe is so critical for successful ethical decision-making.

FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

A. Student Suspension Survey Results (See Appendix VI)

The preliminary survey on the state of student suspension in Lethbridge School District #51 signaled some interesting trends. In summary, I have interpreted these trends as follows:

1. Number of Survey Respondents: If we were to group respondents into the categories of elementary and secondary schools, there was an equal rate of return from both levels. This allowed for some interesting comparison between the levels, when and where appropriate.
2. Number of Students Suspended: During one 'typical' month of school, all elementary respondents said that they would suspend less than two students per month. For the secondary respondents, the 'typical' month was described as varying from less than two suspensions per month, up to five suspensions per month.
3. Reasons for Student Suspensions: At the elementary level **non-compliance with school rules, defiance towards staff, and behavior concerns** were the most common reasons given for student suspension. I would suspect that the suspensions at the elementary level were confined more to the upper grades, however I have no data to support this hypothesis.

As we moved into the secondary level, an interesting shift became apparent. At the Junior High level, **defiance towards staff** remained as one of the key issues, but it was joined by **fighting** as the most common reasons for student suspension. The rise of fighting as an issue at the junior high level seems to make sense if we are to consider the turbulent nature of junior high students.

At the Senior High level a further shift occurred. **Fighting** and **behavior problems** continued to remain at the top of the list, but they were joined by **truancy** as the most common reasons for student suspension. This is of interest to me as high school students, by virtue of their age, are the only level where law does not require that they attend school. I wonder, then, what the impact of suspension as a punishment for truancy might be.

4. Objectives of Student Suspension: I separated the various 'objectives' into those I felt were Consequentialist in nature and those Non-Consequentialist in nature. This, I based on their ability to address group vs. individual needs. The Consequentialist (group) objectives of student suspension were designated as: deterrence value, safety of school and break for teachers. The Non-Consequentialist (individual) objectives of student suspension were designated as: rehabilitation of the offender, punishment value, no options left and message to parents.

The most striking trend to this data is the even distribution of responses. Looking at each level separately, there is an even split between those who favored Consequentialist objectives and those who favored Non-Consequentialist objectives. By adding all the levels (and their corresponding responses) together, there is still a 50/50 split between those who chose objectives which satisfied the 'group' needs, and those which satisfied 'individual' needs.

This seems to confirm the notion that ethical decisions such as the decision to suspend a student from school, do in fact cause frequent conflicts. As one attempts to weigh the 'good' for the large group against the 'good' for the individual, it is probable that a great deal of turmoil goes on in

the head of the decision-maker. This leads me to conclude that 'practice' with ethical decision-making is not only advisable, it is critical!

A further trend evidenced in the data is worthy of note: Earlier in the paper, I mentioned that historically, student suspension came about as a more humane way to discipline students (as opposed to physical punishment.) It was hoped that suspension would 'rehabilitate' the offender by forcing involvement of the parents. In reviewing responses made at all levels, it is clear that suspension has evolved to include other purposes as well (in particular, the safety of the school.) Perhaps, student suspension policies need to be more closely examined to ensure that the objectives desired are in fact, the objectives being achieved.

B. Case Study Interpretation

Six sets of 'Pre' and 'Post' Case Study Responses were returned to me for analysis. While this represents a relatively low return rate, I believe it was large enough for me to achieve my original objective -- "To determine whether or not practice with ethical decision-making can enhance the decisions made."

Pre" Responses

Administrators were read the scenario on Mr. Middle, a Secondary School Principal (see Appendix VIII, page 7.) Mr. Middle's problem was a student named Chris. Administrators were asked to determine what course of action Mr. Middle should take. They were also asked to explore why they felt that this action was justified or appropriate (see Appendix VIII, page 8.)

The 'pre' ethics responses demonstrated a wide range of philosophies and decisions. These responses reflect an interesting split between decisions made based on the benefit to the large group (Consequential

Decisions) and decisions made based on the benefit to Chris (Non-Consequentialist Decisions.) As with the preliminary survey, half made decisions based on the good for the group and half were inclined to make decisions favoring Chris.

There was a definite strength of conviction on all responses made from the Consequentialist perspective. These respondents had a definite opinion about what steps Mr. Middle should follow and what discipline should be assigned to Chris. These decisions were clearly made on the basis of 'the good for all'. Some suggested that Chris should immediately and automatically be suspended or expelled as they felt he had clearly broken an important rule. These decisions used reasoning such as "It is important to send a message to other students that weapons will not be tolerated in school" and "The safety of the others in the school is of utmost importance."

Those respondents who answered from a Non-Consequentialist perspective were more vague in their suggestions of what do with Chris. They ultimately held a more moderate approach as they were clearly looking to make the best decision for Chris. Their decisions on what Mr. Middle should do were often dependent on what he might discover in conversation with Chris. Some Non-Consequentialist responses suggested that Mr. Middle should first confirm that Chris was guilty of carrying a knife. If proven to be true, it was then recommended to suspend Chris because Mr. Middle had ensured that there was no chance of "applying the wrong rule to the wrong kid." Other Non-Consequentialist respondents mentioned "problem solving" with Chris as a way to ensure an appropriate decision was made. This was seen as important as it would "avoid a power struggle" and "would allow for individual determinism." Finally, one Non-Consequentialist

respondent suggested that Mr. Middle should rethink his initial policy so as not to "destroy a child for the sake of a rule."

"Post" Responses

After respondents were given instruction on ethical decision-making, they were asked to re-analyze the original case study involving Mr. Middle and Chris. 'Post' responses were thus created.

When examining the 'Post' responses to determine whether or not the 'method' of decision-making had changed from the 'Pre' responses, an interesting trend was noted. Those who leaned towards a consequentialist perspective on the 'Pre' response tended to remain there on the 'Post' response. Similar results were found for those who followed a non-consequentialist perspective. This demonstrates that respondents did not change the 'method' by which they made their decisions. Thus it can be suggested that instruction on ethical decision-making does not appear to change 'how' decisions are made.

However, for some, the 'Post' responses did demonstrate a change in the 'reasons' for the responses. Some 'Post' responses changed in that they included elements of ethical reasoning in determining the best decision. This suggests that instruction on ethical decision-making does help respondents to become more critical in determining the 'reasons why' they make the decisions they do. For example, one respondent suggested that suspending Chris, merely because the rule was broken, was not his goal. Instead, Chris was being suspended to "ensure safety of others in the school and to involve his parents in any rehabilitation." Another respondent demonstrated the awareness of the difficulty with ethical dilemmas by stating "If Mr. Middle felt that this situation warranted serious consequences, only then should he follow though." Another respondent

suggested that "Chris deserves an option to extricate himself from the situation." Yet another suggested that "expelling Chris would not teach others anything, and that the only one who will benefit from this mistake is the one who made it . . . Chris." Finally, the respondent who questioned the suspension problem policy on the 'Pre' response suggested that Mr. Middle should rewrite the policy because it important to "apply consequences appropriate to the child, the act and the circumstance." These types of comments, while varying in their level of ethical reasoning, do demonstrate that the administrators were trying to ensure that their suggestions were ethical -- "fair, but not necessarily equal." Again, this suggests that practice with ethical decision-making does serve to enhance the process of making decisions. It helps subjects to more thoroughly address the critical 'why' questions involved in the decision process.

At the conclusions of the Lunch n' Learn session, administrators commented that the one-hour session raised many questions for them. This was my original intent; instead of suggesting a 'right answer' to the difficult dilemma of student suspension, I hoped to raise issues which would cause the group to become more critical in their approach to making a decision.

For those respondents who were 'challenged' by the issues I raised in the session, there was a clear evolution of thinking. This was especially evident when I examined the 'Why' question about the decision they felt Mr. Middle should make. For the most part, 'Post' responses demonstrated the addition of principles such as justice, fairness, individuality and freedom. While not every respondent addressed all the ethical issues required in order to make the 'ideal' ethical decision, all responses did demonstrate the addition of at least one ethical principle. Therefore, we can conclude that

the depth of ethical thinking did increase. Thus, I consider the administrators' limited exposure to 'ethics' to be a SUCCESS!

(Note: For some respondents, their answers on the 'Pre' and 'Post' response sheets were exactly the same. They felt confident that their philosophy was "consistent with the ethical issues which were addressed in the Professional Development Session.")

CONCLUSION

In his book, *Moral Leadership: Getting to the Heart of School Improvement*, (1992), Thomas Sergiovanni suggests that those of us in the role of educational administration need to make decisions which will maximize both the goodwill of the decision and the chances for success. The decision matrix which Sergiovanni proposes is as follows:

Yes			
	Moral	Moral and Effective	
"Goodwill" →	Neither Moral nor Effective	Expedient	
No			
	Yes	↑ "Success"	No

Sergiovanni's model is not intended to replace traditional management theory (The Science of Leadership) but instead expands leadership to include the 'moral dimension' (The Art of Leadership.)

Kirby, et al,(1991), suggests that one of the best ways for administrators to improve their moral reasoning is to experience, through practice, case studies based on difficult, hypothetical scenarios. Further more, Smith (1985), suggests that our level of understanding surrounding ethical decisions is constantly changing and evolving. Millerborg (1991), suggests that the 'practice' of ethical decision-making should be added to

administrator preparation programs as a way to strengthen the understanding and scope of power held by the administrator.

Clearly, these articles suggest that ethics courses are an important aspect which need to be considered as a required element of teacher/administrator preparation. My Project, while small in scope and coverage, has demonstrated that even isolated exposure to ethical issues can serve to enhance the process of ethical decision-making. Through more intensive and extensive training, I believe that the quality of decision-making would continue to improve, resulting in administrators making better, more carefully thought out, ethical decisions.

As previously addressed in the paper, the challenges facing administrators in the 1990s will continue to be complex and perplexing. In order that we are dealing with the issues which arise in a manner which ensures the inclusion of 'ethical' reasoning, we must include the practice of 'the Art of Decision-making' in our preparation for the job of educational administration and our subsequent professional development.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

SilverPlatter 3.11

ERIC 1982 - December 1992

ERIC 1982 - December 1992 usage is subject to the terms and conditions of the Subscription and License Agreement and the applicable Copyright and intellectual property protection as dictated by the appropriate laws of your country and/or by International Convention.

1 of 10

Marked in Search: #3

AN: ED347636

AU: Liantos,-Lynn-Balster

TI: Transformational Leadership. ERIC Digest, Number 72.

CS: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, Eugene, Oreg.

PY: 1992

AV: Publication Sales, ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, 1787 Agate Street, Eugene, OR 97403 (free; \$2.50 postage and handling).

NT: 3 p.

PR: EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

2 of 10

Marked in Search: #3

AN: ED342126

AU: Leithwood,-Kenneth; And-Others

TI: Transformational Leadership and School Restructuring.

PY: 1992

NT: 39 p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, January 1992).

PR: EDRS Price - MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

3 of 10

Marked in Search: #3

AN: EJ439277

AU: Sagor,-Richard-D.

TI: Three Principals Who Make a Difference.

PY: 1992

JN: Educational-Leadership; v49 n5 p13-18 Feb 1992

AV: UMI

4 of 10

Marked in Search: #3

AN: EJ439275

AU: Leithwood,-Kenneth-A.

TI: The Move toward Transformational Leadership.

PY: 1992

JN: Educational-Leadership; v49 n5 p8-12 Feb 1992

AV: UMI

5 of 10

Marked in Search: #3

AN: ED339099

AU: Sagor,-Richard-D.

TI: Operationalizing Transformational Leadership: The Behavior of Principals in Fostering Teacher Centered School Development.

PY: 1991

NT: 28 p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration (Baltimore, MD, October 1991).

PR: EDRS Price - MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

6 of 10
Marked in Search: #3

AN: EJ435081
AU: Lincoln,-Yvonna-S.
TI: Critical Requisites for Transformational Leadership: Needed Research and Discourse.
PY: 1989
JN: Peabody-Journal-of-Education; v66 n3 p176-81 Spr 1989
AV: UMI
NT: Published in 1991.

7 of 10
Marked in Search: #3

AN: ED331177
AU: Hoover,-Nancy-R.; And-Others
TI: Transformational and Transactional Leadership: An Empirical Test of a Theory.
PY: 1991
NT: 36 p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, April 3-7, 1991).
PR: EDRS Price - MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

8 of 10
Marked in Search: #3

AN: EJ400454
AU: Walker,-W.-G.
TI: Leadership in an Age of Ambiguity and Risk.
PY: 1989
JN: Journal-of-Educational-Administration; v27 n1 p7-18 1989
AV: UMI

9 of 10
Marked in Search: #3

AN: ED323622
AU: Leithwood,-Kenneth; Jantzi,-Doris
TI: Transformational Leadership: How Principals Can Help Reform School Cultures.
PY: 1990
NT: 49 p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies (Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, June 1990).
PR: EDRS Price - MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

10 of 10
Marked in Search: #3

AN: ED225966
AU: Clatworthy,-F.-James
TI: Toward a New Paradigm in Staff Development: Transformational Leadership.
PY: 1982
NT: 14 p.; Paper presented at the National Conference of the Staff Development Council (Detroit, MI, October 20, 1982).
PR: EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

(b) information relating to a test, test result or evaluation referred to in clause (a),
the individuals referred to in subsection (2) are entitled, subject to subsection (4),

- (c) to review that test, test result, evaluation or information, and
- (d) to receive from a person who is competent to explain and interpret it an explanation and interpretation of the test, test result, evaluation or information.

(4) An individual referred to in subsection (2) is entitled to review the test, test result, evaluation or information referred to in subsection (3) only at a time when a person who is competent to explain and interpret the test, test result, evaluation or information is available to provide him with an explanation and interpretation of that test, test result, evaluation or information.

(5) A board, as soon as practicable after it receives a request from an individual referred to in subsection (2) for an opportunity to review a record to which subsection (3) applies, shall ensure that a person who is competent to explain and interpret the test, test result, evaluation or information is available to provide an explanation and interpretation of that test, test result, evaluation or information.

(6) A person who contributes information to a student record is exempt from any liability with respect to the provision of that information if that person, in providing that information,

- (a) acted in good faith,
- (b) acted within the scope of his duties and responsibilities, and
- (c) did not act in a negligent manner.

(7) If, on examining a student record, a person is of the opinion that the student record contains inaccurate or incomplete information, that person may request the board to rectify the matter.

(8) The Minister may make regulations respecting student records.

19(1) In this section, "suspend" has the meaning given to it in the rules made by the applicable board.

(2) Subject to the rules of a board,

- (a) a teacher may suspend a student from a class period,
- (b) a principal may suspend a student from
 - (i) 1 or more class periods,
 - (ii) 1 or more courses or school programs,
 - (iii) school,
 - (iv) riding on a school bus, or
 - (v) participating in an activity sponsored or approved by the board.

and

(c) a principal may reinstate a student suspended by him or by a teacher.

(3) When a principal suspends a student, the principal shall

- (a) forthwith inform the student's parent of the suspension, and
- (b) report in writing to the student's parent all the circumstances respecting the suspension.

(4) If a student is not to be reinstated within 5 school days from the date of his suspension, the principal shall

- (a) forthwith inform the board of the suspension, and
- (b) report in writing to the board all the circumstances of the suspension together with the principal's recommendations.

(5) On receiving a report from a principal pursuant to subsection (4), the board shall, within 10 school days from the first day of the suspension, reinstate or expel the student.

(6) Prior to a board's making a decision under subsection (5), the parent of the suspended student and the suspended student may make representations to the board with respect to the suspension.

(7) A board may re-enroll a student who has been expelled.

(8) If a student is expelled, the board shall notify, in writing, the parent and, in the case of a student who is 16 years of age or older, the student of their right to have the matter reviewed by the Minister.

Flags

20 The principal of a school shall ensure that the Canadian flag and the Alberta flag are displayed at the school.

Prohibited
activities

21(1) No person shall

- (a) disturb or interrupt the proceedings of a school,
- (b) disturb or interrupt the proceedings of a school meeting or board meeting, or
- (c) loiter or trespass in a school building or on property owned by a board.

(2) No person shall canvass, sell or offer to sell goods, services or merchandise to a teacher or a student in a school without the prior approval of the board.

IGD
Student
Suspensions
REGULATIONS

STUDENT SUSPENSIONS

Procedures for all cases of suspension are important as a process. Quite often problems may be resolved simply by applying the process and an actual suspension may not, in fact, occur.

These regulations are designed to ensure that:

- teachers and principals will receive the support of the Board in attempting to create and maintain a healthy environment for learning in the schools.
- such cases are dealt with as speedily as possible.
- the pupil and parent or guardian are protected against arbitrary decisions at any level.
- the pupil and parent or guardian are given the opportunity of a hearing and informed of their right to appeal.

Where a teacher or principal suspends a pupil the following regulations and procedures shall apply:

1. Short Term Suspensions (One period or less by a teacher; one day or less by a principal).

A teacher or principal may suspend a pupil for a short term when, in the opinion of the teacher or principal, the pupil's behaviour is detrimental to the good conduct and climate of the class or school.

In cases of a short term suspension the pupil may be excluded from class or classes but will not be sent home. The teacher or principal will make arrangements for the pupil to spend the rest of the period or day in some suitable room, such as the general office, where the pupil can be supervised.

The teacher shall report the suspension to the principal as soon as possible.

In cases of short term suspension, the parent or guardian may be informed at the discretion of the teacher or principal.

A short term suspension may become a long term suspension at the discretion of the principal.

2. Long Term Suspensions (More than one period by a teacher; more than one day by a principal).

2.1 Suspensions By A Teacher.

Before a teacher suspends a pupil from class for more than one day, the following procedures are mandatory:

- a) The teacher, in recognizing that the pupil has become a problem, has recorded the incident(s), including the time, place and nature of the behaviour.
- b) The teacher has held a conference with the pupil in private. Records are to be kept of the conference between the teacher and pupil. The teacher will contact the parent or guardian regarding the pupil's behaviour.
- c) If step (b) fails to ameliorate the problem, the teacher refers the pupil to the principal and submits a summary of factors reported for steps (a) and (b). Parents will be notified by the principal about the problem and invited to meet the teacher, principal, and guidance counsellor (if applicable) and informed about what further action may be contemplated.

2.2 Suspensions By a Principal.

When a principal suspends a pupil from class or school for more than one day these procedures shall be followed:

2.2.1 Suspension of pupils with reinstatement by the principal.

- 2.2.1.1 In certain cases, a principal may consider it advisable to send a pupil home pending a visit to the school by the parent. In every case of this kind, the principal must ensure that the parent is advised directly, by telephone if possible, so that an appointment can be arranged and so that the parent will be home when the pupil arrives. If contact with the parent cannot be made, the suspension should be deferred and the pupil detained by

the principal until normal dismissal time.

2.2.2 It is unnecessary for the principal to make a formal report to the Associate Superintendent, Student Services in cases of this kind provided:

2.2.2.1 the parent is immediately notified. The School Act (1988) requires that such notification be in writing.

2.2.2.2 an interview has been held with the parent or guardian.

2.2.2.3 a written record is kept of the details of the suspension.

2.2.2.4 the pupil is reinstated to the satisfaction of the parent or guardian and the principal.

2.2.3 Suspension of pupils with recommendation for expulsion.

2.2.3.1 The principal shall immediately notify the parent or guardian of the suspension and arrange for an interview.

2.2.3.2 If contact cannot be made with the parent or guardian, the principal shall send a notice of suspension to the parent or guardian by double registered mail.

2.2.3.3 The principal shall prepare a suspension report and forward it, together with all relevant documents, to the Associate Superintendent, Student Services. The suspension report will include:

- a copy of the notice of suspension sent to the parent or guardian.
- reports from all teachers concerned with the pupil describing academic achievement, behaviour, and relationships with peers.
- reports from counsellors or school psychologists (where applicable).

- reports of remedial action taken by the principal and teachers.
- reports of conferences with parent or guardian.
- the pupil's cumulative record.

2.2.3.4 For pupils under the age of sixteen (16) a copy of the notice of suspension shall be forwarded to the Lethbridge Regional Director of Social Services, by the Associate Superintendent, Student Services.

PROPOSED LETHBRIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT #51

PD SESSION TIMELINE

1. April 1993 - Invitation to all L.S.D. # 51 Principals to attend a Lunch and Learn Session
 - Distribution of Consent letter
 - Distribution of Preliminary survey (to be completed and returned by April 10, 1993)
2. April 20, 1993 - Lunch and Learn Session
 - A sharing of Administrators' preliminary thoughts and experiences with student suspension.
 - Case Study #1 - Individual reaction (in writing)
 - Introduction and presentation on the notion of "Ethics" and their subsequent impact on decision making.
 - "Ethics" as applied to the decision to suspend a student from school.
 - Administrators group to be lead through an example
 - Case Study #2 - Individual reaction (in writing)
 - (To be mailed back to researcher once completed.)
3. May, 1993 - Content analysis of case studies to be completed studies.
4. June, 1993 - Results to be written up and shared with L.S.D. #51 Administration



Lethbridge School District No. 51

433 - 15th STREET SOUTH
LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA. T1J 2Z5
PHONE (403) 327-4521
FAX (403) 327-4387

April 6, 1993

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: All School Administrators
Administrative Council
Directors

FROM: Don Lacey, Director, Human Resources

RE: Noon Professional Development Activity: April 20th

Martha Johnson has asked to make a presentation to our Administrators' Group on "Ethical Decision Making". Not only will this activity assist Martha with her graduate studies, it promises to promote a most lively discussion on a difficult ethical topic. Although participation in the study (attached) is voluntary, the survey is very short ... one page, five questions, circle the appropriate choices.

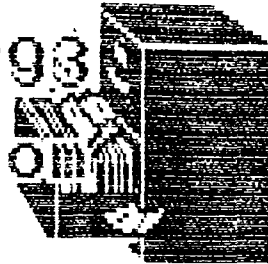
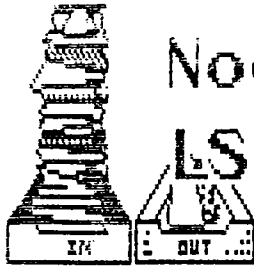
I look forward to meeting with you at noon on April 30th!

/bhv
[MMARTH]

You're Invited!

Noon - Apr. 20, 1993

LSD #51 Board Room

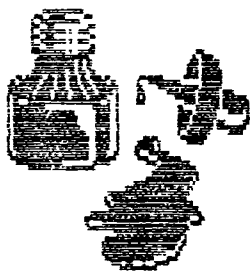


Administrators' Brown Bag Session

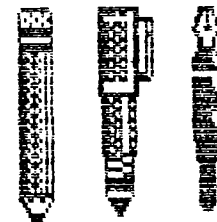
Topic: Ethical Decision Making
Focus: Student Suspension

?Do you wonder why you make
the choices you do?

?Do you feel like you're working
on "gut" reactions?



Come and learn
that there is
method to
your madness!!!!



April, 1993

Dear Administrators:

I am conducting a study of the influence of Ethics on Decision Making. In particular, I will be focusing on the ethics influencing an Administrator's decision to suspend a student from school. The purpose of this project is to enhance Administrators' awareness of ethical issues which effect the decision to suspend and thus, enhance the decision making process. I anticipate that administrators will benefit from this study through an awareness of and self reflection towards ethical issues. I hope you will consider this as a unique opportunity for some personal/professional development.

As part of this project, you will be asked to participate in a lunch P.D. session at the regularly scheduled Administrators' Meeting Day on April 20, 1993. This session will involve three stages:

1. Reaction to a case study
2. Information Re:The Ethics Behind Student Suspension.
3. Reaction to a second case study

Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. When responses are released, they will be reported in summary only. Further, all names, locations and any other identifying information will not be included in any discussion of the results. You also have the right to withdraw from the study without prejudice at any time.

If you choose to do so, please indicate your willingness to participate by signing this letter in the space provided below. As well, please complete the attached survey (no name is required). These can be returned to Don Lacey, at the Board Office.

I very much appreciate your help with this project. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at the university (329-2101) or my home (381-2981). Also, feel free to contact the supervisor of my study, Dr. Eugene Falkenberg (329-2451) and/or any member of the Faculty of Education Human Subject Research Committee if you wish additional information. The chair-person of the committee is Dr. Jane O'Dea (329-2458).

Sincerely,

Martha Johnson
Graduate Student
University of Lethbridge

STUDENT SUSPENSION:
UNDERSTANDING THE ETHICS BEHIND THIS DECISION

I, _____ agree to participate in this study.

Signature _____ Date _____
_____ I am interested in reading the results of this
study, once it is completed.

(*Please return bottom portion to Don Lacey by April 16, 1993.)

* You may wish to glance at this over the Easter Break. It will give you some idea of where I'm coming from.

Enjoy your 10 days off!

W. Strike

The Ethics of School Administration

Kenneth A. Strike

Emil J. Haller

Jonas F. Soltis



CHAPTER 1

Administration and Ethical Thinking

A CASE

Janet Russel, the principal of Haven Elementary School, sat staring out the window. It was a pleasant late spring day. A pair of robins had built a nest in a tree a few feet away, and she could see them darting in and out with an occasional worm or grub. She would have liked to see if the babies were observable from a vantage point closer to the window. But she would have to wait to investigate later.

The feathered domestic tranquility outside provided counterpoint to the absence of tranquility inside. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor were still talking, but Ms. Russel was only half listening. Great attention was not required. She had heard it several times already this week. In fact, she heard it every year at this time. Each spring after the class assignments for next year went home, parents, moved by some primordial urge to secure any marginal advantage for their children, began to migrate toward the school, twittering in frenzied agitation about the placement of their fledglings.

The usual speech went like this: "We know, Ms. Russel, that you work hard to match students to teachers. In the past we have appreciated your attention to the special needs of our child. But this year we think you are wrong. We know our child better than you, and we are sure that our child will do much better with Ms. Tarkington than with Mr. Booth. We would appreciate it if you would make the change."

The first speech was usually polite and tactful. But any resistance escalated matters to a more stressful level. There was the friends-in-high-places ploy. It was hard to believe that school board members and the superintendent of schools had so many personal friends. And of course there were the parents-have-rights and the unresponsive-school-administrators ploys.

The problem was that every parent was right. Their child *would* do better with Ms. Tarkington than with Mr. Booth. Ms. Tarkington was the local superteacher. Children blossomed in her class. Mr. Booth, on the other hand,

was—well—undistinguished teachers had reputations in the community. Parents knew.

What could Ms. Russell do? She could not admit that one teacher was far superior to the other. She had to be supportive of all her staff. Parents understood that intuitively. Nobody ever came in and said, "I want the best teacher for my child." Euphemisms were the order of the day. After much evasion the parents would leave with her promise to think it over.

She had already thought it over. Obviously she could not simply put every child whose parents requested it in Ms. Tarkington's class. Having one class of 35 children and another of 15 would be noticed. Nor could she move enough children out of Ms. Tarkington's class to compensate for the children transferred in. That would be unfair. It would give an advantage to those children whose parents were willing to come in and lobby on their behalf. It was not surprising that these were usually the parents of middle-class children, who tended to be the most successful in school. To grant parental wishes would be to segregate the class on socioeconomic lines and to systematically assign the least able children to the poorest teacher. Given a choice, Ms. Russell would prefer to do the opposite. Yet she had to grant that parents did have a right to some say about the education of their children. She always listened to their requests, and she granted them whenever she could. But she did not think she ought to do so in this case. Parents' rights or not, it just was not fair.

PURPOSES OF THIS BOOK

Ms. Russell has a problem. It is not just an administrative problem; it is also a moral dilemma regarding a clash between rights and fairness. What makes some administrative problems ethical ones, and how can administrators reach justifiable decisions about moral matters? Asking these questions raises others. How do ethical questions differ from factual questions? What is moral or ethical decision making like? Is ethical reasoning really possible? Are not our moral values merely matters of personal choice? Are they not relative to our culture? Can there be objective answers to ethical questions? If so, how do we decide such questions?

In this book we will deal with these basic philosophical questions in the practical context of educational administration. We have a number of objectives in doing so. First, we want to persuade you that objective ethical reasoning is both possible and important for educational administrators. Ethical decisions are not just matters of personal preference. Deciding how to place children, given two teachers of differing ability, is not a matter of taste, like deciding whether to have ice cream or chocolate cake. Instead, we will show

you that it is possible to make ethical decisions based on good reasons that others can accept even if such decisions go against their preferences.

In saying that objective ethical reasoning is possible, however, we do not mean to claim that there is always one right answer to every moral dilemma. Ethical situations often require that hard choices be made under complex and ambiguous circumstances. It is difficult to be sure that we have made a good decision. At the same time, one choice is often better than another. In the case above, for example, Ms. Russell believes that it is morally better to assign children to classes fairly, rather than to concede to parents the right of choice. We agree with her. We also believe that it is possible to give reasons for our choices, to decide objectively on the basis of these reasons, and to persuade others who are willing to judge our evidence fairly that our views are correct. If we are open-minded and reasonable people, we must also grant that sometimes we will be persuaded to change our own minds. Moral reasoning has a moral point, and it can help us to make better and more justified moral decisions if we see the moral point. Ms. Russell seems to sense the importance of morally justifying her acts. At least her comment that "it just wasn't fair" suggests that she does. But "it just wasn't fair" is not much of a justification. As a professional, she needs to be able to specify what being fair means in this context, and she needs to be able to articulate her reasons to others.

Therefore, another of our major purposes in this book is to help you learn how to engage in ethical reflection and justification. Not that you do not already know how. After all, people engage in ethical reflection all the time. But we do think that we can help you to do it better. Part of our task will be to sensitize you to the kinds of moral issues that arise in the normal activities of administrative life. That is one of the reasons we will use cases extensively in this book. We also believe that we can help you to state some ethical principles and arguments more clearly and bring them to bear on your own decisions where principles conflict in actual situations. As a consequence, we expect that you will be a better administrator.

THE NATURE OF ETHICAL INQUIRY

What makes Ms. Russell's administrative problem a *moral* dilemma? We are going to talk about the characteristics of moral issues in more detail in the next chapter, but let us make a start here. Ms. Russell's dilemma has the following characteristics. First, it concerns what is the *right* thing to do, not just the most expedient or least trouble making, but the *fair* or *just* thing. Moral issues are usually characterized by certain kinds of language. Words such as *right*, *ought*, *just*, and *fair* are common. Moral issues concern our duties and obligations to

one another, what constitutes fair treatment of one another, and what rights we each have.

Second, Ms. Russell cannot be settled by the facts. Facts are relevant in deciding ~~mor~~ but they are not sufficient in deciding them. Ms. Russell knows ~~what~~ the consequences of her choices will be. She knows that if she fulfills parental assignment requests, those children who have less aggressive parents or who are less academically able will end up with the poorer teacher. But that does not solve her moral problem. It does not tell her what is a fair way to assign students to teachers. Nor does it tell her what rights parents should have in the education of their children. The facts here are insufficient to allow her to decide. She also needs to bring some moral principles—principles about fairness and rights—to bear on her decision.

Finally, Ms. Russell finds herself in a moral dilemma because her moral sentiments conflict. This is a typical characteristic. She has appealed intuitively to two moral principles at the same time, although she has not stated either with much clarity. On one hand, she has appealed to a principle of fairness. It is not fair for the weakest students to have the poorest teacher. On the other hand, she has recognized the principle of parents' rights. Parents do have a right to a say about the education of their children. Even without further clarification of these principles, given the facts of the case, it is apparent that they conflict. To resolve her dilemma, Ms. Russell needs to be clearer about these two principles and how they are justified. She also would have to have some idea about the priorities of such principles when they conflict.

These characteristics of Ms. Russell's dilemma suggest some of the general features of ethical reasoning. One part of ethical reasoning is the application of principles to cases. Applying moral principles to cases requires expressing and clarifying the principles and finding out the relevant facts about the cases. For example, the principle of fairness to which Ms. Russell is appealing might be based on the idea of equality of educational opportunity. This would mean that the educational resources made available to children should not depend on such irrelevant characteristics as family background, race, or socioeconomic class. Once we understand the facts of the case, however, we find that these would be the deciding characteristics if Ms. Russell granted parental requests for the assignment of their children to teachers. Middle-class children would end up with the better teachers.

In order to perform this task of aptly applying principles to facts, we may also have to inquire into the justification of the principle. This is another aspect of ethical reasoning. Why should we accept the principle of equality of educational opportunity? What purposes does it serve? We may not be able to understand the exact nature of its application until we have a clear idea of its point and rationale.

Often, in thinking about these questions, we are led to ask further questions of a different and more complex sort. How should we decide between

conflicting ethical principles? How in general do we justify ethical principles? What is the nature of moral evidence? How do we distinguish moral from nonmoral claims? And can we construct a general ethical theory that orders our ethical principles under some general view of the Good Life?

The differences among these ethical questions is not sharp. They seem easily to lead into one another. Nevertheless, they do seem to differ in roughly the following way. One set of questions (i.e., how to apply the principle of equal opportunity) seems directly concerned with what we ought to do in a specific situation. We want to know how we should act and why we should act that way, here and now, in these circumstances. The concern is for the morally correct choice and its justification in a specific context. The next set of questions (i.e., how to resolve conflicts between ethical principles) seems to be more general. They are about our process of moral reasoning itself. Here we need to describe our process of justification and to understand how it is possible for us to engage in productive ethical reflection in any situation. We are not so much concerned with the justification of particular actions as with the justification of our moral principles and our ethical theories. We seek to locate our particular moral principles in a general view of the moral life that orders our principles and tells us how to decide when they conflict.

SURVEY ON STUDENT SUSPENSION

Appendix V

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability by placing a circle around the response which most closely represents your current situation and your thoughts on student suspension.

1. At what level are you currently involved?

Elementary Junior High Senior High Other

2. Have you ever suspended a student from school? (Whether "in" or "out" of school suspension?)

Yes No

(If you answered "Yes" to question #2, continue. If you answered "No" to question #2, stop here.)

3. How many students might you find it necessary to suspend during one "typical" month of school?

<2 2-5 >5

4. What would be the most common reason(s) for you to suspend a student from school?

Fighting Defiance Towards Staff Drug/Alcohol Use
Non-compliance with School Rules Vandalism of Property
Truancy Behavior Problems Other_____

5. Although this may be difficult to answer in one or two words, what do you see as the primary objective(s) in suspending a student from school?(You may pick 2 or 3.)

Deterrence Factor (to others) Rehabilitation (Of Offender)
Punishment Value "Safety" of School
No Options Left "Message" to Parents
"Break" for Teachers Other_____

(* Please return to Don Lacey at the Board Office ASAP)

STUDENT SUSPENSION SURVEY RESULTS

*Please Note: When appropriate, responses which were initiall designated as "Other" were reassigned into an existing category.

	Elem.	Junior	Senior	Other	Total
1. At what level are you currently involved?	7	4	2	2	15
2. Have you ever suspended a student from school?					
No	1	-	-	1	2
Yes	6	4	-	1	13
3. How many students might you find it necessary to suspend in one month.					
Less than 2	6	2	1	1	10
2 - 5	-	2	1	-	3
More than 5	-	-	-	-	-
3. What would be the most common reason(s) for you to suspend?					
Fighting	2	4	2	-	8
Defiant to staff	4	4	1	-	9
Drug use	-	1	1	-	2
Non-compliance with rules	5	1	1	-	7
Vandalism	1	-	-	-	1
Truancy	-	-	2	-	2
Behavior problems	3	1	2	1	7
Other	1	1	1	-	3
5. What do you see as the primary objective(s) of suspension?					
Deterrence value	1	3	1	-	5
*Safety of school	5	2	1	1	9
*Break for teachers	-	1	-	-	1
+Rehabilitation	2	-	2	-	4
+Punishment value	-	-	-	-	-
+No options left	1	2	1	-	4
+Message to parents	3	3	-	-	6
*Consequentialist					
+Non-Consequentialist					

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSION
PRESENTATION AND RELATED MATTERS**

Presented by:

**Martha Johnson
April 20, 1993**

to

Lethbridge School District #51 Administration

Lunch N' Learn Session Format

INTRODUCTION (10 Minutes)

O.H. #1 - "Well, I suppose you're all wondering why I've asked you here today....Ha! I've always wanted to say that." Leave this O.H. on while administrators come in.

"Welcome everyone, especially to our visiting administrators from Australia! It seems fair to have the tables turned this week (I attended all of their presentations last week at the Institute they presented at the U of L). Thank you, in advance, for supporting my M. Ed. project endeavor.

O.H. #2 - "I feel somewhat like Sheila....No, not like a cow! I feel as though my instincts on what to complete in the way of an M. Ed. project have led me in a different direction from most. Perhaps, this is the "closet philosopher" in me, trying to get out. Therefore.....

O.H. #3 - "Trust me" (like George), for the next 45 minutes. You may not know where I'm going initially and I do hope I'm taking you off the beaten path. I do hope I'm opening up a new direction of exploration for you. I have appreciated my journey into "The Land of Ethics" and I hope you'll feel the same. O.H. off.

"During the last four years, one of the courses of my Graduate program that I have found to be both informative and practical

is "Education 4381 - The Ethics of Teaching". This course has been an "Ah Ha" experience for me. Through the practise of ethical decision making, we have been tackling issues such as: Corporal Punishment, Sex Education, Distribution of Educational Resources, Freedom of Speech, etc. Our model of study has been a "Case Study" approach. I have taken the liberty of using this same approach for my presentation today. I feel as if this approach has allowed me more understanding about the "Why's" of my decisions. I hope that you will experience some of this same feeling.

Page 1 - Handout package - Review "Overview of Lunch N' Learn Session. O.H. ON

O.H. #4 - "We're going to begin with some brainwork. I'm going to read a hypothetical scenario to you. Please listen carefully to th situation. Then, I will give you further directions."

O.H. #5 - Place "Garrymore" case study on O.H. and read. Direct administrators to turn to page 2 in their package. Ask them to briefly answer the questions, to the best of their ability. "Spend only 5 minutes maximum. *Remember, your responses will remain anonymous."

DEVELOPMENT (25 Minutes)

O.H. # 6 - Show top portion - "Transformational Leadership - The Science and Art of Leading". Discuss: "This is a style of leading which seems to be receiving a great deal of coverage in current educational journals. It is a familiar "buzz" word at present....but, what is it? What does it mean?"

"My readings have led me to develop my own interpretation of Transformational Leadership (TL). I believe a key feature of TL is the addition (and recognition) of the "Art" of leading to the existing notions of the "Science" of leading. Let me explain.....I think that the Science of Leadership has been addressed for some time. One has only to consider Management Style Inventories (which measure people vs product orientation), Administrator and Teacher Perceiver Tests, Decision Making Models and more, to know that we have devoted a great deal of time and attention to the "science" of leading.

Now, words and ideas are appearing in educational journals which address "The Moral leader", "The Authentic Leader", "The Visionary Leader", etc. I have interpreted that these are an attempt to reflect the "Art" of Leadership - that which I believe comes from within. Because the attention paid to the "Art" of leading has only recently become "fashionable", I have taken the liberty of assuming that it is an area worthy of increased attention.

O.H. #6 - Portion 2 If my above assumption/interpretation is accurate, TL will have a wide ranging impact on all aspects of an administrators' life (Show next portion of TL O.H.). My list is by no means, exhaustive. In terms of time, I have chosen to focus on the effects of TL on the process of Decision Making."

O.H. #6 - Portion 3 "Like most aspects affected by TL, the "science" of Decision Making has been given its due. We have many models, theories and levels systems which are useful and important tools. But, what is the "art" of Decision Making? Is it haphazard? Is it done by instinct alone?"

"I have wondered if others, like me, have wondered about this. What is involved in the art (ethics) of Decision Making? This topic, in and of itself, could be worthy of extensive study. However, because I needed to further limit my scope of study, I have narrowed my focus to a study of the impact of ethics on one decision an administrator is often faced with - that of student suspension. Therefore, my main goal has become to explore the impact of ethics on the decision to suspend a student from school."

O.H. #6 - Portion 4 - "In our district, we have an existing policy on Student Suspension. This policy addresses the "science" of the issue as it tells us "what to do", and "how to do it". What the policy doesn't (and can't) give us help with is the "when" and "why" of student suspension. It is my hope that this brief introduction to ethics and ethics as applied to

student suspension will assist you when you are next faced with the "What ought I to do?" part of student suspension. This will hopefully result in a rational decision (as opposed to the most expedient or the easiest decision). Please remember that I am trying to compact three months of information into a half-hour time slot....therefore, an overview, at best is what you will receive.

Handouts - Page 4 Discuss "Ethics - An Overview"

- Complete Consequentialist Theory. STOP. Work through sample case study using Consequentialist Theory. (Page 5, #1)

- Complete Non-Consequentialist Theory. STOP. Work through sample case study using NC Theory. (Page 5, #2)

*Key points for expansion:

1. Ethics - rooted in the historical period of the Enlightenment.
2. Ethical Decisions - Concerns not the most expedient or least troublesome, but the most fair and just decision. Facts are relevant in deciding ethical issues, but, they are not sufficient.
3. Ethical Theories - Two fundamental ways to address ethics...
 - A. Principle of Benefit Maximization: More focus on group rights. Based on predicting consequences. Past is irrelevant.
 - B. Principle of Equal respect: More individual in focus. Past becomes relevant.

Discuss "Code of Ethics for Discipline" . "As you can see, the Consequentialist and Non-Consequentialist ethical theories are often "at odds" with each other. What becomes important, then, is to assure you have given both theories their due. One way to ensure you do this is to develop and follow a Code of Ethics for Discipline practises. Richard Smith, in his book, Introductory Studies on Philosophy suggests some possibilities for general guidelines. I have take the liberty of turning these into some "guidelines" which may serve to assist in matters of discipline. The code is designed to create a sense of responsibility and freedom (as opposed to oppression). Ideally, school rules will then be adhered to by students because it is the "right" thing to do" (Versus being forced to behave in a certain way)."

Discuss the rules:

1. Individuality - Class or collective punishment which is meant to flush out the guilty party may thus be inappropriate and ineffective.
2. Freedom - Don't set "traps" for victims.
3. Justice - Encourages trust in the justice system.
4. Fairness - You must have proof, evidence and a confession.
5. Economical - Punish according to the act and the individual.
6. Security - The student must have knowledge that he/she broke a rule.

"Granted, in a school setting, a principal is not going to have the time to review either the ethical principles or the Code for Discipline. However, with just a few "practise"

sessions, I have found that my decision making has improved, at least in terms of understanding and being able to vocalize why I made the decisions I did."

CONCLUSION (10 Minutes)

O.H. On

O.H. #7 - "Have I confused you? I hope not! I hope that the information I have presented to you will give you added power to make informed decisions regarding student suspension. My research shows that suspension continues to be a widely used method of discipline. However, because we are seeing repeat offenders who are most often boys from lower socio-economic groups, and of ethnic minority, we may not be achieving the desired results. Thus, when we decide to suspend, we create certain problems for ourselves. Similarly, when we decide not to suspend, another set of problems arises. Thus, it becomes vital to understand why we made the choices we did not only in terms of what our "Policy" tells us to do, but also, in terms of our "gut reactions". I hope I have convinced you that there are reasons and ways of confirming what our instincts tell us to do."

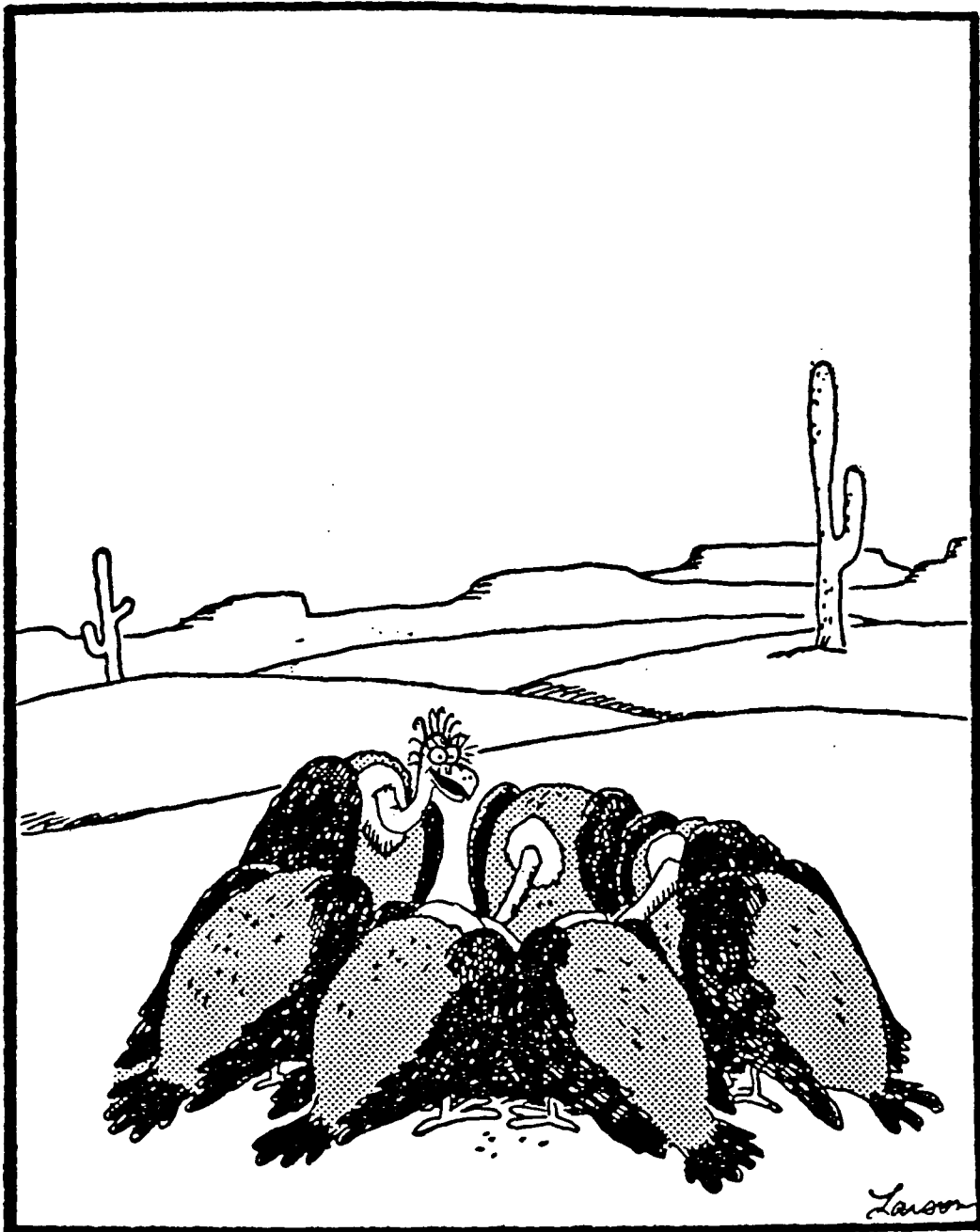
O.H. #8 - "Thank-you for donating your time during your lunch hour,. I didn't mind the munching a bit!"

O.H. OFF

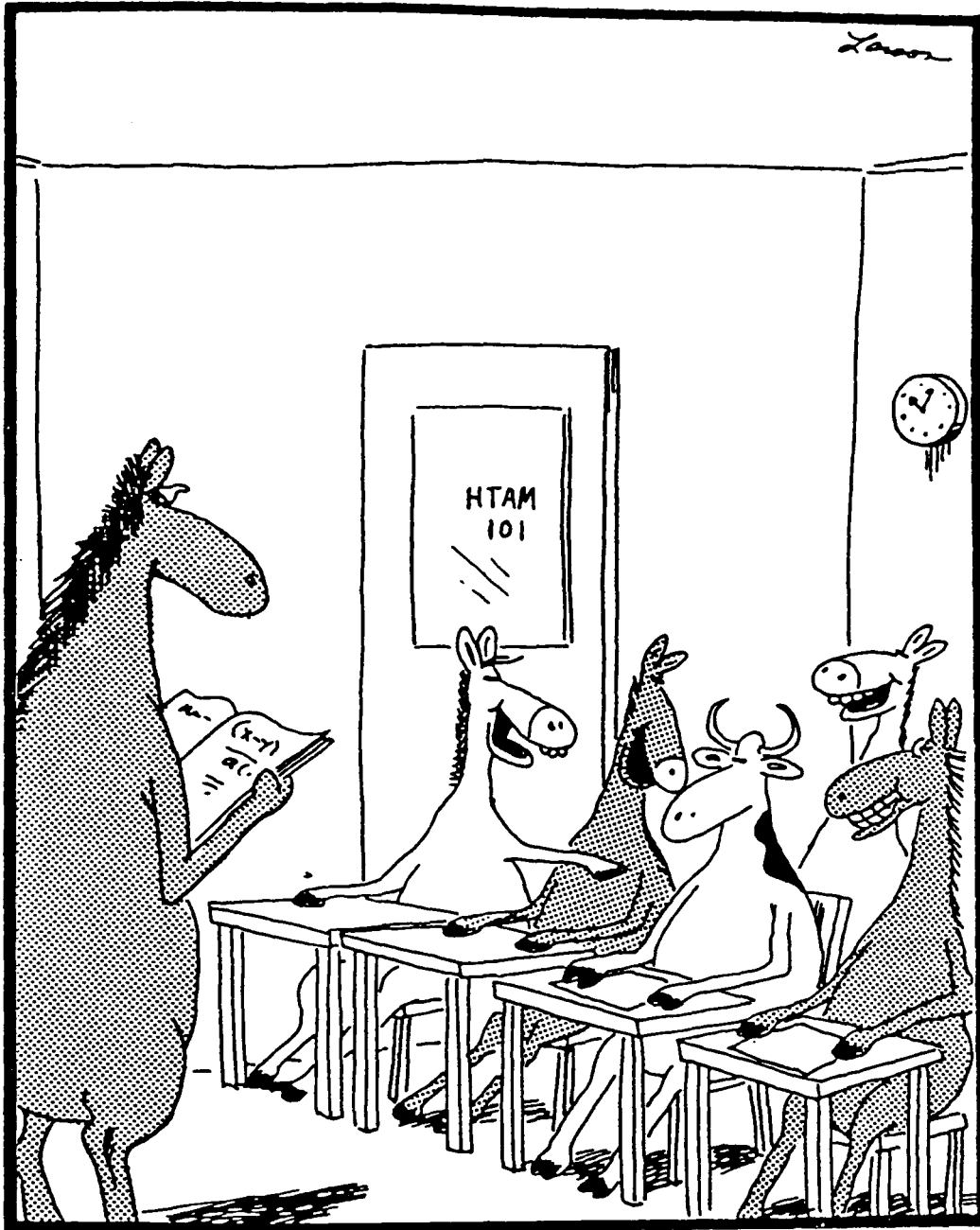
"To conclude, on pages 7 and 8 of your package, you will find the hypothetical case which I read to you at the start of today's session. Would you please take a moment during the

next few days to re-read the case, and to respond to it. Both response sheets (A & B) should be mailed to Don Lacey by April 30th. (No names required). I would also appreciate hearing any comments you might have on the topic of ethics."

"Thanks Again"!!!



"Well, I suppose you're all wondering why I've asked you here today.... Ha! I've always wanted to say that."



Her answer off by miles, Sheila's "cow sense" was always a target of ridicule.



"I don't know if this is such a wise thing to do, George."

Larson

Right side! One two, one two, one two,
left side! one two, one two, one two, one...
C'mon! Keep those cerebellums up!..
One two, one two...

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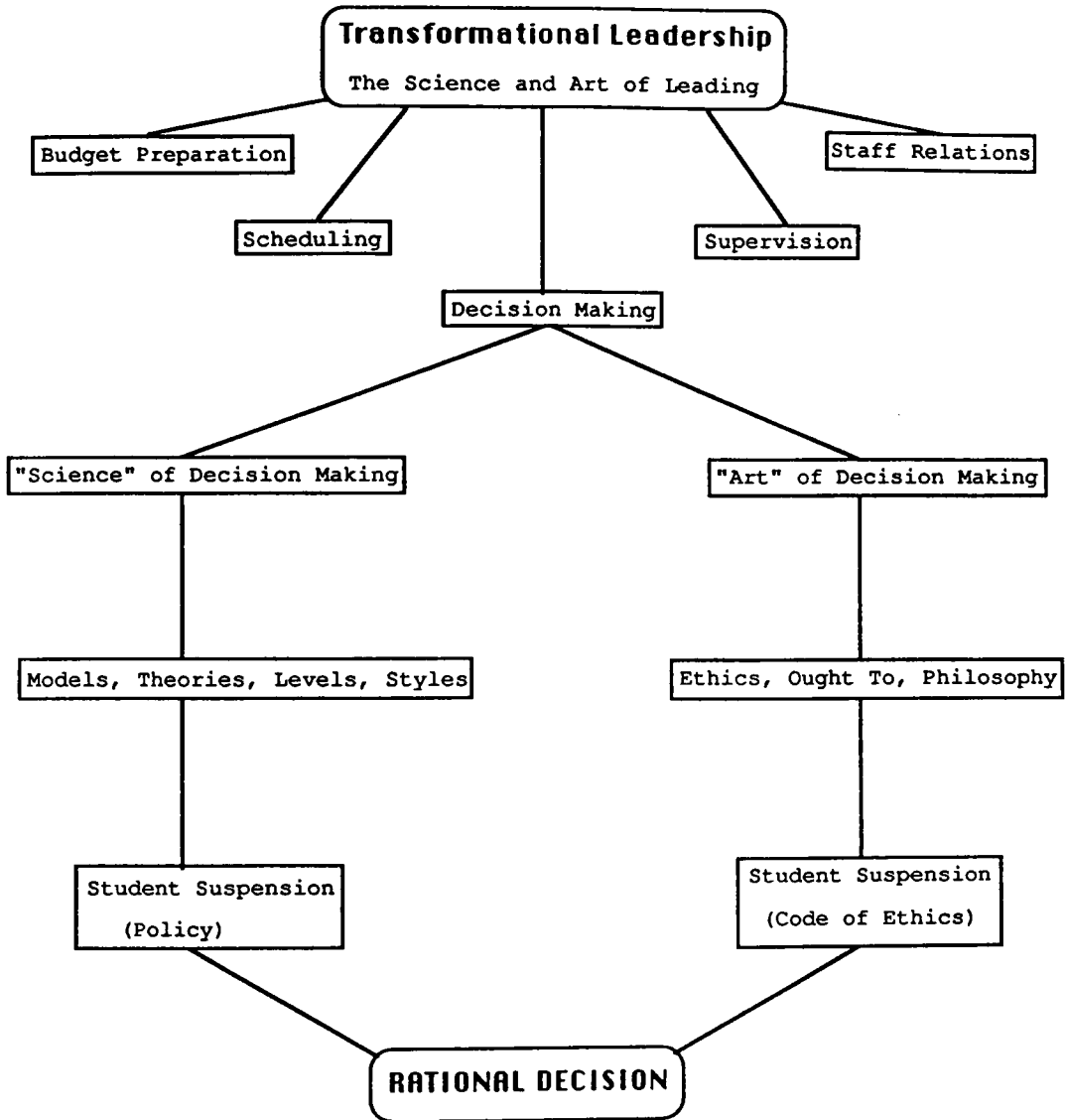
Brain aerobics

CASE STUDY - MR. MIDDLE

Garrymore Junior High, a school of mixed socio-economic and ethnic composition, has recently been plagued by disturbances in the student body. There have been fights instigated by various groups and only two days ago, an ambulance had to be called and two students taken to emergency when knives were introduced. It seemed that even fist fights were escalating into potentially injurious situations.

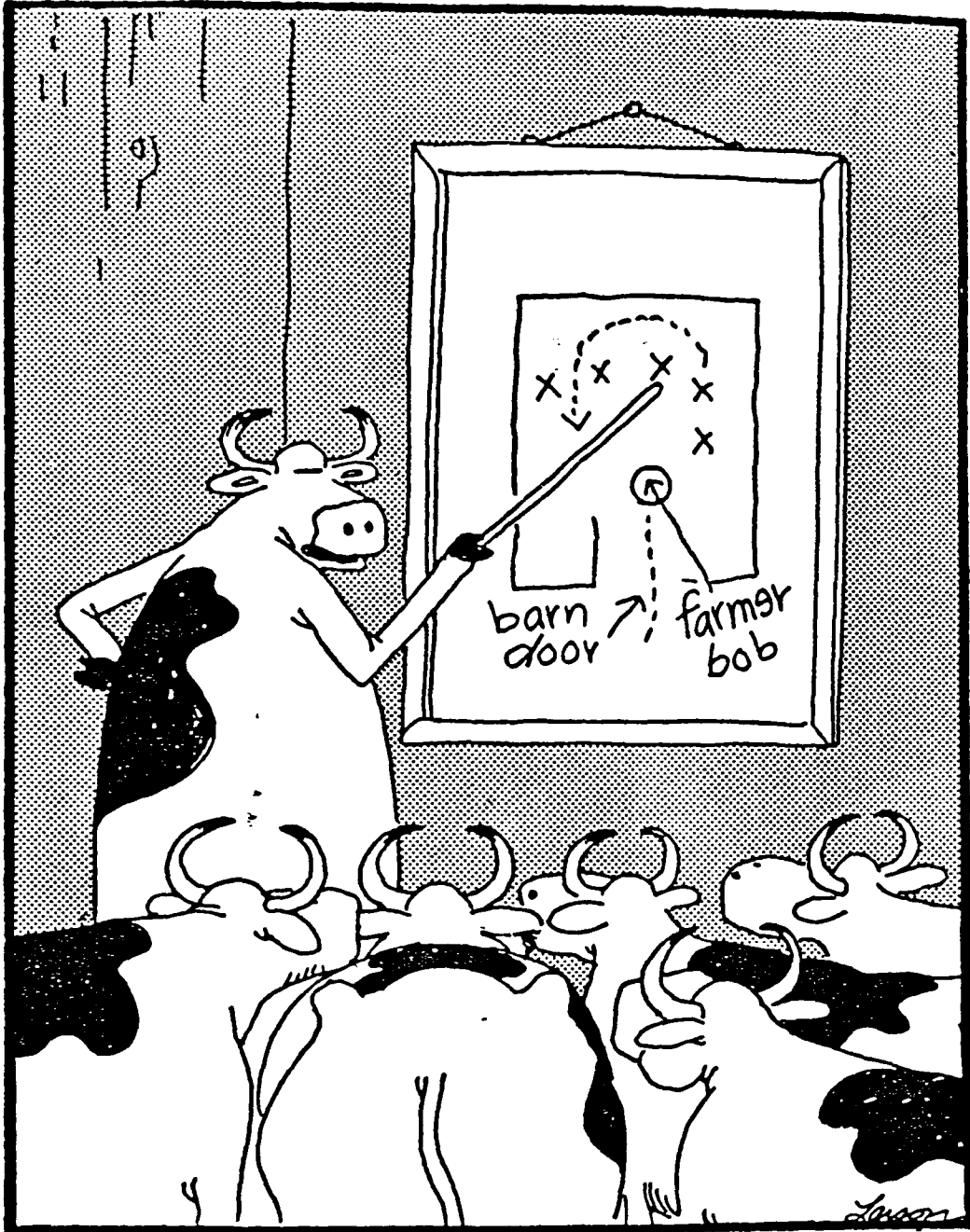
Mr. Middle, the Principal, is determined that this shall not happen again. Accordingly, with school district approval, he has decreed that anyone involved, in any way, in a fight will immediately and automatically be suspended. Anyone caught with a knife or other weapon will be expelled. He has communicated this to the student body by announcing it on the intercom and calling a special school assembly.

Earlier today, Mr. Middle came upon a group of his students talking, and to his horror, he overheard one of them boast that he was carrying a switchblade knife. What bothers Mr. Middle is that the boy carrying the knife --Chris--, has not been associated with any of the previous disturbances. He is not affiliated with any known gang. Neither is he a violent child. Quite the contrary; Chris is a gentle, shy boy and Mr. Middle suspects that the twelve year old is carrying the knife out of a misguided sense of bravado, a desire to impress his peers--show them that he is not afraid to take on the system. Mr. Middle is positive that Chris would never use the knife, however, his message has been loud and clear.





“OK, when I say ‘draw,’ we draw. ... Ready? ... One, two, three — STRAW! ... OK, just checkin’ your ears. ... One, two, three — CLAW! ... OK, DRAWbridge! ... ”



“So when Farmer Bob comes through the door, three of us circle around and ... Muriel! ... Are you chewing your cud while I'm talking?”

Lethbridge School District #51
Administrators' Professional Development Session
Tuesday, April 20, 1993

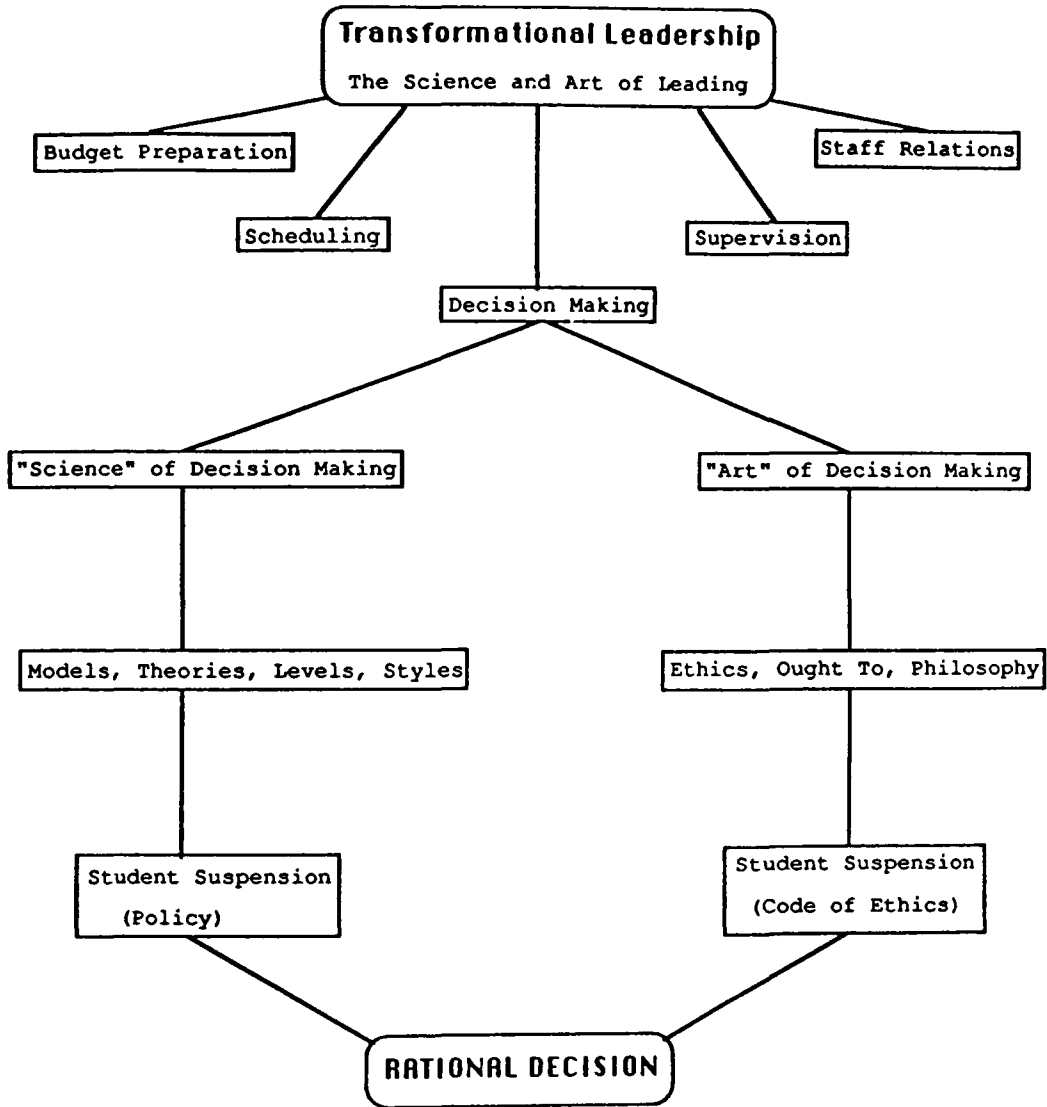
TOPIC: *ETHICAL DECISION MAKING*

FOCUS: *STUDENT SUSPENSION*

Presented by:
Martha Johnson

" LUNCH AND LEARN "
SESSION FORMAT

1. Completion of a Hypothetical Case Study ("A").
2. Introduction to Transformational Leadership (The Science **and** Art of Leading).
3. Decision Making via Transformational Leadership
4. What is the "Art" of Decision Making (Ethics)?
5. Ethics as applied to Student Suspension.
6. A Code of "Ethics" for Discipline.
7. Completion of a Hypothetical Case Study ("B").



ETHICS - AN OVERVIEW

1. **ETHICS** - The discipline that deals with what is good and bad, and with moral duty and obligation.
2. **ETHICAL DECISIONS** - What is the "right" thing to do.
 - The dilemma can not be settled by facts.
 - The decision makers' moral sentiments conflict.
3. **TWO WAYS TO THINK ABOUT ETHICAL DECISIONS**

A. PRINCIPLE OF BENEFIT MAXIMIZATION (Consequentialist Theory)

- Holds that the rightness or wrongness of an action is to be decided in terms of its consequences.
 - Whenever we are faced with a choice, the best and most just decision is the one that results in the most good or the greatest benefit for the most people.
 - We seek to maximize the "good" - that which is intrinsically valuable (happiness, life, love, health, etc.).
- Good consequences - Bad Consequences = Utility Level

*Does not deal with feelings or emotions-is very impersonal.

B. PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL RESPECT (Nonconsequentialist Theory)

- The "Golden Rule" Theory - Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.
- Holds that we should regard human beings as having intrinsic worth.
- We should treat people as "ends" rather than "means".
- We must regard all people as free, rational and responsible moral agents.
- All people are of equal value.

*More judgmental in nature.

THE ETHICS OF STUDENT SUSPENSION

5

"Student X" has been sent to the office for the third time today. His/her offense has been complete and total disrespect of classroom and school rules. He/she has deliberately sabotaged every attempt by teachers, counsellors and administration to remedy the situation. Accordingly, a decision on whether or not to suspend has arisen.

1. Consequentialist Theory

"Positive" Consequences

"Negative" Consequences

2. Nonconsequentialist Theory

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Code of Ethics for Discipline

Discipline (Student Suspension) is most effective when the following principles are kept in mind:

1. Respect Individuality - Punish only an individual based on his/her actions.
2. Respect Freedom - Punishment should offer a choice between committing the offense and incurring the punishment.
3. Respect Justice - Punishment must be a response to breaking a sensible rule.
4. Respect Fairness - Punish the guilty. You must have evidence of guilt.
5. Respect Confidence - The punishment must be economical - cause no more discomfort than the wrong act did.
6. Respect Security - the student must have known the act was wrong and committed it voluntarily.

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