

Excellence through Ethics™

Session 5

Invest in Education



Middle School



Junior Achievement®



Excellence through Ethics
Middle Grades
Session 5

Invest in Education

Content: Ethics and Education as a Priority

Methods: Scenarios

JA Foundational Pillars: Ethics and Work Readiness

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Acknowledgements

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JA Worldwide® (Junior Achievement) gratefully acknowledges Deloitte & Touche USA LLP for its commitment to the development and implementation of the supplementary program *Excellence through Ethics*. JA Worldwide appreciates its relationship with Deloitte & Touche USA LLP to develop and implement vital and innovative programs designed to foster ethical decision-making skills.

Invest in Education

Overview

Students explore and examine influences that impact their decisions about education. They learn how these choices affect their future opportunities. Students recognize how community stakeholders contribute to their education and eventual success.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define ethics, in this area, as making choices that benefit society.
- Recognize how society makes investments in education.
- Identify the influences that are either supports or obstacles to achieving educational goals.
- Decide how to leverage available supports to surmount the obstacles they encounter.

Preparation

Review the activity. Prepare the necessary copies and session materials. Separate each scenario for distribution to each group.

Group work is incorporated into this session. You may consult with the teacher to determine how best to form the groups.

Post Key Terms and definitions in a visible place.

- **Ethics:** The standards that help determine what is good, right, and proper.

Recommended Time

This session typically takes 45 minutes to complete. Ask the teacher to help you keep track of time.

Materials

- Influencing the Future Scenarios (1 per group)
- Pens or pencils (1 per student)
- A college banner (optional)

Presentation

Introduction (5 minutes)

Greet the students. Ask the students if any of them have played a game in which the outcome was affected by the roll of a dice or by chance.

Lead into a brief discussion on how much “the roll of the dice,” i.e., luck and chance, influences long-term outcomes, such as differing family financial circumstances; being born into a family that values education; individual athletic, academic, or artistic talents.

Ask, “Are these circumstances usually the deciding factor with regard to which kids decide to stay in school?” Ask students the extent to which choices make a difference in life, and emphasize that choices and actions have consequences. Draw examples from people whose lives are deemed successful despite the odds that were against them.

In some ways, a person's life may be thought of as a game of chance. Because chance has it that people do not start life in the same economic and social standing, some people believe that illegal activities may be the only realistic paths to financial success. Tell students that in life, furthering one's education is a way to limit the influence of random chance.

Explain to students that young people who don't stay in school often find themselves in economically disadvantaged circumstances. Tell them that in comparison to dropping out, staying in school provides many more opportunities for a meaningful and successful life.

Activity

Society and Education (15 minutes)

Ask, "Why does society invest so many resources in education?" Encourage a few responses before introducing the concept of ethical decision-making. Explain that, in this area, ethical decision-making can be likened to "voting for the common good of society."

Have the class examine ways in which votes have been already cast for the common good of society through investments in education. Record the students' ideas on the board as they brainstorm a list of decisions that have been made to provide for the common welfare of their community. The list could include the following:

- Truancy laws
- Labor laws setting forth minimum ages, and maximum hours of work
- Public schools supported by tax dollars
- Funds for special-needs students
- Federal funds for programs like Head Start
- Free/low-cost lunch and medical care for students
- Public libraries, zoos, and other educational facilities
- Business and industry educational programs
- Scholarships from foundations, civic clubs, and companies

Ask students why these investments were made. Note that we invest in education because to do otherwise would result in a net loss to our society, both ethically and economically. Still, it is the individual's responsibility to society to take advantage of the opportunities provided.

Activity

Who Influences Your Future? (20 minutes)

Tell students that they will use scenarios to examine some of the different influences young people encounter in their decision-making processes. Not all of these influences are positive. Influences that promote the achievement of educational goals will be called supports; those that undermine achieving educational goals will be called obstacles.

Separate the class into four groups. Assign each group one of the four Influencing the Future Scenarios, and then distribute the assigned scenarios. Tell the groups that they will have seven minutes to read their scenarios and discuss the following questions among themselves:

- Which influences would they consider supports, and which would they consider obstacles?
- If they faced this scenario in their own lives, how would they use the supports to overcome the obstacles to continue their education?
- Would they need more supports to overcome the obstacles? If so, who or what might those supports be?

Demonstrate the activity by reading Scenario 1 to the class. Next, tell students that Sean's career interests represent a support, and the film pirate represents an obstacle. Sean's career interests could keep him from illegal activity if he found a supporter from the film industry who would mentor him.

Have each group select a spokesperson to report their conclusions.

Summary and Review (5 minutes)

Briefly review the vocabulary introduced in the session.

After each group has reported their observations, direct discussion toward ethical decision-making. Ask students how the choices being made in the four scenarios affect society. Re-emphasize the importance of making the right personal choices while being respectful of others' opinions. Mention the need for the students to think long-term, realizing that the choices they make now will have a lasting impact.

Ask the class about Sean. If he gives up on college and decides to pirate movies for the black market, how would his actions impact the community at large? Who would be hurt by his choice? How might his life progress?

Next, ask about Rae Ann's situation. Is there anything wrong with her marrying young and raising a family? What are the risks involved? Could her choice harm the common good? If so, how?

Then, ask about Yvette. Why would it be against the law for someone under age 16 to work more than 18 hours per week during the school term? If she took the offer to work 25 hours a week, how would that harm society?

Last, ask students about George. Society seems to be investing a lot in George, but his future is still threatened by his family's finances. If he listens to his father, how would his future be affected? Would that be a gain or a loss for society? What is more important, the needs of an individual, a family, or society? The needs of today or the needs of the future? Why?

Close by saying questions like these are not always easy to answer. Obstacles will always exist to keep people from achieving their educational goals; however, society recognizes the payoffs of continued education and will do much to support those who choose to seek it. Encourage students to seek wise career choices by setting educational goals. Encourage them to stay in school.

Session Outline

Introduction

- Greet the students.
- Tell them that during today's session, they will learn that circumstances and choices influence the ability to continue one's education.
- Draw an analogy between life and games of chance.
- Introduce ethical decision-making, in this case, as voting for the common good of society.
- Have students brainstorm the different ways votes have already been cast for the common good through investments in education.

Activity

- Separate the class into four groups, and distribute the scenarios.
- Have students discuss the scenarios, then report their conclusions.

Summary and Review

- Review the Key Terms for the session.
- Discuss ethical decision-making.
- Ask students how the choices being made in the four scenarios affect society.
- Conclude by contrasting the scenarios with obstacles and supports. Encourage students to stay in school.
- Thank the students for their participation.

Influencing the Future Scenarios

Possible supports, obstacles, and needed supports:

Scenario 1

Supports: teachers, grocery store, career interests

Obstacles: film pirate, socioeconomic standing, desire for ill-gotten gains

Additional supports needed: parents, mentors, film industry mentor, knowledge of how education relates to chosen career path, financial means to continue education

Scenario 2

Supports: teachers, counselors, church mentor, her father, career interests, grades

Obstacles: Shane, family history, and culture

Additional supports needed: her mother, college-bound peers, facts about unemployment rates of unskilled laborers, facts about divorce rate for early marriages, facts about poverty rates for unskilled, single mothers

Scenario 3

Supports: her parents, state law, socioeconomic standing, career interests

Obstacles: math aptitude, family friend, view that parents did okay without finishing college, desire for material things now, willingness to replace homework time with work, willingness to drop hard classes, success at work

Additional supports needed: teachers, math tutor, peers, knowledge of her career interests, industry mentor who supports continued education (family friend would be best), facts about poverty rates for under-educated workers

Scenario 4

Supports: math teachers, engineering firm, engineer he shadowed, summer internship, career interests, grades

Obstacles: socioeconomic standing, his father and uncles, size of family, summer internship pay, construction work pay, family history and culture

Additional supports needed: his mother and aunts, counselors, an industry mentor (engineer he shadowed would be best), peers, financial means to continue education

Influencing the Future Scenarios



Scenario 1

Sean is an above-average high school student from a low-income family. No one from his family has ever gone to college. He gets decent grades. He works several evenings per week at the grocery store to help support his family. His teachers encourage him to stay on a college track. Since middle school, he's been interested in a career as either a photojournalist or a photographer in the motion picture industry.

Recently, someone offered to give him some expensive camera equipment and teach him how to use it. All he has to do is go into theaters and illegally shoot new movie releases so that black-market copies can be produced and sold. To cover the risk of getting caught, the film pirate has even offered to pay him a lot of money—more if Sean agrees to distribute the copies himself. Sean is really considering it. He is starting to think, “Wow, this could really be a way to learn something about the film business and make a lot of money. Maybe I don't need to go to college!”



Scenario 2

Rae Ann is 18 years old and gets good grades in school. Shane, who is only a year older, is her boyfriend. He has been pressuring her to get married and start a family. He has a good, entry-level job as a laborer in the petroleum industry. Sometimes, Rae Ann likes the idea, but she usually ends up fighting with him because she wants to finish school, go to college, and become a nurse like her mentor at church. Shane keeps telling her that he will always work hard and take good care of her and their children, so she doesn't need to finish school.

In Rae Ann's family, women have always married young. She believes her mom could be convinced to support the marriage. Her father doesn't like Shane and would be against it. Rae Ann avoids talking to anyone at school about this because “the teachers and counselors are always pushing college as the only route to a good future.”





Scenario 3

Yvette is 15 years old and comes from a middle-class family. Both of her parents attended college, but neither graduated. Still, they have done well for themselves. Yvette has always wanted to become either an architect or an interior designer. She gets average grades in school, but struggles with math. College seems a long way off, but she really wonders if it's the right path for her. After all, if college courses are anything like her math classes, she probably wouldn't do very well.

Recently, she was given a job by a family friend who has an interior design business. She now works after school, 15 hours per week. She earns enough to buy the clothes and music she likes. The family friend is pleased with her job performance and keeps asking her to work an additional 10 hours per week. That appeals to Yvette, because she wants to buy a car. But, it would also mean that she would have less time for homework. She figures that if her grades suffer, she'll just drop her harder classes. Yesterday, a friend pointed out that state law forbids students under age 16 from working more than 18 hours per week during the school term. Yvette would like to accept the offer, but is hesitant to tell the family friend that it is illegal.



Scenario 4

George is a high school junior. He comes from a large, hard-working family in which no one has ever gone to college. He is hoping to go to college to become an engineer. His math teachers are very supportive; he has done well in all his college-prep math classes. Recently, he was able to “job shadow” an engineer through Junior Achievement. As a result, he was offered a summer internship with the engineering firm. He is excited about the possibility to gain experience in the field; however, it pays only minimum wage. George needs to earn as much money as he can during the summer to help his family make ends meet.

George's father is a construction worker. He hasn't been supportive of George's college ambitions. He has five other children to provide for and just doesn't see how he can afford to send George to college. Instead, he wants George to take a summer job as a laborer, so he can start “working his way up” at the construction company. George feels the pressure to follow in his father's footsteps because his father and uncles keep saying that “real men work for a living” instead of “laying around college campuses reading books.”



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Welcome to Junior Achievement's *Excellence through Ethics*

As a Junior Achievement (JA) volunteer or teacher, you are joining other teachers and volunteers from across the United States in providing students with a unique educational experience. Junior Achievement's *Excellence through Ethics* offers students learning opportunities to share knowledge and information regarding ethics in business. JA strives to show students how business works, and to better evaluate organizations that conduct their operations in the right way.

Excellence through Ethics is designed to equip volunteers and teachers with supplemental, ethics-based activities for use with JA in-class programs for grades four through twelve. All these activities provide students with current and essential information about business ethics.

These activities are designed to reinforce students' knowledge and skills, teach them how to make ethical decisions, assist them in learning to think critically, and help them to be better problem-solvers. All the activities are hands-on, interactive, and group-focused to present the material to students with the best instructional methods.

Within these supplements, you will find sections to help you effectively implement the activities in your volunteer experience. Materials include: (a) an introductory discussion of business ethics, marketplace integrity, and the growing capacity of students for ethical decision-making; (b) activities and student materials that connect to and expand current classroom-based Junior Achievement programs; and (c) a functional glossary of terms relating to a wide spectrum of ethics, quality, service, and social responsibility considerations in business.

JA greatly appreciates your support of these important and exciting activities. If you have comments about the *Excellence through Ethics* program content, curriculum, and/or instruction, please access <http://studentcenter.ja.org.aspx/LearnEthics/> and choose the “*Excellence through Ethics Survey*” link located in the middle of the page.

Appendix

Introduction and Overview

- *How do I do the right thing in this situation?*
- *Should I be completely honest, even if it puts others in jeopardy?*
- *What kind of community do we want to be?*
- *How do we do what's best for the long term?*
- *Who should cover the cost of "doing the right thing"?*

These are all questions having to do with business ethics. They are valid and necessary questions, and good business people have asked them for generations. They form the backdrop of vital discussions as business, community, and political leaders grapple with significant issues. Many students would ask these questions, even if Junior Achievement hadn't developed this ethics curriculum.

Business Ethics Discussions Are Here To Stay

Business ethics has been in the spotlight for much of the past decade, especially as examples of wrongdoing come to light in the media. New technologies and international competitive pressures cause a steady focus on the question, "Is it possible to be competitively successful in business today and still operate in an honest and ethical manner?" The past decade has seen individuals search for deeper personal meaning in the workplace, which has contributed to lively ethics discussions in the business realm. For these reasons, the discussion of business ethics is not a passing fad; it's here to stay.

Many graduate schools of business have either required ethics coursework or integrated ethics principles throughout all areas of study. That is commendable. We believe this vital area of exposure and instruction also should happen at earlier ages and continue throughout the students' educational journey. Many of today's students haven't had access to a well-rounded education in economics and free enterprise or have come to see these in a very negative light. They have limited awareness of the extent to which good business leaders engage in the challenging exercises of ethical decision-making amid heavy competitive pressures. As students learn the general principles of economics and business, it's critical that these be underpinned with a strong foundation in ethics. This will accentuate the best in American business traditions, while laying the groundwork for students' continued evolution into future generations of leaders.

Integrity in the Marketplace?

Many adults and young people choose to believe that the marketplace is driven only by greed. They view it as bringing out only the worst in human behavior, demoralizing the human spirit, and driving out any sense of idealism. While elements of greed and extreme self-interest among some individuals cannot be denied, solid research has shown time and again that companies with a long-term focus on ethics and a broad consideration of stakeholders' interests are much more profitable than those lacking such a focus.

James A. Autry, in his book *Love and Profit: The Art of Caring Leadership*, said it well: "I do not doubt the presence of greed in the marketplace because I do not doubt the presence of greed in people. But, I also do not doubt the ennobling aspects of work, of the workplace, of the community, of endeavor, of

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the marketplace. So I choose to believe that most of the marketplace is driven by people who want to do good work for others and for themselves.”

Excellence through Ethics accepts the challenge of educating youth in the basics of economics and business while establishing a positive balance on the side of well-informed, ethical business practice. This may appear to place a heavy burden on Junior Achievement volunteers, who are not trained ethics experts. The following informational pages will not turn you into an ethics expert. That’s not what we’re striving for here. What students need most is meaningful interaction with people who are willing to engage in a discussion of these vital issues.

Lively Practitioners Rather Than Dry Theorists

This program is more about day-to-day ethics practice than the nuances of ethics theory. Some believe that working in business requires a disconnect from one’s personal ethics. We do not believe this is the case. Students need to know that what they learn about fairness and honesty in general also applies to business. While business ethics may address some specific areas of business practice, it’s not a separate and distinct specialty to be set apart from the general ethical principles that apply in other areas of life. Young people need to encounter the wisdom of age and experience that volunteers bring to the classroom.

Students’ Growing Capacity for Ethical Decision-Making

Excellence through Ethics is designed to foster discussions at the appropriate level for each age group. The curriculum developers have designed the ethics activities with sensitivity to student’s mental maturity. At the late elementary and middle-grades levels, students’ capacities for ethical reasoning tend toward good personal behavior as determined by adult rules and authority. In relationships, personal trust, loyalty, and respect are of paramount importance. For these students, corporate ethical behavior is viewed in much the same light as their own personal behavior: it’s governed by rules.

As students advance into high school, their ethical decision-making moves into the larger arena of social contracts and systems that guide and govern societal and group behavior. Here the rationality and utility of laws are scrutinized, as students become more capable of higher-ordered, principled thinking. Students are increasingly aware of the diversity of values among different cultures and communities. At this level, students’ capacities for processing the complex, ethical dilemmas that may be encountered in business are greatly enhanced.

You will gain confidence as you come to realize that conducting a robust, provocative discussion with students is more important than “having the right answer.” The activities have been designed to leave room for lively discussion and multiple points of view. Having the courage to share your own experiences is very valuable to students.

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You don't have to apologize for the excesses students may see in business. Don't assume responsibility for actions that are not your own, and do not try to defend the indefensible. While accentuating the fact that most businesses operate ethically, it's okay to scrutinize the unethical players in the marketplace who give business in general a bad name.

Continuing Education

Teaching this material to students will no doubt strengthen and enhance your own ethics awareness and continuing education. Some students will challenge your best reasoning capacities. Having your own support network of professional colleagues with whom you can share and discuss some of these issues is very valuable. It's also helpful to seek out colleagues with philosophical views that differ from your own. This serves as a valuable "cross-pollination" function because you will be able to understand and discuss a variety of views with students, as well as share students' perspectives with your colleagues. In this way, everyone learns.

Finally, please be assured that your contributions here have tremendous value to students and will serve to upgrade business ethics in the future. We're dealing with the future generation of leaders in their formative years. We can take pride in the fact that we've had a hand in shaping the very people who will be responsible for business ethics and social responsibility in the future.

Appendix

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Many educators, economists, businesspeople, and consultants have contributed to the development of *Excellence through Ethics*. We would like to acknowledge the following individuals and groups for their efforts, creative talents, and support in creating these materials:

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Excellence through Ethics Junior Achievement Pilot Offices

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Appendix

Excellence through Ethics Evaluation

Junior Achievement has discontinued all paper versions of program surveys. However, we greatly appreciate your comments and feedback about *Excellence through Ethics*. Please help us improve the quality of *Excellence through Ethics* by sharing your comments through our new online survey process. The online survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

If you have comments about the *Excellence through Ethics* program content, curriculum, and/or instruction, please access <http://studentcenter.ja.org/aspx/LearnEthics/> and choose the *Excellence through Ethics* Survey link located in the middle of the page.

Thank you for participating in JA!



Excellence through Ethics Volunteer Survey

1. Including this session, how many individual sessions of Excellence through Ethics have you presented? _____

2. Do you feel that the students were engaged through this session?
 - A. Not at all
 - B. Somewhat engaged
 - C. Engaged
 - D. Very Engaged
 - E. Unsure

3. Do you feel the session was relevant to students?
 - A. Not relevant
 - B. Somewhat relevant
 - C. Relevant
 - D. Very relevant
 - E. Unsure

4. Do you feel students are more prepared to make ethical decisions after participating in this session?
 - A. Significantly more prepared
 - B. Somewhat more prepared
 - C. Somewhat less prepared
 - D. Significantly less prepared
 - E. Unsure

5. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being excellent), how would you rate the overall quality of the Excellence through Ethics session? _____

6. After this JA experience, how likely are you to volunteer for JA again?
 - A. More likely to volunteer
 - B. Less likely to volunteer
 - C. No more or less likely to volunteer
 - D. Unsure

7. What comments or suggestions do you have regarding the overall session (including format, content, etc.)?

Optional: City _____

State _____ Country _____

Email _____

Excellence through Ethics Student Survey

1. What grade are you in? _____

2. Please fill in the circle that best describes how you feel about the following statements.

There is no right or wrong answer.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This topic is very important.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to apply what I learned in this session to the real world.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The activities were interesting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I learned something about ethics from this session.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Do you feel more prepared to make ethical decisions after participating in this session?

- A. Significantly more prepared
- B. Somewhat more prepared
- C. Somewhat less prepared
- D. Significantly less prepared
- E. Unsure

4. I saw someone at my job taking money from the cash register, I would:

- A. Ask someone I trust what I should
- B. Tell a supervisor
- C. Talk to the person taking the money
- D. Do nothing
- E. Not sure

5. To help us better understand who you are, please answer the following questions: How do you describe your ethnicity (family background)? (Fill in all that apply)

- A. African American
- B. Asian American
- C. Latino (a) or Chicano (a)
- D. European American (white)
- E. Native American
- F. Other – how do you identify yourself? _____

6. Do you have any additional comments regarding this session?

Optional: City _____ State _____ Country _____