

Excellence through Ethics™

Session 4

Develop Your Work Ethic



Elementary School



Junior Achievement®



Excellence through Ethics

Elementary School

Session 4

Develop Your Work Ethic

Content: Ethics and Work Ethics

Methods: Self-Quiz and Scenarios

JA Foundational Pillars: Ethics and Workforce Readiness

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Acknowledgements

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Develop Your Work Ethic

Overview

Students will develop an understanding of a good and strong work ethic. They will learn to recognize their own work ethic and realize that it may change or be tested from situation to situation.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define the term **work ethic**, and the characteristics of having a strong work ethic.
- Describe how a person's work ethic can be tested from situation to situation.
- Identify the best ethical options when faced with an important decision concerning work.

Preparation

Review the activity. Prepare the necessary copies and session materials.

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.
- **Work ethic:** Your values and beliefs about every job or task that you do.

Recommended Time

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

Materials

- Work Ethic Self-Quiz (1 per student)
- Work Ethic in Action Scenarios (1 per group)

Presentation

Introduction (5 minutes)

Greet the students.

Pose the following question: Did you know that you are doing many things right now that are preparing you for careers you will have as adults?

Explain that in addition to learning useful skills such as reading, writing, and math, they are also developing something called a “work ethic,” which will directly affect the jobs for which they are hired.

Define the term **work ethic** as **your values and beliefs about every job or task that you do**. It is the internalized view of work as something that can express or reflect oneself. People with a strong work ethic are driven to be dependable, responsible, and honest as they complete work with a high level or rigor, and innovation. These people want to always know that they did the best work possible in every situation. Tell them that they will understand this term better after they take a self-quiz that will evaluate their own work ethic.

Activity

Work Ethic Self-Quiz (10 minutes)

Distribute the Work Ethic Self-Quiz to each student. Inform the students that this self-quiz will not be turned in. Encourage them to be honest with themselves as they complete it.

Read each statement aloud and allow students time to fill in their answers.

When the quiz is complete, ask the students if they had ever thought of these qualities before. Help them connect all these elements of work ethics to their lives.

Explain that most employers find a strong work ethic is the best thing an employee can possess. Even if the employee does not have full understanding of his job responsibilities, if he has a strong work ethic, employers usually will be happy to teach and train him. Ask the students why they think this is true. Would it be better to have an employee who had a lot of knowledge about the job, but was unreliable, or an employee who didn't know very much about the job, but worked extremely hard?

Tell the students that it may be easy to answer ethical questions when they are listed on paper, as they are on the quiz, but sometimes the circumstances can make these answers much more difficult. Sometimes our work ethic is tested. At these times, we need to learn to focus on ethical decisions and options. Tell them we will explore this idea further as we read a case study about a fictional character named Lee.

Activity

Lee's Work Ethic Dilemma (10 minutes)

Read the following story aloud:

Lee loves making extra money by babysitting. She regularly babysits for four families. This week, she has two jobs lined up, one for Wednesday evening while Mrs. Stevens goes grocery shopping, and the other for Friday night while Mr. and Mrs. Lyons go out to dinner.

All week, Lee's best friend, Melissa, has been telling her about a special event for which she has tickets. Melissa's parents bought tickets for her entire family to attend a grand opening party for a music theater. Many bands would be performing throughout the evening, including Lee's favorite band, The Y Group.

When Lee gets home from school on Wednesday, her friend Melissa calls and invites her to attend the party that evening. Melissa's dad had called and told them he would be working late and couldn't attend the event. Melissa excitedly invites Lee, "You can just tell her you're sick! When will you ever get to see The Y Group again? For FREE?"

It was 2:30, and Lee was supposed to be at Mrs. Stevens' house at 5:00. What should she do?

As a group, brainstorm all her options. Write ideas on the board. Possible answers could include:

- Say "no" to Melissa and follow through with the commitment.
- Call and cancel – telling Mrs. Stevens the truth.
- Call in sick. Make up an excuse.

- Ask Mrs. Stevens if you could reschedule for the following evening. If she says no, this would mean you would do the babysitting job as planned.
- Babysit then and meet Melissa at the event after you're done.
- Do not call or show up to babysit.

Discuss the consequence of each option for Lee and for Mrs. Stevens. Sort through each option, discussing the ethics involved with each one. Connect each one back to the ideas of dependability, responsibility, honesty, level or rigor, and level of innovation to which it applies.

Pose and discuss the following question: Can your work ethic change from situation to situation? If so, how can you always be sure you are making the best decisions for yourself and your work?

Explain that most people use questions to help guide their decisions. These include:

- Would this make me proud?
- How would I feel if everyone I knew found out what I had done?
- Is this the right thing to do?
- Would I want someone to do the same thing to me (the Golden Rule)?

Activity

Work Ethic in Action (15 minutes)

Explain the key terms to students.

Organize students into groups of two or three. Pass out a Work Ethic in Action Scenarios worksheet to each group. Tell them to read each scenario and analyze the work ethic of each character. As a group, they should decide where to mark an X on the work ethic scale for each character. Tell the groups that they will need to be able to explain their rating.

Tell the groups that they should to give “advice” to each character whose work ethic is not strong.

Allow groups 5-10 minutes to complete the activity.

Debrief the activity for each character. Have each group share their analysis of each character, including rationale for their choices and advice for those characters displaying less than strong ethics.

Explore the ethical and unethical behaviors and decisions of each character.

Summary and Review (5 minutes)

Review the Key Terms.

Tell students that having a strong work ethic is one of the most desirable features in an employee. Remind students that their behaviors and the decisions they make on a daily basis are working toward building this work ethic. The choices they are making now could affect the type of job they have when they are adults. Encourage them to continue making choices they feel are the most ethical.

Thank the students for their participation.

Session Outline

Introduction

- Greet the students.
- Define the term work ethic.
- Explain the characteristics of work ethic.
- Distribute and facilitate the Work Ethic Self-Quiz.
- Read and discuss Lee's story. Focus on ethical options for this situation.

Activity

- Organize students into groups.
- Complete the Work Ethic in Action Scenarios activity.
- Debrief the activity.

Summary and Review

- Briefly review the vocabulary introduced in the session.
- Review with students that a strong work ethic is one of the most desirable employee attributes.
- Thank the students for their participation.

Self-Quiz: What is Your Work Ethic?

Dependability:

Are you reliable?

Never Seldom Sometimes Usually Always

Can people count on you?

Never Seldom Sometimes Usually Always

Do you follow rules?

Never Seldom Sometimes Usually Always

Responsibility:

Do you honor your word?

Never Seldom Sometimes Usually Always

While working, do you ever do other things?

Never Seldom Sometimes Usually Always

Honesty:

Are you true to the promises you make?

Never Seldom Sometimes Usually Always

Are you loyal?

Never Seldom Sometimes Usually Always

Level of rigor:

Are you a hard worker?

Never Seldom Sometimes Usually Always

Do you work to your highest potential?

Never Seldom Sometimes Usually Always

Level of initiative:

Do you do work that is not required of you?

Never Seldom Sometimes Usually Always

Do you do your job well and leave, or do you offer more of yourself, free of charge?

Never Seldom Sometimes Usually Always

Work Ethic in Action Scenarios

Bobby

Bobby wanted to earn extra money, so his parents helped him get a job delivering papers. He had to wake up every morning at 5 a.m. to fold the newspapers. He would then pack them in the sack on his bike and ride around the neighborhood, throw the paper on the driveways. A few times, his toss was off and the paper landed on the wet grass. He knew he should probably return to the house and place the paper on the driveway, but his aim usually was accurate. He figured he could always pretend he didn't notice – especially if no one complained. Bobby really didn't like the job, but he forced himself to do it every morning. About three months into the job, he decided it wasn't worth the extra money. He told his boss that he wanted to quit, but offered to complete the last week of the month because he knew they would have to find a new delivery person.

Bobby's Work Ethic:



Explain your response:

Sally

Sally volunteered to run the lollipop booth at her school’s Halloween carnival. The principal allows only the most responsible fifth-graders to run the booths. Sally was excited when she was selected. She arrived early and set up her booth beautifully. She worked hard on the sign that read “The Lollipop Game - 25¢ a try”. Everyone who paid 25 cents would get to choose a lollipop from the display. If the lollipop chosen had a black dot on the bottom, the person would win a prize. Sally did a great job running the booth. She carefully collected and stored the quarters and gave out prizes accordingly. Her friend Sarah came up to the table while she was working. There was a long line of people waiting, but Sally wanted to chat with Sarah while she worked, which was not easy to do. As they finished talking, Sarah asked if she could have a lollipop. Sally told her that she needed to pay 25 cents. Sarah handed over a quarter and grabbed a lollipop. The boy at the front of the line complained, “Hey, that’s not fair, she didn’t wait in line.” Sally told him she would give him a prize if he didn’t tell. She showed him where one of the lollipops with the dot was, and sent him off with a prize.

Sally’s Work Ethic:



Explain your response:

Johnny

Johnny started his own business mowing lawns in his neighborhood. He mows the lawn at three houses on Saturdays, but he really hopes to get more customers. On Wednesday evening, Johnny's mother escorted him from door to door, where he introduced himself, offered his services, and left each neighbor with a piece of paper he had made with his name and phone number. That Friday, two more neighbors called to hire him to mow their lawns. On Saturday, he woke up early and completed mowing the lawns of all five houses. Johnny noticed that one of his customers, Mrs. Collins, had a flowerbed full of weeds. After he finished mowing her lawn, he spent an extra half hour pulling the weeds out of her garden. As she paid him for mowing the lawn, she noticed the work he had done on her flowerbed. She was so pleased, she offered him an additional \$5. Johnny politely refused, stating that it was all just part of the job.

Johnny's Work Ethic:



Explain your response:

Veronica

Veronica was on a club soccer team that practiced every Wednesday afternoon after school. She liked playing soccer, but her passion was dancing. She asked her parents if she could take dance classes instead, but they were too expensive. She was disappointed, but she understood. Veronica was in charge of bringing the bag of soccer balls to practice each Wednesday because her house was closest to the park. She didn't mind; she only had to walk one block more to the park. On her way, she always passed by Ms. Gibson's dance school, where she occasionally stopped to watch the dancers. A few times, one of the teachers invited her in to join them for free. She knew if she went into the class, her soccer teammates wouldn't have any balls for practice, but she just couldn't pass up the opportunity to do what she loved. After the third time she failed to deliver the soccer balls, her coach called and asked her to give the bag of balls to Molly so she could be in charge of them. Veronica apologized and told her coach the truth about where she had been and why she chose to attend the dance classes. The coach was disappointed, but he appreciated her honesty. Veronica promised to give the ball bag to Molly, and she followed through with this promise the following day.

Veronica's Work Ethic:



Explain your response:

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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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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!



Let Their Success Be Your Inspiration!®

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 _____