

# Excellence through Ethics™

Session 12

*Written in Stone—Policies and  
Codes in Business*



**Middle School**



Junior Achievement®



*Excellence through Ethics*  
**Middle Grades**  
**Session 12**

*Written in Stone—Policies and  
Codes in Business*

**Content:** Ethics, Business Values, Codes, and Policies

**Methods:** Scenarios

**JA Foundational Pillars:** Ethics, Work Readiness, and Entrepreneurship

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# Acknowledgements

## Sponsorship

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.

## **Written in Stone—Policies and Codes in Business**

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### **Overview**

A company's beliefs can be expressed in many ways, including written ethics policies, codes of conduct, and statements of core values. Similar to the way in which certain traits identify an individual's character, these written policies clearly define the expected behaviors for all employees and guide their business decisions. Standards of conduct are the framework for how all employees should decide what the right thing to do is.

### **Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- Identify several methods businesses use to define or communicate ethical standards (mission statements, ethics policies, core values).
- Demonstrate their understanding of ethics policies by writing an ethics policy or statement of core values for a fictional company.
- Evaluate common employee behaviors or ethical situations in relation to an ethics policy or company core values.

### **Preparation**

Review the activity. Prepare the necessary copies and session materials. Prepare overhead transparencies or charts of 1) XYZ Company Ethics Policies, and 2) Green's Grocery Core Values to be used as examples of business policies. Students will create a similar document of their own design, not a duplicate of the models.

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.
- **Core:** most basic or central; root.
- **Values:** the principles, goals, or standards held or accepted by individuals, groups, and societies.
- **Mission:** a goal or purpose.

### **Recommended Time**

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

### **Materials**

- Business That Values Ethics handout (1 per student)
- Policies in Practice for each group (1 packet per group)
- Charts of XYZ Company Ethics Policies and Green's Grocery Core Values
- Sample policies or statements used by your company
- Sheet of paper (1 per group)
- Pens or pencils (1 per student)

## **Presentation**

### **Introduction (5 minutes)**

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Introduce this activity by explaining the concept of character, stressing that character is abstract and can best be understood by identifying seven traits or “virtues” of a good character: honesty, integrity, fairness, responsibility, respect for others, hard work, and a positive attitude.

Discuss how individuals who have developed these character traits are recognized for having them. Their behavior and ethical decisions are based upon these traits. They make honest decisions, are fair, assume responsibility for their behavior, show respect for themselves and others, work hard at things they do, and have a positive attitude in school, at work, and in their personal relationships. When making tough decisions, they reflect upon these traits. Their character is their reputation.

Ask students to give examples of how these virtues can be seen in school life. The following examples can help start the conversation.

- Would an honest person cheat on a test?
- Would a responsible person skip classes?
- Does a bully show respect for others?
- Are athletes hard working?
- Do you know people who are known by some of these traits? Are they known for having these traits or, perhaps, for not having them?

Explain that a business also is known by its integrity. One way a business’ standards and expected behaviors are communicated to its employees, customers, shareholders, and community are through its mission statement, ethics policies, or statement of core values.

Employees are trained to understand how to behave and how to make ethical decisions to guide their behavior. Commitment to ethical standards creates a good reputation and builds loyal, satisfied customers. Good ethics equals good business!

## **Activity**

### **Business Values, Policies and Written Ethical Standards (10 minutes)**

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Introduce and discuss the following models:

- XYZ Company Ethics Policy
- Green’s Grocery Core Values

Ask students if they think these are good policies. What makes them good or not? What would they add to them? Would they remove or replace some items?

- Ethics: the standards that help determine what is good, right, and proper.
- Core: most basic or central; root.
- Values: the principles, goals, or standards held or accepted by individuals, groups, and societies.
- Mission: a goal or purpose.

Explain to students that they will work in small groups as owners or stockholders of a business. They must decide on the ethical standards that will guide their new business. They must think about the standards that will help them build a business that is trusted by their customers and respected in their community. Ask students to brainstorm for a few minutes about what attracts customers to a business.

Consider:

- Quality products.
- Courteous service.
- Fair prices.
- Reasonable return/exchange policies.
- Professional and positive attitudes.
- A productive and pleasant work environment.
- Community involvement (sponsoring sport teams, donating to charities, or volunteering).

## **Activity**

### **Business That Values Ethics (10 minutes)**

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Organize the class into groups. Each group should have no more than three members. Assign a role to each member. For example:

1. Manager (encourages each person to contribute).
2. Recorder (records the policy or statement of core values).
3. Reporter (reports to the class).

Distribute a copy of Business That Values Ethics to the manager of each group.

Read the scenario aloud. Refer to the models of XYZ Company Ethics Policy and Green's Grocery Core Values to clarify how these documents are brief, broad, and clear.

Give examples of a core value, such as "integrity", and how it relates to many different situations and experiences.

Explain that each group may choose to create either a policy or a statement of core values. They should develop no more than six items on their policy or statement, and should think carefully about the importance of each of these items. Allow several minutes for the activity. Extend this time if students' conversations are thoughtful and focused.

After each group has completed writing a policy or statement, ask one or more students to share their group's work.

Keep students in the small groups. Ask them how their policies or statements of core values would actually work in a business. How would they know if these policies or statements had real, practical value? How would they know if employees were hearing the intended message? Explain that policies must be workable or practical to be helpful in building a successful business.



## **Activity**

### **Policies in Practice (15 minutes)**

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Distribute to each group an envelope containing the Policies in Practice scenarios. Ask group members to take turns selecting a scenario from the envelope to test the policy or statement of core values that the group developed. Each student will read the scenario she or he has selected and answer the question. The group should discuss whether the policies/statements are effective in guiding real-world situations. It might be useful to use the following example as you explain this task:

- Customers standing in a long checkout line at the grocery store are becoming impatient. The checker and the person bagging the groceries are arguing about when the bagger was scheduled for a break. The manager meets with each of the two employees and explains that their behavior is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. According to Green's Grocery Core Values, did the manager do the right thing?
- Green's Grocery Core Values states: We treat each of our customers and each other with integrity and respect.

At the conclusion of the activity, allow time for the reporter from each group to share one example (or more if time allows) of a policy or core value that the group decided upon, and an example of how it would be used in practice.

### **Summary and Review (5 minutes)**

Review the new terms used in this session.

A company's expected behaviors are expressed through mission statements, ethics policies, and the identification and communication of core values. These statements of ethical standards shape the culture of a business, and clarify the standards all employees should use to guide their behavior and make ethical decisions. Employees should be trained in understanding company policies. Explain that there are negative consequences for an employee who does not comply with the ethical standards set by his or her employer.

Well-defined and -communicated ethics policies are good for business. In addition to stating the responsibilities of all employees toward their customers and colleagues, companies often also assume the responsibility for being a positive influence in the community and being good corporate citizens.

Thank the students for their participation.

## **Session Outline**

### **Introduction**

- Greet the students.
- Introduce today's topic.
- Discuss examples of virtues in school.

### **Activity**

- Review models of written business codes.
- Conduct the Business That Values Ethics activity.
- Conduct the Policies in Practice Scenarios activity.

### **Summary and Review**

- Review the Key Terms for the session.
- Emphasize the importance and advantages of written ethics policies at work.
- Thank the students for their participation.

## **Extended Learning Opportunity**

Ask students the following questions:

- Would you prefer to work for a company that has written ethics policies or a company that has no written ethical standards? Why?
- What would you do if, as an employee, you saw or experienced a serious violation of your company's ethics policies?
  - a. forget it, no one is perfect.
  - b. quit your job.
  - c. report the problem to a manager or to human resource personnel.
  - d. report the problem to legal authorities (become a whistleblower).
  - e. call the company helpline.
- Would your answer to the above question be different if:
  - a. the violation was relatively minor?
  - b. the person who violated the policy was well liked?
  - c. the person could be fired?
  - d. the person was a manager?



## **Charts/Overhead Transparencies**

### **XYZ Company Ethics Policy**

1. There shall be no private use of company property or supplies.
2. Information about employees' personal lives, health, and work evaluations shall be kept confidential.
3. Employee expense accounts shall only reflect those costs related to company business.
4. Every employee shall have the right to a harassment-free environment.
5. Employees shall report any violations of the company's ethics policies.

### **Green's Grocery Core Values**

#### **Mission Statement:**

At Green's Grocery, our mission is to be known as an outstanding supermarket where people choose to shop and work. That is at the root of everything we do; it defines our common values, and guides how we perform as individuals and as a company.

#### **Core Values:**

- Integrity and respect: We treat each of our customers and each other with integrity and respect.
- Honesty: We are honest in everything we do.
- Customer focus: We try to understand and deliver what our customers want.
- Teamwork: We work together as team members.
- Excellence and accountability: We are responsible for excellence in all parts of our jobs.
- Learning: We continue to grow and develop as individuals and as a company.
- Community and social responsibility: We take an active role in making our community better.

## **Business That Values Ethics**

You, your sister, and brother are starting a business designing and selling T-shirts. Sara, your 18-year-old sister, is very artistic and eager to develop new and exciting designs for the shirts. Your older brother wants to be in charge of handling and delivery. You will be the manager and, in the beginning, the only full-time employee. Your responsibilities include buying supplies; hiring employees to print and package the T-shirts; approving designs; marketing; and managing all the finances.

This is a home-based business, and your parents have agreed to allow you to use the basement as an office and design center, and the garage to print the T-shirts and prepare them for delivery. With your parents' help, you have developed a sound business plan, and your grandparents have loaned you the money to get started.

You want this business to be creative, reliable, and offer a great product at a good value. Hopefully, you will earn enough money to repay your grandparents and to finance part of your college. You will begin selling the T-shirts to the high schools in your city. Your uncle, who owns a store that attracts teens, is willing to feature them at his business. If you're successful locally, you plan on selling your T-shirts on the Internet. Fortunately, you have the skills to build an effective website.

Using the knowledge you have acquired through your experiences with Junior Achievement to create and build your business, you realize there is much planning to be done before the business is a reality. One of the first challenges is to develop a company ethics policy. This policy will define how business is conducted, and will be communicated to employees and customers. It will guide employees in making right decisions as you build your reputation and your business.

You have the following task to complete today: Write an ethics policy or define the core values for your company.

The policy or definition of core values should be:

- Clear and understandable.
- Brief.
- Broad enough to apply to many situations.

Think about such things as use of company supplies and property, treatment of customers and fellow workers, work habits, creating a good work environment, and establishing a good reputation for your T-shirt company.

## **Policies in Practice**

**Is your policy practical?**

**Will it achieve your goal to create a successful, ethical business?**

As a group, read the following scenarios, and then answer the questions.

### **Scenario 1**

Your brother has decided to take a class in martial arts in the evenings. Now, he is one week behind in shipping T-shirts to your uncle's store. According to the policies of your business, do you find his behavior acceptable?

### **Scenario 2**

One of your customers was sent home from school because she wore one of your T-shirts that the vice-principal considered "inappropriate" for school. According to your business' policies, is your product acceptable?

### **Scenario 3**

You decided to donate 10 T-shirts for a local high school raffle. According to your business' policies, did you make the right decision?

### **Scenario 4**

A customer wants a refund because she decided she didn't like a T-Shirt she purchased six weeks ago. You agree to exchange it for another shirt, but not to refund her money. According to your business' policies, did you make the right decision?

### **Scenario 5**

Your new part-time employee is very hard to get along with, and likes to gossip about other employees and several of your customers. You decide to sit down and review your ethics policies with her. Are your ethics policies helpful in explaining your business' expectations?

### **Scenario 6**

The T-shirts your supplier shipped to you last month were inferior. Your customers are dissatisfied with the shirts that become very misshapen after they are laundered. You decide to remove the shirts from your stock, change suppliers, and give new shirts to those customers who registered a complaint. According to your business' policies, did you make the right decision?

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## Welcome to Junior Achievement's *Excellence through Ethics*

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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

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## 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.

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## Acknowledgements

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 Writers and Consultants**

Ron Ausmus, Integrity Associates

Susan Dilloway

Karen D. Harvey, Ed.D., Educational Writer and Diversity Curriculum Consultant

Insight Education Group

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Dave Somers, Owner of Brevity; Adjunct Professor, DeVry University

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## **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 \_\_\_\_\_