



Ethical Dimensions of Program Administration

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The responsibilities of directors and administrators vary depending on the type of program they direct and the auspices under which it operates. There can be little doubt, however, that directors and administrators are called upon to be Jacks and Jills of all trades. They typically manage relationships between their program and its governing board. In addition, they are accountable for the center's day-to-day operations including curriculum, financial management, relationships with families, purchasing needed supplies and equipment, and managing public relations. They make decisions about hiring and evaluate employees' performance on a regular basis; are expected to create, enforce, and revise policies as needed; ensure licensing and accreditation requirements are met; lead ongoing staff development at the center; and oversee and maintain the physical condition of the facility. They are also expected to support and nurture productive relationships among adults within and beyond the center and are often called upon to be a leader in the field of early childhood care and education at local, regional, and national levels (Morgan 2000).

Note: The terms *director* and *administrator* are often used interchangeably in the professional literature. They are used here to describe the individual or individuals who assume leadership and management responsibilities in early childhood programs.

It is clear that an administrator's days are very full, and each interaction has the potential to enhance or detract from the effective operation and reputation of the center and the professionals who work there. An appreciation for the wide variety of tasks directors are responsible for and the complexity of the relationships they manage led the NAEYC Ethics Forum to explore whether or not directors and administrators felt they needed a supplement to the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.

The NAEYC Code has proven to be a valuable asset for the early care and education field. However, to date it has not specifically addressed the unique needs of program directors and administrators. From the start, members of NAEYC's Ethics Forum believed that such a supplement would help directors and administrators act with confidence when faced with difficult decisions that make them puzzle about the right, fair, or just course of action. Forum members have been careful, however, not to put words into directors' mouths or make assumptions about their needs without asking practitioners themselves for information about their need for additional guidance. That is why we are posting the following survey. We hope to broaden the conversation and involve even more directors and administrators. We believe that the process of developing a supplement to the NAEYC Code (Feeney & Kipnis 1999) must model the collaborative process of involving all stakeholders that was used during the Code's initial development (for more on this, see "The NAEYC Code Is a Living Document" at <http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/200411/FreemanEthics.pdf>).

The NAEYC Governing Board approved the development of a Supplement to the Code of Ethical Conduct for Directors/Administrators at its November 2004 meeting. Following the Governing Board's approval of the revised Code of Ethical Conduct (tentatively to occur March 2005), the NAEYC president will appoint an ad hoc work group to engage with NAEYC staff in preparing a draft supplement, which will be submitted to the Board for review and approval. The supplement, like the supplement for adult educators, will give more focused guidance to administrators of early childhood programs as they consider the question "What would a good early childhood program director do?"

When early childhood education professionals work together to improve program quality and the professionalism of the field they can, jointly, ensure all young children can participate in quality programming that supports their healthy growth and development. We urge you to become part of this professional conversation by completing and mailing the survey below or by completing this same survey in the Online Communities section of the NAEYC Web site.

Complete the Survey

NAEYC members are invited to complete the Survey of Directors/Administrators: Considering a Supplement to the NAEYC Code of Ethics online by logging into the Members Only section of the NAEYC Web site (in Online Communities, Ethics Forum). Members and nonmembers can also print out and complete the survey **below** and mail it to:

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References

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Survey of Directors/Administrators Considering a Supplement to the NAEYC Code of Ethics*

1. Are you currently a director/administrator of an early childhood program? YES NO

If YES, how long have you been a director/administrator?

(circle appropriate response)

Less than 1 year 1-5 years 6-10 years 10+ years

If NO, have you EVER served as a director/administrator? YES NO

2. How familiar are you with the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct?

(check the most appropriate response)

- I've never heard of it
- I've heard of it but haven't had a chance to read it
- I've read it but have not had a chance to use it
- Our center uses it often

3. Based on my personal experiences and the situations I've had to address in my work I think it would be helpful to have ethical guidelines addressing directors'/administrators' particular roles and responsibilities.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

4. Consider the ethical situations you have encountered in your work as a program director or administrator. Have they clustered around the issues listed below? Are there other issues and concerns beyond the existing code that we have not yet considered?

ISSUES WITH ETHICAL DIMENSIONS THAT DIRECTORS HAVE REPORTED FACING FREQUENTLY:

- Enrollment
- Personnel
- Maintaining productive relationships with families.
- Allocation of resources
- Program leadership

* Adapted from Kaucher, E. 2003. On establishing a code of ethics for directors of early care and education programs. Unpublished masters thesis, Pacific Oaks College.

5. Consider the core values from the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct listed below. Are the six core values listed below sufficient? Do they adequately guide directors and program administrators? Do you believe one or more additional core values is/are needed to provide a firm foundation for a director's/administrator's work?

CORE VALUES THAT SERVE AS THE FOUNDATION FOR THE NAEYC CODE OF ETHICS**

- Appreciating childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle
- Basing our work with children on knowledge of child development
- Appreciating and supporting the close ties between the child and family
- Recognizing that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society
- Respecting the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
- Helping children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust, respect, and positive regard

**From NAEYC, *Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment: Guidelines for Responsible Behavior in Early Childhood Education*, Rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Author, 1998) Brochure.

YES, the existing Core Values are sufficient

NO, the existing Core Values are not sufficient

Please list additional Core Value(s) you believe are needed:

6. Have you faced additional kinds of situations with ethical dimensions? Please describe them.

7. Consider these dilemmas

There is a long waiting list for enrollment at your center. Many families have been waiting for more than six months. You get a call from the president of your board explaining that his son's family has just moved back to your community and that he would like you to enroll his three-year-old grandson in the center immediately. He tells you that he will make a generous donation to the fund for the new playground if you comply with this request.

Two staff members in your center have indicated their interest in the lead teacher position that just opened up in the four-year-old classroom. One has been a loyal staff member for over fifteen years but she has little formal training. She is nice to children but doesn't really understand how to provide appropriate curriculum. The other candidate has a degree in early childhood education and has worked at the center for less than two years. She relates well to the children and is very skilled in planning appropriate and creative curriculum.

Your center has a strict no-sugar policy. The Parents' Handbook makes it clear you expect birthdays and other special events be celebrated with healthy snacks. A mother who has been coming to the center for only two months and speaks little English arrives on her child's birthday with an expensive cake she purchased from the local bakery. You know the cake stretched her budget and represents her earnest hope that a festive birthday celebration will help her child enter the social mainstream of the class—he is having some difficulty making friends and fitting in.

How would you address one or more of the scenarios described above? What do you think a good director/administrator should do? What principles should guide his/her decision-making?

8. Would you be willing to review a draft supplement if/ when one is developed? If yes, be sure to include your name, address, and e-mail information.