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EDUC 6380  
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June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
Week 5 – Ethical Difficulties

**Review the AASA (American Association of School Administrators) Code of Ethics. Which of the ethical principles included in this code do you think would be most difficult for a school administrator to follow? Why?**

Most of the codes mentioned are pretty straightforward, such as the first one: the educational leader “Makes the education and well-being of students the fundamental value of all decision making” (“Code of ethics, par. 4, 2019). That seems fair enough. In fact, most of these codes seem like things that the average, ethical person should have no problem with, like number 10: “Honors all contracts until fulfillment, release or dissolution mutually agreed upon by all parties” (2019).

One does stand out, number seven: “Avoids using his/her position for personal gain through political, social, religious, economic or other influences” (2019). Sadly, this is one that has been abused by various leaders, in education and elsewhere many times. Ponzi schemes, for instance, are a mainstay here in Utah, and of all 50 states, they occur here most frequently. People who are in positions of authority often end up betraying that trust and become self-serving (Pugsley, 2019). I actually had a friend of our family who ended up doing the same thing to many of our friends and neighbors, so it isn’t just “bad people.” Many of these people start out as upstanding, trusted citizens with good intentions, but then temptations to use their influence in an unethical way come along, and not all are able to withstand.

As Spiderman’s Uncle Ben used to say, “With great power comes great responsibility.” Sometimes these unethical behaviors are for the perpetrator’s own benefit, but sometimes they justify it because “it’s for the children”. Consider the recent college admissions scandal, and its first sentencing, which showed this type of logic. Former Stanford Sailing Coach John Vandemoer (involved in accepting over \$500,000 in money for his assistance in the scheme) used this same flawed excuse. His defense attorneys argued that he ought to be treated leniently since he didn’t pocket any of the cash for himself, but instead gave it to the sailing program, paid for uniforms, etc. However, he still assisted in the illegal and unethical admission’s scheme, and that was clearly still unethical and illegal (Smith, 2019).

This sort of thing seems to be happening more and more, and I will have to do my best to self-check and also surround myself with others who “can trust, but verify.” Sad as it is, this happens even among some Utah schools, with American Preparatory Academy (APA) being a prime example of recent unethical behavior, wasting near half a million dollars recently in a dubious land project, while all of their campuses are leased on land owned by the school’s director and family (Jones & Pfaum, 2018). APA is by no means the only charter school to do this, with over \$223 million dollars (from 2014-2017) being embezzled, wasted, or mismanaged by charter schools across the country (“Charter school vulnerabilities”, p. 1, 2017). Clearly, this is no small issue, and it would behoove all of us to exercise constant vigilance in making sure we avoid anything of the sort.

#### **Sources:**

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