

C H A P T E R 6

Factors to Consider When Making Judgments About Controversial Issues

TOLERANCE FOR ZERO TOLERANCE

Throughout this book we have talked about leadership in the context of moral architecture. In the last chapter, we spoke directly about leadership bringing people together in a shared vision ripe with moral implications. We stressed that the truly successful administrator cannot long survive simply by trying to juggle competing interests. In this chapter, we examine ethical conundrums such as zero tolerance policies and the differential treatment of students as other sources of potential turbulence disrupting the administrator's dreams of smooth sailing.

Ethical issues surrounding special populations, school safety, hate speech, and related questions are addressed in this chapter in the context of building and sustaining moral architectures suitable for schools intent on preserving the Great Conversation. The inquiry in this chapter focuses attention on prescriptive morals (surface-level rules) that might successfully or unsuccessfully serve as a *covering aesthetic*, completing a school's or district's moral architecture.

In the end humans cannot get far without a set of morals at hand (Scanlon, 1998). Morals create the final shape of a moral architecture. Morals are lifted above the level of human whim and capriciousness or "might is right" thinking by the virtues and higher-order principles that ground detailed, prescriptive morality and define its failure as **immorality**. As noted previously, elevation in moral architecture depends on there being higher-order principles and virtues that provide criteria for adjudicating between conflicts of duty that are inevitable when decision making rests on surface-level rules alone.

These higher-order virtues may look like the feminist sense of bonding, Hume's social sympathy, or biologically grounded instincts for cooperation. Higher-order general principles may look something like Kant's, Rawls's, or Strike's recommendation to treat

humans as ends and never as means; Mills's, Bentham's, or Strike's recommendation to bring more pleasure into the world while minimizing displeasure; or Hobbes's and Deming's recommendation to drive out fear. In any case, effective moral architectures are sustained by something more than a set of surface-level rules, each reflecting the same moral force and upheld by the same commitment to power. Effective moral architectures are elevated and deserving of awe and reverence only to the extent that the higher-order principles, ideals, and virtues are truly honored by an overwhelming majority of stakeholders.

The educational leader must help identify and articulate these virtues and higher-order principles to secure buy-in from all stakeholders. This must be done in advance so that when the inevitable conflict of duty arises there is some **intersubjective agreement** between stakeholders, making possible a resolution of differences based on something more than **psychological egoism**. The search for intersubjective agreement requires leaders to bring people together to be largely of one mind, at least in matters of just and mutual regard.

Especially in the case of public or institutional morality, advocates of utilitarianism, rule utilitarianism, and reflective equilibrium often press their strongest arguments on grounds that their respective theories give general form to all surface-level rules covering a moral architecture. When conflict arises at the surface level—that is, the aesthetic skin of the moral architecture—sturdy and lofty scaffolding makes deference to virtue or higher-order principles more relevant in resolving conflict than the exertion of force by one person or group against others. See the box below.

The Dimensions of a Moral Architectural Model

The Covering Aesthetic of Moral Architecture

The prohibitions and prescriptions that can be fairly applied in complex situations (requires collaboration between those of great pragmatic sense and those of great aesthetic sense).

The Scaffolding of Moral Architecture

The structure creating a hierarchy with more general principles (requires collaboration between those who have an uncommon sense of the human condition and those with an eye to rigor and soundness of thinking)

The Moral Foundation of Moral Architecture

Virtues and sympathies that frame and animate moral behavior (requires those who are scientifically minded working in close collaboration with those who most deeply have empathy for the phenomenology of human moral experience)

Plato identified the highest forms of truth, beauty, and justice with one another. Certainly there seems to be something intuitively satisfying about the notion that whatever is just must be true in some sense and that whatever is true must be just in some sense. After all, how often do people refer to divine harmony of some sort or the idea that “what goes

around comes around”? Pushing the Platonic intuition a bit further, it is also appealing to think that genuine truth and justice possess an important and unique beauty. Without fear of becoming too reckless with metaphor and analogy, it seems reasonable to assert that moral architecture, like any other architecture, is always something of a work of art. Thus, the moral architectures of schools and districts must be developed and maintained at least in part by moral artists. By the term *moral artists* we mean people who know how to create novel structure out of the raw material of rules, principles, and raw intuitions without distorting the functionality of the overall structure. In short, there is much that goes into building and sustaining serviceable moral architecture. One need not be a **metaphysically** minded Platonist to appreciate the idea that there is indeed something beautiful about truly serviceable moral architectures.

Taken together—foundation, scaffolding, and skin—an effective moral architecture should reflect the diverse talents and skills of school and district communities to answer questions such as “Who do we want to be as members of this community?” This answer requires attention to more mundane and specific questions, such as “Whom do we each owe?” “What is it we owe to those to whom we have a debt?” “How do we know when we have successfully lived up at least minimally to our commitments toward self and others?” “How should we express concern and compassion for one another as individuals and as collectives?” “What conventions do we wish to encourage and discourage, and to what lengths will we go to informally institutionalize such things?” and “What should we tolerate in ourselves and others, and what do we find intolerable in ourselves and others?” See Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Key Questions in Building Comprehensive Moral Architecture: Whom Do We Want to Be Members of This Community?

To whom do we have a moral responsibility in the school?	Which ethical principles do we want to promote?
What do we owe to one another?	What ideas, attitudes, and behaviors will we tolerate?
How do we know when we have met our minimal moral duties to one another?	How do we determine which ideas, attitudes, and behaviors we will not tolerate?
What virtues do we wish to encourage?	How will we nurture freedom as well as fairness?
How will we nurture a caring community?	When is it obvious that the moral architecture of a school or district is ill suited to educational purpose?
<p>Suggestion: As you think about these questions, compare your answers with those of another person with whom you naturally sense a sort of shared bondedness and then again with someone whom you suspect sees community very differently from you. How and why do your answers overlap and diverge in each case? Can building shared moral architecture accommodate diversity of perspective? To what extent does shared moral architecture protect diversity of perspective?</p>	

Moral scaffolding and foundation have received much attention throughout this book. However, even the most cursory review of Chapter 2 reveals that moral theorists in general recognize the imperative that **ought implies can** must guide every attempt to implement our moral theorizing. This means that erudite and lofty principles (scaffolding and foundation) that lead to good wishes but can never be fully realized through surface-level rules and aesthetics offer no guidance to leaders when guidance is what is most needed. So, it is time now to consider a bit more reflectively some of the characteristic surface-level rules common in many schools today. We do this in order to reflect on the extent to which such surface-level rules and aesthetics (virtues and courtesies) support or weaken the ideals of a robust and functional moral architecture.

Zero tolerance prohibitions seem as good as any other place to begin to reflect on the surface-level rules currently in fashion in many schools and their commensurability with the ambitions of administrators to build and sustain lofty moral architectures throughout schools and districts. Zero tolerance policies are becoming ubiquitous as means for encouraging and discouraging certain types of behaviors. (See Case Study A.2 in Appendix A.)

Bringing weapons, poisons, and hallucinogenic drugs to school should surely be discouraged. Bullying, beating, and mauling classmates are the sorts of things all are likely to agree are bad things and to be eliminated from school and district terrain. Regardless of the communities involved or the diversity and nature of supportive moral architectures, disgust toward these sorts of behavior is probably a near universal among professionals most responsible for developing institutional moral architecture. In light of the presumed offensiveness of such behavior, is it reasonable to assume that a one-size-fits-all set of prohibitions to end such behaviors is the right way to go?

What seems simple enough on the surface can prove a bit more problematic in practice when people examine these surface policies or rules in light of their school's or district's normal operations (Shealy, 2006). Here in particular, unwavering mandates perhaps should give way to the guidance of pragmatists and the more artistically minded in moral matters. Not only pragmatists but most other theorists discussed in Chapter 2 are likely to balk at the unbending insensitivity that accompanies many zero tolerance policies. Zero tolerance's obsession with *behavior* instead of *actions* often leads to uncompromising stances. At such times administrators and other responsible stakeholders may believe that the constraints imposed by zero tolerance policies leave those charged with implementation feeling guilty at times for having to impose what seem to be irrationally harsh penalties in a given context. Other stakeholders may feel justifiably irate at the imposition of a zero tolerance policy in cases where mitigating circumstances are clearly evident. In the end, nearly everyone associated with implementation of zero tolerance policies will feel uncomfortable much of the time.

In a televised *Dateline* episode airing in 1996, John Stossel was aggrieved at the fact that an honor student and Eagle Scout with a congressional appointment to West Point was being expelled from school just days before graduation for violating the district's zero tolerance policy with regard to weapon possession. The student's expulsion would mean that he would not be admitted to the nation's military academy at West Point. The district superintendent looked into the camera and explained, "Zero tolerance means zero tolerance! If people are not happy with my administration of the rule, then they need to go to the school board and get the school policy changed." At first glance the superintendent's position

seems somewhat reasonable. No one wants weapons in the school. So why were people so disturbed by this consistent disciplinary action?

A REALITY CHECK

The authors imply that school leaders sometimes need to be artistic as well as pragmatic when it comes to wording statements or creating documents related to moral matters. Is it really possible to say, "Drugs, firearms, and gang identifiers are not allowed on campus under any circumstance"? What does that mean about the wearing of yarmulkes, rosaries, and the like? What does it mean about carrying scissors or knitting kits with needles in them? Is Midol akin to crack? What can be done, if anything, to create an aesthetic covering the kinds of actions and only the actions all agree are truly inappropriate in the schools?

If the student had brought to school an AK-47, surely people would have sided with the superintendent. Most probably, they would have sided with the superintendent if the weapon had been a pistol, a straight razor, a switchblade, or some other obvious tool of aggression. The student had indeed brought a knife to school, but not just any knife. The student dressed late the morning of the incident. In addition to proudly wearing his Eagle Scout shirt, he had quickly slipped into the same jeans he had worn to an Eagle Scout meeting the night before. In those jeans he had his Eagle Scout pocket knife. Imagine. Here is an Eagle Scout wearing a variation of his Eagle Scout uniform and having his Eagle Scout pocket knife still in his pocket. This is a clear and present danger, wouldn't you agree?

A school police officer noticed the bulge in the student's pocket and asked him to empty his pockets, whereupon the knife was discovered. The process of enforcement rolled downhill like a snowball gaining speed and with no way to stop. This model student and Eagle Scout was expelled, and with the expulsion his hopes for West Point were ended by the zero tolerance rule. Certainly the student, and maybe even the nation, has lost much here because the young man may have become an exemplary military officer. What is wrong here?

Quite possibly every moral theorist you have read about in this text, with the remote and possible exception of Jeremy Bentham, would agree with Stossel's exasperated, "Give me a break!" Here we have an administrator who can apparently see no further than an insensitively managed regulation. His apparent approach to leadership is based on surface rules alone. He seemingly has given little thought to what his school stands for or what moral architecture should sustain the kind of community he is trying to lead. He is adeptly covering his own flanks, but he is doing little else of merit for the school, society, this student, or any student for that matter. If students see that administrators have little ability to distinguish an innocent mistake from malicious behavior, then what respect are they likely to have for the administrator or his directives?

Admittedly, a pocket knife in the hands of a gang member is *prima facie* a weapon of aggression. But as any fan of Robert Ludlum, Tom Clancy, Stephen Coonts, or another mystery or adventure novelists knows, anything can be a lethal weapon in the wrong hands. Pencils, cafeteria utensils, or a lipstick container can be used to murder another person. In

short, each *can be* a weapon of aggression. And in sharp contrast, a knife in the hand of a surgeon can be life saving, a very good thing indeed. Maybe, just maybe, a knife in the hands of an Eagle Scout who is also an exceptional student with a record of meritorious behavior may be a good thing. At the very least, a knife in his pocket is probably benign. Where is it truly reasonable to draw a line of demarcation?

Pragmatists will undoubtedly be the first to urge reflection on the immediate context when advising where to draw lines of demarcation between the permissible and the impermissible. The details of intent and context must be considered because each situation is unique. Other moral theorists will urge reflection on the grounding principles of the school district's moral architecture. Their point will be to inquire into how this or that surface-level moral rule advances the cause of human moral experience generally, realizing in practice what conceivably ought to be done.

In the previous illustration, John Stossel explained, the district superintendent knew of the Eagle Scout's commendable academic and behavioral record. If the administrator knew all this, then how could he ignore it when he upheld a decision to expel the boy? Does the administrator's action suggest a flat moral architecture where *transient* surface-level rules dictate every decision rather than some higher-order commitment to human betterment?

QUESTIONING THE AUTHORS



The authors refer to transient, surface-level rules. How can leaders help staff and students distinguish between practical rules for school operation and ethical principles for school and life? Does confusing the two types of rules flatten or elevate a district or school's moral architecture?

The superintendent's answer was to insist that if he made an exception for one student, he would have to make exceptions for others. In other words, this administrator either confused fairness with the principle of equality or believes that equality of treatment trumps fairness. (One can only imagine his thoughts about affirmative action, special appropriations for special education students, etc.)

Surely there is nothing conspicuously errant about making similar decisions *in similar circumstances*. But determining similarity of circumstance is often a challenge, one no morally sensitive administrator has a right to avoid.

Think here of the analogy to common law. In common law each case is decided in light of the last case most like the present case. The task of lawyers is to identify past cases most similar to that of their clients and with an outcome favorable to the client. The court then must decide which precedent truly seems to be seamlessly binding between past and present circumstance. The task can be quite daunting at times, but such practices of precedential thinking and adjudicative action have served the courts well over the centuries. In short, similar thinking in the context of similar circumstances may serve well in the

complexity of school operations, and when the circumstances differ those responsible for adjudicating such matters must make appropriate adjustments.

In summary, the Eagle Scout example shows that the initial zero tolerance rule is too narrow and crude to be effective in developing a robust moral architecture for serving the school and district communities. School authorities need rules sufficiently complex in order to be universally and *fairly* applied in a variety of situations. If the task is to deprive thugs or irresponsible people of tools to be used as weapons, then there must be evidence of the tool's *prima facie* use as a weapon and the culprit's disposition to use it in a careless or malevolent manner. The task itself is justified not simply by some surface-level rule in place but more generally by such deeper principles as the Hobbesian or Deming principle of driving out fear, the utilitarian principle of maximizing pleasure, universalist convictions to optimize cooperation and collaboration, and so on.

An administrator who enforces a rule while dismissing all contextually relevant and mitigating circumstances is creating a "might makes right" moral ambiance (Searle, 1995). Rather than developing an elevated moral architecture of principle, he may well be nurturing the seeds of bullying. That is, the message he is role modeling may be that when you have the power—the juice, as kids like to say—you get to do things your way. In the end, this sort of thinking is far more compatible with the way gang members and fascists think than the thinking of effective school administrators concerned with building a moral architecture sustaining the Great Conversation over the long run.

Press accounts have weakened school and judicial reliance on zero tolerance policies in some parts of the country over the last few years, but in other areas of the country they are as prevalent as ever. In Florida 10 years ago there was a famously reported case of a 5-year-old boy expelled from kindergarten on grounds of sexual harassment for kissing girls. (The authors each remember such a boy in the kindergartens they attended decades ago!) And there was also a widely reported case of a teenage girl expelled for sharing an over-the-counter analgesic with another girl suffering severe menstrual pain. Moral architectures that are unable to accommodate childhood innocence or compassionate sharing cannot do much to prepare students for shared participation in either the Great Conversation or democratic processes. These sorts of zero tolerance policies are an affront to student moral development inasmuch as they mitigate against the search for higher-order moral principles and virtues that make moral architectures robust.

An administrator who governs solely by surface-level rules without reference to an overarching moral architecture shows no understanding of or tolerance for the individuality of circumstance or the uniqueness of persons (Zagzebski, 2001). Such displays of intolerance are unlikely to prepare students for collaborative participation in democratic communities. Such environments are more likely to create an us-against-them instinct for survival. For example, imagine an administrator who hates gays and lesbians. Imagine how such an administrator might apply rules limiting affectionate behavior on campus. Zero tolerance could easily become an excuse for hidden bigotry. Imagine that district rules then change in a direction more favorable toward affectionate behavior on campus. The administrator will reliably abide by the new rules, just as he did for the previous rules. This is because for him the rules are all that matter, not the underpinning structural sympathies, virtues, and principles. However, if the administrator was homophobic before, will anyone be fooled by

his adherence to the new rules? His attitude of intolerance will still probably be evident. His moral leadership will remain apparent and unchanged regardless of his compliance with any shift in rules. Moreover, given more latitude to interpret the appropriateness of certain behavior, he will probably shed the responsibility given him, as the unempowered may prudently fear, and instead take the opportunity to vent his **chauvinism**. In any case, the point is that regardless of the rules, prejudice or bigoted authorities will wreak havoc on a community's moral architecture, lowering its allure in the eyes of stakeholders.

QUESTIONING THE AUTHORS



The examples the authors give seem to imply that there is an important contrast between being ethical and reflective on one hand and being unthinking and unethical on the other. Is this the case? How might a reflective disposition help an administrator be ethical? How might a commitment to stable rules help an administrator be ethical?

No set of prohibitions can rid communities of the problem of cowardly scoundrels in positions of power. If the moral architecture of the school or district is to include tolerance toward gays and other groups of students such as religious fundamentalists, Green Party advocates, and so on, then attention must be given to more than just the strict adherence to rules. The moral architecture must manifest an appropriate ambiance or moral ecology (Goodlad, 2004). The feel of the place must be filled with honor and reciprocal respect.

Schools cannot be places of character formation and democratic understanding if they are situated in a moral architecture without a solid foundation, scaffolding, and consistently derived, surface-level moral rules. Wishful thinking and a smorgasbord of disparate rules expressing sheer administrative power will never prepare students for the responsibilities of democracy, citizenship, parenting, and so on. An important schooling function in democratic societies is that students learn what it means to live within a moral architecture conducive to shared community. In addition, schools committed to fostering the Great Conversation must be similarly predisposed to developing and sustaining inclusive and respectful communities free of even transient **rudeness** and devoted to the search for and sharing of human understanding. School and district moral architectures expressive only of social power can neither teach nor model necessary democratic commitments and sensibilities.

Strength of leadership need not be associated with despotic practice. Quite the contrary may well be true: Strength of leadership focuses not so much on control as on the development of autonomy throughout the organization (Mangin, 2007). The truest strength of leadership is exhibited through the ongoing construction of an environment where reflection, caring, freedom, and fairness are honored and where the stifling effect of "might makes right," "policy is policy," and "make the easy choice" management is minimized or eliminated (Noddings, 1992).

RACISM AND HATE SPEECH: FRAGMENTS OF SCHOOL AND DISTRICT CULTURE

In the last section, zero tolerance policies are shown to inhibit effective educational leadership and at times possibly destroy moral architecture. The cause of such policies' inhibitory character was shown to be an unyielding insensitivity to context and to the individuality of person. The unyielding rigidity of zero tolerance policies should not be defended strongly on grounds of consistency and **equality** unless one is willing to elevate equality as a moral principle above fairness. No one major theorist seems willing to do that. It is generally acknowledged from Aristotle to R. S. Peters (1983) that treating everyone equally may be the most unfair consequence that can result from any policy. For example, not everyone should be inoculated against a minor chronic disease if there is good reason to believe some people may be fatally allergic to the vaccine.

Educational policies such as **disparate impact** considerations and the **Equal Access Act** often require disproportionate expenditures of resources on students with special needs. It would generally be considered *unfair* to insist that an equal dollar amount be spent on each student regardless of special needs and circumstances. Fairness and equality have never been equated with one another in moral theory. The closest the two concepts come to one another may be captured in Aristotle's (1958) recommendation that equals should be treated equally and unequals unequally. More pointedly, in the educational context some students may need unequal resources in order to secure the same access to educational success as most other students. The acknowledgment that fairness may demand a differential treatment of students under varying circumstances brings us back full circle to the problem with zero tolerance policies. How are administrators and policy makers to tell under what conditions differential treatment is fair? This is certainly a problem, and the problem is only worsened by one-size-fits-all planning.

The problem of differential treatment of others often threatens the stability of an organization's moral architecture when leaders fail to recognize the difference between surface-level rules (the aesthetic covering) and the deeper principles, virtues, and sensitivities (the foundational and structural values) that make for a more robust and resilient environment. When there is good reason for differential treatment of individuals, differential treatment is in order. When there is no good reason for differential treatment, such treatment would be arbitrary, capricious, and unfair.

Some, if not all, advocates of almost every moral theory discussed in Chapter 2 would find racism and hate speech horrific. In every moral theory, there are grounds for despising racism and hate speech. There is good reason to conclude that there should be no tolerance for either racism or hate speech in a nation's schools. Does this settle everything a school leader needs to know about racism and hate speech? Probably not.

In the daily operations of school districts, specific rules applying penalties and punishments must be administered to ensure awareness of and respect for prohibitions against racism and hate speech. This is where the realities of leading touch the realities of living in a complex world. Consider the matter of hate speech. It is reasonable to conclude that it is something to be intolerant of, but can hate speech always be so easily identified?

CLARIFYING THE CONCEPT

Some discussions are said to be merely about matters of semantics, and others are said to be about important meanings. Are there important differences between hate speech, racist remarks, offensive names, and out-of-date vocabulary? If so, how should a school deal with these differences in surface-level rules and its overall moral architecture? Considering consequences of implementation, how do “ought implies can” considerations matter here?

The “*n*-word” is a common example of a word reflective of hate-filled attitudes and denigration of people because of their race. Yet some young people embrace the name when used by one another within their own culture or racial group. What about the words *honkey* and *cracker*? Are those as much a part of hate speech as the “*n*-word”? How does a community of morally sensitive people decide? What about *fatty*, *four-eyes*, *ho*, and so on? How do we know where to draw the line? Again, the difficulty of the problem is no excuse for avoiding the challenge. Hate speech should be eliminated from the nation’s schools, and somehow as a democratic community devoted to respecting the rights of individuals stakeholders must figure out where to draw lines and when and how to amend lines already drawn.

Finally, at what point do hate speech and innocent insensitivity part ways? For example, there is all the difference in the world between a student who turns to a classmate and accuses, “*You* people usually . . .” and a student of conspicuous good will and earnestness who clumsily and unwittingly asks, “Well, why do you people always . . .?” In the first case, the student may be presumed to be speaking hatefully even though no “hate words” are used. Should such deliberate insensitivity be considered so offensive as to deserve punishment usually reserved for the deliberate use of hate words? That is, should students who derogatively use the “*n*-word” and *cracker* be treated the same way as people who sneer “*You* people . . .” in an open discussion? And should people who sneer “*You* people . . .” be treated the same or differently from others of presumed good will who clumsily ask or say, “*You* people . . .”?

It is one thing to find across the board or at least postulate that moral theory condemns hate speech. But it is an altogether different affair to craft enforceable rules that are consistent with the direction intended by the moral architecture of the school. The difficulty of addressing hate speech should not entice administrators to adopt a relativistic stance, make simplistic but politically correct decisions, or acquiesce in the blind application of punishments to every technically described episode of hate speech. Administrative moral responsibility requires more. Defining that further responsibility is not at all easy, however. There certainly are no algorithms at this level of moral discourse to crank out truth at every turn. Nonetheless, there must be punishments for acts of hate speech, but both punishments and accurate identification of hate speech violations must be adept. The management of punishment for hate speech violations must be deftly handled with an eye to underlying principles, virtues, and sensitivities to be exhibited and modeled in the context of the encompassing moral architecture. Again, there is no fail-safe system of moral management, but that is no excuse for management to be less than vigilant and morally alert to the challenge. There may be no fail-safe prescription for success when addressing matters of hate

speech, but in schools that successfully meet the challenge, the covering aesthetic of the moral architecture is, as Plato would predict, evident as a thing of beauty. And again, as it is easy to imagine what Plato might predict, schools that fail to meet the challenge of tempering hate speech are conspicuously ugly institutions. Their failure is no secret; their failure in this regard cannot be hidden, no matter how oppressive the exercise of administrative power.

PROVIDING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT: AT WHAT COST?

Other surface-level moral rules that make up the covering aesthetic or skin of school moral architectures address matters of student and staff physical and psychological safety. It is routinely assumed that if children do not feel safe at school, they cannot learn (Simmons & Black, 1991). And if staff feel unsafe, they cannot teach or perform very well other professional duties.

Rules, separated from some coherent and comprehensive moral architecture, are unlikely to relieve students and staff of the need for what some feminist theorists describe as communal cooperation and care. Students and staff feel most secure not because police, metal detectors, and an elaborate system of rules and punishments are in place but because there is a sense of community, making such protections unnecessary or at best an incidental distraction. There is a significant difference between leadership that focuses on the apparatus of control and leadership that focuses on the development of community. In the former case, the moral architecture is deflated and diminished in importance by the apparatus of control and its vigilant deployment. In the latter case, the apparatus of control may still be necessary, but its presence is deliberately subsumed under a more focused concern for the building of a genuine sense of community.

A genuine sense of community, that exemplar of Platonic beauty and feminist ideal, is one in which the moral architecture is built on honor, bondedness, and shared appreciation for higher-order moral principles and virtues. Schools that serve as zones of safety for student learning and teaching excellence are most evident in schools and districts with elevated moral architectures. Schools with minimal moral architecture feebly try to provide some modest safety through the deployment of a showy array of fortifications and enforcement strategies. In some schools there is so much focus on safety from student aggression that learning resources may be squandered and children's opportunities to learn diminished (Gellman & Delucia-Waak, 2006).

One reason for administrative overemphasis on fortification and enforcement where it does occur may be administrative fear of litigation. Vulnerability to litigation is an ever-present distraction to school administrators today. In today's litigious society fear of liability is hardly unreasonable, but it should be minimized—along with other fears—in a district that has a strong and vital moral architecture. Conversely, no administrator should ever be reckless, inviting litigation. But a conscientious administrator cannot simply focus on avoiding litigation. Her range of responsibilities is far greater. If she focuses simply on avoiding litigation, the school or district's architecture will flatten and become little more than a hodgepodge of rules and consequences. Administrators serve their constituencies best by addressing the entire range of safety, support, and moral architecture that makes learning and creative exploration central to the school and district social milieu.

Ongoing and ineffective management of student aggression is a sign that the school has an ineffectual moral architecture. The addition of more campus police, metal detectors, cameras, and so on serves only as a stopgap measure, slowing encroaching assaults on safety. Such stopgap measures are no solution to what is clearly a more endemic problem. They may be necessary in times of transition, but they do not solve safety problems in the long run. The competent administrator implements such measures as needed but only to the extent that they are necessary. In the face of problems with student aggression, schools and districts must be careful to avoid role modeling anything leading students to think that all social interactions revolve around the exercise of force and might. Schools should be institutional role models (Gardner, 1991) not of coercion and oppression but rather of democratic responsiveness fostering participation in the Great Conversation. In addition to advancing conditions conducive to effective administration, such institutional role modeling is the only plausible way schools and districts can prepare students for the responsibilities of genuine participation in democratic structures as adults.

A PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENT

Assume that you are a new principal in a school with serious safety problems and a deficient moral architecture. Consequently, as one might imagine, there is little emphasis on the Great Conversation. What steps would you take to address these matters? Describe your priorities for addressing these concerns. Whose support would you need in order to create a more functional moral architecture fostering inclusive participation in the Conversation?

Onsite administrators know that details (the skin of moral architecture) get all the attention in daily practice, and this is as it should be. But what daily attention to detailed prescriptions and prohibitions ultimately reveal is how effective a school or a district is in moving forward in its primary mission. That primary mission of course is to create in students and staff a universal inclination to participate in the Great Conversation for the rest of their lives, one way or another.

PARTICIPATION IN THE GREAT CONVERSATION OF HUMANKIND

Preparing students to participate in the larger communities that surround them may legitimately lead to encouraging patriotism as part of the *schooling* function. But as our world grows ever smaller, the relevant communities of which students should all see themselves grow ever larger. Consequently, it is an inherent part of the *educational* function of schools to open students' eyes to the world's various nations, cultures, demographics, physical characteristics, and immigration patterns. It is also part of the educational function of the schools to show students the world's sciences, laws, humanities, and arts. When schools effectively invite students into participation in the Great Conversation, they lead students in the direction of mutual respect for one another, a passion for truth, and a more general understanding of the four corners of educational purpose.

A REFLECTIVE BREAK

What are the educational and ethical responsibilities of a principal who hears that one of her teachers is dogmatically and one-sidedly discussing economic, political, and historical ideas and even **grading** on students' grasp of the teacher's opinions? How should she carry these responsibilities out?

Ever present in the conscientious administrator's mind is the fact that in carrying out noneducational schooling duties the school is always at risk of becoming a tool by which a segment of society's power brokers hope to gain control over the future. In every historical or sociological account of demagoguery, scholars and social scientists make explicit the intent of malevolently and benevolently intentioned demagogues to control society by gaining control over the schools and the media. It is the duty of every educator but especially of administrators to never serve as an extension of any group currently in or seeking disproportionate power. As Paulo Freire (1998) observes, schools—though they cannot be neutral—should not capitulate to the ideological and economic orientations of the powerful, regardless of whether they are leftist or rightist dogmatists. When schools promote ideologies and dogmas, they abandon their duty to develop in students the skills, attitudes, and dispositions of critical assessment and tarnish students' developing passion for inquiry and truth.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

It has not been our custom throughout this book to make explicit recommendations about surface-level rules of application. So if you were hoping that in this chapter we might break from that pattern, you are undoubtedly disappointed. Nonetheless, we do hope we have made you aware of some very important considerations worthy of reflection when deciding what prescriptions and prohibitions might best fill out your school's or district's evolving moral architecture. Certainly, keeping in mind that moral architectures for *educational* purposes must always reflect diversity and intellectual ideals proper to the Conversation is a good place to start every time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Martin Luther King Jr. demonstrated the importance of tolerance and moral intolerance. On moral grounds, he was unrelentingly intolerant of racism. Can you think of an issue today that ought to prompt an administrator into intolerance? Once the line is drawn separating grounds for intolerance from tolerance, courage becomes a necessary moral virtue for effective educational leadership. Explain why this is so.

2. Delineate a list of priorities and responsibilities you think an effective administrator ought to address. Explain the grounds that you think justify the hierarchy you have created.
3. The administrator owes a moral duty to society in general. She also owes a duty to students, teachers, and professional staff, other employees, parents, the school board, fellow administrators, the law, the academic disciplines taught at the school, the community (national, state, and local), and the tradition of the Great Conversation. Prioritize with appropriate individual weightings this list of stakeholders as best you can. Explain your reasons for the assigned priorities.

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 6.1. The Teachers Gone Wild Blog

As Ms. Alvarez walked into Superintendent Goldstein's office, she observed him holding his head in both hands and looking down at a sheet on his desk. He didn't even look up when she entered and approached his desk. She asked whether he was feeling okay or whether there was some problem. Goldstein looked up and then finally spoke: "You have to ask Jenkins to resign, or else I will suspend him." The superintendent lamented, "It's difficult. As you and I both know, Jenkins has been through this sort of thing once before."

In the previous incident Goldstein referred to, Jenkins was accused by two senior girls of attempting to kiss them at a post-graduation party, and a third girl claimed he fondled her. He was arrested and formally charged with sexual assault the next day.

As things turned out, the girls recanted their fabricated stories when they realized the damage about to befall Mr. Jenkins. One girl admitted instigating the story with her friends after Mr. Jenkins rebuffed her advance that evening. All charges were dropped, but Mr. Jenkins had already been pressured into resigning his position at the school where he was then teaching.

A string of questions shot through Ms. Alvarez's mind as she asked, "So, what has happened this time?" (The Mr. Jenkins she knew was a model teacher and citizen. He was an excellent biology instructor and a contributing member to the "Volunteer After School Learning Community.")

Mr. Goldstein said a blogger had created a site called "Educators Gone Wild" to warn parents and students of sexual predators in education. On the blog, one of the stories was about Mr. Jenkins and the earlier accusations. Parents and school board members were pressuring Mr. Goldstein to dismiss Jenkins. The fact that the previous charges were dropped and the accusers recanted their stories was of little interest to anyone. And these developments were not mentioned on the blog. The superintendent explained that the district could not afford that sort of publicity. "It's unfortunate," he claimed, "but Mr. Jenkins must go. As his principal I want you to tell him his contract next year will not be renewed, but if he resigns we will give him the most favorable recommendations we can. I am sorry to place this burden on you." Assuming you are Principal Alvarez, what other alternatives might you imagine pursuing to preserve and enrich the integrity of what you believe to be the district's moral architecture when addressing this case?

Case Study 6.2. The Terrors of Bluegrass High School

You are the new principal at Bluegrass High School. You have been told by the former principal, the superintendent, and several board members that your job will be a breeze as long as the girls' basketball team continues doing well. This should be no problem because most of the girls in the first string are returning seniors from last year's state championship team. Moreover, many of the girls' parents are board members or otherwise prominent members of the community. All seems right with the world—at least on the surface. Within the school community itself, the team is colloquially called the Divine Diablos, divine on the court and diabolical everywhere else.

Having to deal with a team of arrogant bullies was one thing; now, however, photographs of the players in various suggestive poses wearing articles of their team uniforms showed up on the Internet. Subsequent stories in local and major newspapers were creating large-scale public scandal for both the school and the district. You get a phone call at home from the school board president. He tells you that his call is off the record and asks you not to mention it to anyone, including the superintendent. He advises you that the board expects you to act quickly, quietly, and—most importantly—charitably in dealing with the situation. His final words are, “Think of them as your own daughters.”

What options would you consider in addressing the behavior of the team members? What might this situation say about the school's and district's moral architecture? If you remained at Bluegrass High School beyond the current school year, what priorities and plans would you work toward in future years?

ACTIVITY

Activity 6.1

To get an idea of what the skin of a moral architecture looks like and consider how it can be shaped, adopt a courtesy that you don't currently use and keep a journal for a month indicating how the new courtesy has affected your world. For example, if you overlook thanking bus persons or waiters for filling your glass or removing your plate, make it a point to make eye contact when they do, smile, and thank them. Or if you do not now write thank you notes for little courtesies extended toward you, begin doing so. For this activity, don't use e-mails. Instead, use formal thank you cards and personal handwriting to show not only your appreciation for the courtesy but your respect for the other person. This may seem like a small matter, but try it and see how those receiving the cards respond to you and act toward you in the future. This is a surprisingly effective way of distinguishing yourself from the crowd as a person who appreciates others and what they do. There are a host of courtesies to choose from, and most of us overlook one or another of them. Note in your journal the accumulating things you notice as this new courtesy becomes habitual in your life. Courtesies are but one small element in the skin of a moral architecture, but this exercise might draw your attention to how small things change an environment. Also, take notice of the courtesy you chose. It may reflect something of your foundation or structural sense of how the moral world should be.

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