Introduction to Moral Dimensions

What are moral dimensions?

The moral dimensions of education are a philosophy of education. One of the original educators behind this movement, called An Agenda for Education in a Democracy, was John Goodlad of the UCLA School of Education. He developed a nationwide network of schools of education and school districts that adopted this philosophy of education called the National Network for Educational Renewal.

Several local school districts, Provo, Nebo, Alpine, Wasatch, and Jordan joined BYU in a partnership several years ago and used this philosophy to develop the mission statements of their district which still guide these districts today. Over the years there have been several collaborative efforts to understand the 4 major elements and what they look like in an effective school district.

The moral dimensions are:

- Enculturating the youth in a social and political democracy
- Providing equal access to knowledge for all
- Practicing nurturing pedagogy
- Ensuring responsible stewardship for our schools

What do these mean? –From The University of Nebraska at Omaha, The University Center for Innovation in the Arts

DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION:

MORAL DIMENSIONS OF TEACHING

The Mission of Teacher Education in a Center of Pedagogy Geared to the Mission of Schooling in a Democratic Society.

From Dr. John Goodlad, National Network for Educational Renewal
Providing Equal Access to Knowledge for all Children

Providing equal access to knowledge and opportunity to learn for all students (children and youth) in society regardless of ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic factors, or learning abilities.

- All students can learn. Equity of opportunity is essential.
- We must remove barriers to learning. Access to knowledge is critical.
- We must provide kids with essential skills for learning.
- Students must learn "how" to learn as well as what they need to learn.
- We must confront issues such as gender, minority, and labeling kids.
- Students must not only acquire knowledge/information but learn how to use it.

Engaging in a Nurturing Pedagogy

Practicing a nurturing pedagogy (the art and science of teaching) to provide the support, caring and encouragement to all students for their development in both knowledge and behavior skills and to build relationships that enhance learning.

- We must create a caring environment and community where children can learn.
- We must have respect for what kids know and help them share what they know.
- Caring involves having high expectations for all students.
- It is essential that we make connections to the larger world outside schools.
Enculturating the Young in a Social and Political Democracy

Teaching and modeling for young people what it means to live productively in a democratic society. Teaching students to be full participants in a democracy and to understand the rights, rules, and responsibilities of an educated citizen.

- We need to insure that democracy remains alive and real.
- Democracy must be an "active construct." We must create personal experiences within schools which prepare kids for democracy.
- Citizenship skills must be taught and practiced.
- It is important that schools model democratic processes.
- We must instill the attributes which are essential for a democracy to function effectively.
- Knowing our history is important.
- Understanding the key connection between knowledge and freedom.

Ensuring Responsible Stewardship for Schools and Education

Acting as responsible stewards of education and the well being of our communities and our lives. Empowering oneself as both owner and partner of your classroom, your building, your district, your community as a caretaker and advocate of public education and the public good.

- Teachers must learn to stand up for what they believe in.
- Teachers must be empowered to stand up for best teaching practices.
- Schools and communities are interdependent. They need to be brought together to further understanding of the relevance of education to the public good.
- Schools and teachers need to see the global view of education in a democracy.
- Teachers must teach their students to learn to appreciate and learn to act to protect their environments, their community structures and standards, the preservation of those ideals and actions that promote the betterment of all.
- Teachers must be change agents and teach their students by modeling how to make a difference in their world.

http://www.unomaha.edu/fineart/art/NACNEMasters/moraldim.html
What do schools or districts look like when they implement this philosophy?

Enculturating the youth in a social and political democracy

This concept has created some controversy in at least one of the local school districts where some patrons are concerned about the phrase “enculturating” and some are concerned about “social democracy.” See links to articles and editorials.

What does it look like in a classroom where a teacher is attempting to “enculturate the youth in a social and political democracy?”

- Students may have more voice or say in the classroom. It moves from a teacher-centered classroom to more of a student-centered classroom.
- Students are taught and have modeled for them appropriate social skills for participating in today’s society.
- Students have a chance to implement in a classroom situation what is often only taught in a civics classroom.

Providing equal access to knowledge for all

In a school district where this philosophy is implemented all students, regardless of zip code, have an equal opportunity for an education. Special programs are available for all students. Funding is equitably distributed between schools. Quality teachers are available for all students, not just those students at high achieving schools. Students with disabilities or limited English proficiency have an equal opportunity to learn and progress.

Practicing nurturing pedagogy

What does “nurturing pedagogy” mean? Nurturing implies a school or classroom where students are cared about and teachers strive to meet their educational and emotional needs. Nurturing pedagogy is practiced by effective teachers as they focus meeting the needs of all of their students through their instructional design, their instructional strategies, and their classroom management.
A classroom that applies this philosophy has the philosophy that all students can learn; it may just be in a different way or at a different rate. Differentiated instruction is evident in the classrooms.

Ensuring responsible stewardship
Teachers are leaders in reforming schools. All stakeholders know their responsibilities and fulfill them. Teachers and schools accept and practice accountability for student learning outcomes.

REFLECTION:
Which of the moral dimensions do you feel is the most important? Why?
would be the easiest for you to implement in your classroom? Why?
would be the hardest for you to implement? Why?