



# The ethics of ECE: Growing connections through ethical commitments

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*"Together We Grow-Creating Collaborative Landscapes"*

Conference

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# Overview of the Session

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- Introductions
- What do we mean by ethics?
- Why is ECE an ethical concern?
- The ECA *Code of Ethics*, (2006)
- Using the Code to support ethical decision making
- Ethics for Connections
- Conclusion-What if...?



# Defining Ethics....

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What does the term 'ethics' mean?  
Is ethics the same as morals?

Ethics means...



# Why is ECE an Ethical Concern?

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Values are at the heart of our work in early childhood services

Values commit us to actions, or to respond in particular ways

Virtues or qualities are connected to our deeply held values



# Values and Virtues in ECE

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- Identify two core values that underpin the way you respond or work in your service.
- What virtues do you need to respond or work according to your values?

For example:

**Value:** Respecting others

**Virtue:** Patience



# Why is ECE an Ethical Concern?

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There are several aspects of our work in ECE where ethics as value choices are embedded or inherent:

- Relationships
- Transformations and change
- Program or pedagogy decisions
- EC professionals' authority or expertise
- The ethical dilemmas inherent in our every day work



# Ethics in ECE

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*“Though the ethic may, at times be unspoken and unconscious, it precedes the norms that it declares; it is expressed in the relationships, the environments, the educational strategies, the strategies and modalities of information and communication; and is declared and communicated in the organizational choices.”*

(Margini, 2006: 3)



# Ethics in ECE

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Understanding our work as a context for ethics means that we will be more likely to,

- Think critically
- Ask questions of ourselves and others
- Challenge taken for granted practices
- Not to make assumptions
- Not judge others too readily
- Listen more than talk

( Moss & Petrie, 2002)

# ECA Code of Ethics

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- Is our *Code of Ethics* useful? Why?
- Who is the *Code of Ethics* for? Why?
- How is (or could) the Code used in your service?

*“Wise moral decisions will always acknowledge our interdependency; our moral choices are ours alone, but they bind us all to those who will be affected by them. So deciding for yourself what’s right or wrong does not mean deciding in isolation.”* (Mackay, 2004:247)



# What is new in the revised ECA Code?

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- Global and local issues are included
- Additional sections of ethical responsibility to Students, Employers and to Research
- Stronger sense of children's rights
- Revised image of the child as an active participant in different learning communities
- Greater emphasis on 'speaking out' in the presence of unethical actions or practices

# Ethical Dilemmas

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## Ethical dilemmas

- Complex issues
- More than one solution
- Each solution will have merits
- Solutions may have limitations
- Not the same as breaches of law or regulations

*I ought to be honest*

*I ought to protect a child from harm*

# Ethical Dilemmas: Response Strategies

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- Identify all the stakeholders or people involved
- Identify all the facts
- Identify the core value positions held by the stakeholders or those involved
- Use the ECA *Code of Ethics* to highlight the core principles connected with this issue or event
- Begin to form an opinion and discuss with colleague/s if appropriate
- Decide on the action/s individually or as a group
- Reflect on the outcomes and re-plan different solution/s if required

# Ethical Dilemma Example

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Justin is in a kindergarten program and is eligible to start school next year. Staff have identified that he is developmentally delayed in several domains. The family is struggling financially and in other ways and would find it easier if Justin goes to school next year. They want the staff to support their decision (Adapted from Newman & Pollnitz, 2002).

## **Dilemma: What will staff recommend?**

- Who is involved?
- What are the values or principles their positions?
- Identify the Code's guiding principles relevant to this dilemma.
- What would be an ethical solution/s?



# Ethics for Connections

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Connecting and collaborating with others is an ethical concern

## **Our choices**

- Sympathy
- Empathy
- Empowerment
- Other regarding (Levinas, 1987)



# The Ethics of Encounter

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*"Instead of grasping [the Other], I have to take responsibility for the Other: and this relationship is one of welcoming, a welcoming of the Other as stranger."*

(Dahlberg & Moss, 2006:80)



# The Other-the ethics of connecting

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Thinking about the Other in this way means moving into a new ethical context

- Not attempting to make the Other the same as myself- 'if only they were like me'
- Not about 'how would I feel if I was in their shoes'
- Through responsive listening, learning to respect the Other's values, feelings and actions
- Being comfortable with difference and disagreement at times
- Moral shift from self regarding to Other regarding
- Not focused on empowerment of the Other which can be based on unexamined assumptions

# What if....?

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- If Governments understood that our work is as ethically significant for children's wellbeing as that of medicine or nursing- what difference would that make?
- If all early childhood professionals understood the ethical nature of their work- how would they connect with colleagues?
- If all families and children experienced the ethics of connecting with the Other as 'You are welcome'-what kinds of practices would they witness in our service?



# What if...?

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- Identify one thing you could do to ensure that ethics is made more explicit in your workplace?
- Identify one new welcoming or connecting strategy you might adopt for families, children or colleagues