As a Division or School Leader, you have a duty of moral responsibility. Ethical leadership involves acting with integrity, leading by example, addressing problems, making ethical decisions, and creating a culture of compliance. In this ongoing effort, leaders are vital, as they are in the best position to communicate district values to the employees under their supervision.

Leaders best inspire direct reports to act in an ethical manner by modeling the desired behaviors themselves. Doing so underscores training, reinforces the district messages and builds employee morale.

**WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW**
Simply put, ethical leadership involves doing what is right. It applies even when “no one will know” or when it goes against the way things may have been done in the past. Sometimes, it means not doing something even though that behavior may not be illegal. Remember:

- Being ethical involves not only actions taken but also actions not taken
- Ethical leaders have empathy and can “put themselves in others’ shoes”
- Trust is a valuable commodity and, once lost, is difficult to regain
- It involves acting for the good of the district as a whole
- Ethical leadership requires acting in a timely manner when warning signs of problems occur
- It can require standing up against pressure, and doing what is right

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“Character, in the long run, is the decisive factor in the life of an individual and of nations alike”

Theodore Roosevelt (26th President of the United States)

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**LEADING ETHICALLY**
Here are some actions of an ethical leader:

- Understands that public service is a public trust and responsibility
- Leads by example, setting the tone for the district
- Fosters a sense of belonging within the team
- Develops effective listening strategies
- Trains and reinforces ethical values and behavioral expectations
- Holds self and others accountable
- Avoids using public office for private gain
- Avoids favoritism and biased treatment of others
- Admits mistakes and works to correct them
- Keeps promises and honors commitments
- Tells the truth, and puts forth honest effort
- Is transparent in communicating policy and decisions
- Protects and conserves District property
- Does not engage in outside activities that conflict with official duties
- Upholds ethical values in decision making
- Reports credible violations to appropriate authorities, and
- Does not retaliate against others for reporting wrongful actions

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**CONSEQUENCES**
Some consequences of unethical leadership practices include:

- Poor employee performance and morale
- Ineffective, hostile or nonexistent relationships between leaders and subordinate employees
- Negative internal and external perceptions of the district
- Low levels of reporting of existing ethical violations
- Damage to the district’s reputation
- Disciplinary action, and
- Potential legal issues

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All leaders are responsible for behaving ethically, ensuring that their direct reports do likewise, and maintaining an atmosphere of trust, fairness and integrity in which employees feel comfortable addressing ethical dilemmas. This means being aware of warning signs, monitoring activities, welcoming questions about ethical issues, and reporting any serious violations to the Office of Inspector General for investigation. Clear, direct and honest communication is key to creating and maintaining a culture of integrity.
Q&A

Q. A colleague seems to be hiring her relatives. Isn’t this a conflict of interest?
A. No, not necessarily. If she has disclosed the relationship and recused herself from the hiring decision, it could be acceptable according to our district’s policy. Consult with Human Resources.

Q. I learned that a District vendor has hired a subcontractor that was previously removed from our district for improper conduct. Should I report this?
A. Yes. Contact the Office of Procurement and Logistics to share what you know about the situation. Our District requires ethical conduct of not only the employees, but our vendors and subcontractors.

Q. I’m part of a team assigned to interview potential candidates for an administrative position. I have a good friend who worked with one of our prospective candidates in the candidate’s previous employment. The friend shared negative information about this candidate. Do I have a responsibility to share this information?
A. Yes, if you honestly describe what information was shared and the nature of your relationship with your friend, the feedback could be useful in the decision-making process.

Q. I’ve been contacted by a company that wants to donate some goods to my school. Should I accept the gift?
A. Yes. However, the District has a process for accepting donations through the Department of Development and Partnerships. Please ensure that procedural requirements are followed before receiving any donations of goods or services.