

Excellence through Ethics™

Session 15

Demand vs. Doing What Is Right



Middle School



Junior Achievement®



Excellence through Ethics
Middle Grades
Session 15

Demand vs. Doing What Is Right

Content: Ethics and Illegal and Controversial Products

Methods: Debate

JA Foundational Pillars: Ethics and Entrepreneurship

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Acknowledgements

Sponsorship

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Demand vs. Doing What is Right

Overview

Students review the role of entrepreneurs in designing new products or services. They learn to evaluate new products from an ethical, as well as an economic, perspective by applying guidelines for ethical decision-making.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognize that consumers are sometimes willing to pay for products that are illegal or harmful.
- Familiarize themselves with ethical decision-making guidelines.
- Investigate and analyze the ethical issues surrounding the production and sale of controversial products.

Preparation

Review the activity. Prepare the necessary copies and session materials. Separate the paragraphs in each of the four product sheets to form product slips. You will have 32 product slips. Each student will need one product slip during the activity. Distribute the slips by placing them in a container suitable for passing around the classroom. Mix them well. Have students randomly draw the slips. **Note:** Do not distribute the headers, which contain the product number, name, and source information.

Group work is incorporated into this session. You may consult with the teacher to determine how best to form the groups. Discuss the use of Case 1: Illegal Drugs; if the teacher advises against it, or if you feel uncomfortable with it, use Case 2: Elephant Ivory.

Post Key Terms and definitions in a visible place.

- **Ethics:** The standards that help determine what is good, right, and proper.

Recommended Time

This session typically takes 45 minutes to complete. Ask the teacher to help you keep track of time.

Materials

- Product Sheets (1)
- A container
- Pens or pencils (1 per student)

Presentation

Introduction (5 minutes)

Greet the students. Inform them that in our economic system, entrepreneurs are free to start legal businesses of their own. What would an entrepreneur's first decision have to be? **Answer:** which good or service to provide.

Why would he or she try to choose a product for which there is a high demand? **Answer:** to make sales and earn profits. Is it possible to stimulate demand for a new product? **Answer:** Yes, through marketing.

Tell students that some entrepreneurs decide to produce or sell products that are illegal. Others choose products that are not illegal, but are controversial. That is, people disagree about whether these products should be legally allowed on the market. Tell students that first you're going to talk about a product that is illegal.

Activity

Analyzing an Illegal Product (10 minutes)

Note: The first example of an illegal product is a powerful one. Be sure to discuss your choice in advance with the teacher. **Choose only one of the following two cases:**

Case Choice 1: Illegal Drugs

Ask students to give you reasons why selling illegal drugs is a bad business to go into. List the reasons on the board. Possible reasons include:

- Illegal—risk of arrest, imprisonment, and heavy fines
- The product is harmful to its users
 - Addictive and often deadly
 - Expensive—users may use violent means to get money to pay
 - Product is not regulated for strength or purity
- Competitors are dangerous (they go way beyond product differentiation, price, and marketing)
- Both suppliers and distributors are dangerous
- Actual producers get very little of the profit
- There are no laws to protect workers
- No taxes on earnings are paid to government

| Ask why people go into the illegal drug business despite all these serious reasons not to. **Answer:** There is a huge demand, and there are big profits to be made.

Ask, "If income is the main incentive, is it possible to sell legal products that do not threaten the seller or the customers for big profits?" **Answer:** Yes. People have made millions of dollars selling everything from hamburgers to computers.

Tell students that selling drugs is wrong. It is illegal. The product is harmful to others. The business is dangerous to the community and even causes friction with other countries.

Case Choice 2: Elephant Ivory

Ask if anyone knows if it is legal to import and sell elephant ivory in the United States. **Answer:** It is not legal. Ask students to give you reasons why importing elephant ivory is a bad idea. List the reasons on the board. Possible reasons include:

- Animals are endangered—risks extinction of species
- Illegal—risk of arrest, imprisonment, and heavy fines
- Animals are dangerous to hunt
- There are no laws to protect workers
- Hunters get very little of the profit
- Subject of international controversy
- Both suppliers and distributors can be dangerous
- No taxes on earnings are paid to government

Ask why people go into illegal businesses despite all the serious reasons not to. **Answer:** There is a huge demand, and there are big profits to be made.

Ask, “If income is the main incentive, is it possible to sell legal animal products that do not threaten sellers or a species for big profits?” **Answer:** Yes. People have made millions of dollars selling everything from alpaca wool clothing to silk scarves.

Tell students that selling illegal products is wrong. Such businesses are dangerous and cause friction with other countries.

Tell students that they are now going to discuss whether some legal, but controversial, products should be made and sold. Students’ decisions will take into account the ethics of each situation and the social responsibility of business. Leave the list from the introductory case on the board, but explain that students should try to use guidelines for ethical decision-making.

Guidelines for Ethical Decision-Making

Explain that ethical decisions can be made by comparing good character traits with self-awareness questions as students go through a decision-making process.

Good character traits are ethical values that guide our choices as we search for what is good, right, and proper. These traits include:

1. Trustworthiness. People learn to believe in and admire us if we have such qualities as:
 - Honesty in communication and conduct.
 - Integrity in that we keep our word.
 - Reliability in that we are consistent and dependable.
 - Loyalty to certain people or organizations.
2. Respect. We do unto others as we would have them do unto us.
3. Responsibility. We are accountable for what we do and who we are.
4. Fairness. We follow a balanced standard of justice without reference to our own biases or interests.
5. Caring. We have concern for the welfare of others.
6. Citizenship. We follow the law and do more than our “fair share” to make society better. *

*The guidelines for ethical decision-making were adapted from *Making Ethical Decisions* by Michael Josephson, and *Auditing and Assurance Services* by Dr. Jack C. Robertson and Dr. Timothy J. Louwers.

Now tell students that another method that can be used to make ethical decisions is called an ethical construct. This method provides students with questions they can ask themselves when faced with an ethical decision.

- Is your action illegal or unethical?
- Are you being fair and honest?
- Would you be unwilling or embarrassed to tell your family, friends, or co-workers?
- Will you sleep soundly tonight?
- Would you want to see it reported on the front page of a newspaper?
- Could someone's life, health, or safety be endangered by your action?
- Could the intended action appear inappropriate?

Activity

Controversial Product Debates (20 minutes)

Remind students that they will now examine some products that are legal, but controversial. They will read pros and cons, then decide whether it would be ethical to produce or sell them.

Have students pass the container of product slips around the class; each student draws one slip. Then, direct students to find others who have information on the same product they have. This part of the activity will involve some noise and movement in the classroom and will take a few minutes. Direct the forming groups to find different sections of the classroom in which to be seated and to work.

Using all the information they now have, each group, acting as a “board of directors,” must decide whether their company should engage in the business presented. Remind them to refer to the ethical decision-making guidelines listed on the board.

Walk around the classroom. If a group is having difficulty, suggest that they picture a seesaw with pro arguments piled on one end and con arguments piled on the other. It may be appropriate to stop all groups and present this tool to the whole class.

While students are still working, write the following template on the board: Even though _____, our Board of Directors has decided _____ because _____.

About 12 minutes before the end of class, ask a spokesperson from each group to briefly present its product and the group's decision about it. They should not repeat the pros and cons, but should try to construct a sentence using the template you have written on the board.

Summary and Review (5 minutes)

Briefly review the vocabulary introduced in the session.

Review with students that while demand for illegal or harmful products may be high, selling them would be unethical, despite the fact that profits can be made by those who produce or distribute them.

Ask students why it was difficult for some or all of the groups to make a decision. **Answer:** There are good arguments on both sides. They may need more information.

Point out that good people can frequently disagree on issues, and that better decisions are made when all facts and perspectives are heard, analyzed, and put through an “ethical filter.”

Thank the students for their participation.

Session Outline

Introduction

- Greet the students.
- Introduce today’s topic.

Activity

- Suggest that not all possible products and services are legal. Others may be legal, but controversial.
- Choose one of the cases illustrative of illegal, but profitable, products.
- Present students with guidelines for ethical decision-making.
- Have students randomly select pieces of information about legal, but controversial, products. Have students form groups with those who have information on the same product they have. Each group will form a “board of directors” to decide whether to make the product.
- Remind students to refer to the guidelines for ethical decision-making during their deliberations.
- Ask a spokesperson from each group to present their product decision, using the provided template for their statement.


Summary and Review


- Review the Key Terms for the session.
- Ask why it was difficult for some or all groups to make a decision.
- Suggest that better decisions are made when all facts are heard and ethical principles are considered.
- Thank the students for their participation.

Product Sheets


Product 1—Genetically modified food

(adapted from James Acton, “Genetically Modified Food,” IDEA Database, 6/30/2000; and other Internet articles)

----- 
Proteins are chemicals that regulate many of the processes that occur inside cells. Genetic modification by biotechnology companies can add new proteins or remove them. Such modifications in plants have led to better crop resistance to frost and insects, production of more vitamin A in grain, less need for water, and higher crop yields.

----- 
Biotechnology companies have been patenting genetically modified crop varieties, which give them the exclusive right to produce and sell the seeds. They have also developed “terminator” genes that prevent plants from reproducing. Farmers who use such crops will become dependent on these firms, which will be able to charge them high prices.


----- 
Farmers have been selectively breeding crop varieties for centuries, and changes have occurred gradually. Genetic modification has simply sped up the changes. The results are the same.

----- 
Scientists looking at a new plant would not be able to tell if a change had occurred naturally or in a laboratory.


----- 
We have not had time to assess the long-term consequences of genetically modifying crops. They might endanger farmers’ health, their fields, and their business.

----- 
Introducing exotic genes into plants, which traditional plant breeding cannot do, requires a much higher level of testing.

----- 
In the United States, all genetically modified food must be tested for nine years before it is released onto the market.

----- 
In the 30-year history of these foods, not one person has died due to genetic modification; all associated deaths resulted from poisons accidentally introduced during food production.

The addition of nut proteins to soybeans caused people with nut allergies to go into shock upon eating the soybeans. Even though this was discovered in testing, sooner or later, a gene could cause risk to human health.


----- 
The use of these crops is causing fewer strains to be planted. If just two types were planted, and one was wiped out by disease, the result would be catastrophic for the food supply.

----- 
Many consumers, both here and overseas, will not buy genetically altered food. Continuing to grow it will harm our economy.

----- 

Product 2–Nanotechnology


(Source: *U.S. News & World Report*, 1/27/2003, page 44.)


----- 
Nanotech is the production of tiny, molecule-size particles and machines that are less than one-thousandth the width of a human hair. It has attracted billions of dollars in funding, but there are arguments both for and against it.

----- 
A manufacturer of jeans has used nanowhiskers on the surface of the fabric to repel stains.

----- 
Tiny nanospheres of zinc oxide keep a sunscreen transparent, but still able to absorb ultraviolet light.


----- 
In the future, it may be possible to create such nanotech marvels as bacteria-size, disease-fighting robots (nanobots) or super-strong, super-light materials for space travel.

----- 
Several groups worry that the tiny particles could embed themselves in body tissues, with unknown harmful effects. However, in animal studies, nanoparticles end up being processed safely in the liver.


----- 
Conceivably, nanotech could create weapons, such as robots programmed to attack an enemy cell-by-cell or a building piece-by-piece.


----- 
Product 3–Drugs to improve athletic performance

(adapted from Alastair Endersby, “Drugs in Sport,” IDEA Database, 9/29/2000)


----- 
In 2000, several Olympic athletes were stripped of their medals as a result of positive drug tests.


----- 
Some doubt the effectiveness of these tests and the fairness of some of the resulting disqualifications.

----- 
Performance-enhancing drugs include steroids, testosterone, human growth hormone, and other drugs that build muscle bulk or stimulate the body to improve performance in competition. Most of such drugs have some medical uses and are prescribed legally in certain cases.

----- 
Athletes already use dietary supplements, exercise equipment, clothing, coaching, training regimes, medical treatments to enhance their performance. Since there is no clear way to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate artificial aids to performance, they should all be allowed.

----- 
The goal should be to preserve the spirit of fair play and unaided competition between humans at the peak of natural fitness.

----- 
Eating a balanced diet and wearing the best shoes are clearly in a different category than taking steroids and growth hormones.

----- 
There are no tests for some drugs. New medical and chemical advances mean those who want to cheat will always be ahead of the testers.

----- 

Some rules are arbitrary, such as not being able to use cold medicine, but others are not, such as not being allowed to compete after having heart surgery specifically to increase circulation and stamina.



It would be fairer to athletes if they were able to use drugs and medical procedures legally. However, it would not be fair to competitors from poorer countries, who could not afford these enhancements.



Product 4—A medical product, that requires testing on animals

(Adapted from Thomas Dixon, “Animal Experimentation,” IDEA Database, 6/28/2000)



Animal experimentation can be the means to a greater end. The reduction of human suffering is our first priority, and while testing a drug or procedure on an animal may hurt or kill it, at least science is one step closer to helping humans.



Animals have the right to be treated as valuable. Animals should never be experimented on, whatever the gain for humanity.



Humans must give their consent before taking test drugs; animals have no say.



It is possible to experiment on animals without being cruel to them. For example, scientists can use anesthetics and keep animals in clean, comfortable, healthy conditions. However, many news stories have shown that animals in laboratories are often mistreated and sometimes even tortured.



In the United States, all prescription drugs must be tested on animals before they are allowed on the market. To ban animal experiments would paralyze modern medicine and endanger human health.



Few medical breakthroughs have actually been made as a result of animal experimentation. Many drugs that were approved after animal testing were later taken off the market because harmful side effects still emerged.



About 98 percent of chimpanzee and human genes are virtually identical. Therefore, testing drugs on chimpanzees is an excellent guide to possible reactions of human patients. Other animals share the same basic physiology with humans. It would be wrong to risk the life of a human being when a medicine could be tested on an animal instead.



Most animal experimentation is done on animals that are nothing like human beings, such as rats and mice. The reaction of a mouse to a substance is no guide to the human reaction. However, the more an animal seems to resemble a human being, the more immoral it seems to treat it as a disposable object.



Appendix

Welcome to Junior Achievement's *Excellence through Ethics*

As a Junior Achievement (JA) volunteer or teacher, you are joining other teachers and volunteers from across the United States in providing students with a unique educational experience. Junior Achievement's *Excellence through Ethics* offers students learning opportunities to share knowledge and information regarding ethics in business. JA strives to show students how business works, and to better evaluate organizations that conduct their operations in the right way.

Excellence through Ethics is designed to equip volunteers and teachers with supplemental, ethics-based activities for use with JA in-class programs for grades four through twelve. All these activities provide students with current and essential information about business ethics.

These activities are designed to reinforce students' knowledge and skills, teach them how to make ethical decisions, assist them in learning to think critically, and help them to be better problem-solvers. All the activities are hands-on, interactive, and group-focused to present the material to students with the best instructional methods.

Within these supplements, you will find sections to help you effectively implement the activities in your volunteer experience. Materials include: (a) an introductory discussion of business ethics, marketplace integrity, and the growing capacity of students for ethical decision-making; (b) activities and student materials that connect to and expand current classroom-based Junior Achievement programs; and (c) a functional glossary of terms relating to a wide spectrum of ethics, quality, service, and social responsibility considerations in business.

JA greatly appreciates your support of these important and exciting activities. If you have comments about the *Excellence through Ethics* program content, curriculum, and/or instruction, please access <http://studentcenter.ja.org.aspx/LearnEthics/> and choose the “*Excellence through Ethics Survey*” link located in the middle of the page.

Appendix

Introduction and Overview

- *How do I do the right thing in this situation?*
- *Should I be completely honest, even if it puts others in jeopardy?*
- *What kind of community do we want to be?*
- *How do we do what's best for the long term?*
- *Who should cover the cost of "doing the right thing"?*

These are all questions having to do with business ethics. They are valid and necessary questions, and good business people have asked them for generations. They form the backdrop of vital discussions as business, community, and political leaders grapple with significant issues. Many students would ask these questions, even if Junior Achievement hadn't developed this ethics curriculum.

Business Ethics Discussions Are Here To Stay

Business ethics has been in the spotlight for much of the past decade, especially as examples of wrongdoing come to light in the media. New technologies and international competitive pressures cause a steady focus on the question, "Is it possible to be competitively successful in business today and still operate in an honest and ethical manner?" The past decade has seen individuals search for deeper personal meaning in the workplace, which has contributed to lively ethics discussions in the business realm. For these reasons, the discussion of business ethics is not a passing fad; it's here to stay.

Many graduate schools of business have either required ethics coursework or integrated ethics principles throughout all areas of study. That is commendable. We believe this vital area of exposure and instruction also should happen at earlier ages and continue throughout the students' educational journey. Many of today's students haven't had access to a well-rounded education in economics and free enterprise or have come to see these in a very negative light. They have limited awareness of the extent to which good business leaders engage in the challenging exercises of ethical decision-making amid heavy competitive pressures. As students learn the general principles of economics and business, it's critical that these be underpinned with a strong foundation in ethics. This will accentuate the best in American business traditions, while laying the groundwork for students' continued evolution into future generations of leaders.

Integrity in the Marketplace?

Many adults and young people choose to believe that the marketplace is driven only by greed. They view it as bringing out only the worst in human behavior, demoralizing the human spirit, and driving out any sense of idealism. While elements of greed and extreme self-interest among some individuals cannot be denied, solid research has shown time and again that companies with a long-term focus on ethics and a broad consideration of stakeholders' interests are much more profitable than those lacking such a focus.

James A. Autry, in his book *Love and Profit: The Art of Caring Leadership*, said it well: "I do not doubt the presence of greed in the marketplace because I do not doubt the presence of greed in people. But, I also do not doubt the ennobling aspects of work, of the workplace, of the community, of endeavor, of

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the marketplace. So I choose to believe that most of the marketplace is driven by people who want to do good work for others and for themselves.”

Excellence through Ethics accepts the challenge of educating youth in the basics of economics and business while establishing a positive balance on the side of well-informed, ethical business practice. This may appear to place a heavy burden on Junior Achievement volunteers, who are not trained ethics experts. The following informational pages will not turn you into an ethics expert. That’s not what we’re striving for here. What students need most is meaningful interaction with people who are willing to engage in a discussion of these vital issues.

Lively Practitioners Rather Than Dry Theorists

This program is more about day-to-day ethics practice than the nuances of ethics theory. Some believe that working in business requires a disconnect from one’s personal ethics. We do not believe this is the case. Students need to know that what they learn about fairness and honesty in general also applies to business. While business ethics may address some specific areas of business practice, it’s not a separate and distinct specialty to be set apart from the general ethical principles that apply in other areas of life. Young people need to encounter the wisdom of age and experience that volunteers bring to the classroom.

Students’ Growing Capacity for Ethical Decision-Making

Excellence through Ethics is designed to foster discussions at the appropriate level for each age group. The curriculum developers have designed the ethics activities with sensitivity to student’s mental maturity. At the late elementary and middle-grades levels, students’ capacities for ethical reasoning tend toward good personal behavior as determined by adult rules and authority. In relationships, personal trust, loyalty, and respect are of paramount importance. For these students, corporate ethical behavior is viewed in much the same light as their own personal behavior: it’s governed by rules.

As students advance into high school, their ethical decision-making moves into the larger arena of social contracts and systems that guide and govern societal and group behavior. Here the rationality and utility of laws are scrutinized, as students become more capable of higher-ordered, principled thinking. Students are increasingly aware of the diversity of values among different cultures and communities. At this level, students’ capacities for processing the complex, ethical dilemmas that may be encountered in business are greatly enhanced.

You will gain confidence as you come to realize that conducting a robust, provocative discussion with students is more important than “having the right answer.” The activities have been designed to leave room for lively discussion and multiple points of view. Having the courage to share your own experiences is very valuable to students.

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You don't have to apologize for the excesses students may see in business. Don't assume responsibility for actions that are not your own, and do not try to defend the indefensible. While accentuating the fact that most businesses operate ethically, it's okay to scrutinize the unethical players in the marketplace who give business in general a bad name.

Continuing Education

Teaching this material to students will no doubt strengthen and enhance your own ethics awareness and continuing education. Some students will challenge your best reasoning capacities. Having your own support network of professional colleagues with whom you can share and discuss some of these issues is very valuable. It's also helpful to seek out colleagues with philosophical views that differ from your own. This serves as a valuable "cross-pollination" function because you will be able to understand and discuss a variety of views with students, as well as share students' perspectives with your colleagues. In this way, everyone learns.

Finally, please be assured that your contributions here have tremendous value to students and will serve to upgrade business ethics in the future. We're dealing with the future generation of leaders in their formative years. We can take pride in the fact that we've had a hand in shaping the very people who will be responsible for business ethics and social responsibility in the future.

Appendix

Acknowledgements

Many educators, economists, businesspeople, and consultants have contributed to the development of *Excellence through Ethics*. We would like to acknowledge the following individuals and groups for their efforts, creative talents, and support in creating these materials:

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Appendix

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Appendix

Excellence through Ethics Evaluation

Junior Achievement has discontinued all paper versions of program surveys. However, we greatly appreciate your comments and feedback about *Excellence through Ethics*. Please help us improve the quality of *Excellence through Ethics* by sharing your comments through our new online survey process. The online survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

If you have comments about the *Excellence through Ethics* program content, curriculum, and/or instruction, please access <http://studentcenter.ja.org/aspx/LearnEthics/> and choose the *Excellence through Ethics* Survey link located in the middle of the page.

Thank you for participating in JA!



Excellence through Ethics Volunteer Survey

1. Including this session, how many individual sessions of Excellence through Ethics have you presented? _____

2. Do you feel that the students were engaged through this session?
 - A. Not at all
 - B. Somewhat engaged
 - C. Engaged
 - D. Very Engaged
 - E. Unsure

3. Do you feel the session was relevant to students?
 - A. Not relevant
 - B. Somewhat relevant
 - C. Relevant
 - D. Very relevant
 - E. Unsure

4. Do you feel students are more prepared to make ethical decisions after participating in this session?
 - A. Significantly more prepared
 - B. Somewhat more prepared
 - C. Somewhat less prepared
 - D. Significantly less prepared
 - E. Unsure

5. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being excellent), how would you rate the overall quality of the Excellence through Ethics session? _____

6. After this JA experience, how likely are you to volunteer for JA again?
 - A. More likely to volunteer
 - B. Less likely to volunteer
 - C. No more or less likely to volunteer
 - D. Unsure

7. What comments or suggestions do you have regarding the overall session (including format, content, etc.)?

Optional: City _____

State _____ Country _____

Email _____

Excellence through Ethics Student Survey

1. What grade are you in? _____

2. Please fill in the circle that best describes how you feel about the following statements.
There is no right or wrong answer.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This topic is very important.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to apply what I learned in this session to the real world.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The activities were interesting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I learned something about ethics from this session.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Do you feel more prepared to make ethical decisions after participating in this session?

- A. Significantly more prepared
- B. Somewhat more prepared
- C. Somewhat less prepared
- D. Significantly less prepared
- E. Unsure

4. I saw someone at my job taking money from the cash register, I would:

- A. Ask someone I trust what I should
- B. Tell a supervisor
- C. Talk to the person taking the money
- D. Do nothing
- E. Not sure

5. To help us better understand who you are, please answer the following questions: How do you describe your ethnicity (family background)? (Fill in all that apply)

- A. African American
- B. Asian American
- C. Latino (a) or Chicano (a)
- D. European American (white)
- E. Native American
- F. Other – how do you identify yourself? _____

6. Do you have any additional comments regarding this session?

Optional: City _____ State _____ Country _____