

# Identifying Core Ethical Values to Build Your School of Character

Character.org Forum

October 21, 2017

Washington, DC

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# Defining Core Ethical Values

A Value – *A belief about what is good that transcends a specific situation and that guides judgment and decision making (Rokeach, 1993).*

*In order for a value to be a 'core ethical value' it must be of central importance in the life of the individual and life of the community (Lickona, 2002).*

# Core Ethical Values

## Defining Characteristics

- *Universal (cross cultural, non-sectarian)*
- *Moral and ethical in nature (guiding behavior)*
- *Supportive of a democratic way of life*
- *Affirming and supportive of every individual*
- *Beneficial to relationships*
- *Supportive of ethical decision making*
- *Meaningful*

# Core Ethical Values & the 11 Principles

The school community seeks to:

## [Principle 1](#)

Advance core ethical values (CEVs) as the basis of good character.

## [Principle 2](#)

Define CEVs comprehensively to include thinking, feeling, and behavior.

## [Principle 3](#)

Use comprehensive and intentional strategies to integrate CEVs into all school functions.

## [Principle 4](#)

Create and maintain a caring school community.

## [Principle 5](#)

Provide students with opportunities for moral action where CEVs are practiced and reflected upon.

## [Principle 6](#)

Support a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners and helps them reflect on their CEVs.

## [Principle 7](#)

Strives to foster students' CEVs for self motivation and self regulation without extrinsic rewards.

## [Principle 8](#)

Engages the school staff as a learning and moral community that attempts to adhere to the same CEVs that guide the education of students.

## [Principle 9](#)

Fosters shared moral leadership and long range support of the character education initiative.

## [Principle 10](#)

Engages families and community members as partners in the character-building effort.

## [Principle 11](#)

Evaluates the character of the school, the school staff's functioning as character educators and the extent to which students understand and demonstrate CEVs.

# Ethical & Performance Values

Recognizing two domains of CEVs

*Ethical character* defined by values such as **honesty**, **caring** and **respect** or how people interact ethically.

*Performance character* defined by values such as **perseverance**, **creativity** and **responsibility**, or how people accomplish their personal goals.

# Transactional Skills & CEVs

How CEVs support prosocial skill development

## Transactional/ SEL\* Skill

Active listening

Conflict resolution (win/win)

Synergize (Leader in Me)

Strategic

Be proactive (Leader in Me)

First things first (Leader in Me)

Reflection

Sharpen the saw (Leader in Me)

Decision Making

## Supporting CEVs

Respect, Care

Respect, Empathy, Responsibility, Creativity

Cooperation, Humility

Responsible, Initiative, Care

Responsible, Self-Control

Excellence, Perseverance

Integrity, Caring

\*SEL = Social Emotional Learning

# Applying Core Ethical Values

## Principle 1

List of core values and behavioral definitions  
Application of CEV to Mission/Touchstone

## Principles 2, 3.3 & 7

Application of CEV to Expectations,  
Procedures and Rules

## Principle 3.2

Integration of CEV into lessons with an  
application of Bloom's taxonomy

## Principle 4

Focus on care as the CEV in creating a  
positive learning community

## Principle 5

CEV applications in service learning

## Principles 6.3, 7, 8 & 9

Application of CEV to reflection on  
personal goals and behavior

## Principle 11

Assessment of faculty and student  
understanding and practice of CEV in  
evaluation

# What are your District/School CEVs?

List of CEVs

How were they developed? By whom?

Does everyone in the community know what they are?

Do they provide concrete guidance that impacts curriculum, instruction, staff & student behavior? Are they defined in developmentally appropriate behavioral terms?

Are they highlighted as a moral compass in your code of student conduct?



# Establishing CEVs

## Goals to identify CEVs

- The school/district's confirm commitment to use CEVs as the reference point for decision-making regarding behavior of all members of the school community.
- CEVs function as the foundation for rules of conduct and serve as the unifying thread for your school.
- CEVs create aspirational goals for student and staff character

# Identifying CEVs

## Activity to identify CEVs for your school/district

In a meeting of 30 or more participants--

1. Create small groups of five to six where each individual writes down a list of CEVs they believe should be included in the district/school mission.
2. Each person shares their list with small group and a recorder makes a combined master list and combine values with similar meanings (i.e. kindness/caring).
3. Through group discussion, speak for/against each value on list. Why does each selected value have relevance for your school, your students, your life? Are they truly core ethical values or just preferences? Is there a balance of moral and performance values?
4. Pass the master list around and each person marks a tally next to their top three choices on the master sheet.
5. Tally results and rank the small group's top six choices.
6. Combine the top six lists from all small groups and rank (by number of group nominations) and identify the final number for further consideration.

# Lists of Core Ethical Values

**Sources:** Plato (The Republic) & Aristotle (Rhetoric) = 1, CS Lewis (The Abolition of Man & Narnian Values) = 2, Kidder (IGE, 2000) = 3, Jonathan Haidt (Ethical Foundation Theory) = 4, Peterson & Seligman (2004) & Liston (2014) = 5

Justice/ Fairness—1,2,3,4,5
Self-Control/ Temperance—1,2,4,5
Prudence—1,5
Courage—1,2,5
Persistence—2,5
Wisdom—1,2,5
Magnificence/ Noble--1
Magnanimity/ Generous--1

Love / Care—1,2,3,4,5
Hope-- 5
Humility— 2,5
Respect—2,3,4
Mercy/ Forgiveness—2,5
Loyalty—4
Liberty--4
Integrity / Honesty—2,3,5

Responsibility—2,3
Gratitude—2,5
Curiosity—2,5
Creativity—5
Transcendence/ Spirituality—5
Citizenship /Teamwork--5

# Montvale School District, NJ CEVs

## Character Education

### Core Ethical Values Committee: Meeting Minutes

➤ Discussion of using the logo, Montvale **CARES** –

**C**itizenship, **A**chievement, **R**espect, **E**mpathy, **S**pirit.

Discussion of characteristics under each section-

#### Citizenship

Responsibility  
Community  
Cooperation  
Accountability  
Commitment  
Honesty

#### Achievement

Effort  
Goals  
Determination

#### Respect

Tolerance  
Manners  
Consideration  
Integrity

#### Empathy

Compassion  
Understanding  
Kindness

#### Spirit

Enthusiasm  
Pride  
Courage  
Strength

# Defining Core Ethical Values

Core ethical values and performance values do not have clear and significant meaning unless they are defined in behavioral terms.

## Finding the Golden Mean for CEVs

Background: The ancient Greeks recognized that individual character traits could be demonstrated in many different ways. For example, courage could be a weak character for some (cowardice) or be excessive in others (fool hardy). In character development it is helpful to aim for the golden mean.

## Directions

From CEVs you have identified for personal or group behavioral goals (such as respect, caring...), select a CEV to use in the following exercise. Repeat this exercise for other CEVs you or your class/team have identified as important behavior goals. This exercise should be repeated with respect to relevant developmental ages.

## Core Ethical Value: Courage

Absent or Weak	Golden Mean	Excessive
Person runs from challenges, avoids all conflicts Person quickly quits under any pressure from others or circumstances	Person completes tasks under meaningful pressure or harassment of others Person stands up for self or others even at risk of harm with thoughtful consideration of risks	Person attempts to complete tasks without any consideration of risks or hazards

# Defining Core Ethical Values (cont.)

A second method to identify behavioral definitions for CEVs

- Use a **T** chart to give specific examples of what each value LOOKS LIKE and SOUNDS LIKE.
- **Left** side of **T**: Positive examples – e.g., what does it sound like when someone treats me respectfully in our community?
- **Right** side of **T**: Negative examples – e.g., what does it look like when someone acts irresponsibly in our community?

Positive Examples	Negative Examples
I hear encouragement  Participant examples...	I see conflicts that don't seek to advance the school community

# Applying CEVs to Policies

Core ethical values should guide the development and be the outcome objective of all expectations, policies and rules.

**Expectations** provide aspirational statements for behavior using CEVs.

**Procedures** support the development of CEV behaviors to help the school community to flourish. Procedures are taught and practiced with reminders.

**Rules** should be few and stated positively when possible to provide “safety” boundaries. Rules must have consequences if violated.

Setting: Classroom

Expectations	Procedures	Rules
We demonstrate— C are  A ppreciation  R espect  E ffort	Active listening is practiced when others are speaking. (active listening is defined & practiced) We raise a hand to gain recognition prior to speaking in group settings. One person speaks at-a-time.	We do not use put-downs or vulgarity.

# Example of CEVs in Policies

## Cafeteria

Expectation—We will demonstrate courtesy, respect and cleanliness.

Procedures—Everyone eating in the cafeteria will practice—(1) respect for each other, cafeteria workers and the facility; (2) be patient while waiting in any lines, (3) sit only on benches, (4) use polite table manners, (5) use limited time wisely, (6) take responsibility for spills or messes, (7) pick-up condiments, tableware, napkins prior to being seated, (8) speak in a restaurant level voice, (9) stay seated until dismissed, (10) dispose of waste properly.

## Hallway

Expectation—We will demonstrate respectful, responsible and safe behavior.

Procedures—Everyone walking in our halls shall—(1) move on the right side of the hallway or stairs, (2) use conversational voices and respectful language, (3) provide adequate room for the movement of others, (4) be courteous of others and respectful of property, (5) pick up after themselves, (6) keep hands and feet to themselves, which includes inappropriate displays of affection, (7) carry a pass during any non-standard passing times, (8) only post administration approved signs, posters or displays.

Adapted from Price Laboratory School, Cedar Falls, IA



# Example of CEVs in Code of Conduct Report

STUDENT NAME \_\_\_\_\_ TODAY'S DATE. \_\_\_\_\_

REPORTING STAFF \_\_ DATE OF INCIDENT \_BLOCK

Dear Parent/Guardian: The Code of Conduct at HCRHS is based on the following pillars of character. The check mark indicates the pillar that was breached. A brief description and applicable consequences are listed below. Please assist us in helping your child understand the implications of their actions and accept the related consequences.

**CARING:** I will be sensitive to the beliefs, ideas, feelings and experiences of others.

**CITIZENSHIP:** I will take pride and be a role model in my country, my town and my school.

**FAIRNESS:** I will treat others equally regardless of their ideas, opinions or standards.

**RESPECT:** I will be considerate of the feelings and property of others and treat them without bias or judgment.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** I will act in a mature manner and be prepared for any consequences , both positive and negative.

**TRUSTWORTHINESS:** I will be reliable, honest and dependable.

**Source: Hunterdon Central Regional High School, NJ**

# Example of CEVs in Positive Conduct Report

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ ID # \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Reporting Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent/Guardian: The Code of Conduct at HCRHS is based on the following pillars of character. The check mark indicates the area in which your child exhibited exemplary behavior.

**CARING:** Sensitive to the beliefs, ideas, feelings and experiences of others.

**CITIZENSHIP:** Role model our country, town and school.

**FAIRNESS:** Treated others equally regardless of their ideas or opinions.

**RESPECT:** Considerate of the feelings and property of others without bias.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Acted in a mature manner to complete tasks.

**TRUSTWORTHINESS:** Was reliable, honest and dependable.

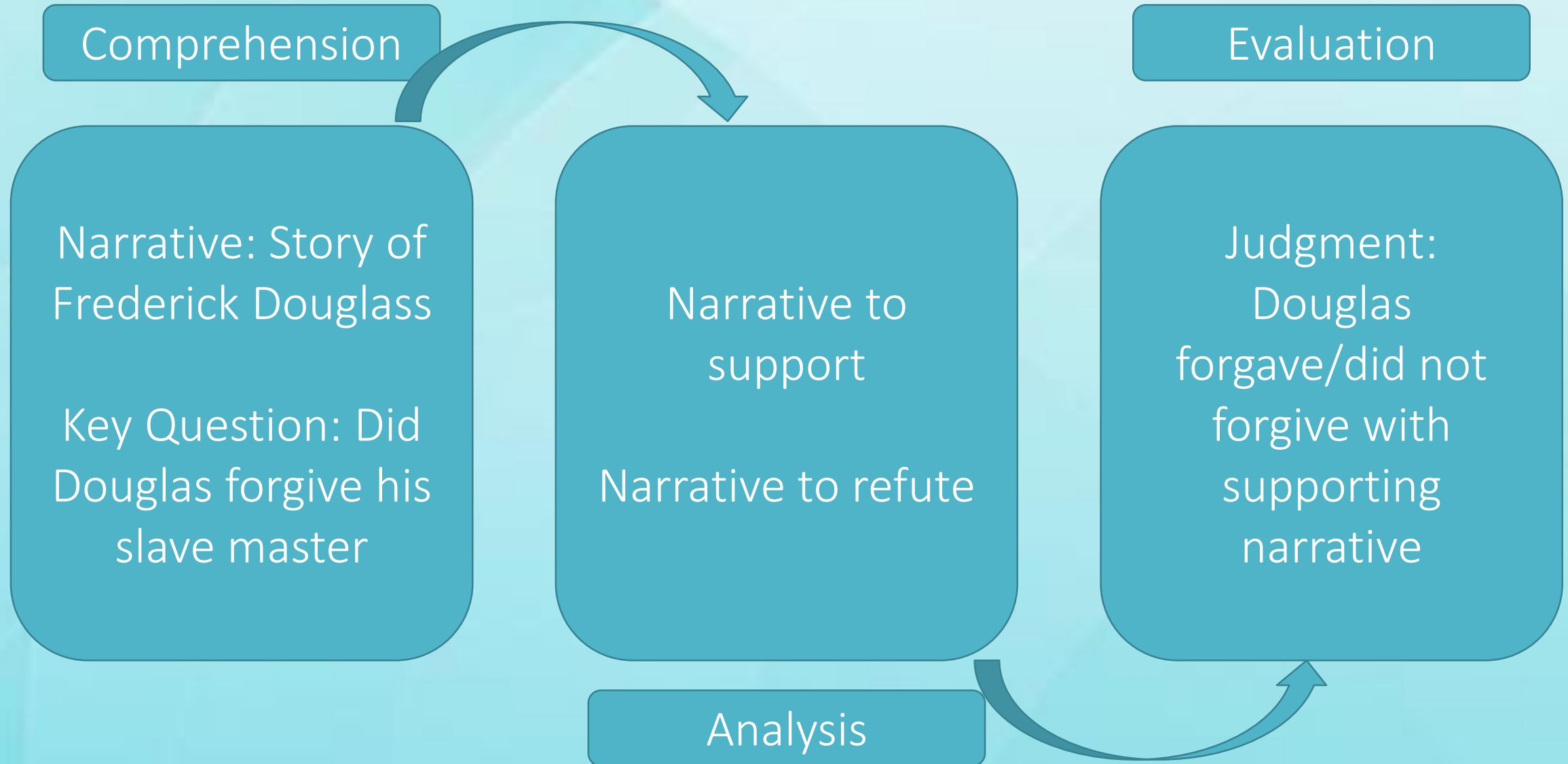
Source: Adapted from Hunterdon Central Regional High School, NJ

# CEVs in the Curriculum

Core ethical values can developmentally become the focus of school curriculum and guided by the Bloom's classic learning taxonomy. Benjamin Bloom created this taxonomy for categorizing levels of abstraction that can be applied to developmentally appropriate instruction. Only three of Bloom's five competencies are cited here.

Competency	Skills Demonstrated
Knowledge	Observation and recall of definitions of character, knowledge of examples, role models <i>Question Cues:</i> list, define, tell, identify, show, label, collect, quote, name, who, when, where, etc.
Analysis	Seeing patterns of cause and effect related to demonstrated character, organization of facts to support application of character, recognition of hidden meanings <i>Question Cues:</i> analyze, separate, examine, explain, connect, classify, arrange, divide, compare, summarize
Evaluation	Make determinations and discriminate between choices with different character outcomes, identify choices based on reasoned argument, verify value of evidence and recognize subjectivity <i>Question Cues:</i> assess, decide, rank, grade, test, measure, recommend, select, judge, discriminate, support, conclude

# Example of Analysis & Evaluation with CEVs



# Example of CEVs in the Curriculum

## “Dignity”

In your team, have one person read the following narrative excerpted from Letters of a Nation (1997). Carroll, A. (Ed.) Broadway Books. Pgs 93-101. Using this excerpt, seek to analyze the text and respond to the question, did Frederick Douglass forgive his slave master?



Excerpts of a letter from Frederick Douglass to his former slave master

Sir-- The long and intimate, though by no means friendly, relation which unhappily subsisted between you and myself, leads me to hope that you will easily account for the great liberty which I now take in addressing you in this open and public manner. ...I have selected this day on which to address you, because it is the anniversary of my emancipation; ...Just ten years ago this beautiful September morning, yon bright sun beheld me a slave--a poor degraded chattel--trembling at the sound of your voice, lamenting that I was a man, ...I will now bring this letter to a close; ...I intend to make use of you as a weapon with which to assail the system of slavery ...In doing this, I entertain no malice toward you personally. There is no roof under which you would be more safe than mine, and there is nothing in my house which you might need for your comfort, which I would not readily grant. Indeed, I should esteem it a privilege to set you an example as to how mankind ought to treat each other.

I am your fellow-man, but not your slave.

Frederick Douglass

# Example Core Values & Skills in Curriculum of Highland Park School District, NJ

## Core Values

Respect

Responsibility

Caring

Honesty/Integrity

Courage

Social Harmony

## Social-Emotional Learning Skill Set

Speaker Power

Listening Skills

Class Meetings/Social Awareness

Feelings Identification/Self Awareness

Feelings Expression/Self Awareness

Keep Calm/Emotional Regulation

B.E.S.T./Effective communication

Hassle Logging/Decision Making

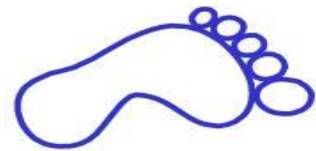
# Example of CEVs in Service Learning

<https://www.ethicsed.org/service-learning.html>

## YES Steps for Successful Service-Learning



### Preparation



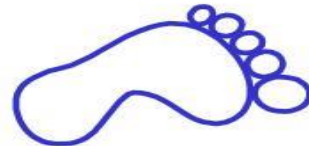
#### Defining

- Service & learning goals
- Direct, indirect, advocacy
- Community
- Steps & Strategies



#### Team building

- Select character-based expectations
- Choose team roles
- Learn decision-making skills
- Practice reflection strategies



#### Investigating

- Research & understand needs
- Assemble background information
- Identify additional resources
- Identify project ideas
- Draft project goals
- Service
- Learning

•Reflect



#### Planning

- Select a project
- Address community needs
- Connect available resources
- Clarify project goals
- Service
- Learning
- Reflect

### Action



#### Implementing

- Identify project tasks
- Document timeline and responsibilities
- Complete tasks
- Keep aligned with goals
- Service
- Learning
- Reflect

### Demonstration / Celebration



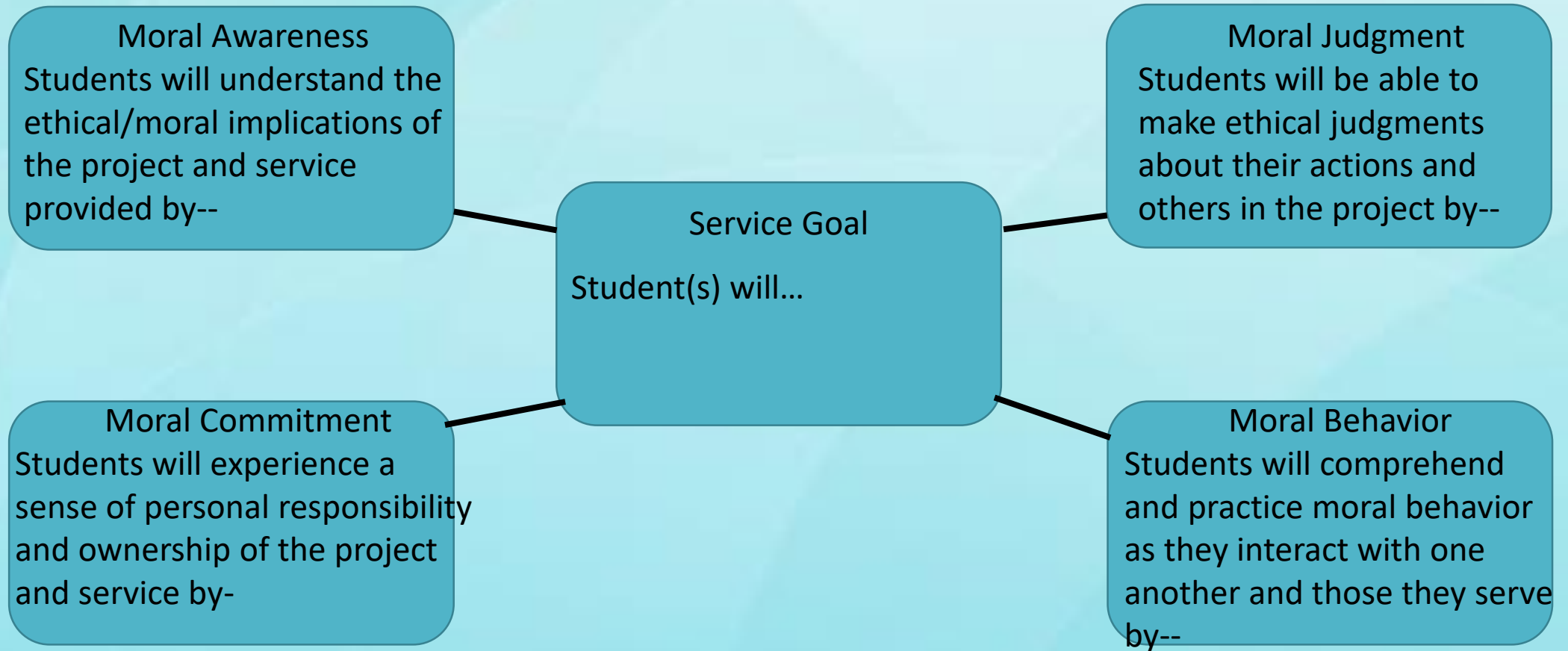
#### Finishing

- Present
- Publish
- Evaluate
- Celebrate
- Reflect



# Example of CEVs in Service Learning

Integrating Service and Character/Moral Goals Draft specific statements that describe service and character/moral development activities that students will engage in during their participation to develop each of the four components.



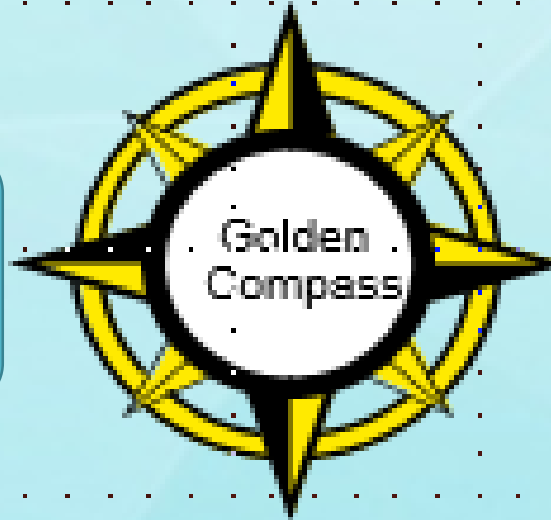


# Example of CEVs in Decision Making

## The Golden Compass: Character-Based Decision Making

<https://www.ethicsed.org/golden-compass.html>

1. Stop! Calm my emotions and recognize dilemma.



2. Think! What are my choices? What character is demonstrated with each choice?

4. Reflect! What consequences resulted from my action?

3. Act! Choose the best option by the character demonstrated.

# Testimonies for CEVs in NSOC Schools

Comments from members of current National Schools of Character

- She [a teacher] used core values to help students understand the consequence of the decisions they are making and empower them to redirect their actions in the future. The school's core values are the basis for weekly class meetings and self-examination of behavior and choices in every classroom, every week. Brentwood Lower School, Los Angeles
- Teachers are trained to walk through thinking strategies to use the core values to make decisions. Those values are focused on in every area of the school. Trautwein Elementary, MO
- At the school's founding, there were and remain eight core values to form the focus of character education. A high school student made the following observation, "In our reading of Othello, we pause and talk about the ethical situations present and discuss how that applies to us today." Union Academy, NC
- Posters in classrooms and hallways, the website, handbook and classroom norms all explain or support our core values. The common language allows for consistency and discussion aligned to the core values which accentuate the learning of those core values. Eldridge Park Elementary, NJ

# Reflection/Closure

- Questions?
- Thank you for participating!
- Link for Workshop Slides: <http://bit.ly/CEV-workshop-slides>