



Ethics should be taught in public schools

by Aaron Spikol

Teaching ethics in public schools has been a controversial issue ever since public education began. The difference between today and the past, however, is that while there used to be at least the semblance of a debate as to what proper ethics should consist of and how it should be taught. Today the issue is virtually a mute one, with ethics simply considered too taboo a subject to be touched upon in a classroom. Considering the recent recession, caused in no small part by the unethical actions of many citizens along with greed on the part of many others, it seems that now would be a prime moment to question whether the United States should start to engender a value change among its populace. A national ethics course for students in high school would be an appropriate place to start. The idea that ethics is too nebulous a subject or too entwined with religion to teach is wrong and results in the weakening of our country as a whole.

The last time teaching ethics was an issue for national debate, during the late 80's, the proponents were so religiously biased that while their proposals were legitimately discredited, there was the adverse effect of ethics education gaining a bad name. Ethics do not need to be derived from a religion, nor can they only be understood as an application of our nation's legal system. Rather, ethics is how one applies his or her morality,

a sense of right and wrong, which in the United States is summarized by the Constitution; namely that all men are created equal and have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Ethics education should be seen as a way to encourage good citizenship, by instructing students how to uphold those core values of the country.

The problem occurs, however, when these values come up against another ingrained trait of the United States—the right it affords its citizens for personal advancement. While there is nothing wrong with being rewarded for hard work, there can at times be a fine line between clever work and simple unethical behavior. There are laws, of course, to ensure that people cannot directly infringe on the rights of others, but to a certain extent, so long as there are rules, there will be ways around them. In the end, it is the individuals in a society who decide whether they will personally pursue ethically correct paths of personal improvement. Thus, it is important for the government to find other ways besides laws to encourage ethical behavior in its citizens.

A mandated high school class in ethics would be a good start. In Parkland, students take a civics class in eighth grade, a course which is good at raising student awareness of public issues and emphasizing the importance of a participatory government, but it does not prepare students for the daily

ethical choices which confront them on a daily basis. High school, in particular, is rife with opportunities to engage in ethically circumspect practices. With essentially one common goal for most students, gaining acceptance to the best college possible, there is a high incentive to find ways to gain an advantage over the competition.

The main object of an ethics class would thus be to convince students of the value of everyone's combined success rather than their own individual triumphs. Gaining an advantage unfairly, even if it brings success, is valueless, as it simply disadvantages the group as a whole. Individualism, though an integral value of this country, needs to be tempered with some national spirit. As the United States becomes an increasingly fractured society, anything that can be instituted to help preserve some common unity, even if it is as small as an ethics class, helps. In high school, where students are virtually segregated based on academic tracks, a shared class between all students could serve as an important unifier, a way to look across the divide and recognize the other side as human. A class where students of differing economic and ethnic backgrounds and educational goals meet to discuss the core values they share in common as citizens of the United States might do something to help students keep in mind after they graduate that everyone in this country is of equal value and worth considering.

Midday News offers valuable information

by Aanand Shah

Everyday, at 2:04 pm, Parkland teachers are confronted with the same conundrum that plagues their labored lesson plans: To keep plowing on teaching or to yield to the loudspeaker spitting out the Midday-News. Some more resilient teachers plow on into their lessons while others welcome the interruption and finish the daily lesson without an actual conclusion or review. Yet for both situations, the class's education is nevertheless interrupted.

Eighth period has always been a period marked by interruptions, ranging from early leave, athletic trips, and doctor appointments. Interruptions that will continue in the future and that are simply part of the natural order of school happenings. Similarly, though disruptive, "Parkland Midday News" is simply too important to leave out. As a major competitor in all athletic leagues and events, and even more, as a patron of a vast network of arts and clubs, the school needs constant updates on those respective activities.

Yes, much of the announcements made during midday can be said during the morning edition of PMN, but obviously as weather conditions change, or as needs arise, there are things that may need to be announced at the end of the school



photo by Aanand Shah

Parkland's newsroom is quiet before they begin filming Midday News.

day. Hence, midday news is not only needed, but should be made mandatory.

Athletes and club members are constantly complaining about the school's inability to inform. Athletes show up prepped and ready for practice in the gym or out in the fields only to learn that practice was postponed or scheduled to a later time in the day. In other situations, club members miss deadlines and important meetings not because they chose not to show up to the meetings, but because they had no idea that there even was a meeting. While midday news does in fact report on these updates, many teachers continue teaching during the announcements and so students do not hear what they need to hear.

Nonetheless, it is understandable that teachers choose to forgo the

announcements during their classes. They are interrupted at an essential time that usually makes up a major chunk of the daily lesson or a vital review. Even more, after midday news, additional announcements are made through the loudspeaker. Students can barely hear their teacher talking over the announcements, and when the additional announcements are made, the teacher has to stop and wait until they are over.

On the other hand, students' need for Midday News is so much that it cannot be taken away; in fact, it must be made mandatory. Yet, instead of broadcasting at the end of eighth period, perhaps it should be broadcasted during the beginning, a time in which classes are only beginning and the lesson still needs to be started. There would be no interruptions in the review, and if anything, it would actually help the teachers gather the students beforehand. Moreover, eighth and ninth periods are frequently paired up as double periods for both gym classes and science labs. With the current timing, science classes are interrupted and gym classes do not even hear the announcements. Furthermore, eighth period has always been a period in which students come late from lunch or a morning field trip – having Midday News during the beginning would allow teachers to gather a full class.

Falco's Fury:

Dust bunnies attack Parkland

By Chelsey Falco

It is the end of the day. Students are anxious to get out of school, and, in a hurry, they slam their lockers. All of a sudden the halls are consumed by fog. Some students cough, but many are oblivious to the swirling dust particles causing the fog. Students may act oblivious, but there is no denying that dust bunnies have taken over Parkland.

Dust poses a serious health risk to students. Dust is home to flame retardants, pesticides, rodent waste, bacteria, asbestos and viruses. All of dust's components are entering students' bodies and can negatively affecting their immune systems. With the recent concern over H1N1, it is more important than ever to reduce the amount of dust in the school. Influenza and illnesses are not the only side effects of dust. Many people have allergies to dust, so excess amounts may cause coughing, itchy eyes and runny noses. Dust may also worsen asthma. There is even a possibility that the flame retardants found in dust can affect one's brain development and reproductive hormones.

Dust is hazardous to student health, yet Parkland still has large amounts of dust on many surfaces, most commonly on the tops of lockers. It seems as if dust is all over the school. The dust level has gone to such extremes that students have created a form of dust graffiti. It is common for one to see comments written in Sharpie in a public bathroom, but Parkland's bathrooms are not just any old bathroom.

The stalls in Parkland bathrooms often feature writing inscribed in the thick dust coating surfaces of areas such as toilet paper dispensers. The fact that the dust is thick enough for one to actually write in, is absolutely disgusting. No one would ever let their house get that dusty, and they certainly should not allow their school to reach that condition.

Dusting can be a simple chore. A cheap dust-buster is all that is needed to sweep a surface clean. Once a dust-buster collects too much dust, it merely needs to be shaken off outside. Thus, dusting is easy. It is not even necessary to dust the whole school in one day. For example, the custodial staff can clean the A-wing one week and move onto the B-wing the next week. That pattern can continue until the whole school has been dusted, and then the custodians can repeat the process on a dusting cycle.

Parkland needs to invest in a nice dust-buster and protect the health of its students. PHS has an excellent custodial staff, but the growing dust problem needs to be taken care of immediately. At this rate, the Parkland mascot will need to be changed from the Trojan to the Dust Bunny.