Professional Ethics
Scenarios and Principles

Making Software Choices Benefit All Children

By Leslie D. Hall

Scenario

Raúl left the April elementary principal's meeting feeling more optimistic than he had for several months. His low income, limited English speaking students were not making adequate yearly progress in mathematics and the superintendent had just announced the district wide adoption of supplemental mathematics software. The software emphasizes problem solving and thinking mathematically. According to the superintendent, the software helped raise mathematics scores in urban elementary schools, including those with high numbers of limited English speaking students. Raúl was impatient to learn more.

As he read material gathered from the web and from full text databases, three authors came up repeatedly. They were a consultant, a professor, and a bureaucrat. They all were associated with the software company in one way or another and they had written all of the articles.

Concerned, Raúl searched the reports until he found two schools similar to his own. Conversation with the principals of those schools revealed that one attributed the rise in mathematics scores to a year-long professional development program on increasing mathematics teaching skills and not to any software. The other principal stated that most limited English speaking students in her school were migrants. Mathematics assessments were administered in the spring, when few of the migrant workers were in attendance.

Raúl groaned. Eighty percent of his mathematics budget would be spent for him on the new software. Further, 65 percent of his technology funds would go to upgrading his school's computers to run the software. He believed the limited resources made it imperative that educational materials support as many of his students as possible.

Principle

AECT Code of Professional Ethics

Section 1 -
Commitment to the Individual

Principle 7

In fulfilling obligations to the individual, the members shall promote current and sound professional practices in the appropriate use of technology in education.

(Apply the principle to the scenario for yourself before going on to read the analysis.)

Analysis

As principal for his school, Raúl is the both the fiscal manager and the educational leader. Sound professional practice makes it Raúl's responsibility to ensure that his students are provided with learning materials, including software, suited to their needs.

Current professional practice also requires that materials adopted for large numbers of students be flexible enough to serve subgroups. The software may be fitting for elementary schools with high numbers of native English speakers, but can Raúl's limited English speaking students benefit from such an investment?

Raúl considered several options. He could present his findings to the superintendent and suggest that only

schools with predominantly native English speakers be required to use the mathematics software. The schools with high numbers of limited English speaking students could opt out of using the software and seek more beneficial mathematics materials.

He could use the remainder of the school year to investigate how the software might be adapted to benefit limited English speaking students. At the same time, he could revise his budget with an eye to providing summer employment. A team of teachers would create a professional development plan for helping his entire faculty adapt the software to their students' needs. Raúl gazed out his window, thinking there must be other possibilities as well.

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Note
Professional ethics scenarios published in TechTrend*s are fictitious, see* TechTrend*s March – April, 2006. There is never any intended resemblance to specific individuals or specific institutions. The instructional purpose is to raise consciousness about AECT's professional ethics.*

Admissions Decisions and Accomodations for Disability

By Erin Brewer

Scenario

The Veer College Admissions Committee is making final admissions decisions for the Educational Technology masters program. Veer College is privately funded, religious, and modestly sized. Its degrees are well respected and most graduates are accomplished.

Joseph, Ting-Ting, and Stan are reviewing the many qualified applicants. Ting-Ting picks out Tom's portfolio and sighs: "What should we do about this one?"

"Tom seems to have what it takes but we just don't have access to an interpreter for him," Joseph responded. "The College is struggling to meet the needs of currently enrolled deaf students. I just don't know if we can provide the support necessary for Tom to be successful. He might be better off at a larger institution that can provide the accommodations he should have."

"True," added Stan, "and it will be rough for those who work with Tom on group projects. Now that every class has a collaborative learning component it would be frustrating for other students to be with someone that they can't talk to."

Ting-Ting nods in understanding. She opens the portfolio for one last look at the application and sees there is no doubt that Tom is an excellent candidate for the program in Educational Technology. She wonders if she should pass it back and ask her colleagues to reconsider.

Principle
AECT Code of Professional Ethics

Section 1 -
Commitment to the Individual

Principle 3
In fulfilling obligations to the individual, the members shall guarantee to each individual the opportunity to participate in any appropriate program.

(Apply the principle to the scenario for yourself before going on to read the analysis.)
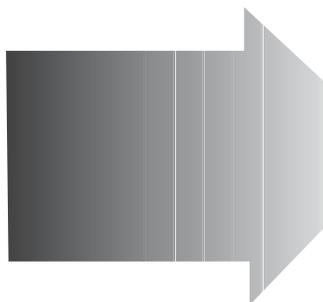
Analysis

The Veer College Admissions Committee is struggling with something difficult. As Joseph points out, funding to accommodate individuals with special needs is limited, especially at private institutions without the support of public money. It is hard for a small program to provide the services a deaf student needs to achieve success. Joseph also notes that Tom, the candidate in question, "seems to have what it takes" and would enrich the student body.

Stan assumes "it would be frustrating for other students" to collaborate with a deaf person. He is failing to acknowledge that one of the benefits of collaborative learning is the opportunity to gain insights from a wide range of individuals.

Ting-Ting acts as the Committee's conscience but might not be an advocate for a weaker applicant although that person is right for the program.