This lecture will be presented in three separate sections: 1) a discussion of what is a profession and what that means to teachers, 2) ethics and the moral imperative and the teaching profession and 3) why the understanding of ethics and the moral imperative are important to the teaching profession. The foundation for this lecture is based on the following references: Starratt, Robert J., Ethical Leadership, Noddings, Nel, Philosophy of Education, Carr, David, Professionalism and Ethics in Teaching, Fenner, David W., Ethics in Education, Rebore, Ronald W. The Ethics of Educational Leadership (second edition), Haidt, Jonathan, The Righteous Mind and why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion, Gluchmanova, Marta, The Importance of ethics in the teaching profession, and Professional Ethics, The Center for the Study of Ethics in the Profession at Illinois Institute of Technology (http://ethics.iit.edu)

**Section 1: What is a profession?**

In order to understand how ethics affects teaching, it is important to address first the question is teaching a profession. It is relevant to this lecture because most individuals would agree that such professions as law and medicine have historically been called a profession, have established, and embedded an ethical standard by which the profession has been held accountable. Therefore, if one accepts that teaching may be a profession they would conclude that teaching must be held to a standard of ethics. The question is teaching a profession and, therefore, held to an ethical standard as other historically recognized professions, has been debated for years. Therefore, to engage in this discourse let us first consider some criteria for defining a profession.

Concerning a professional and functions of a profession there are key elements that need to be present: Professionals

1) Sees other members, including those employed elsewhere, as peers/colleagues.
2) Exercises judgment in the performance of tasks and follows relevant professional standards.

3) Accepts the profession's agreement to work in a morally permissible way (often expressed as a code of ethics) as determining in part the obligations of the role.

One could conclude that teacher do meet these three criteria. 1) Teachers do in fact view their colleagues as peers; 2) they are required to follow relevant professional standards. This includes, but not limited to, standards for licensure. 3) They do accept the moral obligations that are embedded in teaching.

To further this discussion let us consider what some scholars write. In his book *Professionalism and Ethics in Teaching*, David Carr attempts to answer this question from a theoretical and practical lens. Carr attest there are three key elements that need to be present in order to reference teaching as a profession. These elements are: 1) teaching is a professional activity, 2) any professional enterprise is deeply implicated in ethical concerns and considerations, and 3) teaching is an enterprise deeply and significantly implicated in ethical concerns and considerations (Carr p 3). Carr further contends that it is teaching, “that seeks at best to promote the moral, psychological, and physical well-being of learners and at least to avoid their psychological, physical and moral damage” (Carr p 9). He further states that it is a teacher “who can in principle be looked up to as an exemplar of the very highest cultural enshrined standards and values and as someone who possess a range of virtues more than a set of skills” (Carr p 12).

Carr further contents there are five common criteria of professionalism. 1) Professionals provide an important public service. 2) They involve a theoretically as well as practically grounded expertise. 3) They have a distinct ethical dimension that calls for expression in a code of practice. 4) They required organization and regulation for purpose of recruitment and discipline. 5) Professional practitioners require a high degree of individual autonomy and independence of judgement (Carrp 23). Professionals, therfore will elevate the well-being of their clients above that of self-interest. Moreover, they will recognize that the “service” provided such as health care, legal assessments, and education appear to constitute human necessities that other occupations, vocations, do not.

Historically, in some sense, teaching was considered an occupation. So this begs the question, when does an occupation become a profession? According to the
Center for Study of Ethics in the Profession (CSEP) at the Illinois Institute of Technology, here are some factors that need to be considered. When a group of individuals start sharing the same occupation organize to work in a morally permissible way, or to work to support a moral ideal, such as doctors organize to cure the sick, and teachers organize to teach students they may be considered a member of a profession. Members set and follow special standards for carrying on their occupational work. At least one of these standards must go beyond what law, the marketplace, ordinary morality (what an ordinary moral person must do) and public opinion demand. For example, a good mercenary only needs to fulfill the terms of their contract, a good professional soldier must serve their country honorably, even when ordinary morality, law, and public opinion do not require it. These special standards are morally binding to members of the profession. If a member freely declares or professes part of a profession, they are voluntarily implying that they will follow these special moral codes. If the majority of members of a profession follow the standards, the profession will have a good reputation, and members will generally benefit; if the majority of members violate these voluntary standards, professed members of a profession will be at a disadvantage or at the least receive no benefit from declaring a profession. A code of ethics is in place and prescribes how professionals are to pursue their common ideal so that each may do the best they can at a minimal cost to themselves and those they care about (including the public). The code is to protect each professional from certain pressures (for example, the pressure to cut corners to save money) by making it reasonably likely (and more likely then otherwise) that most other members of the profession will not take advantage of her good conduct...A code is a solution to a coordination problem. (Cited from CSEP).

To continue the discussion of what is a profession a member of the profession has certain professional obligations:

1. An individual’s professional obligations are derived from the profession and its code, tradition, society's expectations, contracts, laws, and rules of ordinary morality.

2. A professional has obligations to his/her profession and a responsibility to serve the public interest.

In addition, to be consider a member of a profession there are individual responsibility. The might include, but not limited to the following: 1) sphere of tasks daily responsibilities. The individual performs tasks according to the set of standards aligned with the profession, and is responsible for the outcomes caused
by one’s actions or decisions. The individual accepts the liability for one’s actions or decision. The individual has the capacity to control one's behavior. The individual accepts the moral responsibility, looks ahead, and cares about what happens to oneself and others.

Of course, there are consequences for a professional who does not meet the requirement as set forth by the profession. First, they are negligent because they do not meet the standards. They deliberately do wrong and act unethically. For teachers this could mean a loss in a teaching position or they could lose their license to teach.

To take this argument further let us consider the criteria outlined by R.S. Downie in *Ethics in Education* edited by David Fenner. Downie contents that a professional meets the following criteria: 1) has skills or expertise which proceed from a broad knowledge base. 2) Provided a service to clients by means of a special relationship, which consists of an attitude, and bond. 3) The public recognizes the authority of the professional and has the social function to speak put on matters of social justice. 4) They are independent of the influence of state and commerce. 5) Educated as distinct from merely trained in a narrow sense. 6) Is morally and legally legitimate (Fenner p 15).

Gluchmanova writing in the article “The Importance of ethics in the teaching professionalism” calls for three tenets of professionalism in education. 1) They are in a position to profess substantive beliefs about the meaning a value of education, 2) they are in a position to exercise ethical and professional judgement, 3) they are in a position to acknowledge and resist normalization on themselves student and colleagues. “They are able to articulate an ethic that is clear on the role that resistance plays in order to achieve more defensible educational aims” (Gluchmanova p 510).

To conclude this section a brief summary is required. We stared this section out by asking the question is teaching a profession. It appears as if the answer to this is yes. First, there are as set of standards that they follow and includes a set of ethics; second, they see other members, including those employed elsewhere, as peers/colleagues; third, they exercise judgment in the performance of occupational tasks and follows relevant professional standards. Forth, accepts the profession's agreement to work in a morally permissible way often expressed as a code of ethics as determining in part the obligations of the role.

**Section II Ethics and the moral imperative in teaching profession**

To begin our discussion on the ethics and the moral imperative of teaching we need to examine some basic tenets of ethics and moral imperative. Morality is not just another “subject” teachers teach. Individuals may decide not to be
mathematicians or scientist but they cannot deny their human inheritance of moral behavior (Carr p193). Moreover, it is not just habitual moral behavior, respect your elders and rules of society, it is the behavior to treat each other with human dignity. Let us turn our attention to the issue of ethics and in turn the moral imperative.

Ethics, according to Robert Starratt, is the study of what constitutes a moral life; an ethic is a summary, systematic statement of what is necessary to live a moral life. Moreover, morality is living, the acting out the ethical beliefs and commitment. (Starratt p 5). Ethics are beliefs, assumptions principles, and values that support a moral way of life. The study of ethics is ordering these principles, beliefs, assumptions, and values into a logical dynamic that characterizes a moral life (Starratt p 6).

Teachers therefore are required to hold themselves to a high standard that is grounded in ethics. Their foundation is found in their espoused system of ethics. Richard Shweder, as reported in Haidt, identifies three major clusters related to ethic;

1) The ethic of Autonomy: People should be free to satisfy their wants, needs, and preferences; only so long as they increase human welfare

2) Ethics of Community: People are first members of a larger entity such as families, teams, companies and a race, ethic group etc., communities.

3) Ethic of Divinity: People are temporary vessels within which a divine soul has been transplanted (Haidt p 116).

Let us exam this three ethical themes as related to teaching. First, is the ethic of autonomy. Teachers should be free to satisfy their needs so long as they increase human welfare. They do this by setting a high standard of accountability. Teachers should within the parameters of their ethics, encourage students to engage in open and frank conversations and dialogue and openness of every topic (Carr 240). If, however, this openness leads to interschool conflict and ethical challenges and inflammatory rhetoric, and are in danger of undermining the core values of the school and the teaching profession, it is incumbent on others to confront the individual in a professional manner and seek a compromise. If this is not accomplished then a disciplinary action may result. The guiding premise is to determine how does this challenged action add or defer from increasing the human welfare (Carr 241).
Second, is the ethics of the larger community. Teachers are a member of a larger community that includes students, the school building, school district, surrounding community, state, ethnic group, gender, race, and others. Each of these communities bring its own set of unique ethics. Further, teachers are members of the teaching profession, which comes with its own set of ethical standards. Each of these communities will require the teacher to examine their foundation of their moral imperative and ethical foundation. This is essential when it comes to the culture of the classroom. The challenge is how the teacher respect all the difference, and in some cases, conflicting ethics to their own that are evident in the classroom or surrounding community and yet remain true to their own. This begs the question can teacher, or must a teacher, leave his/her own ethical at the “school house door?” For example, how would the teacher address the issues of a surrounding community or political position regarding transgender students that conflicts with the teacher’s ethical standard, How would the teacher deal with an ethical issue when a school district established a policy regarding the placement of disabled students that is in conflict with the teachers?

Third, is the ethics of Divinity. Teachers often will bring with them the ethics they acquire from their religious foundations. They believe they are the massagers of a divinity and consequence must be true to that message. This can affect the “publicness” of a school system and place the teacher in conflict with the development and implementation of “public policy.”

With these three as the bases, it is now time to examine how it may affect a teacher’s ethics. Take for example number 1, autonomy.

A teacher is well known for her radical progressive and libertarian political and educational views. However, her highly skeptical and critical attitudes to the system and authority now appear to be influencing some students to questions the authority of other teachers with serious consequences regarding discipline (Carr 238).

The ethical issue here is how far can a person take his/her autonomy without undermining the effective deliver of the school. Does the teacher have a ‘right’ to exercise his or her own ethical beliefs? It is important to recall that the teacher is a member of a profession that has a standard governing ethical behavior of its members. To what extent can a teacher use their “power and influence,” yet comply with, and not violate the professional and or organizational ethical
standards? What would/should the consequences be if the teacher “crossed over the line?”

Secondly, what obligations does a teacher have to the larger community’s ethics? Be that the school district, surrounding community, state, or national implied or explicit ethical standards. Let us take for example the “sound” educational practice of placing student based on results of a standardized state, national test. Test for that matter written by someone else and expecting a specific outcome. As Strattatt contents “high stakes testing (standardized tests) shrinks the vision of teachers to the technical dimension of learning. In the simplistic public interpretations educational achievement is equated with standardizes measurements.” (Strattatt p 1). If a teacher does in fact believe that such high stakes testing does shrink their teaching to a technical process, and removes them from making authentic education decisions regarding a student’s educational needs and placements, how are they to rectify the conflict between the larger community standards and their own? If the teacher endorses this then no student will ever be assigned to a course of study based on test scores. Instead, they should be allowed to choose any course of study the school offers with pride and confidence (Nodding p 204).

Lastly, let us examine the issue of the divinity. Perhaps this is not the issue of a belief in a divine being, as much as it mean to be “religious and how that affects and embeds an ethic. Haidt states that religion generates a vast surplus of social capital (Haidt p 311). Therefore, the belief in a divinity and being religious and therefore a set of ethics grounded in this brings a sense that a teacher can teach students to be “good caring citizens” this ethic can play out on the school.

To continue the discussion of ethics and the teaching profession, according to Gluchmanova, virtue ethics are the most important ethic in education and teaching. Consider what virtue ethics the teacher is modeling for the student and encouraging thought the curriculum. It is very important, according to Gluchmanova, to grasp the effects of virtue ethics on students. Gluchmanova further stress the importance of ethics in teaching resulting in the globalizations of education. Education has become more focused on “complex issues of identity, diversity, and citizenship” (Gluchmanova p 510).

Once a person begins thinking about the ethical issues and moral imperative that teachers encounter on a day-to-day basis, it becomes relatively easy to identify ethical issues in what can and should be taught.
To conclude this section a brief summary is necessary. A teacher’s ethics and the moral imperative are grounded in several areas. First, ethics is a foundation that is built from a teacher’s belief system. It can be from religious beliefs and or social construct. Second, in understanding the ethics of teaching it is important to accept that a teacher is a member of a “profession” that holds its members to an ethical standard. Third, professional ethics play out in the classroom and teachers ethical obligations and moral imperative. This goal is to teach students good citizenship

Section III Ethical dilemmas and conflicts faced by teachers

Teaches are faced with ethical dilemmas and conflicts on a daily bases. Many of these conflicts and dilemmas are in such areas as the purpose and disagreement with standardized testing, grading, student placements, diversity and the many cultures in a classroom, incompetence of colleagues, parental advocacy, disagreement with leadership, bureaucracy, curriculum expectations, ensuring the fulfillment of the moral imperative, cyber bulling, and ethical use of technology. In addition, teachers are faced with “new challenges of balancing local, state, national, and global norms and moral as well as ethical values in the process of educating children.” (Gluchmanova p 510).

How teachers address these dilemma and conflicts that surface almost on a daily bases, is in large part supported by their ethical foundations. To begin with, teachers must create learning culture that is based on cultural civility. Consequently, it is incumbent of the teacher to have a solid grounding of their ethics and the purpose of the moral imperative. The expected outcome of this is to create a learning environment where all persons are respected and human dignity is central. It means to create and maintain an authentic working relationship with students, administrators, parents, and colleagues.

According to Starratt it is the responsibility for teachers to teach civic learning and cultivate “learning community that embraces the learning and practice of civic responsibility, such an environment would not only attend to academic lesson about citizenship, but also include many developmental appropriate ways students negotiate conflict in schools” (Starratt p 59). By teaching in this environment teachers will themselves became more inclined with civility. To continue with this line of reasoning; Haidt contents that if you put “individuals together in this way, such that individuals can use their reason (civility) and powers to disconfirm the claims of others and all individuals feel a common bond and share fate that allows them to interact civilly, you can create a class (italics added) that ends up
producing good reasoning as an emergent property of a social system----intellectually and ideological diversity within groups or institutions whose goal is to find truth such as to produce good public policy” (Haidt p 105). To educate people to act more ethically means you need to change in incremental ways change the environment one finds themselves in which can result in major ethical changes.

An understanding of the processes as poised by Starratt and Haidt may very well assist the teachers in resolving some of the ethical conflicts and ensuring the commitment to the moral imperative. However, it is important to note that there is no one answer that teachers can look to resolve the plethora of ethical issues in education. Each conflict and or dilemma is in and of itself unique and will require through analysis to reach a resolution.

Following are some strategies that the teacher might want to consider in addressing any ethical conflicts. First, they should consider the standardization of their work, remembering they are a responsible to protect the public and the students they serve. Second, they must modify their behaviors based on common sense. Their profession is defined by certain judgements and not merely by the knowledge, the judgment presupposes, Third, they are not a teacher just because of way they know, but because they show good character which results in good judgement.

Another strategy is to ensure that what is taught in the classroom is authentic learning. Authentic learning is not asking the questions standardized testing an ethical challenge: to ask someone to respond to a someone else’s questions. (Starratt p 2) Instead, authentic learning, according to Starratt, is; a) organize, synthesize, interpret explain or evaluate complex information, b) consider alternative solutions strategies perspectives or points of view as they address concepts of a problem or an issue, c) use ideas theories or perspective considered central to an academic or professional discipline, d) use methods of inquiry, research, or communications characteristics of an academic or professional discipline, e) elaborate on their understanding, explanations or conclusions through extended writing using analysis theory or argument, f) address a concept problem or issues as they are likely to encounter in life beyond the classroom, g) communicate their knowledge present a product or performance or take some action for an audience beyond the classroom (Starratt p 56). Civic learning; Administrator (inserted teacher) is responsible for cultivating a learning community that embraces the learning and practice of civic responsibility, such an
environment would not only attend to the academic lessons about citizenship, but also include many developmentally appropriate ways students to negotiate conflict as it arise in the school (Starratt p59).

Further, Haiti contents that

“If you put individuals together in the right way, such that individual can use their reasoning powers to disconfirm the claims of others and all individuals feel common bond and shared fate that allow them to interact civilly, you can create a group that ends up producing good reasoning as an emergent property of the social system------intellectual and ideological diversity within groups or institutions whose goal is to find truth such as to produce good public policy” (Haidt page 105)

To educate people to act more ethically means you need to change the in incremental ways change the environment one find themselves which can result in major ethical changes.(Haidt Page 106). If children get enough experience of taking turns, sharing, and playground justice they will eventually become a moral creature, able to use rational capacities to solve even harder problems (Haidt page 7). This may go a long way to resolving ethical conflicts.

When there is a conflict with those in authority, the teacher has to seek a course of action that most benefits the students while taking into consideration their responsibility to other stakeholders (Starratt p 62). Theses responsibilities include

“a) as a human being, b) as a teacher (administrator) c) as a citizen, d) his or her students, e) colleagues, f) parents, g) other school officials, h) state and local governments, i) create and sustaining authentic working relationships with stakeholders, j) create and sustaining a healthy learning environment, k) healthy environments for learning and practice civic virtues for all learner” (adapted from Starratt p 63).

Moreover, when addressing an ethical or moral imperative conflict a teacher must be true to one’s self. To not be true to oneself would be to miss the point of one’s life. They must model that they expect from their students. Students construct their moral understanding on the absolute truth that harm is wrong. Schools should embody progressive principles of equality and autonomy and not authoritarian principles that enable elders to train certain children. Educators must become ethical practitioners! Further, teachers, according to Aristotle, must teach moral education. Children should be taught to behave virtuously. The virtues identified
in the very best citizens are inculcated at appropriate ages in children. When virtues are well established, people can safely raise questions and engage in critical analysis of the society and its customs (Reported in Noddings p166).

According to Rebore there are five principles of ethical leadership that must also be evident in the classroom: a) the human dignity of each person is the foundation of decision making, b) Administrators, teachers, and staff members have a right to the empowerment that is necessary to exercise their responsibility, c) the very nature of the profession, educators are called to solidarity with students who are at risk, d) Equality of opportunity for students and educators is embedded in the goal of schools and school districts, e) stewardship of schools and school wide assets is a public trust that is the responsibility of all members of the school, school district and community (Rebore p 318). These principles if instituted practiced and modeled in the classroom, school building may well minimize any ethical, and more conflicts.

To further this point according to Dewey, as summaries in Noddings states; an act is judged ethically acceptable or unacceptable according to the consequences it produces. The primary criterion of ethical behavior is willingness to accept responsibility for the full range of anticipated outcomes. The outcome must be acceptable to all involved (Noddings p 163).

Moreover, from a policy standpoint, and to assist in resolving ethical conflict, school reform, and curriculum policy makers should decide what it is that they want to equalize (Noddings p 202). They must work toward a system in which all students can experience success, but success for one student does not necessarily mean success for another.

In the classroom while addressing ethical conflicts, teachers must embrace the construct of “social worth” and understand that ethics is far more than just making decision about what is the right and wrong way to act in a given situation. All human beings are innately free and have the right of self-determination simply because of their humanity. This principle can be mitigated only if a person’s conduct impinges on the freedom and self-determination of others (Rebore p 6).

The last point in this discussion is to offer some practical suggestions to assist teachers in making ethical decision: a) identify the problem, b) analysis the problem, who, what and context, c) analyze the values involved that are influenced by a person’s beliefs and convictions, d) identify norms that should guide and protects the person’s values, e) explore the consequences of the action, f) compares
the consequences with the values, g) if the consequences and values are inconsistent, explore other alternatives and test them to gain feedback about the norms that protect the person’s value, and h) If the consequences and the values are consistent perform the action (Rebore p 31).

It is critical to remember the culture of a classroom is depended on manner in which a teacher yields the power of the position of teacher. Every teacher should show equal treatment of dignity to every person as an individual starting with his or her first lesson. Gluchmanova state that a moral life helps the development of human life, it protects it and a supports it. The principal and value of human dignity should be among the most significant mutual relationship of a teachers towards their students and students toward their teacher (Gluchmanova p 512). What a teacher models will be effective.

To conclude this section and to offer a summary conclusion a few comments are necessary. It is incumbent on every teacher and in every classroom to create a leaning environment that is grounded on cultural civility. Teachers must establish a classroom that has as its focus dignity and respect for human kindness. As Gluchmanova states, “it is the moral way and ethical way that helps the development of human life” (Gluchmanova p 512). To follow this “creed, teachers will fulfill the moral imperative and is founded on an ethical standards; teacher and consequently teaching will be recognized as profession. Moreover, they will be creating a learning environment where the only outcome can be teaching student to be ‘good citizens.’”