

Ethics Forum Learning Community (EFLC)

What is the Ethics Forum Learning Community?

The Ethics Forum originated as a result of discussions started by the Leadership Development MIG in an effort to collaborate on the topic of ethics across ILA communities. Jan Byers, Tom Sechrest, and Ted Thomas were on an ethics panel at the 11th Annual ILA Conference in Prague, Czech Republic in 2009. The participation in that session and the interest expressed by members in having a Learning Community devoted to ethics was quite strong. The Ethics Forum became a formal Learning Community in 2011.

When describing either a transactional or a transformational leader, one of the conceptual descriptors always includes ethics. Though the Ethics Forum Learning Community is relatively new, there have been many discussions and presentations around ethics since the ILA began. Now there is a place—a home, if you will—for the continuation of these discussions and presentations.

There are many ways to approach ethical leadership; through research, as practice, with frameworks and theories as part of education, and in individual, organizational and cultural contexts. It crosses Member Interest Group boundaries. Whether for-profit, not-for-profit, public sector, private sector, young or old, man or woman, ethics has always been and will always be a part of what ILA espouses to those who practice, study or teach leadership.

At the initial discussion in Prague, a broad range of topics was discussed, including ethical relativism, the impact of culture/context/peer pressure/age, how to initiate and sustain a conversation about ethics, why unethical behavior is tolerated, how ethics is taught, whether ethical choices are conscious or unconscious, whether ILA needs a code of ethics (and whether *any* organization needs a code of ethics), whether or not leaders who have demonstrated unethical behavior can be salvaged, how the ethical culture of an organization can be changed, what tools for ethical enlightenment and education are the most promising, and how to measure and report ethics outcomes, among other topics.

At the 12th Annual ILA Conference in Boston, we continued the discussion begun the year before and validated the interest in the formation of a Learning Community.

At the 14th Annual ILA Conference in Denver, there was a facilitated discussion about *shared values* that allowed Ethics Forum members to discuss what they thought membership in ILA and in the Ethics Forum Learning Community meant.

At the 15th Annual ILA Conference in Montreal, Catharyn Baird, CEO of *The Ethics Game*, gave an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of the work she does.

At the 16th Annual ILA Conference in San Diego, Jan Byars, Tom Sechrest and Ted Thomas facilitated a workshop on *The Ethics of Social Media* that generated lots of buzz.

The Ethics Forum has also sponsored or co-sponsored several webinars, including *Leading Ethically* with Walter Fluker, *Becoming a Trustworthy Leader* with Aneil and Karen Mishra, *From our Heart to our head: Strategies for Effective Ethical Leadership* with Catharyn Baird, and *The Ethics Education of Business Leaders* with Tom Culham. All of these webinars are archived on the ILA website and are available to members.

More is on the way!

Who are the leaders of this community?

From its inception as an idea to its formation as an official Learning Community, Jan Byars, Tom Sechrest, and Ted Thomas have worked together to provide a voice for members and to organize activities at ILA Conferences and during the year related to ethics and ethical leadership. At the Ethics Forum business meeting during the 16th Annual ILA Conference in San Diego, California USA in October 2014, Tom Sechrest was selected as the first formal “Chair” of the Community and Lonnie Morris was selected as Chair-elect. Jan and Ted continue to support Tom and Lonnie as they continue the work that was started in 2009.

All members of ILA—wherever you are located in the world--are encouraged to seek out leadership roles in the Member Interest Groups and in the Learning Communities. If you are one of the over 600 members who are affiliated with the Ethics Forum Learning Community, please reach out to either Tom or Lonnie (or Jan or Ted) to share your ideas for activities and to express your interest in taking a future leadership role.