

2024-2025 Middle School Ethics Bowl Case Set

To learn more about this event, please visit:

<https://www.ethicsatkentplace.org/student-programs/middle-school-ethics-bowl>

Cases Written by the Writing Committee:

Asha Jani (student), Ayushi Wadhwa (student), Charlie Ford (student),
Claire Cherill (student), Erik Kenyon (committee member),
Katie MacKay (student), Maya Medeiros (student),
Nicholas Machado (teacher), Noura Kalife-Pacheco (student),
Paul Athanasiou (student), Sally Zeiner (teacher),
Sebastian Linscott (student), and Sonia Nikhil (student)

**And edited for final approval by the Middle School Ethics Bowl Executive
Committee:**

Erik Kenyon, Roberta Israeloff, and Karen Rezach

Case 2: Number on the Scale

Blue Ridge Middle School has a new wrestling program. Coach Wilson, who wrestled in high school and college and loves the sport, runs the team with high expectations. Even though he has a family, he spends extra time at school every day helping those on the wrestling team refine their skills. He expects team members to take their training very seriously, working every day to improve. During practice, wrestlers work out with partners who are roughly the same size to see that matches are fair.

Although the Blue Ridge wrestling program began as a way for interested students to get into good physical condition and learn the sport, Coach Wilson feels that the team has learned so much that they are ready to participate in tournaments. He believes that competing is the best way for his young wrestlers to further improve. In accordance with tournament guidelines, he begins sorting wrestlers into predetermined weight classes.

The decision to enter a tournament creates an uproar among parents and the wrestlers themselves. Some parents feel that it is preposterous for Blue Ridge wrestlers to enter tournaments in which they will be put into weight classes. These parents have read about student wrestlers who try to gain or lose weight by either force feeding or starving themselves to meet their desired weight. Parents worry that their children will become obsessed with the number on the scale, desperately trying to “make the weight” in order to compete. This obsession has led competitive wrestlers around the country to develop eating disorders which can impair their mental health. Aware of this, some members of the Blue Ridge team who are already insecure about their weight worry that competing may prove degrading and frightening.

Others in the school community support the decision to enter the tournament. Some parents share Coach Wilson’s belief that by participating in the tournament, students become more disciplined, serious wrestlers who will be better prepared to wrestle in high school. He argues that matching wrestlers by weight class is the only way to ensure fairness. Some parents are also eager for the tournament. They support their children who are excited by the prospect of competition. These wrestlers feel that they have been working hard and have earned a right to compete.

Match Questions

1. How should the coach respond to the concerns raised by parents about weight classes?
2. How much risk should parents permit for middle school students engaged in wrestling?

Study Questions

1. How should we balance concerns for student development and concerns for safety?
2. What responsibility do coaches have for members of their team?
3. Do weight classes actually make wrestling matches fair?