

CEP Forms Partnership to Improve Academic Integrity

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A new Academic Integrity Network was announced during the 2008 National Forum on Character Education. The Network's goal is to facilitate dialogue between secondary schools seeking to advance successful strategies in support of academic integrity. To better emphasize this important topic, the National Forum included three breakout sessions that focused on academic integrity.

The Academic Integrity Network is administered by The School for Ethical Education (SEE) in Milford, CT, in partnership with CEP in Washington, DC. SEE is engaged in a three-year project to implement and study strategies that high schools can use to reduce academic dishonesty.

Current data show that 65% or more of high school students participate in some form of cheating during the school year. Ignoring evidence of wide-spread cheating has a corrosive effect on the overall character development of young people. It also hinders the objectives of authentic learning.

Dr. Jason Stephens with the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut is collaborating with SEE to help schools implement and study the outcomes of their own strategic plan to address integrity issues. The plan is based on a comprehensive school change model that encourages school administrators, faculty, students and parents to work together and advance research-based approaches in support of integrity.

Additional project information and resources to support academic integrity can be found at SEE's Web site, <http://www.ethicsed.org/programs/integrity-works/index.htm>. SEE's site is also the host of the new Academic Integrity Network, <http://www.ethicsed.org/programs/integrity-works/ain.htm>. There is no cost to join the Network.

The topic of academic integrity has been a difficult subject for educators to address. Surprisingly, it is often the students themselves who insist that teachers or administrators take some form of action to reduce cheating. Below are student comments from SEE's current study:

I just think that if teachers made sure students understood the topic they wouldn't feel the need to cheat, because everyone gets excited when they do well by themselves. And if that happens and if teachers really don't want you to cheat, they should watch you more carefully.

Cheating needs to definitely be taken more seriously in my school, I only have one teacher that checks desks before tests for notes that may be written there and that needs to change.

I hate how some of the kids in the top 20 or so are only there because they cheat and nothing happens to them. It puts me at an extreme disadvantage because I have the hardest possible classes for my grade, but I don't cheat, so I'm at a disadvantage.

These student observations point to some of the key recommendations that can be implemented in schools to promote academic integrity. They include clarifying the teachers' and schools' commitment to core values that include integrity; teaching for mastery learning and not just grades; and greater attention by teachers when administering tests. These recommendations and other strategies, along with example honor policies, codes and pledges, can be found on SEE's Web site. CEP and SEE celebrate this new partnership to provide resources supporting academic integrity in schools.