

Academic Integrity E-Update

January 2011



Students Seek Support for Academic Integrity

David B. Wangaard, Ed.D.

In a September 1 *Education Week* essay, Christopher Doyle noted, "My students are asking for help to lead more honest lives. ... All we need to do is... engage them, and follow through with the conversation." (pg 20). I have also recognized students want adult help to resist academic dishonesty. My introduction to this student concern took place during a site visit for the Character Education Partnership's National Schools of Character Program in a high school near Eugene, Oregon. Students at this school were justifiably proud of an academic integrity committee they had founded after compelling the school faculty to support the initiative. Students reported they had been frustrated with the level of cheating taking place in the school and wanted to organize an effective response.

High school students in the northeast have expressed the same concerns. After completing our Academic Motivation and Integrity Survey ([AMIS](#)), over 600 students from six high schools representing a broad diversity of social-economic communities provided anonymous responses to the question, "What can your school do to reduce cheating?"

The largest number of students' statements (20%) supported the theme—"The school should create and enforce stricter consequences for dishonesty." One representative statement from that theme is provided here.

I don't think that academic integrity is really enforced. Students cheat. They don't get caught. I wish that the school had a program or something that would help prevent cheating. I would like to see a clearer policy and I would like it to be enforced. Students should be aware of the policy. ...The problem in the school is that kids know they can get away with cheating...

Sixteen themes were identified in a qualitative sorting of all student responses. There is an executive summary of these themes available from SEE, which we would be happy to supply if requested.

One goal of this newsletter is to encourage adult support for the students who want to advocate for academic integrity in their school. [Strategies](#) for a local academic integrity committee are suggested on the link here.

Ten Reasons not to Cheat

Cheating is an ethical/moral failure that harms the individual and society (school). Use the following list to

promote student discussion or solicit student responses to the question, "Are there reasons I should not cheat?" and then compare them to the list provided here.

Cheating harms the individual by--

1. Rationalizing their cheating which leads to more cheating (in and out of academics) and a corruption of their own ethical/moral code,
2. Failing to engage in the authentic learning and mastery of academic material and thus harming their own education,
3. Harming their reputation (they are frauds, liars and intellectual thieves) and facing consequences that can be serious,
4. Reducing the enjoyment of accomplishments earned through genuine effort.

Cheating harms society by—

1. Creating an environment of broken trust, which then limits the ability of students and students and faculty to work together meaningfully and collaboratively,
2. Breaking trust leads to more cheating as cheating becomes "normal" and the way to compete in the school culture,

3. Lowering standards which can reduce the moral authority of school leaders,
4. Forcing cheaters to depend on authentic learners (because cheaters haven't learned or mastered their own academic work) as cheaters are not as able to be as productive in society while they rely on the creative work of others,
5. Requiring productive students/citizens to spend time and effort protecting themselves (intellectual property, ideas, writing, exam answers) from cheaters which is non-productive work,
6. Miss-appropriating the authentically earned rights/privileges of those who do not cheat.

Like us on Facebook

If you are willing to help us expand the social network of educators committed to academic integrity, we invite you to (1) visit our new [Integrity Works!](#) Facebook page that supports links to our program website, (2) press the "like" tab to be added to our updates and (3) join and spread the word about membership to our free [Academic Integrity Network](#).

If you would like any additional information about how SEE could help you evaluate and create a strategic plan to advance academic integrity at your school contact us at ethics@ethicsed.org.



Integrity Works! is a project of *The School for Ethical Education (SEE)*,
440 Wheelers Farms Rd., Milford, CT 06461 www.ethicsed.org

Ethics in action creates character.