Ethics in action creates character

New school year tips:

1. *Create mini-deadlines for larger projects*

2. *Grade products of mini-deadlines*

3. *Teach students to use editing tools to check for originality before turning in assignment*

Planning for Integrity

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Time, or the lack of it, is often cited by students as their rationalization for compromising their academic integrity. We understand that students' lives are complicated today by work, extra-curricular activities and the demands placed on them to enhance their transcript and resume for college. These time demands are cited by students as justification for cheating such as plagiarism, unauthorized collaborations or use of crib notes on exams. While the time demands are real, we can also recognize where time is mismanaged and this is where teachers can help their students stay on an ethical high road.

As educators committed to academic integrity, we can help students in the way we design, assign and grade project work. Whenever a project requires multiple days to complete, we can choose to teach and train successful time management by breaking the assignment up into smaller tasks with corresponding due dates. Thus, rather than assigning a research paper with a due date in 30 days (and the resulting one grade), we can choose to teach and train students to submit (1) their topic and draft thesis statement on day 5, (2) an abstracted bibliography with complete citations on day 10, (3) a detailed outline with inclusion of possible quotes with their final bibliography on day 15, (4) the draft of their paper which has been self-checked for originality (as with TurnItIn) on day 20, and finally (5) the final paper on day 30.

Clearly we've created more work for ourselves with five grading tasks as opposed to one, but what have we gained? We've gained the engagement of students by day 5 and almost guaranteed the work they complete cannot simply be copied from others. We gained a more authentic learning experience for students as the project unfolds over 30 days and the students practice excellent research and writing strategies that couldn't be completed in a one-weekend rush. We've placed value on the research and writing process and provided four additional teaching opportunities with the additional graded deadlines.
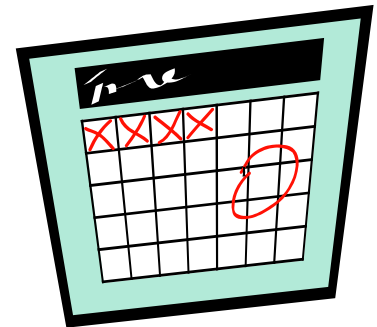
There is no getting around the extra work if we believe in the importance of assigning larger projects. Otherwise we must recognize we will lose a certain percentage of our students to the panicked and often ethically compromised process of researching and writing a "weekend wonder."

It is recognized that using the strategy of mini-deadlines is an individual teacher's choice to support student's academic integrity. The school faculty as a team can further choose to create a strategy to avoid placing major projects or exams on the same dates for the same class cohort. With the availability of Google calendar or other school calendar tools, this is another (and much simpler) strategy to help your students avoid teacher-created time pressures.

What would you do?

It is useful for us to reflect on our students' experiences in school and by placing ourselves in their shoes, consider how we might help facilitate a better learning

experience. SEE teaches a four-component strategy to support ethical action and encourages you to respond to the following questions regarding a school-based ethical case and then replicate the discussion with your students.

A Hypothetical Case
Another text! Emilia is glad she bought the high-use data plan. There are multiple electronic conversations going on during her study hall. A new text is from a friend in a Spanish exam. She is asking for help with some vocabulary. Emilia is an honors Spanish student and knows the answer. While she's not in the classroom, she knows she could still be accused of cheating. Should Emilia reply to the text?

Reflection Questions
   (1) Is there an ethical situation here?
   (2) What would an ethical person do?
   (3) If I were Emilia, what would I do and why?
   (4) What skills would I need to carry out an ethical decision?

In our full teaching protocols, the reflection questions here include a series of steps and skills that help students and teachers advance to an ethical action. We have found these skills can help students reflect more deeply on the ethical issues associated with academic integrity. The same process can also be applied to ethical analysis of cases in history, literature or science. If you are interested in learning more about this process, contact SEE for additional information.

About SEE
The School for Ethical Education is a not-for-profit teaching agency in Milford, CT with the mission to advance strategies to put ethics in action to create character. As a non-sectarian 501(C)3, SEE is supported by fees for service, grants and donations. For more information visit our website at www.ethicsed.org

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