

Chapter 10

Pop Quiz Debacle

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is now commonplace for students to bring PDAs and smart phones into the classroom, which gives them swift access to the internet. While this technology is a benefit for students conducting research for a project, it can also be detrimental for educators conducting assessments. “Pop Quiz Debacle” describes a particular quandary for educators who work with advanced placement or Gifted/Talented students. For students with a very high GPA and other academic performance, what distinguishes them is how perfect they are, so there’s no room for any kind of error. If there’s no room for error, students tend to cheat—even though these students would have done just fine on the test. They say they cheat because, “this is my safety net.”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The vast advances in computer technology in recent years have changed the way we use computers. Gone are the days where you had to sit at a desk to operate a computer, nowadays you have powerful computer access in the palm of your hand. It is now commonplace for students to bring PDA’s and smart phones into the classroom which gives them swift access to the internet. While this technology is a benefit for students conducting research for a project, it can also be detrimental for educators conducting assessments. Additionally, the boundaries defining right and wrong are becoming blurred. Everyday the news reports of public figures involved in criminal activity, immoral activity or deceit. It seems that integrity is no longer revered in

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our society. The combination of the decrease in integrity along with technological advances poses significant concerns for educators. Not only is cheating on the rise nationally, but there has also been a cultural shift in who cheats and why.

Ask a high school or college student about cheating and most will justify it by saying, “Everybody does it.” Survey statistics back up the statement.

Researchers found that nationally, 75 percent of all high school students cheat. But the ones who cheat more are the ones who have the most to lose—the honors and advanced placement students. Eighty percent of honors and AP students cheat on a regular basis.

The following case study describes a particular quandary for educators who work with advanced placement or Gifted/Talented students.

THE CASE

Mrs. Washington was a GT Specialist at Jefferson Creek Intermediate School. She enjoyed working with the GT students and strived to not only properly educate them, but to instill in them a desire to achieve higher goals.

Jefferson Creek Intermediate School had both an honor code policy and cell phone policy that was explained to the students at the beginning of each year. However, Mrs. Washington was aware that these policies were violated several times a year. The school administrators recognized that the technology policy in conjunction with the existing code policy and cell phone policy needed to be reviewed and revised, but they were concerned about parents’ viewpoints regarding more stringent guidelines and how it would affect emergency communication with their child.

One of Mrs. Washington’s favorite groups of students to work with was from Mr. Walters’ class. Lindsey, Tracy, Heather, Ian, and Brady were all very motivated learners. She could always count on them to provide lively viewpoints during class discussions. She considered them to be some of the best students in the school.

On Tuesday Mrs. Washington and the students were discussing the movie *The Count of Monte Cristo*. She wanted to discover how the students perceived the character’s actions. She queried first about Villefort’s decision to imprison Dantes even though he had done nothing wrong.

The students offered many possible reasons for Dantes’ decision however it seemed to Mrs. Washington that the students were dismissing Villefort’s behavior and not holding him accountable for his actions. Mrs. Washington prompted, “so you are saying that Villefort’s actions were permissible?”

Again, the students offered possible reasons why such a decision may be permissible.

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