

Superintendent – College President Partnership

A Reaffirmation of Integrity: Learning in the 21st century

We, the school superintendents and college and university presidents of Long Island, collectively find cheating in its many manifestations to be increasingly prevalent, ethically corrupting, and all too commonly accepted in our contemporary culture. As competition intensifies and technology becomes ubiquitous, society's increasing acceptance of cheating threatens the ability of our schools and colleges to educate students humanely for the 21st century. We collectively reaffirm an overriding obligation to teach students ethical and moral standards of behavior, especially in the area of academic honesty where we have, in particular, a vested role to play.

Academic integrity means that the work submitted by students is done with the highest ethical standards appropriate to the students' age and grade level. *Cheating, the antithesis of academic integrity, can be grouped into the following broad categories:

- *Plagiarism: representing in any academic activity the words or ideas of another as one's own without proper acknowledgement;*
- *Fabrication: providing information of an event that never occurred or non-existent facts;*
- *Collusion: scheming by two or more students to defraud;*
- *Forgery: imitating or counterfeiting documents, signatures, et cetera, to deceive;*
- *Inappropriate possession: the unauthorized use of materials, data or prior examinations;*
- *Examination fraud: violating the integrity of a test or examination*

*based on and modified from the Half Hollow Hills Academic Integrity Policy

For students to submit assignments or take exams while perpetrating any of these violations is dishonest. The underlying core principle is that students of every age must be tested on their knowledge and learn to complete their work independently and, if they have assistance and have used sources, must cite these works using age appropriate formats. As learning communities, we need explicitly to teach the concept of honesty throughout the academic environment, both to instill pride in work and to ensure that each student understands where his or her work leaves off and where someone else's is substituted.

Honesty and integrity are learned values and, as such, must be taught, internalized and prized. As educators, we have a solemn obligation to teach these values, to clarify what is and is not academic integrity, and to demand that students demonstrate behaviors consistent with them. This is our covenant which cannot be winked at or debased.

As early as kindergarten, students, alone or with friends and family, use various technologies to record, copy, download, transfer, modify and print photos, videos, songs, games and documents. Therefore, concepts of copyright and intellectual property rights need to be introduced early. Otherwise students may come to believe that what they have "created" through technology-enabled means is their original work. Too often today students copy directly from the work of others. Inculcating the principles of academic integrity in students is hindered at times when siblings or parents create, write or research significant portions of an assignment for the student.

Students must learn to interact with traditional print as well as contemporary digital media. They must understand how to work on collective projects. As they mature they need to handle appropriately peer-to-peer file sharing, information sharing via internet sources and a host of new learning environments. Educators, therefore, have expanding responsibilities to assure that students understand the concepts of ownership of work and intellectual property and are able to draw clear distinctions between their own work, the work of others and that of a group. Too often high school and college students resort to purchasing works off the Internet, missing tests and assignments under false pretexts, or citing sources in a research paper that were not consulted.

Honesty and integrity in the academic environment are relevant, therefore, to students of all ages from kindergarten to graduate school and must be constantly reinforced. As leaders of schools and colleges charged with educating responsible citizens, we reaffirm our commitment to our own personal ethical values and pledge to foster these values in the staff members who serve at our educational institutions. We urge everyone in our educational communities to embrace these values.

We therefore collectively pledge to:

- I. teach academic integrity and honesty to students of every age;
- II. develop and implement explicit and age appropriate guidelines for students and parents;
- III. adopt a pedagogy that promotes student ownership of work; and
- IV. develop and implement modalities to celebrate examples of academic integrity within our schools and colleges.