



## Cheating: Friends and Web-Based Exams

“Cheating is not really considered a bad thing by students. Since everyone does it once in a while, it is kind of like going over the speed limit. Everyone knows that it is against the rules, but everyone still does it.” A male student made this comment in an exploratory discussion group the researchers (referenced below) used to better understand students’ beliefs and attitudes about cheating. The quote is a grim reminder why academic integrity continues to be such a prevalent and pernicious problem at our institution.

The research reported in this article covers many aspects of cheating—how to measure it, the impact of certain situational variables as well as individual variables and its presence in the business field generally and marketing specifically. From its wealth of data, we will highlight two particularly intriguing results, but not without noting first that this study also confirms the widespread presence of cheating. “Consistent with past research, our results indicate that most students will cheat at least some time during their academic tenure in college. Nearly 75% of all students will cheat at some point in some situation. Even more disconcerting is our finding that if we exclude those students who have admitted they cheated and those who say they would cheat in at least one of the scenarios, only 14% of the students are left.” (p. 246)

Of special interest in these findings is the role friends play in cheating episodes. Students in this study were given four different scenarios, and for each they were asked what they would do if the student seeking to involve them in cheating was a friend or an acquaintance. “In the four scenarios, 37% of the students stated they would give answers to someone on a test,

63% would use a ‘stolen’ copy of an exam to study for a test, 42% would participate in a group involved in e-cheating, and 14% would participate in a group involved in e-cheating when the instructor warned of electronic surveillance and word-of-mouth corroborated the instructor’s statement. It is noteworthy that the percentages dropped substantially (to 8%, 40%, 14% and 4% respectively) if the scenario involved an acquaintance rather than a friend.” (p. 243)

Also of interest in this research was consideration of Web-based testing. In this sample 24 percent reported that they had already cheated on an electronic exam, and 42 percent indicated that they would given the opportunity. In one of the scenarios on electronic exams, students were asked if they would join a group that planned to share information and take the exam together, even though the instructor had given strict warnings about taking the test alone. When asked what they thought most other students would do in this situation, 76 percent said they thought other students would cheat with their friends. Only 2 percent said they would decline and then turn their “friends” in for cheating. When the same scenario was used but students were told the instructor used electronic surveillance and some had been caught, the percentage who reported that they would cheat dropped to 14 percent. This shows that pursuing cheaters deters many from cheating.

When the exam is online, the “friends” don’t even have to be from the same class. They can be summoned from anywhere and may include those “friends” who have already successfully completed the class. The researchers recommend that if using Web-based exams, instructors should consider “open-book” formats, place strict

time limits on completing the exams, and post answers only after all students have completed the exam.

On a slightly more encouraging note, the 824 business students who participated in this study, did have a clear understanding of those behaviors that constitute cheating. Eighty-eight percent said it was cheating when students worked together on an electronic exam when they had been told explicitly to complete the exam on their own. Of the seven cheating situations listed, more than 85 percent agreed that six of them were cheating. But only 58 percent said it was cheating when a student obtained information about an exam from someone enrolled in the course previously even though the instructor had explicitly asked those students not to discuss exam contents with other students.

Reference: Chapman, K. J., Davis, R., Toy, D., and Wright, L. (2004). Academic integrity in the business school environment: I’ll get by with a little help from my friends. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 26 (3), 236-249. ♥

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## High-Maintenance Students

Does the title resonate with you? Do you think you might have one or two? Would you describe them as those students who complain and whine beyond reasonable limits? Do they sap your energy? Are they the students you most happily see go at the course's end?

High-maintenance employees have been studied, but not high maintenance students. However, as Lisa A. Burke observes in this initial exploration of the topic (reference below), "for most college instructors, it is no strain to generalize this construct to the instructional setting." (p. 744) Burke uses research on personality profiles to predict high-maintenance students, offers several research propositions, and makes some early suggestions as to how faculty can constructively deal with students like these.

High-maintenance students often look quite the opposite when they first present themselves to teachers. They appear to be extremely conscientious and motivated. They are among the first students to show up during office hours. They ask questions and want to discuss assignments in detail. But at some point what appeared to be interest and dedication turn into something less constructive. Perhaps you returned a quiz on which the student scores 9.8 out of 10. The student follows you to the office, asking for repeated explanation of why the .2 of a point was taken off. They express disappointment and frustration, seemingly unable to reckon with the fact they still got an A. Next the student may express concern about being placed in a group with certain other students, some of whom she just knows don't "like" her. Then there are personal issues, illness or family problems, that spawn requests for deadline extensions and discussions of difficulties in other courses. And on and on it goes.

Based on personality research, Burke proposes that high-maintenance students are most likely those who rate high on conscientiousness—individuals who are described as methodical, achievement oriented, diligent, organized, exacting, and purposeful—and those who rate low on

agreeableness. Those with that combination of traits are characterized as being strict, rigid, industrious, hard, and deliberate. "These students are unlikely to be considerate or cooperative. . .and at the same time are likely to maintain high expectations and definitive prescriptions. . .for their own school-related outcomes (grades)." (p. 750)

Burke cautions that the predisposition many academics have to help and support students allow them to be easily drawn into responding to the needs of these students. A situation of co-dependency may result where the student needs a lot of help and the faculty member supplies a lot of help. The problem here is that the more help the faculty member gives, the more the student needs. It's a vicious circle.

Based on research with managers, Burke recommends that faculty members help these students to find their own solutions. The teacher provides general direction, resources, and tools. This prevents the high-maintenance student from dumping his or her incessant concerns on the instruction to solve.

Burke worries that this kind of student is not likely to be successful in the workplace, and so it is important that teachers help them gain insight into their behaviors. She cites research that documents how few managers have an accurate self-understanding and suggests that inexperienced students likely have even less insight. She recommends self-awareness tools as well "straightforward, honest, specific behavioral feedback" (p. 752) as to the affects of those high-maintenance behaviors.

Perhaps it is comforting to know that high-maintenance behaviors try the patience and test the mettle of virtually all college teachers. Students like these daily confront us with the fact that sometimes the most important lessons we need to teach learn have nothing to do with course content.

Reference: Burke, L. A. (2004). High-maintenance students: A conceptual exploration and implications. *Journal of Management Education*, 28 (6), 743-756. ♥

# Visualizing Thinking: A Strategy that Improves Thinking

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As every instructor will attest, teaching students to think critically about any subject matter can be an uphill battle. Could it be that the process of solving complex problems needs to be translated into a paradigm that students can grasp -- visually? After years of persistent effort in teaching students the art of discovering relationships, inferences, biases, synthesis, etc. in an introductory health course, I have found one of the most effective ways to teach critical thinking is to allow students to envision what their thinking looks like before and after instruction. When students can clearly see their thinking process, it is much easier for them to transform illogical thinking into clear, organized, and logical thinking. I expedite the process of students' envisioning their thinking with a two-part assignment which includes a two-page critique of a newspaper or journal article and a graphic or visual illustration of content that uses connecting lines to show how concepts are related to one another. Some know these as concept maps. The assignment is presented in the form of a pre-post test and can be

completed in two to three sessions. Students were also given several opportunities to resubmit the assignment for full credit if they still had difficulty after the post-test.

## Session One: Pre-Test Assignment

In the first session, students meet in groups of three to discuss and describe critical thinking, the importance of relationships and implications in health, and how critical thinking differs from rote learning. One student from each group shares what her/his group discussed. After 30 to 45 minutes of brainstorming and sharing, I provide directions for completing a two-page critique of a short newspaper or journal article on stem cell research. Students are instructed to format the critique to include an introduction, body, and conclusion. The body of the paper should identify a thesis statement, the presenting problem, main points, details, relationships, possible solutions to the problem, and implications. In the first session, I do not provide any information on how to write a thesis statement or discover relationships

or implications. After a brief discussion of concept mapping, students are instructed to organize their thinking process by using a graphic or map that includes connected circles, squares, triangles, footballs, or whatever construct students may prefer.

## Session Two: Post-Test Assignment

As part of the post-test assignment, students are required to complete another two-page critique of the same newspaper or journal article. In the second session, I open class with an interactive lecture on critical thinking in which I discuss the relevance of critical thinking and rote learning to health, how to write a thesis statement, discover main points, details, relationships, and implications, as well as some suggestions on how to organize their knowledge using concept mapping. Then I give students an opportunity to once again apply what they learned by analyzing the same short newspaper or journal article, this time as an individual homework assignment.

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## It Costs to Cut Class

Many studies confirm the relationship between attendance and grades and the one referenced below is no exception. The course where the data reported in this study were collected was multiple discussion sections of a larger course. In these discussion sections attendance and participation counted for 10 percent of the total grade, 5 percent for each. Another 10 percent of the grade was determined by regular quizzes also given during the discussion sections. Findings were consistent across all sections: as absences increased, grades decreased.

In this study, unlike some other reported findings, the number of absences did not correlate significantly with the day of the week. But this study confirmed what

has been reported elsewhere: classes before 10 a.m. and after 3 p.m. did not have more absences than classes scheduled during those hours. The number of absences did vary by class level, with seniors recording the most and sophomores the least. Sophomores had the highest average grades, but seniors did not have the lowest grades. First-year students did. Researcher Gump thinks this might be a "testament" to "experiential survival instincts—not as well understood by the first-year students." (p. 24)

This study involved a variation in the quizzing schedule. Twice that schedule included six unannounced quizzes with the top five scores each counting 2 percent. In one section the instructor gave 12 quizzes,

one per week but for the first and last weeks, with the top ten each counting for 1 percent. This change in quiz frequency affected attendance—it was the highest for any semester in the study. However, the frequency change did not have a positive effect on students' course grades. Apparently knowing that a quiz would be given each week was enough to bring students to class even though the quizzes counted the same as when there were five. These results illustrate how attendance is part of what determines the grade, but it is not the entire story.

Reference: Gump, S. E. (2005). The cost of cutting class: Attendance as a predictor of student success. *College Teaching*, 53 (1), 21-25. ♥

## Student Expectations for College Courses: An Update

Some issues back, we reported survey research that identified students' motivations and goals with respect to things like course requirements and evaluation methods. That study surveyed introductory psychology students. The findings were pretty bleak: students wanted effort weighted almost as much as their mastery of the material; they wanted good grades more than learning new material; they preferred multiple-choice tests and felt grades should be determined on a modified curve rather than by absolute standards.

Faculty researchers Miley and Gonsalves decided to replicate this study but with a population of upper-division students (86 percent of students in their sample were juniors and seniors). They wondered if students made the transition from performance goals (like being focused on getting good grades) to mastery goals (like seeing the value of learning new material). Unfortunately, their data do not document this change in the way students orient to upper-level course work. In this sample, almost 90 percent were enrolled in this psychology course because it was required and

fulfilled a degree requirement. Less than 5 percent reported that they were in the class because it seemed interesting. More than 60 percent reported that what they hoped to accomplish by taking this course was a good grade, compared with 25 percent who hoped to learning new material they could apply in life. As for the academic tasks they preferred, 35 percent identified tasks that were fun and interesting, 24 percent tasks and activities that reinforced classroom instruction, and 23 percent opted for tasks that gave them a good grade. These students also preferred multiple-choice tests over papers, presentations, and essay exams; and they selected the same modified curve grading system.

The researchers conclude: "this study suggests that students do not change appreciatively in terms of their expectations and goals in a course as they advance through their psychology courses in college. . . . This study suggests that academic socialization into the joy of new learning and mastery of material that some faculty may hold as a core value does not take place in that time that students are with us in their undergraduate careers." (p. 332)

But are faculty in the dark about student motivations and goals? This faculty research team surveyed 96 of their colleagues, about why students were taking their courses, what students wanted out of those courses, and what activities they thought students would select as the bases for their grades. The data confirm that faculty do know that most students are in courses because they're required, that what they want most out of a course is a good grade, and that they most prefer activities in which they are confident they will receive a good grade.

"These attitudes towards students in their classes could foster a cynicism that the goals and purposes of their courses are as the students define it, rather than as faculty member would wish them to be." (p.332) Isn't it possible to recognize the importance of grades and still make a clear case for the joy, power, and fundamental role of learning in any course?

Reference: Miley, W. M., and Gonsalves, S. (2004). Grade expectations: Redux. *College Student Journal*, 53 (3), 327-332. ♥

## Teaching as an Uncertain Endeavor

*Ed.'s nte: Most of the content highlighted in the newsletter comes from recent publications. The intent is to keep readers up to date on the latest and the best research, pedagogical thinking and instructional ideas. But sometimes a question, request for information or search for a reference leads me back to an old source from which I discover new insights. Such is the case here. . .*

"Teaching is a messy, indeterminate, inscrutable, often intimidating and highly uncertain task." And, teachers deal with realities like these by constructing defenses, defenses that prevent them from confronting teaching. So, observes Richard F. Elmore in the foreword to one of the all time best edited anthologies, *Education for Judgment: The Artistry of Discussion Leadership* (reference below). When faculty ask for a resource on discussion, this is still

the book I recommend most often.

Here's a sampling of some of those defenses. Professors are hired to profess. Learning a discipline intimately requires years of study. This deep immersion in a field is the professor's claim to fame, and it is what students really want from a professor. They are there to be taught by the one who has learned. They are not there to have their time wasted with "contrived exercises in pedagogy." (x)

College students should be motivated by the mastery of intellectually rich subject matter. Content should be the focus of college courses not "teaching tricks." This pedagogical gimmickry may be necessary when students are children and have yet to learn the importance of knowing. What should motivate college students is the content, not the manner of presentation.

Third defense: put teaching aside by glorifying it. Make it a gift from God or a natural ability bestowed upon or belonging to a select and sacred few. It is not a gift for the masses, ergo many of us must teach on without it. As a gift or natural ability, it is not amendable to analysis or understanding.

On the other hand, we might explain different approaches to teaching as a matter of style or taste. What we like instructionally should be a matter of individual discretion. This fits well with our conceptions of teaching being essentially a private act. What you do in your classroom, what I do in mine is a matter of choice. We honor each other's right to choose and recognize that the differences between us are nothing more than the vagrancies of individual style.

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## Effective Teams in the Workplace: Do Students Know the Characteristics?

Without question, more and more faculty are using projects and other kinds of assignments that require students to work together on teams. And for good reason, not only does research consistently show that students can and do learn from and with each other, increasingly in the world of work, employees are being required to work together on teams. One study cited in the article referenced below found that 58 different employers rated team-building skills the highest of 23 characteristics desired of entry-level employees.

But one question typically not asked is whether the teamwork skills students develop in college are the same ones needed in the world of work. And related to that query is whether students' perceptions of good group skills match the ones identified as important in the workplace. After summarizing extensive research that seeks to identify what constitutes an effective team, Catherine B. Ahles and Courtney C. Bosworth (reference below), settled on a list that emerged out of a study that analyzed group dynamics across a wide range of professions, including a product launch team at McDonalds, a Centers for Disease Control project team, a Mount Everest ascent team, a Notre Dame championship football team, and a Federal Aviation Administration investigative team.

Here are the factors characteristic of successful workplace groups that emerged out of this research: a clear, elevating goal; a results-driven structure; competent team members; unified commitment; a collaborative climate; standards of excellence; external support and recognition; and principled leadership.

To ascertain whether students enrolled in a capstone marketing communications course recognized these skills, Ahles and Bosworth solicited input both at the beginning and the end of the course. The course itself involved an intensive group experience. Combining results from a brainstorming session at the course's beginning with responses to a multi-part survey at the end, researchers found that of the eight

characteristics typical of effective workplace teams, students did not mention five of them as important: a clear, elevating goal; a results-driven structure; standards of excellence; external support and recognition; and principled leadership.

These results caused the researchers to recommend a number of different ways teachers can help students understand those characteristics that make workplace teams effective. Among them, they point out that students tend to think of general characteristics. For example, the most desirable characteristic of teammates identified during the brainstorming session was "communication." Researchers suggest additional readings and discussions of them might help to specify students' understandings of characteristics.

They also point out even an intense group experience like the one provided by this course, supplemented by other group experiences in previous courses, did not enable students to extrapolate those characteristics that made their groups work. Researchers suggest incorporating some team-building activities into the group assignment. Activities that call attention to those characteristics that make for effective teamwork should be used.

Finally the researchers were concerned that even though students in the course recognized some of the characteristics, like professional competencies, they did not hold these in high regard. The researchers advise that "faculty should actively discourage students from assembling a . . . team based upon inconsequential factors such as who their friends are or geographical proximity." (p. 57) Alternatively, they suggest that students prepare resumes that they discuss with each other as a way of highlighting the importance of relevant experience and skills before they selected teammates for their projects.

The design of this study and its results raise questions that should interest all faculty who use group activities. Are the skills and experiences provided by those activi-

ties equipping students with the competencies they will need to successfully perform in groups after college? And, are students taking from their college group experiences an understanding of what those skills are and why they are so important? Raising both those questions with students might not be a bad idea.

Reference: Ahles, C. B. and Bosworth, C. C. (2004). The perception and reality of student and workplace teams. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, Spring, 42-59. ♥

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### UNCERTAIN FROM PAGE 4

Why do faculty hide behind defenses like these and fail to confront their teaching? "Let's be blunt. Exposing one's knowledge, personality, and ego to the regular scrutiny of others in public is not easy work under the best of circumstances." (x) And faculty exposure rarely happens in those best-case scenarios. Faculty face students unprepared to teach. This forces them to rely on their own often unexamined experiences as students. Knowing how to teach is an expected part of the job. Rarely does it become the subject of serious intellectual discourse among faculty. Conditions like these explain why defenses are built, reinforced, and otherwise fortified. But that action does not come without consequences. "These defenses. . . too often result in an eviscerated, flat and disappointing experience for both professors and students: an interminable montage of talking heads and illegible overhead transparencies, interspersed with short periods of stark panic at exam time." (xi)

Reference: Elmore, R. F. Foreword. In C. R. Christensen, D. A. Garvin, and A. Sweet, eds. *Education for Judgment: The Artistry of Discussion Leadership*. Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 1991. ♥

## How Rubrics Work

What are rubrics, and what can teachers use them to accomplish? Those questions are ably answered in a short, pithy piece (reference below) that describes “the good, the bad and the ugly” aspects of how rubrics function.

“A rubric is an assessment tool that lists the criteria for a piece of work or what counts. . . and articulates gradations of quality for each criterion, from excellent to poor.” (p. 27) The article includes a detailed example completed by the author and her students. Rubrics differ from checklists in one key dimension. Checklists do not identify different quality levels. Author Andrade further differentiates a rubric used exclusively in the evaluation process, a scoring rubric, from what she calls an instructional rubric. “A rubric that is co-created with students, handed out; used to facilitate peer assessment, self-assessment, and teacher feedback; and only then used to assign grades is an instructional rubric.” (p. 27) In this case, the rubric is not just about evaluation. It becomes a tool useful in teaching other important lessons related to learning.

What can a teacher use them to accomplish? Andrade lists a number of benefits. First, rubrics constructively confront teachers with their goals—what it is they want a particular assignment or course activity to accomplish. They make instruction more designed and coherent. Andrade works backwards. She starts with her goals for students in a particular unit of instruction. Then she decides on a project that will help them learn what they need to accomplish those goals and demonstrate their learning. Then she develops the rubric. Only with that done does she figure out what she will do each day in class, choosing content and reading that will help students do well on the project.

Clearly rubrics help students understand the rationale behind assignments and activities. They enable students to see what the teacher is trying to accomplish, and their ability to understand what differentiates a high-quality project from one of lesser quality develops even further if they have a hand in creating the rubric that will ultimately be used to assess their work.

And rubrics enable teachers to give more informative feedback to students. The level at which they met each criterion on the rubric can be checked with individual comments. Those same rubrics can be used as the bases of formative peer and self assessments.

Last but not least, rubrics help to keep teachers fair and unbiased. The criteria are clearly stated. Ancillary factors, like how hard the student tried, are less likely to influence an instructor when the work is assessed with a rubric in hand.

But rubrics don’t accomplish these benefits automatically. Their “bad” aspects include the fact that they are not self-explanatory. Most students have little experience with them and even a rubric created and distributed in class doesn’t guarantee that students understand the role it should play as they prepare their work. They may not see how they can use the rubric to deliver constructive feedback to fellow students. And rubrics don’t substitute for good instruction. “Even a fabulous rubric doesn’t change the fact that students need models, feedback, and opportunities to ask questions, think, revise, and so on.” (p. 29)

The “ugly” issues relate to the validity, reliability, and fairness of the rubrics being used. Validity has to do with the “reasonableness” of the standards that end up on the rubric. What is asked of students should be “reasonable” given the curriculum being taught in the course. Standards that are too high or too low are equally problematic. Reliability refers to the consistency of the rubric. It is a reliable measure if, when different people use it to rate the same piece of work, they come up with similar assessments. Rubrics don’t prevent an instructor from being biased against certain student groups, genders, or majors. “These concerns do not require us to perform complex statistical analyses but, rather, that we simply worry enough about them to subject our rubrics to critique.” (p. 30)

Instructional rubrics reinforce the learning potential inherent in the assessment process. They also significantly reduce the hassles associated with students

who have trouble understanding “what you want,” as in what they should learn by doing a project.

Reference: Andrade, H. G. (2005). Teaching with rubrics: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *College Teaching*, 53 (1), 27-30. 🍀

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### VISUALIZING THINKING

FROM PAGE 3

#### How Well Does it Work?

The results are exciting and rewarding. Using a 30-point rubric to assess students’ performance, I clearly see an improvement not only in students’ writing, but also in their thinking. In the pre-test assignment, most students’ writing showed difficulty in properly introducing the subject matter, including a thesis statement, statement of the problem, and areas of focus to be discussed in the body of the paper. In a class of approximately 30 students, only two students came close to writing a paper that demonstrated this level of proficiency. After completing the post-test and the second concept map, several students came up to me and said they did not realize how poorly their writing and thinking skills were until they completed this assignment. Several other students reported that now when they read anything, they automatically think in terms of discovering relationships and implications instead of merely gaining knowledge. They recognized that “real” thinking requires organization, and for most students their first concept map showed that their thought processes were not organized at all.

I conclude the assignment by having students use a rubric to rate their work before they turn it in for my assessment. This helps them see the improvements in their writing. But more importantly, the activity enables students, to gain a better understanding of their thinking processes, the importance of details, the meaning of relationships, and the relevance of discovering implications in solving problems in any discipline. 🍀