Think About This . . .

"Words such as lying, dishonesty, misrepresenting, deception, and morality appear in the literature on cheating and may be applied to situations in which students do not realize that they are 'wrong' in school terms (Athanasou & Olasehinde, 2002). The line between helping (an ethical behavior) and cheating (an unethical behavior) is culturally inscribed and variable. Where the line is drawn is related to cultural differences in conceptions of the purposes of schooling, notions of how knowledge is constructed, the nature and meaning of assessment, and the relationship between the individual and the group (Fleck, 2000; Greenfield, 1994; Nelson-LeGall & Resnick, 1998)."

—Rothstein-Finch & Trumbull, 2008, p. 158

As with other misbehavior, academic dishonesty is primarily a discipline problem, so it must incur clear consequences. Valparaiso High School (2007) lists consequences for first through fourth offenses. Consequences for the first offense "may include but are not limited to . . . 1. no credit for the material in question, 2. referral to the assistant principal, 3. parent notification, 4. Saturday class" (pp. 50–51). It is also reasonable and necessary to have more direct academic consequences for academic dishonesty than for other behavioral problems. The appropriate academic consequence is "do it again without cheating or plagiarizing," because what is needed is accurate evidence of the student’s achievement, not tainted evidence or evidence that has been distorted by penalties or zeros. While teachers often have little difficulty with this philosophically, they frequently express concerns about the practical difficulty of creating comparable alternative assessments. One method that can frequently be used to deal with this is an oral test/exam—it does not take long to prepare several probing questions that will find out very quickly what a student knows or understands and on which academic dishonesty is impossible.

Cizek (2003) offers a detailed analysis of the issues involved in academic dishonesty. He provides lists of potential indications of cheating on tests (p. 67), potential indicators of plagiarism (p. 71), points to remember when responding to cheating (p. 80), tips for preventing cheating on tests (p. 87), and tips for preventing plagiarism on written assignments (p. 94), as well as in-depth discussion of these and many other aspects of academic dishonesty. Useful information can also be found at the Web site of Clemson University’s Center for Academic Integrity (www.academicintegrity.org).

What Should Not Be in Grades?

Effort, participation, attitude, and other personal and social characteristics need to be reported separately from achievement. There is also no place for extra credit and bonus points.

Figure 3.1 shows an inappropriate grading plan for a performance subject.
In this extract from an actual high school grading inventory for a performance subject, the asterisked items should not be included in grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Daily activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Journals (reflections on projects and performances)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Attendance and punctuality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Attendance Scale
- 20 marks—perfect attendance
- 16 marks—3 absences
- 12 marks—4 absences
- 8 marks—5 absences
- 4 marks—6 absences
- 0 marks—7 absences

### Late (Tardiness) Scale
- Subtract 1/2 mark—first tardy
- Subtract 1/2 mark—second tardy
- Subtract 1 mark—tardies thereafter

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**Reflecting On... Grading Plans**

Consider the effects of the grading plan shown in Figure 3.1 on the following scenarios, in which a block schedule with 70 classes can be assumed:

**Scenario 1**—A student who missed 10 percent of the classes would be able to receive a grade of no more than 80 percent, even if he or she got perfect marks in all other aspects of the course.

**Scenario 2**—A student who missed 7 percent of the classes and who was late for 10 percent of the classes would be able to receive a maximum grade of 82 percent.

Are these accurate results?

- Does this inventory produce grades with clear meaning?
- Does a procedure like this promote attendance and punctuality?
- Does a procedure like this honor learning?

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**Effort, Participation, Attitude**

Hard work (effort); frequent responses to teacher questions; intense involvement in class activities (participation); and a positive, encouraging, friendly, and happy demeanor (attitude) are all highly valued attributes. However, they should not be included directly in grades, because they are very difficult to define and even more difficult to measure.

Stiggins (1997) provides a detailed analysis of the arguments for and against including these factors in grades. With regard to effort, he says that definitions of trying hard vary greatly from teacher to teacher; thus, if effort is included in the
grade, "we add noise into the grade interpretation process" (p. 418). Noise means "static, not clear meaningful signals" (p. 413). He also notes that "students can manipulate their apparent level of effort to mislead us" (p. 418).

Stiggins (1997) suggests that participation is often a personality issue—some students are naturally more assertive, while others are naturally quieter. This is often related to gender and/or ethnicity, so we run the risk of perpetuating bias if we include effort and participation in grades. Another problem is that

factoring effort into the grade may send the wrong message to students. In real life just trying hard to do a good job is virtually never enough. If we don’t deliver relevant, practical results, we will not be deemed successful, regardless of how hard we try. (p. 418)

The inclusion of attitude presents similar problems; positive attitude has many dimensions, is very difficult to define, and is extremely difficult to measure. It is also very easy to manipulate—students can fake a positive attitude if they think or know it will help their grade.

To a considerable extent, personal and social characteristics do contribute to achievement, but including a mark for attitude as part of a mark for a product blurs the assessment of the product and affects the validity and, thus, the meaning of the grade. Also, including a mark for effort or any of these characteristics means a double benefit for successful students and double (or triple or quadruple) jeopardy for less successful students. This approach is clearly inaccurate and unfair.

As with other aspects of assessment and grading, it is essential that the behavioral expectations be as clear to teachers, students, and parents as the academic expectations. One of the best examples of clarity in this area is provided by the British Columbia performance standards (British Columbia Ministry of Education, n.d.). For grade levels K–3, 4–5, 6–8, and 8–10, separate "quick scales" and elaborated scales are provided for each grade level grouping with examples of how the scales can be taught and used. Figure 3.2 shows an example for Grades 8–10. Support ideas and material can also be found at The Network of Performance Based Schools Web site (www.npbs.ca).

Several authors, including Marzano (2006) and Haladyna (1999), have suggested compromises in this area such that teachers may include behavioral components in grades, but I believe such compromises are inappropriate. Haladyna (1999) classifies criteria for grading as supportable, arguable, and unsupportable. His arguable list includes violation of deadlines, class participation, extra credit, improvement, and attendance. I believe that all of these should be placed clearly in the unsupportable category. Strong effort, active participation, and positive attitude are highly valued attributes, but if grades are to have clear meaning, they should not include these attributes. These attributes are reporting variables, not grading variables. They need to be assessed as accurately and rigorously as possible and reported separately and regularly.
**Figure 3.2 Quick Scale: Grades 8 to 10 Social Responsibility**

This Quick Scale presents summary statements from the four categories in a one-page format for ease of use. In most cases, these scales can be used to evaluate student development anytime during the year. In the Elaborated Scale, each of the four categories is printed on a separate page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Not Yet Within Expectations</th>
<th>Meets Expectations (Minimal Level)</th>
<th>Fully Meets Expectations</th>
<th>Exceeds Expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONTRIBUTING TO THE CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL COMMUNITY</strong></td>
<td>• appears apathetic or unfriendly and may try to manipulate or dominate others • avoids participating in class and group activities; shows little sense of responsibility</td>
<td>• usually courteous and friendly • participates in class and group activities, but takes little responsibility for the school or community</td>
<td>• usually kind and friendly • takes some responsibility for the school or community and contributes willingly to class and group activities</td>
<td>• kind, friendly, and inclusive • works actively to improve the school or community; often volunteers for extra responsibilities and shows leadership skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOLVING PROBLEMS IN PEACEFUL WAYS</strong></td>
<td>• in conflict situations, often uses put-downs, insults, or sarcasm; has difficulty stating position clearly; may be illogical • can describe simple, concrete problems or issues and generate some strategies; often ignores consequences</td>
<td>• in conflict situations, tries to manage anger appropriately, listens respectfully, states opinion clearly, and tries to be fair • can describe problems or issues, generate some strategies, consider immediate consequences, and evaluate actions</td>
<td>• in conflict situations, usually manages anger appropriately, listens respectfully, presents logical arguments, and can paraphrase opposing views • can clarify problems or issues, generate strategies, weigh consequences, and evaluate actions</td>
<td>• in conflict situations, shows empathy and a sense of ethics, presents soundly reasoned arguments, and considers divergent views • can clarify problems or issues, generate and analyze strategies, create an effective plan, and use evidence to evaluate actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VALUING DIVERSITY AND DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS</strong></td>
<td>• sometimes disrespectful; may stereotype or avoid those perceived as different in some way</td>
<td>• usually respectful; supports those who speak up or take action to support diversity and defend human rights</td>
<td>• respectful and fair; increasingly willing to speak up or take action to support diversity and defend human rights</td>
<td>• respectful and ethical; speaks out and takes action to support diversity and defend human rights, even when that may not be a popular stance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXERCISING DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES</strong></td>
<td>• tends to be egocentric and apathetic; displays little sense of community or responsibility for others</td>
<td>• shows some sense of community-mindedness; may go along with positive actions organized by others but without much commitment</td>
<td>• shows a sense of responsibility and community-mindedness; increasingly interested in taking action to improve the world</td>
<td>• shows a strong sense of community-mindedness and accountability; can describe and work toward an ideal future for the world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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One example of a school that does this is the middle school at Jakarta International School, where educators have identified six “approaches to learning” that are evaluated on a frequency scale for each report card, namely, makes effective use of class time, demonstrates responsibility for own learning, contributes positively to the learning environment, is attentive and focused in class, collaborates effectively, and comes to class prepared and organized with homework if required. Additional examples of reporting procedures that include these student characteristics can be found in Figures 11.2a, 11.2b, 11.3a (elementary), and Figure 11.4a (secondary). An excellent structure for teaching and assessing learning related behaviors is provided by Costa and Kallick’s (2000) Assessing and Reporting Habits of Mind. They have identified 16 habits; this large number can be made manageable by focusing on 3 to 5 habits each grading period.

To summarize this issue, consider this statement by Reeves (2006): “We err greatly when we call compliance and politeness ‘algebra’ or ‘English’ or any other label that conflates proficiency with behavior” (p. 118).

**Late Work**

A major problem, especially in middle and high schools, is the issue of not submitting required assessment evidence (“work”) on time. The following late homework policy for one college course was found on the Internet, and similar policies are often been found in high schools:

Homework turned in for grading in class on the date due will incur no penalty. Otherwise the following grade reductions are in effect:

- up to one day—a 5 percent reduction;
- two days late—a 10 percent reduction;
- three days late—a 20 percent reduction;
- four days late—a 40 percent reduction; and
- five days late—an 80 percent reduction.

Homework extensions are only granted before homework is due. Do not attempt to obtain an extension on or after the due date.

At the high school level in my former school district, penalties for handing work in late were as high as 10 percent per day to a maximum of 50 percent (including weekend days!).

There are three problems with these approaches. First, the penalty that students receive distorts their achievement, thus contributing to a mark and, ultimately, to a grade that does not have clear meaning. Second, the punitive nature of the penalty provides a powerful disincentive for students to complete any work after it is more than one or two days late. In both examples, no intelligent student would bother completing the work after three days. Third, the penalties rarely change subsequent student behavior.

As Reeves (2007) notes, there is “nearly a century of evidence that grading as punishment does not work” (p. 230). The student who hands work in late in