

Dealing with Academic Dishonesty

In a suspected case of academic dishonesty, the instructor is responsible for obtaining evidence and presenting the evidence at a judicial or administrative hearing. An instructor cannot legally penalize a student by changing his/her grade as a result of cheating without first taking the case through a hearing for a decision and allowing for possible appeals. The hearing will take any mitigating circumstances into account. While the mitigating circumstances should not influence the basic findings of the court, these circumstances may be taken into account in determining the appropriate penalty for academic dishonesty.

If a student is found guilty of academic dishonesty, the instructor can either assign a grade of zero on the material in question or an F for the course. Also, the student may receive a penalty from the court, normally suspension for one or two quarters from the university. A requirement for community service may be substituted by the court for a quarter of university suspension.

Recommendations

Take ample precautions to protect against cheating in your classroom. Develop a policy statement on academic dishonesty and inform students about the policy. Keep good records, maintain a suitable classroom environment for examinations, and use multiple tests. Use a dynamic testing strategy that will keep potential cheaters off-guard, because they will try to beat whatever system you devise to protect against cheating. Expect cheating and use proactive measures rather than simply reacting after it has already occurred.

Cheating should be dealt with as early in a student's academic career as possible. Legally, cases of academic dishonesty must be brought before a judiciary hearing so that a judgement can be reached and the appropriate sanctions determined. When a student passes one course by cheating rather than understanding the material, that student will not possess the requisite knowledge to enter the next course. Since the academic records will indicate the student is ready for the next course, the student will be allowed to enroll in more advanced courses. Once enrolled in an advanced course there will be a strong tendency for the student to continue cheating, because he/she never understood the fundamentals covered in the previous course. Pervasive cheating can undermine an entire academic program.

Collective departmental action can effectively reduce cheating. Departmental policies on academic dishonesty should be developed and discussed openly among faculty. The faculty should develop plans for combatting academic dishonesty. In particular, the faculty should consider setting limits on the amount of coursework that students with low grade-point averages can take, based on what they can handle and do independent work. Widespread faculty involvement is needed, because faculty have primary responsibility for policing academic dishonesty.



BUILDING A BOND

Supporting The First Year Teacher

John P. Mundt and Laurie A. Stenberg

The article references the dramatic changes which are occurring in the field of education and the need for addressing change in the preparation of teachers. The article specifically addresses how the profession has historically abandoned new teachers upon entering the profession. A model for teacher induction and first year assistance is discussed and results are highlighted. Cited in the article are results of an evaluative study and comments from first year teachers of high school agriculture and home economics and their building principals.

Education as a whole, and specifically the preparation of teachers, is at a crossroad. During the past decade, a minimum of ten nationally commissioned reports surfaced - - each telling us that our educational system is at risk. Overall, these reports indicate a general dissatisfaction with the current status of education. Within this context of change, one area receiving significant attention has been that of teachers and teacher preparation. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) forwarded a seven-part recommendation to improve the preparation of teachers, raise salaries and respect, and assist novice teachers in their career development. Beginning teachers have been singled out as needing special help and assistance.

Providing First Year Teacher Assistance

The expectation of the beginning teacher from the educational community is the ideal teacher. No other profession puts its beginners into a position where they are immediately expected to perform like a veteran. Lortie (1975) described the isolation of the early years of teaching: "The cellular organization of school constrains the amount and type of interaction possible, beginning teachers spend most of their time physically apart from colleagues." (p. 72) In addition, the beginning teacher is expected to perform the same tasks as the veteran but without systematic induction or guidance. Lortie (1975) goes on to say:

Fully responsible for the instruction of his students from his first working day, the beginning teacher performs the same tasks as the twenty-five year veteran. Tasks are not added sequentially to allow for gradual increase in skill and knowledge; the beginner learns while performing the full complement of teaching

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duties ...Since the beginner spends so much of his time away from other adults, it falls upon him to discern problems, consider alternative solutions, make a selection and, after acting, assess the outcome. (p. 72)

In schools, the induction year for the beginning teacher is analogous to breaking horses in the old western movie. Houston and Felder (1982) describe how the wild horse is broken with the rider furiously kicking its flanks. The horse responds out of confusion and fear. It bucks until it is exhausted and its spirit broken. Unfortunately, the analogy is often all too true:

In this school "corral," fenced in by school boundaries and harnessed to a number of students who are more familiar with the nuances of the school than is their fledgling teacher, the beginner's first experiences in the profession can be heartbreaking. "I would never have taught had I known what it was like." "That first day of school was the most terrifying experience in my life." "Lonely." "Exhausting - bone-crushing exhaustion." These words of beginning teachers are familiar to all teachers. (p. 457)

Hall (1982) in his article, "Induction: The Missing Link" further describes what happens to beginning teachers:

Teachers are assigned a group of students, given the key to a classroom, introduced to their colleagues in a faculty meeting, and expected to teach. This is an interesting indicator of the sophistication of our profession. Teaching is one of the very few professions in which the novice is expected to assume full responsibility from the first day on the job. (p. 53)

The words of anger, frustration, disillusionment, and broken spirit are often expressed by first-year teachers in describing their first year. Essentially, the profession has operated with the "sink or swim" model as it relates to the first year of teaching. Dorner (1979) who described the induction year as a confrontation with reality states: "The essence of our method with a probationary teacher is to throw them in at the deep end and watch keenly to see if they float." (p. 145) In a study completed by Mundt (1989) principals of high school agriculture teachers generally agreed that their first year teachers would have preferred more supervision. Beginning teachers want to know how they are doing. One principal said, "I think he would have liked more supervision--but he will grow out of it." (p. 153) A statement which confirms the "sink or swim model."

Novice teachers have been singled out due to research which indicates that today's beginning teachers may be less confident, qualified, or competent than teachers who graduated in earlier years (Gardner, 1983; Griffin, 1983). In addition, the actual entrance rate for those trained to teach is lowest for those most qualified while the overall retention rate of teachers is only 50%; nearly one-half of all teachers will drop out by their sixth year of teaching (Jensen, 1986, Curtis, 1985).

Why do teachers leave the profession, or never enter in the first place? Why do teachers feel less prepared than teachers of yesteryear? One explanation may be that teaching is not as simple as it used to be. Today's teachers are

forced to be surrogate parents, personal counselors, and at times, juvenile enforcement officials. Our society, including our youth, have changed. Today's teachers are confronted with less than ideal situations: teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, children of divorce, and general motivational deficiencies. A second rationale revolves around heightened expectations of teaching, including beginning teachers. Recent research in teaching effectiveness, learning theory, motivation, and discipline have revolved into a multitude of popular strategies--assertive discipline, cooperative learning, critical thinking, and the list could go on. Finally, school-based activities have expanded in recent years. Teachers are expected to assist with clubs, organizations, school functions, athletic teams, and other activities which fall outside of the curricular offerings of the school.

The successes and failures which are experienced by beginning teachers during the first years of employment determine, to a large extent, whether those individuals choose to remain in the profession, and further influences the long-term effectiveness of the individual and the program. It is during these formative years on the job that work patterns are developed which tend to become routine career habits. The most effective use of supervisory assistance to a teacher occurs during this formative time. Assisting new teachers in planning, instruction, budgeting professional time, and providing constructive criticism directed toward the development of strong programs in agricultural and home economics education is effective in establishing professional work habits and long-term improvement in the total program.

The Idaho Model for Teacher Induction

The beginning teacher induction program for agriculture teachers began in the fall of 1985. The home economics component was initiated in 1989. The program is deliberate and structured, yet an individualized approach to providing beginning year assistance. It is supported by a strong commitment from the Colleges of Agriculture and Education at the University of Idaho and the Idaho State Division of Vocational Education.

The purpose of the Idaho program is to provide leadership, technical assistance, and support to beginning teachers. Specific objectives and the structure of the Idaho vocational agriculture and home economics induction program includes three components. First, individual on-site consultations occur two to three times during the school year. Teacher educators from the University of Idaho visit the first-year teacher in his/her school to observe teaching, discuss classroom management, listen, support, give advice, and trouble shoot in diverse areas.

Second, a fall seminar is conducted jointly for beginning secondary agriculture and home economics teachers. The one and one-half day seminar is held in a quiet setting away from the school environment. During this time, participants are given the opportunity to share, exchange ideas, and discuss problems and issues in a non-threatening manner. In addition, special topic presenters have addressed issues dealing with time management, classroom management,

student motivation, learning styles, students in crises, and creative teaching ideas. State supervisors from agriculture and home economics speak to teachers about such topics as vocational student organization, funding, state forms, program evaluations, and other topics with state-wide vocational implications. The participants' expenses are reimbursed by local school districts.

The participants' evaluations of the beginning teacher seminars have been overwhelmingly positive. Based upon evaluations from the teachers, comments over the past three years have included:

I really enjoyed the variety of teachers and backgrounds that attended the conference.

I really felt the time was productive.

It helped me with ideas that can be used in teaching that will make me a better teacher.

It gave me a surge of rededication.

Incredible! Opened many doors and beginning thoughts.

The time allowed for group comments from the individual teachers was great.

I wish that it were longer.

I very much enjoyed this workshop as a re-introduction to classroom teaching...it has been wonderful to update my knowledge and share with my peers.

The classroom management was excellent.

Group sharing is very important.

This workshop is an excellent idea for new first year teachers. Along with new ideas,

I was able to meet other teachers in my field.

I loved the sharing time.

Third, phone calls and correspondence are carried out all year long. The beginning teachers are encouraged to call or write if they have a need or problem. The role of the teacher educators is to help the teacher solve or address problems which arise.

Results

The beginning teacher induction program for agriculture teachers began in the fall of 1985. Since that time, 53 beginning agriculture teachers have been served through the program. Today, 36 are teaching agriculture in Idaho. The program expanded to include beginning home economics teachers in 1989. Since that time 17 beginning home economics teachers have been served and 14 are teaching home economics in Idaho today.

According to an evaluation of the beginning agriculture teachers program conducted by Nesbitt (1991), the participants in the program and their principals were pleased and indicated that they received great value and benefitted from the program. Among the conclusions of the study were:

1. The direct face-to-face interaction with the program coordinator during the on-site visit was of great value to both the teachers and principals. They appreciated the fact that they had an expert to non-judgmentally address their individual program and problems.
2. The program caused many teachers to set long-term goals that they may not have otherwise thought about during their first year of teaching.

3. The program helped many teachers to lay a solid foundation in areas that they could build on in the future.

4. The program's encouragement and moral support was of great value to the beginning teachers. (p. 58-60)

Teaching is a profession and those who train teachers in the profession have a responsibility to continue efforts in providing beginning teacher assistance. Organized, structured, and deliberate induction programs pay big dividends.

Dividends to the beginning teachers, dividends to administrators, and dividends to the individuals who are in charge of the undergraduate teacher education programs. In addition, beginning teacher assistance programs serve as an effective public relations activity. According to Nesbitt (1991) teachers and administrators alike perceived the induction program to be going the extra mile for their students who were graduates of the institution. They saw the university caring about them beyond the institutional door. Here is what two of the principals said:

"As a university program, it adds to the teacher and university relationship for years to come. It adds credence to the agriculture teacher education program as not just providing instruction, taking of cash, and turning your back. It helps university-community relations as teachers are placed. It provides opportunities for university personnel as they interact with the community. It humanizes the educational experience for youth as they have the opportunity to observe the teacher-university contact."

"I think that it is a great program. It builds a bond between the University of Idaho and the local school administration. It is a witness to the concern for the education of our youth of Idaho."

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