

## How Should Schools Punish Cheaters?

1           Nowadays the Internet has made it easier for students to cheat. Students can  
2 share homework or test answers online, and they can even buy essays to use. In a  
3 recent survey of 4,800 high school students, 53 percent admitted to cheating on tests,  
4 and 62 percent said they had turned in homework that was not their own work.

5           Few students are caught cheating, but when it happens, the punishment is often  
6 severe. Some schools remove the student from the class, while other schools suspend<sup>1</sup>  
7 or expel<sup>2</sup> the student. The principal usually puts a note about cheating in the student's  
8 academic record, which may become part of a student's college application file  
9 someday.

10           Last week, a Westridge High School junior copied a classmate's homework in his  
11 honors math class<sup>3</sup>. The teacher caught him, and he admitted to cheating. Consequently,  
12 he had to withdraw from the class for the rest of the year. The student knew this might  
13 happen because the previous September he and his parents had signed an academic  
14 honesty statement for the honors class that clearly explained the teacher's cheating  
15 policy: The punishment for anyone caught cheating even one time was immediate  
16 removal from the class.

17           However, the student's father, who is a lawyer, wants to fight the punishment.  
18 He says that the school rules call for removal from a class after a student is caught  
19 cheating twice, not once. The father believes his son should remain in the honors class  
20 because the rules of the school and the rules of the teacher are in conflict with each  
21 other. In addition, he says the punishment is too severe for a practice that is so common  
22 among students. Removal from the honors class will make it impossible for his son to  
23 get into a top university. Yesterday, the father started legal action against the school.

24           The school officials are firm in their decision. "If we do not punish cheating, then  
25 we reward students who cheat and we put honest students at a disadvantage," says Ann  
26 Linsione, the principal. "Students who study long hours and work hard should not have  
27 to compete against dishonest students for top grades." Most students agree. "We are all  
28 under a lot of pressure," says one honors student. "Actually, I feel bad for the guy  
29 because he's a smart student who made a bad choice. But, in the end, there's no excuse  
30 for dishonesty."

31           *What's your opinion? Do you think the punishment is too harsh? Send your comments,*  
32           *and I will post your ideas in my next blog.*