

Disrupting plagiarism

Building and maintaining a classroom honor code: A 4-part collaborative activity

Including students in the planning, development, and maintenance of a classroom honor code can help to ensure that they feel ownership of and responsibility toward the policy. Use the 4-part activity below to help create a culture of academic honesty within your classroom.



Part 1: Exploring the values of academic integrity

■ Learning objective:

Students will be able to understand the values of academic integrity and analyze the importance of those values within the classroom.

"Scholarly communities flourish when community members live the fundamental values-honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage." -ICAI

■ STEP 1:

Begin Part 1 of this activity by asking students the following question:

"What do you think academic integrity means?" Allow students to respond individually on [this worksheet](#) or on a piece of blank paper. Then discuss as a class what their responses were.

■ STEP 2:

As you are discussing student responses, begin to highlight any key values that students suggest representing academic integrity.

"Highlight words that are similar to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage, as defined by the [International Center for Academic Integrity](#), but accept others that make sense in the context of your classroom. Record these highlighted values somewhere where all students can see them.

Once the values have been highlighted, discuss with students whether any of the values can be distilled further.

■ STEP 3:

Ask students to spend some reflective time answering the following questions regarding the values that have been recorded:

- Why are these values important for our class and / or school?
- Why are these values important to you personally?

After students have had some time to reflectively answer these questions independently, consider discussing their answers in small groups.

■ STEP 4:

Inform students that during Part 2 of this activity, they will begin to consider how we can take those values and put them into practice in the classroom, using their own reflections to fuel those practices.

Part 2: Putting the values into practice

■ Learning objective:

Students will be able to explore and define what the values of academic integrity will look like when put into practice within this class.

■ STEP 1:

Spend a few minutes reviewing the values that were highlighted during the discussion held in Part 1.

Inform students that during Part 2, they will begin to explore what it means to put those values into practice in your classroom.

■ STEP 2:

In small groups, ask students to return to their independent reflection from yesterday and consider what the values highlighted in Part 1 mean:

- in your class
- for their work
- for their relationships
(educator - student and student - student)

Students can utilize [this worksheet](#) to guide them through this activity.

■ STEP 3:

Ask each of these small groups to present a 2-3 minute explanation of what they believe the values should mean in each of these contexts.

Then discuss as a whole class and come to a consensus.

■ STEP 4:

After discussing what the values should mean in each context, ask students to return to their small groups to consider the following questions:

- What does it look like when we practice the values effectively?
- What does it look like when we ignore the values?
- How should it be handled when the values are neglected?

■ STEP 5:

Again, after giving small groups time to discuss, come back as a whole class to discuss small group responses and come to a consensus on these answers.

- These consensus responses should demonstrate a level of compromise between students and educators, but should still hold students to a high standard of work.
- Guide students appropriately to ensure that they are not creating practices that are too lenient or too confining; discuss why those extremes should be avoided and how they could be problematic in the classroom.
- Know what your end goal is prior to this activity, but then allow students to find their way to that place with you as their guide.

The answers that are created in Part 2 will inform the details of the honor code that is crafted in Part 3.

Part 3: Creating our commitment

■ Learning objective:

Students will be able to synthesize the values of academic integrity and ways to put those values into practice in order to craft an effective classroom honor code.

■ STEP 1:

Spend a few minutes reviewing the information that was highlighted during the discussions held in Parts 1 and 2.

Inform students that during Part 3 of this activity, you will all work collaboratively to create the classroom honor code using the values and practices covered in Parts 1 and 2.

■ STEP 2:

Discuss the pieces of an honor code with students. In particular, be sure that students understand that all effective honor codes include at least the following:

- A statement addressing the values of academic integrity and the issues that violating those values can create.
- A clear statement of the boundaries and consequences of violating the policy.
- Examples that illustrate adherence to and violation of the honor code.

Ask small groups of students to work together to draft pieces of this statement. Use [this worksheet](#) to help guide students through this work.

■ STEP 3:

Periodically bring the larger class back together to combine the pieces, provide feedback, and suggest revisions.

Consider providing student groups with sentence frames to help guide them in crafting the pieces of the honor code. This will also help to create some consistency between groups, which will make combining pieces easier.

■ STEP 4:

Continue this work cycle until a final version of the honor code is created.

Part 3 of this activity will likely take significantly longer than Parts 1 and 2, as Part 3 should include several iterations of drafting and revision. The final version of the classroom honor code should be approved by everyone and should be as clear and concise as possible.

Part 4: Maintaining a culture of academic integrity

■ Learning objective:

Students will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the classroom honor code and determine areas in need of improvement.

■ STEP 1:

Make the honor code a living thing in your classroom. It should be considered and discussed with all assignments, not just big projects that require research.

Take time to discuss what the honor code means to each and every assignment when reviewing the assignment's expectations. Detailing how the elements of the honor code relate to each assignment will help to clarify how every activity and assessment is rooted in the expectations of the honor code, reducing any confusion in students.

■ STEP 2:

Regularly check in with students regarding the details of the honor code. Use [this worksheet](#) to ask students the following questions:

- How do you feel the honor code is working in our classroom?
- In what ways has the honor code helped to clarify expectations for each assignment?
- Are there gaps that you've noticed?
- Do you have any concerns regarding the honor code and its function in our classroom?
- How can we make the honor code better?
- Do you need clarification or review of any elements of our honor code?

■ STEP 3:

Review students' responses to these questions in detail, and then make adjustments to the honor code or your communication and handling of the honor code, if necessary.

Checking in on the process regularly will ensure that it is effectively maintained throughout the school year, and will keep it top-of-mind for students.

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