



# White Board

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Center for Effective Undergraduate Teaching (864) 388-8426

## Students as a Forgotten Ally in Preventing Cheating

I'M STILL WANDERING around in the literature on cheating. It's hard not to get depressed. It's such a pervasive problem and one that compromises all that education could and should be.

Faculty are pretty much focused on preventative measures, which are essential, but there are a couple of other issues rarely mentioned in the literature or in our discussions. Students who don't cheat usually aren't on our side when it comes to enforcing cheating policies. In one study, almost 93% of the students said they had witnessed another student cheat, but only 4.4% said they had ever reported a cheating incident (Bernardi, et. al., 2016) Students are in a bind—they don't want to rat out fellow classmates, some of whom may be friends. If they do and word gets out, they are labeled as "snitches" and "tattletales" — told to mind their own business and otherwise berated. With serious social consequences like these, it takes real courage to do the right thing.

Given the pervasiveness of cheating and the increasing acceptance of academic dishonesty by students, a lot of honest students don't think it's their responsibility to report cheating. The policies that aim to prevent it are promoted by the teacher or the institution, so they figure they're the ones who should also handle enforcement.

What honest students don't reckon with is how they're affected when others cheat. Cheaters are getting grades on exams and in courses that they don't deserve. And if those are good grades, they bolster the GPA, which is what counts when it comes to getting job interviews and admittance to graduate programs and professional schools. Losing out to someone who received grades they didn't deserve is a high price to pay for putting up with cheaters. Moreover, students who cheat sour the relationship between the professor and the entire class. Professors get cynical and start to treat everyone with suspicion, instead of giving students the benefit of the doubt.

We need to find a way to encourage honest students to report cheaters. In another survey, 90% of the institutions had procedures in place for whistle-blowers but 88.5% responded they were never used (Lewis, et. al., 2001). When surveyed, students say they are more likely to report cheating if their confidentiality is preserved or they're allowed to report cheating anonymously (Bernardi, et. al., 2016). And those who do cheat indicate they are less likely to do so if they think they'll be reported by a classmate.

If professors want to embolden students to report cheating, they need to make the case for why they should and that isn't easy. However, it's a moral issue for students who cheat and those who don't. Research shows that cheating is a slippery slope and it doesn't end at graduation. Those who cheat in college are more likely to cheat in the workplace. And students who see cheating and pretend they don't are complicit. Cheating is everybody's problem and it's not going to be tackled successfully unless everybody gets involved.

Students may need help understanding the nature of credible reports of cheating. They can't just make an accusation. The report needs to include specific details; who's involved, what they did and when they did it. Professors should take student reports as an indication that there may be a cheating problem, but they need to verify for themselves the accuracy of the reports.

Secondly, there's not a lot of attention paid to those who enable the cheaters—the student who positions the test so that it's easily seen by those sitting nearby, the student in the earlier section who talks about what's on the test, the student who "loans" someone else a paper to recycle, or the student who corrects homework problems for friends. That's cheating, too. Now in some cases it's not clear whether the behavior is enabling or helping. If a student loans notes to someone who's skipped class, is that enabling or helping? And yet, the presence of gray areas

doesn't rule out that some behaviors clearly enable cheating and we need to hold those enablers accountable.

There are no easy answers to the cheating problem. But that doesn't excuse complacency or make us less accountable. Most of us do work hard to prevent cheating in our courses. We also need to work to promote academic integrity. We can do that by providing the leadership and encouragement students need to stop cheating and to take a stand against it.

### References:

Bernardi, R., Landry, A., Landry, E., Buonafede, M., and Berardi, M. (2016). What actions can be taken to increase whistle-blowing in the classroom? *Accounting Education*, 25 (1), 88-106.

Lewis, D., Ellis, C., Kyprianou, A., and Homewood, S. (2001). Whistle-blowing at work: The results of a survey of procedures in further and higher education. *Education and the Law*, 13 (3), 215-225.

Maryellen Weimer, PhD; Students as a Forgotten Ally in Preventing Cheating; Faculty Focus; March 13, 2018 [ <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/students-forgotten-ally-preventing-cheating/> ] March 27, 2018.

Fall Registration (new) - April 16  
Classes End - April 27  
Exams - April 30-May 4

### WHITE BOARD

2017-2018 Publication Dates  
First Monday of the Month

September 5	March 5
October 2	April 2
November 6	May 7
December 4	June 4
January 8	July 2
February 5	August 6

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## An Approach for Helping Quiet Students Find Their Voices

"I'M AFRAID I'LL BE the only one to think my thoughts, that no one else will see it the way I do. I don't want to be wrong."

That was the response by a student to a comment I made asking him to consider participating more in class discussions. The conversation took place one day after class toward the end of the 2017 spring semester when he asked me to sign an academic progress report. He was a good student and submitted quality papers on a timely basis. Yet, while he paid attention to my lectures and everyone's remarks in class, he rarely spoke.

I told him how much I enjoyed reading his assignments, that they were creative and insightful. Although he seemed to appreciate the feedback, he said, "Still... it's what the others might think."

His words inspired me to develop, "Another Way to Say It, Another Way to See It." The approach provides an opportunity for quieter students to express their thoughts and ideas with written contributions. I define quiet students as those who do not speak in class or who speak seldom and, when they do, they do so with great difficulty due to anxiety and/or lack of confidence.

I implemented the project during the fall 2017 semester in my face-to-face Introduction to Social Work class. Here are excerpts from the letter I posted online for students to read:

### The Letter

"Have you ever been reluctant to share your thoughts in class? Are there times you wished you had weighed in on a class conversation but, for some reason, did not?"

'Freshman Year' can be a little overwhelming and I know that some of you may experience anxiety when it comes to speaking in class. That's why I've created this optional forum, a temporary way for you to 'say it' in writing until you develop enough confidence to 'say it' in class.

Please know I want to hear your thoughts, especially the ones you feel are unique. Don't worry about being "wrong" or what



others think. Share your insights. You may very well be onto something that no one else sees.

And... what could be better than that?"

### The Reactions

After discussing what I had posted online, I asked the students to submit a two-paragraph reaction to the idea. Here are some of their comments:

"I have social anxiety and every time I talk in front of a group of people, my face gets red and I start to stutter. I think this program will help me to begin feeling more comfortable expressing my ideas to the rest of the class."

"Typically, in school, I've always been the kid who mumbles the right answer under her breath and waits for someone else to say it out loud. I'm not very confident in classroom settings. Having an outlet to type my thoughts rather than attempting to speak them in a jumbled mess is something I appreciate."

"I am shy to ask questions, sometimes, because it could be embarrassing. It's a very judgmental world and this is a good way to help those less confident feel better about expressing themselves."

### The Posts

At the end of the fall 2017 semester, there were 43 comments posted in the forums tool. Nine of 27 students contributed to the forum. Here are excerpts from posts after a class discussion about living conditions on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, approximately 50 miles from Chadron State College:

"I am filled with such heartbreak anytime I go to the reservation. I am obviously white

but have never had thoughts of being better."

"I understand how you feel concerning 'the rez.' It causes an aching heart to drive through it, to see hopelessness on the faces of those who survive the place."

"What we don't realize is that these conditions are in our own backyard."

### Value of the Project

Each of the quiet students who contributed to the forum eventually spoke in class and, each time they did, they did so with growing confidence. One student spoke for the first time in Week 10 and several times thereafter.

In a general class discussion about the value of the project, several quiet, forum-contributing students stated that they found it useful and would like to continue writing (and speaking) in the spring semester. Of the quiet students who did not contribute to the forum, several said they would consider trying it in the spring semester. Their reasons for not posting ranged from being "too busy" to "not knowing what to write."

### What's Next

Encouraged by the students' responses to the project, I plan to offer the program again in the spring 2018 semester. For those students who responded with "too busy," I will continue to plug the program in class, using the opportunity to discuss effective ways of managing one's time.

I will also offer specific examples of the types of posts they can write in hopes of motivating those who responded with "not knowing what to write."

As one student said, "The forum allows you to get your side of the topic out there. And that can be helpful for everyone."

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Rich H. Kenney; An Approach for Helping Quiet Students Find Their Voices; Faculty Focus; March 15, 2018 [ <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-teaching-strategies/helping-quiet-students-find-their-voices/> ] March 27, 2018.