

Academic Integrity and the Northwest School Division

October 9, 2010

In light of the recent debate, and in the interests of clarity and transparency, the following is a general overview of the current practices relating to the issues of academic integrity and assessment within our school division.

Currently in the Northwest School Division we actively discourage any attempt to allow a student's behaviour, whether good or bad, to affect the teacher's assessment of that student's work. Assessment, (or marks), is a tool that provides the teacher, the student and the parents with feedback about how well the student is assimilating the material, the skills and the concepts being taught, and the inclusion of a non-academic factor would distort that feedback. Sanctions and consequences of a non-academic nature are used to deal with unacceptable conduct.

Notwithstanding the above, a breach of academic integrity (e.g. plagiarism, copying, cheating, submitting work done by another as if it were your own etc.) in the Northwest School Division is severely discouraged and typically results in a mark of zero. Is this an example of 'behaviour' affecting a student's mark? No, because if the student is resorting to such unethical acts then one could reasonably conclude that he or she has not assimilated the material. Further, the mark of zero is a reflection that the work cannot be graded because it is not the work of the student. It is an academic penalty that does provide clear feedback to the parties concerned.

In the Northwest School Division we seek to mirror the values of our communities. Our communities prize hard work, perseverance, honesty and integrity. We know this, we model this, and we teach this. Anything other, be it plagiarism -a form of theft, cheating, or dishonesty is not acceptable in our communities, and would never be condoned in our schools. Our director and superintendents will be reviewing our practices and policies with our principals and teaching staff to reinforce the principles discussed above.

On a provincial level it is important to know that all school divisions will be working with the Ministry of Education to develop a clear policy related to plagiarism and late assignments. At this time we cannot speculate as to what that policy will include.

Lastly, we will continue to act in our classrooms and in our schools in accordance with policy and with the best interests of the needs of individual students foremost in our minds.