



CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR 2010 PROJECT SUMMARY

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Project Title Cheating, The Academic Epidemic: Is Teaching Honesty the Cure?	
<p style="text-align: center;">Abstract</p> <p>Objectives/Goals The purpose of this study was to understand cheating, the academic epidemic. Several hypotheses were developed regarding incidence, gender, student standings, and teacher perceptions. The main goal was to determine if teaching elementary students about cheating behaviors could increase their understanding of cheating.</p> <p>Methods/Materials Surveys were designed: 1st to 5th grade student surveys - Test 1 and Test 2; 6th-8th grade student survey; and 1st-8th grade teacher survey. Surveys were administered at 3 schools to a total of 850 students and 49 teachers. For grades 1 to 5, Test 1 was given first. After teachers reviewed the survey cheat statements with the students for up to 5 minutes per day for 3-4 days, Test 2 was given. Surveys were collected, data recorded, and statistical analysis performed.</p> <p>Results The incidence of cheating in elementary school was 22% and junior high was 55%. The following were the incidences: boys 37%, girls 34%, non-honors 57%, honors 54%, and director honors 51%. Following teaching, a significant improvement in the understanding of cheating behaviors was seen from Test 1 to Test 2 for 1st grade (6% to 2%, Z-value= 6.014), 2nd grade (5% to 1%, Z-value=5.543) and 4th grade (8% to 6%, Z-value= 2.19). There was no change for 3rd graders; and inexplicably 5th grade scores were significantly worse (6% to 8%, Z-value=2.155). When cheat scores were used, there was no significant difference for 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders between Test 1 and Test 2 with calculated t-values of 0.66, 0.114, and 0.48, respectively.</p> <p>Conclusions/Discussion The hypotheses were mainly refuted; however this study still gives insight into academic cheating. The incidence of cheating for elementary students was low compared to junior high, demonstrating a window of opportunity to change behaviors during early education. Furthermore, teaching elementary students about academic cheating improved their understanding, especially in 1st and 2nd grade. Repeating the study over several years will allow insight into whether improving student understanding of these behaviors can actually reduce the incidence of cheating over time.</p>	
Summary Statement By doing this study I attempted to show that students can improve in their understanding of what constitutes academic cheating early in their education, with the eventual goal of reducing the incidence of cheating over time.	
Help Received Mr. Cornell, my science teacher, helped guide me throughout the study. My parents helped gather materials that I needed to complete the study.	