

Using the Big6 to Prevent Plagiarism

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Plagiarism is a word that can strike fear into the heart of teachers, administrators, parents, and students. As a basic definition, plagiarism is cheating by claiming the work of others as one's own. Practically speaking, plagiarism could mean a failed assignment, course, or expulsion from school - no matter the consequence, a student who plagiarizes is not learning. Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty, and it is necessary for all students to understand its definition, and learn how to recognize and avoid all forms of plagiarism by using information ethically.

A good definition of plagiarism is:

“Plagiarism is commonly defined as the unacknowledged appropriation of the words, graphic images, or ideas of another person. Plagiarism is theft of credit and covers ideas as well as forms of expression” (Online Ethics Center, 2005, para. 1).

As you will notice in this article, I have used a lot of in-text citations. This is just one of many ways to present the ideas of others while avoiding plagiarism. I recommend exposing students to proper citation techniques as often as possible.

Even when a student “forgets” to cite a source, they are guilty of plagiarism. When a student uses a cartoon from the web and does not provide proper credit, they are guilty of plagiarism. Improper paraphrasing can lead to increased chances of plagiarism. The best way to combat plagiarism is to teach our students the definition of plagiarism in all its forms, proper note taking techniques, use of citation styles, and the consequences of unethical behavior. The Big6 is a great tool for training our students to respect the words, ideas, and works of others.

The Big6 and Plagiarism

Big6 4.0: Use of Information, is the stage of the Big6 that best addresses plagiarism. In stage 4, students engage information and extract it from a source (Eisenberg, 2001). This is the perfect opportunity to help students understand how to use information ethically by citing properly.

Teaching students the ethical use of information is an important step to teaching the relationship between information literacy and plagiarism (Boden & Carroll, 2006). One excellent way to create a plagiarism-proof assignment is to create assignments that stress the research process and require that students be held responsible for their work (Hulbert, Savidge, & Laudenslager, 2003). For instance, you could require students to turn in their notes as they research their topic. This would be a great class assignment for Big6 4.0, Use of Information, in an assignment organized around Big6.

Big6 is the key to teaching the ethical use of information. Using Big6, you can create assignments that reduce the tendency toward plagiarism and help students learn proper writing habits (Carbone, 2001). Students that are instructed in the boundaries of plagiarism and those who learn why a certain act is considered plagiarism are provided the tools to success and learning. It is essential that students receive instruction on the ethical use of information, as this will allow students to learn to distinguish between use and misuse of information.

Introducing the Topic

Do not automatically assume that your students know the definition of plagiarism. During a freshman orientation, I asked the students if anyone could tell me what plagiarism was. Not a sound was heard, except for eyeballs rolling in their heads, and eyes looking everywhere but at me. My fourth grade daughter – who had accompanied me to work that day- raised her hand. Since the freshmen did not want to answer my question, I let my daughter. “It is using someone else’s words for your own. It is wrong mommy, just wrong” (Huffman, 2006).

Now, I imagine my freshmen knew what plagiarism was; they were just being typical students and did not want to offer an answer. Yet, attempting to engage students in the process of learning about plagiarism is the first step toward knowledge. After my daughter’s explanation, we continued with our class and by the end of the class period, the students participated in a plagiarism quiz and enjoyed themselves in the process.

The [plagiarism quiz](#), downloaded from the San Francisco University website, provides an excellent review of key topics. It includes common sense plagiarism questions, reviews how to use direct quotes, and shows how to reference works. For example, does reprinting a paragraph from a work count as plagiarism if you change some of the wording? (The answer is yes, and believe it or not, this trips up plenty of students.)

To keep this topic fun, we work through the questions aloud. Students who call out the answers receive a piece of chocolate for speaking up. Once students realize that chocolate is the reward, they become more involved.

Steps for the Teacher

When you design assignments that will reinforce ethical use of information, be specific. For instance, require that students reference specific resources such as two books and two journal articles on the topic, or expect students to create annotated bibliography (Becker, 2006) of the resources they use.

For instance, in one class session I focus on paraphrasing techniques. Improper paraphrasing is a form of plagiarism, but paraphrasing correctly can be a challenge. In this activity, students are asked to find a book or journal article on a topic, and copy a paragraph. They are then asked to identify keywords and summarize the paragraph into their own words, thus illustrating proper paraphrasing techniques.

A school plagiarism policy is another great tool for education. If you have one, introduce the students to it and discuss it! If your school does not have a policy, assign students to research other policies, and to develop guidelines for ethical use of information. Include a statement on plagiarism in the syllabus as a good reminder of your views on the topic.

Help younger children understand that everyone has ideas, thoughts, and words and compare plagiarism to stealing. Illustrate this principle with a short skit, and make it funny! Work with the school media specialist to develop lessons that teach how to use information, cite resources, or include resources used with the final product.

In an [article](#) I wrote for the Big6 eNewsletter on Big6 Stage 4: Use of Information, I included a link to a note taking resource. The templates for taking notes from books, journal articles, and Internet resources includes a separate place for citation information, and room for notes and quotes, including page numbers. Teaching students to take proper notes is just one step in the process of plagiarism instruction.

The End Result

It is essential that students develop ethical information habits - these skills are the key to success in the information age. Big6 4.0: Use of Information provides a natural opportunity to teach and reinforce these skills.

Whether you develop an entire unit on plagiarism, or you integrate the topic into a subject-specific assignment, students who learn how to avoid plagiarism will have more success in school and in life.

An acrostic poem I use with my students to illustrate plagiarism appears below. By the time I present this to my class, most of the students can figure out that I am author of this poem. How do they do this, you ask? Easy - when I present the acrostic to them, I do not provide citation information. Feel free to share it with your students, but remember proper citation is a must!

P paraphrasing someone's work with little change and turning it in as your own

L legal concern

A academic dishonesty

G grade(s) will suffer

I ideas of another, presented as your own

A always provide a citation

R references in text

I intellectual property violation

S suffer consequences

M messy, messy, messy

Ru Story-Huffman. (2006). *Plagiarisme*.

Reference List

Boden, D. & Carroll, J. (2006). Combating plagiarism through information literacy.

Library and Information Update 5(1-2), 40-41.

Carbone, N. (2001). *Thinking and Talking About Plagiarism*. Retrieved January 23, 2007,

from <http://bedfordstmartins.com/technotes/techtiparchive/ttip102401.htm>

Eisenberg, M. (2001). *A Big6 Skills Overview*. Retrieved January 18, 2007, from [A Big6 Skills Overview](#)

Huffman, L. (2006). *Personal communication*.

Hulbert, J. M., Savidge, C. R., & Laudenslager, G. R. (2003). Processed assignments: How promoting information literacy prevents plagiarism. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 10(1), 39-51.

Online Ethics Center. (2005). *Glossary of Terms*. Retrieved January 16, 2007,

from <http://onlineethics.org/Default.aspx?id=2960>

SFU Library. (n.d.) *Plagiarism Pre-Test*. Retrieved February 8, 2007,

from <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/researchhelp/tutorials/interactive/plagiarism/tutorial/Plagiarism-Pretest-QUIZ.htm>

Resources for Students

Ablock, D. (2006). *The Ethical Researcher*. <http://www.noodletools.com/debbie/ethical/>

Contains links for a PowerPoint presentation on plagiarism, note taking, and cut and paste.

Boston, J. (2007). *Plagiarism Resources*.

<http://www.djusd.k12.ca.us/harper/jboston/PlagiarismResources.htm>

From a school library media center in California, this site addresses Information Literacy and Plagiarism.

Education World. (2002). *Student Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism*.

http://www.education-world.com/a_curr/TM/curr390_guide.shtml

Excellent site. Would make a nice handout for students.

Oregon school Library Information System. (2006). *Learn How to...*

<http://cm.oslis.org/MLACitations/elementary/>

A nice page that outlines the steps to research, taking notes and citing resources. Designed for use with elementary students.

Purdue University. (1995-2007). *Avoiding Plagiarism*.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>
Designed for use with older students.