

As a high school teacher, I wanted my students to realize that when we choose to be honest—or dishonest—something happens inside of us. *It affects the kind of person we are becoming.* To help them see why this is true, I asked them to write in response to a series of questions:



1. A prospective employer or college writes to one of your teachers for a recommendation. The writer says, "We know this student has good grades. What about his/her character?" What would you want the teacher to say about your character?

2. Is "Everybody's doing it" a valid reason to do something dishonest?

3. Is cheating in any of the following circumstances less wrong than cheating in the others: (a) school, (b) business, (c) income taxes, (d) athletic event, (e) job or college application? Explain.

4. How do you gain the trust of another person? How do you destroy it?

5. What are some of the consequences of being dishonest?

6. What are the rewards of honesty?

Next, students shared their answers in small groups, followed by reporting out and whole-group discussion. Then I had students read an excerpt from my book *Life's Greatest Lessons*, describing the consequences of dishonesty (turns us into phonies, destroys trust, and undermines self-respect) and the benefits of leading an honest life (builds a

good reputation, strengthens relationships, and brings peace of mind).

Once students had read this essay, I asked them to write again on the initial questions about honesty, and compare their two sets of responses.

As a class we discussed how their answers may have changed and why. This activity helped them see that honesty is a choice, one that matters. They had a better grasp of why honesty is essential if they wished to have self-respect and fulfilling relationships—now and throughout their lives. ■

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