

Round 3



The Wandering Eye

GENERAL FACTS:

Cardinals High School, a prestigious public high school in Arizona, known for its academic excellence, has long upheld strict policies regarding test integrity. The school's commitment to maintaining a fair and honest academic environment has been central to its reputation, especially in the years following the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Recently, the Arizona School Board Association implemented a new policy aimed at preserving test integrity after another high school discovered an unspecified number of students devised a system in which students were paid by others to complete online homework and tests in multiple math sections. The new policy states any student suspected of cheating, caught cheating, or compromising test exams would be automatically suspended until further review. A student who admits to cheating before school authorities' complete investigation is subject to less severe disciplinary actions than a student who is concluded to be cheating from the investigation.

During a recent History mid-term exam, Emmerson, a diligent and high-achieving junior at Cardinals High School, was suspected of cheating by their teacher, Dr. Ren Johnson. Dr. Johnson observed Emmerson looking at their neighbor's paper on five different occasions in the span of a few minutes and at one point, noticed Emmerson smirk, and write something down. Without any physical evidence, Dr. Johnson reported the incident to the school principal.

The principal later called Emmerson to ask why they were looking at their neighbor's paper in which Emmerson replied, "I wasn't looking at their paper, I was looking at the clock next to them." Dr. Johnson admits the clock was situated against a nearby wall next to Emmerson's neighbor because it had fallen a few days prior. Emmerson further states they had no reason to cheat because they had one of the highest grades in Dr. Johnson's History class. Though true, the student Emmerson was next to during the mid-term was one of only two students who had a higher grade than Emmerson. Dr. Johnson states he heard Emmerson whispering to nearby classmates just before the exam started, expressing how difficult the test was going to be because they studied the wrong materials. Emmerson agreed this happened. Dr. Johnson also acknowledges that besides the five occasions, Emmerson did not appear to look at their neighbor's paper for the remainder of the exam.

In line with the newly implemented test integrity policy, the school principal decided to suspend Emmerson pending a formal investigation into the alleged cheating. Emmerson's parents were notified of the incident and deeply concerned about the suspension, as it could have serious implications for Emmerson's academic record and college prospects. They believed that the school should have conducted a thorough investigation before taking such a drastic step. They argued that the suspension was based solely on suspicion, with no tangible evidence to support the allegation. As Rule 2(b) of the test integrity policy (see attached), they have placed Emmerson's mid-term as pending, which means they will not issue a grade until the investigation has been conducted.

Dr. Johnson and the principal highlighted the importance of maintaining test integrity. This mid-term is one that will help determine class rankings for which seniors will be granted the opportunity to speak at graduation next year. Given the recent incident with the nearby school, the principal had a duty to act promptly to protect the integrity of Cardinals High School's academic evaluations. They insisted that the suspension was a precautionary measure and not a punishment, as it would be lifted if the investigation cleared Emmerson of any wrongdoing.

With tensions escalating, Emmerson parents and counsel decided to invoke the school's mediation process to resolve the matter amicably and ensure that Emmerson's future academic endeavors are not jeopardized. They will meet with Emmerson's principal, Dr. Johnson, and school's counsel to discuss a resolution to this issue.

Emmerson's parents and counsel are determined to have Emmerson's suspension lifted and their academic record cleared of any wrongdoing because they believe there is a lack of evidence to support the investigation. They believe that the school's policy should not lead to hasty decisions that could harm a student's future, especially one that is speculative. They are hoping to cooperate and are willing to work with the school to find a fair and just resolution.

Dr. Johnson and the school's counsel are committed to upholding the school's test integrity policy under Rule 1 of the policy. They have been given permission by the school board to ensure that academic evaluations remain reliable and trustworthy. They believe that the suspension was necessary to protect the integrity of the mid-term exam. They are open to a thorough investigation but hope to find a resolution beforehand that aligns with the policy.

Cardinals High School Test Integrity Policy: This policy outlines the school's approach to addressing issues related to test integrity.

Policy Provisions:

1.) Suspected Cheating:

- a. Any student suspected of cheating during a test or compromising test exams will be subject to investigation.
- b. Suspected cheating includes, but is not limited to, copying from another student's paper, using unauthorized materials, communicating with other students during the test, or any other actions that compromise the integrity of the test.

2.) Caught or Suspected of Cheating:

If a student is suspected or caught cheating during a test or compromising test exams, the following actions will be taken:

- a. The student's test will be invalidated, and no credit will be given for the test.
- b. The student will receive a grade of zero for the test if caught cheating or remain pending if suspected of cheating.
- c. The student will be automatically suspended until further review.

3. Admitting to Cheating:

If a student admits to cheating before a formal investigation is completed, the following actions will be taken:

- a. The student's test will be invalidated, and no credit will be given for the test.
- b. The student will receive a grade of zero for the test.
- c. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as determined by the school authorities, which may include a suspension.

4. Investigation Process:

When a suspected cheating incident is reported, the school will conduct a prompt and thorough investigation to determine the extent of the violation and the student's involvement.

- a. Investigations may involve interviews with the student, the teacher, and any witnesses, as well as a review of test materials and any other relevant evidence.
- b. The investigation will be completed as soon as possible to minimize disruptions to the student's academic progress.
- c. Students may volunteer to take a polygraph test to assert their innocence and if the test indicates the student did not cheat then they will be absolved of any wrong doings.

5. Disciplinary Actions:

If, after investigation, a student is found guilty of cheating or compromising test exams, they will face disciplinary actions as determined by the school authorities.

- a. Disciplinary actions may include, but are not limited to, suspension, academic penalties, loss of privileges, and mandatory academic integrity education.