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Mr. Johnson has discovered that the higher the level of student engagement and creativity, the lower the probability of plagiarism. For teachers who would like to see such desirable results, he describes the characteristics of assignments that are most likely to produce them.

WHEN I SEE stories in the media or on the Internet about rampant plagiarism, I am reminded of Joseph Malins' poem "A Fence or an Ambulance." This 1895 poem tells the story of a community that solves the problem of people falling over a cliff by providing an ambulance at the bottom. Initially, the community is pleased with this solution, but then, . . . an old sage remarked: "It's a marvel to me That people give far more attention To repairing results than to stopping the cause, When they'd much better aim at prevention. "Let us stop at its source all this mischief," cried he, "Come, neighbors and friends let us rally, If the cliff we will fence we might almost dispense With the ambulance down in the valley." Educators expend much effort trying to "catch" plagiarism in student work. Teachers and library media specialists use various Web services and Internet search techniques to detect student work that is lifted from online sources. While such tools are necessary and can be effective, our time as educators would be better spent creating assignments that require original, thoughtful research and, therefore, minimize the likelihood of plagiarism in the first place. The following scenarios provide examples of projects that encourage students to do original work.

Scenario one. Michael is a wonderful young man — handsome, intelligent, caring, and sweet. While Mike always completes his school assignments, he is perfunctory about them. On occasion, however, Mike gets very excited about his schoolwork — the school science fair is one of those times. He spends weekends conducting experiments, visiting the library, searching websites, making graphs, taking photos, and carefully designing presentation boards that illustrate his findings. In one of his best projects — completed in the fifth grade — Mike sought to identify which of several substances would melt ice the fastest. To make this determination, he drilled holes in the bottoms of four or five aluminum pie plates, taped over the holes, and then filled them with water. After freezing the pie plates, he removed the tape from the holes, carefully balanced the plates on measuring cups, spread a variety of materials on top of each icy pie, and then diligently recorded how much water dripped through the holes each hour. He presented his findings in spreadsheets and graphs that he designed. As part of his research he investigated facts about water, ice, and commercial deicers and used the information to verify his hypothesis. Finally, he practiced answering questions a judge might ask at the science fair itself. This is a fairly simple project that could be replicated easily with other students.

Scenario two. Beth chose an interesting way for her eighth-grade students to learn about World War II. Instead of having the class read from a textbook, Beth asked volunteers from the community to come in and be interviewed by teams of students about the impact of the war on them as either military personnel or civilians. After carefully interviewing the volunteers, the students wrote a narrative, took digital photographs, and scanned WW II-era memorabilia into the computer. The students also explored Web-based references to research the topics and terms they learned about from the interviews.

## **PLAGIARISM-PROOFING ASSIGNMENTS**

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