

Editorial Writing

2011 KSPA Regional Competition

Description

You are a member of Ad Astra High School's newspaper staff. Your editor has assigned you to write an editorial using the information provided.

School Info

Name: Ad Astra High School
Location: Aspera, Kansas
Mascot: Box Turtles
Enrollment: 850 (grades 9-12)
School Colors: Green & Gold
Yearbook: The Honeybee
Newspaper: The Star

Contest Info

This is an **on-site** contest.

Please attach **your assigned contest number** in the upper right-hand corner of your entry.

Do not put your name on the entry. If you do, your entry will be disqualified.

Students are not to request help or advice from anyone other than the KSPA Executive Director. All work must be that of the contestant.

Assignment

You are to write a 200-word editorial on the controversy outlined in the story below, which is running in the next edition of the Ad Astra Star, your paper.

The writer should determine which information is relevant and important to the story. Students may write in pen or pencil. Students may use dictionary, thesaurus and A.P. style manuals. The use of personal listening devices (i.e. iPods), recording devices, electric typewriters and personal computers during the contest is prohibited.

Story

Teens love Facebook. But right now, at Ad Astra High School, it's a Facebook page started by parents that's getting a lot of attention.

It's called "Real World, Real Grades." The AAHS parents are upset about what they view as a lack of communication in the school system and some new policies they say send the wrong message. It used to be that if you were caught cheating a test at Ad Astra, the grade you received was a "zero."

But a policy instituted this year at the school told teachers to give students caught cheating a chance to "recomplete" the work.

"I think if you got caught cheating, that's your fault. You shouldn't have done that. You shouldn't get a second chance," said Laurie Anderson, a junior at AAHS.

Some parents, like Kate Bush, agree.

"It's morally corrupt to promote cheating with no repercussions. I teach infants and toddlers, and a big principle behind learning there and learning anywhere is natural consequences," Bush said.

Parents say Principal Bill Withers reverted back to a different policy that allowed teachers to decide if they wanted a student to redo the work. Parents say that's not good enough, so they created the Facebook page.

"They've got two or three more days to study, they can talk to other students about what was on the test and they may have even had a chance to scan the test before they got caught cheating," Bush said.

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Story con't...

Parents are also frustrated by another new policy that allows a student to carry a grade of "I" for incomplete during the school year and even into summer school.

"I didn't really understand it at first. It was sort of thrust on everyone, not really explained very well," said Joan Jett, a senior.

Withers said the extra time gives "every opportunity for a student to show mastery of a concept." "Math and science especially are very sequential. And if you don't know A, you cannot learn formula B because it's built upon it," Bush said.

Finally, parents say they were caught off-guard by plans to phase out honors courses when there's an alternative "AP" course.

"People move to Aspera for the schools," Bush said. "I did. I school-shopped as a teacher for the best education for my kids. I regret that looking at what they're trying to put in place."

Principal Withers has now said the incomplete grades can't spill over into summer school. He promises everyone will have an actual grade by the end of the year.

The Aspera USD 666 Board of Education didn't want to talk to The Star. A school board spokesperson, Carole King told The Star, "There is no story here."

One school board member, Eva Cassidy, is out of town. She told The Star by telephone that grades should be handed out in a timely manner and cheating should be handled on a case-by-case basis, but he said there must be consequences.