Lesson: Reflection on ethical practice

Evidence for 7.1.1 Working Towards Graduate

Scenario

During term two you notice that one of year 11 students is performing extremely well on take home assessments. You are happy that this student has seemingly turned a corner in their understanding of the key concepts but you have a nagging doubt in your head that is exacerbated by the lack of understanding they display when you discuss concepts with them in class. The nagging doubt forces you to act on this issue.

A. You schedule a meeting with the student, their parents and year advisor and give them an official warning about plagiarism

B. You make a mental note to modify the assessment tasks for next year so that there are more in-class assessments then take-home ones

C. You schedule a meeting with the student where you remind them of the contract they signed as part of the All My Own Work program at the beginning of Year 11 and set goals for their future practice in preparation of take home assessments

D. You ask the student's other teachers in a whole school staff meeting if they have the same doubt

E. You call the student's parents and warn them about the penalties for plagiarism

	Most appropriate Least Appropriate				
	1	2	3	4	5
A				X	
B					X
C	X				
D		X			
E			X		

Justification

I believe the most appropriate response to this scenario is to meet with student to discuss the situation, and the student's perspective (Walker, 2009). Giving them an official warning may be inappropriate, but rather the meeting should focus on the discussion, as it is still unclear whether the student did plagiarise. Rather than accuse, I believe the best approach is to discuss the assignment with the student, and the expectations placed upon them by the contract signed and the NESA All My Own Work Program (2017). If it is discovered through the meeting the assignment is plagiarised, then consequences can be discussed and negotiated with the student, before a formal warning is given.

The next step I would take is to speak with other teachers to find out if this issue is relevant across

all of her subjects. However, I would not do this in a whole school meeting, but rather through individual discussions or a private meeting with just the student's teachers. This approach would reduce any humiliation for the student, and would also not take up the time of any teachers to whom the situation is irrelevant. A discussion with the student's year advisor or welfare teacher may also need to happen within this step (Suskie, 2010). This step is largely dependent on the outcome of this discussion with the student, and the reasons for plagiarism, if any.

The third step I would take would be to call the parents and discuss with them my concerns over the students work. I would also question their perception of the student, their stress levels, work at home and any other factors that may have influenced the student (Suskie, 2010). I would not issue a formal warning over the phone, but instead remind the parents of my concerns and school policies relating to plagiarism, in particular the NESA All My Own Work Program. If necessary, the phone call may result in a need to set up a meeting with the student's parents, year advisor and associated teachers. If a meeting was necessary, I would issue an official warning here. However, a meeting is a rather drastic reaction to suspicion of plagiarism, which is why it is one of the least appropriate reactions (Walker, 2009).

The first and foremost strategy to suspected plagiarism is a discussion with the student, as no allegations or actions can be made before this step (Walker, 2009). It is crucial to ask the student what is going on, and whether they actually did plagiarise their work, and if so, why. From this step, discussions can be had, consequences given and any further discussions or meetings set up with fellow teachers or parents (Suskie, 2010).

According to the Department of Education Code of Conduct (2006), the above outlined steps and justification are the only correct manner in which to approach the given scenario.

Reference List

Department of Education. (2006). *Code of Conduct*. Retrieved from: https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/rights-and-accountability/department-of-education-code-of-conduct.

NESA. (2017). *HSC All My Own Work Program*. Retrieved from: http://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/hsc/hsc-all-my-own-work.

Suskie, L. (2010). *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*. United States of America: John Wiley & Sons.

Walker, J. (2009). Measuring Plagiarism: Researching What Students Do, Not What They Say They Do. *Studies in Higher Education, 35(1)*, pp. 41-59.