How Can Teachers Offering Choice in their Classrooms with a UDL Framework, Raise Academic Integrity and Honesty in Students?

By Angelina D’Aquino (Verrazzano Honors) and Michael DeConco (Department of Education)
The College of Staten Island

Thesis
Providing students multiple means of expression is a major aspect of a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework. By allowing students to have choice in the ways they express what they know, academic integrity and honesty in the classroom will prosper.

Why may students be dishonest?
- Lack of interest
- Pressure to get good grades
- Peer culture
- Time constraints
- Easy access from the internet

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Framework
Giving students an equal opportunity for success is demonstrated through the three main principles of the framework:

- Multiple Means of Representation
  • Present information in different ways to support variety of students learning.
- Multiple Means of Engagement
  • Promoting different ways of engaging with materials.
- Multiple Means of Expression
  • Offering students choice to demonstrate their learning in various ways.

What is being done currently?
Many teachers take precautions during in person assessment and some resort to punishment as a response to academic dishonesty. Often, these options are effective in catching academic dishonesty, but not preventing it in the future.

- Separation of desks during exams
- Multiple versions of assessments
- Invalidation of test if student is caught
- Antiplagiarism software
- Detention or calls home

How can Multiple Means of Expression raise academic integrity?

- Offering students choice in as many aspects of their learning as possible, can improve their motivating and confidence.
- Choices can activate schema (bringing in students outside knowledge and putting things into context), which creates more relevance for students within their learning. If students are more engaged, they may be less likely to cheat.
- Choice targets the students’ learning styles, highlighting each of their strengths and assets. They can choose a way to express their knowledge according to the way that individual student learns best.

How does this affect teachers in their lesson planning?
Providing these options to students comes from teachers understanding that there are actions in their power that can prevent the amount of cheating and plagiarizing in their classes. Teachers can offer these choices by:

- Providing students with an option to choose which question they can answer best.
- Allow students to choose from a variety of formats to express their knowledge (essay form, graphic organizers, illustrations with captions, poetry, collage, diary entry, etc.)
- Choice of reading that interests them.