



EMBARGOED UNTIL October 15, 2006.

The release of this report is to coincide with national CHARACTER COUNTS! Week, October 15-21. It is released to the media early to permit time for analysis and interviews. Please do not publish before October 15.

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JOSEPHSON INSTITUTE'S REPORT CARD ON AMERICAN YOUTH: 28% OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS STEAL; 60% CHEAT

Survey of 36,000 high school students reveals entrenched habits of dishonesty in the workforce of future

LOS ANGELES – According to the Josephson Institute's 2006 Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth, today's young people reveal deeply entrenched habits of dishonesty. The report, released as part of National CHARACTER COUNTS! Week (October 15-21) reveals high rates of cheating, lying and theft.

More than one in four (28%) of the 36,122 high school students surveyed admitted **stealing from a store within the past year** (32% males, 23% females). Twenty-three percent said they **stole something from a parent or other relative**; 81% confessed they **lied to a parent about something significant** and 39% said they **lied to save money** (47% males, 31% females).

Cheating in school continues to be rampant. A substantial majority (60%) **cheated on a test** during the past year (35% did so two or more times) and one in three (33%) said they used the Internet to plagiarize an assignment.

As bad as these numbers are, it appears they understate the level of dishonesty exhibited by America's youth as 27% confessed they **lied on at least one or two questions on the survey**. Experts agree that dishonesty on surveys usually is an attempt to conceal misconduct.

Despite these high levels of dishonesty, these same kids have a high self image of their ethics. A whopping 92% said they were ***satisfied with their personal ethics and character*** and 74% said that “***when it comes to doing what is right, I am better than most people I know.***”

According to Michael Josephson, president and founder of the Institute and one of the nation’s top ethics experts, “The good news is that things aren’t getting any worse -- the 2006 results are almost identical to those reported in 2004. The bad news is that unacceptably high rates of dishonesty have become the norm. It doesn’t bode well for the future that so many kids are entering the workforce to become the next generation of corporate executives and cops, politicians and parents, journalists, teachers, and coaches with the dispositions and skills of liars, cheaters and thieves.”

Following a benchmark survey in 1992, the Josephson Institute has conducted a national survey of the ethics of American youth every two years. The 2006 data was gathered through a national sample of public and private high schools. Surveys were conducted in 2006.

This report addresses honesty and integrity and is the first based on the extensive data gathered. Additional reports will be issued in the ensuing months focusing on violence, drug use and other issues and will analyze the impact on values, attitudes and behavior of sports, religious convictions and other factors.

About the Josephson Institute of Ethics

The Josephson Institute of Ethics, a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization based in Los Angeles, CA, created and administers the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a partnership of more than 700 educational and youth-serving organizations committed to improving the ethical quality of America’s young people through character education. CHARACTER COUNTS! is the nation’s most widely implemented approach to character education. Congress and most states have declared the third week in October National CHARACTER COUNTS! Week.

An extensive library of materials for teachers, parents, coaches and others interested in character education as well as transcripts of Michael Josephson’s daily radio commentaries are available at no charge at www.charactercounts.org.

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