

What Would You Do?

Consider this DECA scenario and decide

By Eric Hastie

Compiled by Vincent Alex Brown, editor

DECA (Distributive Education Club of America), the association of marketing students, is hosting its annual Competitive Events Program, and high school groups from all over the state are developing project ideas that they are sure to win first prize.

After hearing that the event is coming, DECA chapter members decide they should enter the competition. The group officers—Joe, Alicia, and Greg—consider the amount of work needed to develop a winning project and decide to enter the Creative Marketing portion of the program.

A month before the competition, no one has started the project. Joe, chapter president, gets hold of a past winning project and asks the group if they would be willing to alter the old project in order to save time. Alicia suggests that with a month left before the deadline the group has ample time to develop its own project. Greg sides with Joe, saying the group doesn't have time to develop a first-place entry, and that by changing the old project, they could place much higher. The group votes on refurbishing the old project.

One week before deadline, the group advisor asks to see the club entry. She mentions that before they enter the competition, more changes are needed because the project looks plagiarized as it stands. The group has a week to fix the project.

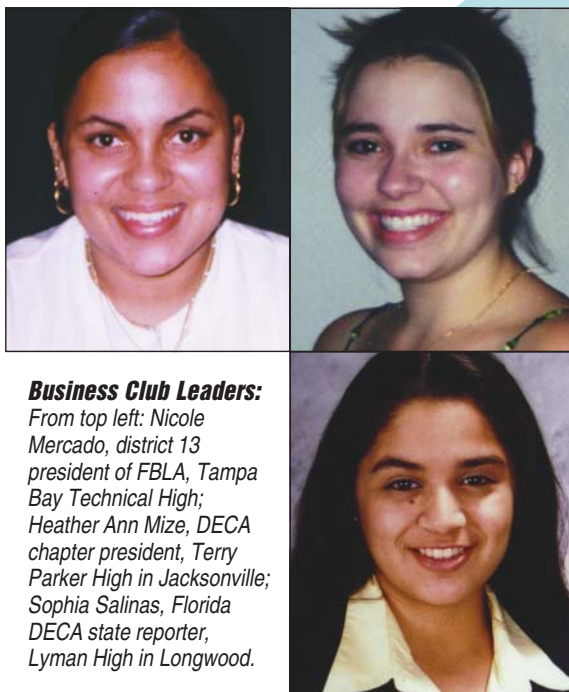
Joe decides that he will enter the project without making changes. Alicia says she will resign as a club officer because she feels that the group is going to be disciplined for turning in a plagiarized project. Greg starts to worry about being caught, and he tells Joe they should not enter the competition.

To comment on this scenario, we asked two DECA leaders—one high school and one statewide—and a newly-elected district FBLA leader to add an additional perspective. The participants are: Nicole Mercado, district 13 president of FBLA, Tampa Bay Technical High School; Heather Ann Mize, DECA chapter president, Terry Parker High School in Jacksonville; Sophia Salinas, Florida DECA state reporter, Lyman High School in Longwood.

1. Should Joe enter the competition and risk being caught?

Sophia: No. Joe shouldn't enter the competition, not so much for the risk of being caught but to allow all the other creative marketing teams who have actually worked on their projects a fair attempt to place at competition.

Heather: No, because it's not worth jeopardizing the whole group's reputation.



Business Club Leaders:

From top left: Nicole Mercado, district 13 president of FBLA, Tampa Bay Technical High; Heather Ann Mize, DECA chapter president, Terry Parker High in Jacksonville; Sophia Salinas, Florida DECA state reporter, Lyman High in Longwood.

2. Were the group officers wrong not to start a new project initially?

Sophia: Yes. A new project should have been started initially so that the project would be original and ready for competition by the deadline.

Heather: Yes, because they're officers of a distinguished organization and need to set an example.

3. Was the group responsible for not questioning their leader's motives for using the old project?

Sophia: Yes. The group should have questioned their leader. However, the leader of the group should have set an example for the entire group.

Heather: Yes, because they are officers and they're just as responsible as he is.

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4. Should the group officers be punished for not looking out for the group's best interest?

Sophia: Yes. The group officers should set examples for the entire chapter, but the others should also be punished.

Heather: Yes, because they know their duties and are capable of speaking for their actions.

5. Was the advisor wrong not to watch their progress more closely?

Sophia: The advisor should watch the project as closely as possible, but the advisor wouldn't be able to watch everything that occurs in the project. If the advisor knows that the project is plagiarized, he shouldn't allow the project to be entered.

Nicole: No, DECA officers should be responsible enough to do a project by themselves. In the real world, your boss won't watch your every move!

6. Should Alicia have talked to the group sponsor about Joe's actions?

Sophia: Alicia should have talked to their group sponsor, perhaps not about Joe's actions but about the group's actions and decisions.

Heather: Yes, because as a club officer, she could have used her communication skills to help herself and fellow classmates.

7. Would it be better if the group entered next year's competition to avoid being caught?

Sophia: The group should drop their current project and wait until next year not just to avoid being caught but also to give an equal opportunity to the others that are in the competition.

Heather: Yes, because then they could start extra early and really make it a first-place project.

8. Do you think they would have learned more by doing their own project, or was modifying the old one just as effective?

Sophia: The only way to learn through a project is to actually do it. Modifying a project will not have the same learning effect as actually going through the experience of making a project. I don't believe that a person would feel the same satisfaction of winning if the project was plagiarized.

Nicole: They would have learned much more by doing their own project—especially time management, planning, working together, and creating original ideas.