

DCs: The Academy's Power Play

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Disclaimer: This article does not intend to take aim at the Academy, nor complain about the system. Its sole purpose is to present an angle about on the prep school DC system.

DC. two letters that make even the most fearless of students shiver in their boots. I have been lucky enough to never find myself in a disciplinary meeting but am familiar with the basic process: students gets caught doing something they shouldn't, they have a meeting in which they are allowed to defend themselves in front of a student-faculty committee, and then a decision is made about how to punish them. From the outset it seems like a fair system, but "being DCd" often has a ripple effect far greater than the crime deserves—an unintended effect, if you will.

DCs are designed to help students recognize the error in their ways and spend all their time at the Academy as "days of glory." However, I think it's safe to say that a majority of students refute the Deans' claims that DCs help students recover from mistakes. Rather, see a DC like a Scarlett Letter. In case you're not familiar with it, the concept is based on *The Scarlett Letter*, written by Nathaniel Hawthorne, in which a woman is convicted of adultery and forced to wear a red "A" as means of bearing the stigma of her wrongdoing. Similarly, although it lacks a physical manifestation, a DC can hang over students for long periods of time, even their entire Deerfield careers. It can do this by harming one's reputation with teachers, students, and making it more difficult to get into college.

Some may argue that through reform one can show teachers that they have changed. And some may insist that the pressure to show the community that one has changed could even be a good thing. For example, if a student is caught drinking, their DC will act as a constant reminder of their ill judgment. However, I believe that most students would think more about how they got caught than why what they did was wrong. Extending this hypothetical drinking-related DC, college culture is so highly linked with alcohol that students often don't consider drinking as a wrongdoing, rather something they don't want to be caught doing.

Furthermore, students rarely break rules alone. Normally small or even large groups of friends are guilty of violating major school rules, and this is how DCs can interrupt student relationships. If at the risk of striking out of the Academy, students may decide not to spend weekends with their friends. Again, some may consider this a good thing—the DC makes students re-evaluate the kinds of influences they want around them. However, if the students don't believe they are doing anything wrong at a practical level, rather than making a decision for the good, they risk losing touch with friendships that may outlive their Academy days.

Regardless, I do not question that the Academy is looking out for us with our best interests in mind. We even had a meeting today where Mr. Kelly explained how our safety is the school's

top-most concern. So, I'll end this article as I started it. I have been lucky enough to not have a disciplinary hearing thus far in my prep school career, and I hope that you have too.