

Playing with



Cheating in the 'Digital Age'

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"Most of the assignments are really pointless, so not wasting time on one or two isn't going to stop me from going to college."

-Junior Aidyn Morelock

"What is okay to take? Is borrowing your friend's Netflix password the same as not really thinking through an issue. But thinking you're informed and arguing for something, or voting. Where do you draw the line?" said English Teacher Matthew Gustafson.

As the lines between collaborating, borrowing, and cheating are becoming more and more blurred, students are having a harder time understanding the harsh consequences. The addition of the internet creates a perfect storm for them to pull together any grades that may be dropping.

Cheating is normal. Take a look around IC Cafe during 4th period. How many students can you count copying off of another student? In a poll of 235 students, 80% said they have copied before.

While cheating is nothing new, it's possible that the digital age has made us dependent on instant answers.

"Your generation has grown up with the internet," English teacher Stefanie Crecelius. "Your generation has grown up with Google for the answers, for everything. So, it might just be something that's ingrained."

The internet rose to prominence in the early 90s, so not just students swipe easy answers and information from the web, but so do adults in all different types of jobs.

"Once I had a meeting with a parent and a student, where the parent had helped the student rip a bunch of stuff off the internet in order to construct this paper," Gustafson said. "Her dad argued that it wasn't cheating because he does it in his business all the time."

Six years ago, cheating at Creek was considered an academic issue rather than a disciplinary issue. This meant that the deans had no power over the consequences of cheating, only teachers did.

As the internet rose into the foreground, answers became much more accessible and the influx of cheating outmatched teachers' disciplinary tactics.

"Before the internet became such an easy way for students to plagiarize. There was far less plagiarism. It required a lot more work," English Department Coordinator Samuel Feld said.

And with the new addition of instant answers - from professors' PDFs to Quizlets and Photomath - the magnitude of academic dishonesty became watered down to students.

"I think everyone knows it's bad, but once you get away with it one or two times, it just becomes okay to do," Crecelius said. "And I think it's more common now. So, if everybody else is doing it, students probably think it's okay."

Why kids do it

Knowing this, the addition of pressure and carelessness create the ideal recipe for disaster.

When students are in a time crunch with a homework assignment due, and the answers are at the tips of their fingers, it becomes a simple A-to-B situation.

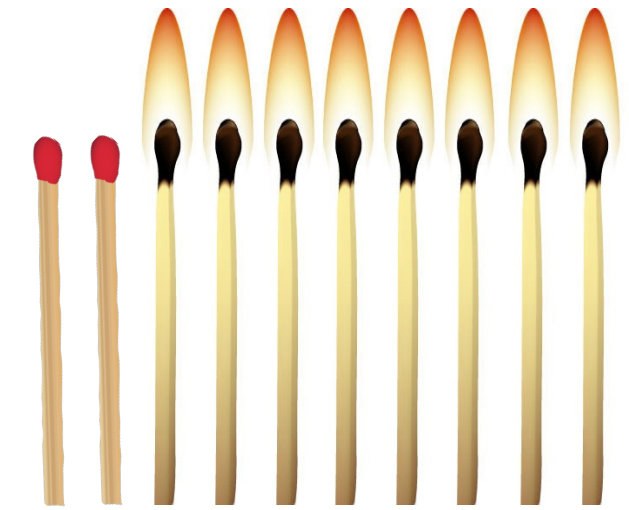
"They think it's not as big of a grade so it's not as big of a deal and they're short on time so they get desperate and just copy the assignment down," Gustafson said.

Sometimes it's just a matter of time prioritization. "Most of the assignments are really pointless, so not wasting

Have you ever copied off of the internet or another student for an assignment?

80%

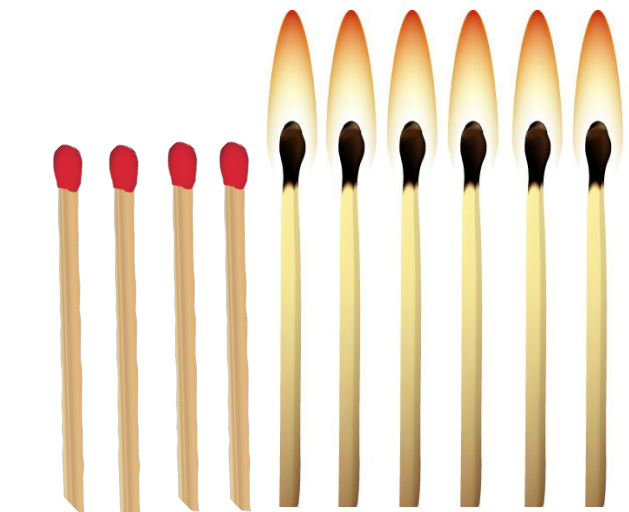
of students say yes



Have you ever cheated?

65%

of students say yes



poll of 235 students

time on one or two isn't going to stop me from going to college," Junior Aidyn Morelock said.

All this being said, there are still plenty of students who don't obsess over a grade and don't cheat, like Junior Mitch Patton.

"I do all my work and I study because it helps better absorb the information," he said. "I may not get a perfect grade but at least I am learning more than if I just copied the work"

Feld agrees. As a teacher, he values the significance of learning over achievements.

"I always want to see your work, no matter what level your work is at because, at the end of the day," Feld said. "It's not going to be the be all end all on your way to college."

The consequences

Creek has a strict zero-tolerance policy for students who get caught cheating.

Any teacher who catches a student cheating is expected to follow protocol and contact the student's dean and the department coordinator depending on which class the crime was committed to.

Students are given two strikes. After the third, they are immediately suspended which is completely visible to all colleges, and, if asked, students must explain the altercation.

In response to the emergence of the web and easy access to answers, administration instituted an expensive plagiarism detection service many students are familiar with - "Turnitin.com"

Turnitin uses a private quote system and Feld wasn't sure of the exact price for Creek. However, it typically charges between \$1.25-\$2.00 per student, according to the Financial Times.

For Feld, it was well worth the price.

"Turnitin.com is extraordinarily successful, and successful in the way that students just know they're going to get caught," he said. "So as a preventative, that's been excellent."

Creek has many advanced preventative strategies but, what happens when students don't get caught?

Despite many students getting away with cheating, Gustafson believes that the long-term effects of cheating are just as, if not more, detrimental than getting caught.

"They're losing out on the opportunity to gain those academic muscles that will help them perform on the test or help them perform on the one thing they wouldn't even consider cheating on," Gustafson said.

And, in an even more long-term sense, how is this affecting students as they transition into adulthood?

"When you don't read the news or you're not practiced in considering your sources, how can you tell the difference between real news and propaganda? When you don't sit down and struggle through a difficult text?" Gustafson said.

A common misconception is that copying an assignment from online or off of another student isn't cheating.

Out of the 80% of students who admitted to copying, only 65% had said admitted to cheating.

However, the Bear Facts explicitly states that any sort of plagiarism or copying is academic dishonesty and should receive consequences equal to any other form of cheating.

"It's the same thing as cheating on a test," Dean Tom Doherty said. "It's the same thing as cheating, it's academic dishonesty."

The only real variation between the degrees of cheating is the point-value of assignments.

"If you plagiarized on a 200 point paper, your grade is really going to tank," Feld said. "And nobody's going to give you a second chance. If you plagiarized on a homework assignment, yeah you're going to get a zero, but it's more going to be one of your strikes, as it were, against you."

Though the consequences of copying are more minimal short-term, in the long run, students can expect to find harsher repercussions.

Many students do not realize the extenuating ramifications of their actions and a steep divide between students and teachers begins to form.

"That's the thing about instant gratification always," Gustafson said. "You lose some measure of yourself that can only be gained through struggle."