

Plagiarism in the Digital Age: *Expert-Answers to Questions High School Educators Are Asking Now.*

Q. I'd like practical information. How can we encourage students to use their own information? Writing is hard, and there's just so much information they could copy. What can we do to motivate them to actually take the more difficult path that includes critical thinking and organized writing?

Jason Stephens: While there's no silver bullet with respect to motivating all students, a good starting point is to enhance the "task value" of all writing assignments (by making them as interesting and/or useful to students as possible) and by allowing as much as student "choice and voice" as possible (in terms of picking a topic and determining the nature of the final product).

Q. Do you agree that developing an ethic that values academic honesty and a culture of integrity among high school students requires that the following factors must also be addressed; 1) impatience (with reading thoroughly), 2) weak note-taking skills, 3) apathy, 4) poor time management, 5) familiarity with and ability to navigate wide range of sources, 6) resolve to avoid distractions and temptation of "quick an easy"?

Betsy Dawson: Developing this ethic is part of an over-arching discussion, which needs to take place throughout the school. If you'd like to talk more about how to begin such an effort, please contact me at dawsonbetsy7@gmail.com

Jason Stephens: Yes, all that and more. You've only identified a few of things that focus on students, there's much more with respect to changing the school culture. Including, for example, the salience and importance of academic integrity, the type of achievement goals and values that are communicated to students by teachers, administrators and parents, the extent to which students feel responsible for achieving with integrity and are involved in adjudicating cases of dishonesty, etc.

Q. How do we redefine plagiarism with generation y and z in the context of mashups, collaboration, sharing, freedom, and open source?

Bill Connolly: I don't think it's a matter of redefining plagiarism. The methods of cheating have changed but the reasons behind it have not. Administrators and teachers certainly need to recognize these new contexts, but they should focus more on motivating students to do their own work, rather than trying to find all of the new ways they will cheat.

Jason Stephens: I don't think the meaning of plagiarism has changed, despite emerging trends and technologies that make sharing, co-construction and creative fusion more commonplace. Making proper attribution for the words and/or ideas we borrow from others is still (and I think always will be) the right thing to do. However, *how* we make that attribution by varying depending of the medium of expression.

Q. How do cell phones and text messaging add to the cheating/plagiarism dilemma?

David Wangaard: Technology has afforded students many new strategies to cheat and students are much more skilled at using technology than teachers are at preventing its use. One helpful strategy is to have the school establish its own clear procedures and rules as to use of electronic devices in school. Once the procedures and rules are in place, there must be administration and teacher support to implement the policies. The tech tools that students have now only increase their ability to cheat, however teachers who (1) support school policies in class, (2) identify their own commitment to academic integrity and commitment to enforce it, and (3) monitor class proceedings to be aware of violations can help students resist temptations to cheat.

Jason Stephens: Digital technologies have created numerous new tools (cell phones, PDA's, the Internet, etc.) that can be used to cheat or plagiarize. There is not much evidence to suggest that these tools have created a whole new generation of students who cheat (who otherwise would not have). Data does suggest, however, that a shift is occurring: that more students are using these digital technologies (rather than conventional means) to misrepresent what they know or have done. This is particularly true with respect to plagiarism, and, to a lesser extent, test cheating (e.g., using unpermitted notes stored on a digital device as opposed to traditional "cheat sheets").

Q. What is the best way to talk with the student about plagiarism? What consequences are appropriate for High school students when they plagiarize? Should it be different for a 9th grader than a senior?

David Wangaard: Other question responses address this topic to note: (1) dialogue with students is critically important, (2) the conversation should emphasize the ethical "ought" to not steal other's intellectual property, attempt to get an unfair advantage over peers and complete your own work to participate in real learning. There are suggestions for consequences found at -- <http://www.ethicsed.org/programs/integrity-works/pdf/HonorCouncil.pdf> (see page 4)

Jason Stephens: Perhaps more fundamentally teaching them about the ethics of plagiarism, we need to do a much better job teaching students 1) what it is and 2) how to prevent it. Regarding the latter, we need to provide experiences that teach students how to paraphrase another person's words, how to directly quote those words when necessary, and how to properly cite the work (be it a journal article, book, Web site, or some other performance).

Q. The Internet is used for course instruction everyday...how can we manage and control the amount of resources students use?

David Wangaard: Not sure this is possible; I think the teaching question is, "How do I design assignments that cannot be completed by downloading Internet material?" This requires teachers to think creatively as to questions and responses that require students to show original work.

Jason Stephens: I agree with David. I'm not this is possible or even desirable. That said, depending on the pedagogical purposes of a given assignment, a teacher might consider limiting students to the

use of X number of external sources (all to be cited, of course).

Q. How can faculty best be assisted in understanding that plagiarism can be largely avoided if instruction and assignments are structured properly: (B) how can school establish systems for dealing with plagiarism and intellectual integrity that are institutional?

Betsy Dawson: In regard to the second part of your question: Our school has worked on this for many years. If you'd like to learn from our experience, please contact me at dawsonbetsy7@gmail.com

David Wangaard: For part A of the question, all teachers involved that assign writing projects, should engage in some professional development (Barry Gilmore's book- Plagiarism would provide a great resource) to discuss, practice with guided instruction and evaluate assignments that challenge students to write original work. For part B or your question, you are invited to visit-- <http://www.ethicsed.org/programs/integrity-works/example-aipolicy.htm> for a description of steps to establish and Honor System at your school.

Q. Should schools have academic integrity policies?

Betsy Dawson: Yes, yes, yes!!!! If you wish to discuss developing these, please contact me at dawsobets7@gmail.com.

David Wangaard: Yes, policies that are discussed, taught, modeled and enforced. For examples of honor policies see - <http://www.ethicsed.org/programs/integrity-works/pdf/Synthesis.pdf> and -- <http://www.ethicsed.org/programs/integrity-works/policies.htm>

Q. How much does a student have to change a resource's information so it is considered to be in their own words?

Bill Connolly: If the idea behind the information is taken, then it should be cited, no matter how much they change the words. Of course, it becomes very difficult to detect this if they change the passage significantly.

Q. What has been most effective in changing student behavior on this issue?

Betsy Dawson: Guidance from teachers that a student respects will help him/her to develop a value system that precludes cheating. Meaningful dialogue on these issues is the best way to encourage deep reflection about the importance of honesty.

David Wangaard: In support of Betsy's observation, our own research notes that one of the strongest correlations to students choosing not to cheat is their recognition that cheating is ethically wrong. Schools can help cultivate that recognition through dialogue, teacher modeling and exhortation, fair enforcement and meaningful learning experiences.

Audience questions for "Plagiarism in the Digital Age: What's Happening in High Schools Now?" a webinar sponsored by Turnitin.com and Library Media Connection: Nov. 18, 2009
A recording of the webinar and supplemental resources are available at www.plagiarism.org

Q. What are the differences between teens and adults in defining cheating and ways to address or clarify that issue?

Betsy Dawson: Adults need to engage in an ongoing dialogue with teens so that they can develop a common philosophy. This dialogue should be integral to culture of the class room and the school.

Q. How does the faculty at any high school develop an academic integrity plan for the 21st century?

Betsy Dawson: My favorite question! I'd be glad to share my 8 year experience in doing just this. You can contact me at dawsonbetsy7@gmail.com.

David Wangaard: Also reference-- <http://www.ethicsed.org/programs/integrity-works/example-aipolicy.htm>

Q. How can information literacy instruction help prevent plagiarism?

David Wangaard: It is one tool in the arsenal to help students. The motivation to resist plagiarism is cultivated with ethical maturity and ethical role models.

Q. What is the best way to deter students from buying untraceable essays from Internet sites?

David Wangaard: Is anything "untraceable"? My first response is to go back to the need to cultivate an ethical response. The student should be given some opportunity to learn of their ethical responsibility. Following that, there are policing strategies too, such as Turnitin.com that should be used as an editing tool (by the students) in addition to final review tool.

Q. How do you balance warning about plagiarism (without scaring students for whom it's not a problem) with showing students the correct way to cite sources? ... And when one or two students continue to have issues, what can you do?

David Wangaard: After lessons and notes have been provided to teach proper citation, then use peer editing to focus on proper citation and provide this as a creditable assignment for peer editors.

Q. Where can I find ideas about how to clearly make students understand exactly what plagiarism is? We tell them that they can't do it, but I'm not sure that they always understand exactly what it is.

David Wangaard: Barry Gilmore's new book is excellent (advertised in Webinar) and Plagiarism.org has many extra resources.

Q. What are the best methods to raise awareness among teachers that they need to be more vigilant and take precautions to reduce cheating during tests? Do we have statistics to shock them into realizing how completely students take advantage of teachers who use test time to grade papers and fail to adequately monitor their class, do not require cover sheets or take extra time to create multiple versions of the test?

Betsy Dawson: Teacher training needs to be ongoing on this issue. If you want to discuss what we have done at my school, please contact me at dawsonbetsy7@gmail.com

Bill Connolly: I agree with Betsy -- but perhaps teachers should also face penalty if they fail to take precautions. We have found at my school that Professors sometimes avoid the subject all together because of pure laziness.

David Wangaard: One excellent strategy is to conduct your own baseline study and collect student data at your school and continue to evaluate every few years to track your progress. See-- http://www.ethicsed.org/programs/integrity-works/amis_survey.htm for a student survey tool that might work for you.

Q. What role can librarians play in minimizing plagiarism among students?

David Wangaard: Librarians can play a powerful role as catalyst for action, keeper of resources and organizer of your own school Academic Integrity Committee. See-- <http://www.ethicsed.org/programs/integrity-works/aic.htm>

Q. How do you effectively explain the importance of intellectual property and rights to younger students (9th grade)?

David Wangaard: Students of all ages recognize ownership. What students (everyone) does is justify their thefts, whether it be music downloads, movie or software copying, ideas, even onto shop lifting with rationalizations-- this doesn't hurt anyone, they are so wealthy, everyone else is doing this... To break the use of rationalizations, you can expose the rationalizations to ethical examination and also attempt to bring examples of theft (that hurt) closer to home to energize the broader law of reciprocity "do unto others..."

Q. How do we get Administration to take the infractions of plagiarism more seriously?

Betsy Dawson: Persistence, persistence, persistence! Don't give up. Keep trying creative approaches.

David Wangaard: Encourage them to complete a baseline study of student behavior. see-- http://www.ethicsed.org/programs/integrity-works/amis_survey.htm

**Q. What engaging materials or video presentations are available for staff development?
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David Wangaard: Barry Gilmore's books are excellent! Plagiarism.org has a vast amount of resources, including this webinar!

Q. How can one teacher get more teachers on the same page about the impact of plagiarism?

Betsy Dawson: Bring it up in faculty meeting and department meetings. Develop a school-wide policy.

David Wangaard: Find some like-minded colleagues, get support from your school administration and begin your own Academic Integrity Committee. See--
<http://www.ethicsed.org/programs/integrity-works/aic.htm>

Q. If such information has been gathered, what have students themselves reported to be the most effective deterrent (or way to avoid) to plagiarism?

Without data to back this up, in my experiences with other students, the biggest deterrent to plagiarism is other students. Students are 'talked at' by teachers and administrators all of their life. However, they respond to their peers more than anyone else. If it isn't 'cool' to cheat, students will not do it nearly as much. - Bill Connolly

Q. Could the experts address middle school plagiarism issues? What strategies are best used?

Betsy Dawson: Middle School is the best place to begin. Instruction about plagiarism should be integrated into the English curriculum.

David Wangaard: I think anything suggested during this webinar would work throughout secondary. Maybe with the exception of students on honor councils-- that is not recommended for middle school students.

Q. Has having a student committee actually reduced the amount of plagiarism committed?

Betsy Dawson: Yes, definitely!

Bill Connolly: I agree. Our group has had great success in growing a campus-wide movement to prevent plagiarism. Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go. Having a student committee is a great start, but they need to be supported by teachers and admin as well.

Q. How do we, as library media specialists, convince the entire faculty to be consistent about plagiarism?

David Wangaard: The Academic Integrity Committee that is referenced should be a standing committee that continues its mission to advance awareness and commitment to all integrity issues and encourages the school to continue to evaluate its status.

See-- <http://www.ethicsed.org/programs/integrity-works/aic.htm>

Q. Are there consistent criteria in place that could be used by all high schools to enforce plagiarism? Guidelines? Or is it by each individual school?

David Wangaard: Good question - this is evolving-- see plagiarism.org for good guidelines

Q. Is there really any effective method to deter cheating given the immense amount of data available to students both on the free web and in the subscription databases?

Betsy Dawson: Character education is really the only lasting answer. If you want to discuss this further, please contact me at dawsonbetsy7@gmail.com.

David Wangaard: I agree, several earlier replies note the importance of cultivating and linking clear ethical norms to academic integrity - see-- <http://www.ethicsed.org/programs/integrity-works/pdf/corevalues.pdf>

Q. How do we make students understand why plagiarism will not help them to learn?

Betsy Dawson: This understanding has to be part of a larger dialogue between teacher and student about the importance of honesty and integrity in building a meaningful life.

Q. How do we begin to instill habits of mind that will deter plagiarism more than any other deterrent- how to instill pride in one's work- self-confidence, and teach teachers to assign more open ended questions?

David Wangaard: This would be the goal of implementing a school-wide honor system. See-- <http://www.ethicsed.org/programs/integrity-works/example-aipolicy.htm>