

Forum

Cheating episode brings up ethics issues

■ ISAAC CALLAGAN

Contributing Writer

Cheating. A prevalent practice that will always be frowned upon. As long as there are grades and rewards for excellence, cheating will exist. It is an ethical problem and recently became a very public issue here, even making the front page of the *Oregonian*.

In late January, six students were suspended from school after the teacher noticed a substantial difference in his electronic grade book. This was a serious breach of trust between the students and the teacher. Teachers shouldn't have to worry about students accessing their computers.

Although the teacher left his gradebook open on his computer, the blame falls on the students. It is expected that most students would have the integrity to ignore the temptation. The issue brings up serious questions for students and teachers to address: how secure do grades need to be before the possibility of tampering is removed. This episode takes cheating further than anything I had seen or heard of in four years of high school.

Cheating is a part of high school. Whether copying someone else's homework, using an illicit note card, or taking a furtive glance to the side during a test, students everywhere bend the rules. According to *The Oregonian*, two-thirds of high school students have

admitted cheating during some of their time in school. The key word is admitted, as the actual number would probably lie higher.

There are many motivations for students to cheat. In our current, competitive high school environment, the cutthroat battle for scholarships and college admission provides plenty incentive. When being successful centers around earning a college degree, there is more reason than ever to make yourself look better. To the naked

eye an 88 percent does not seem too far from a 90, but on a transcript, there is a world of difference.

OregonLive posted an article on this and the response was surprising, to say the least. Several visitors to the site that identified themselves as West Linn parents defended some of the students and their actions. There is no hiding the fact that these actions constitute a felony. Luckily for the offenders, they were not charged as such but did receive school

suspensions.

A few people tried to place blame on the teacher, but it is hard to find fault. The teacher trusted his students, school is not a prison and shouldn't be treated as one. The trust between students and teachers is an integral part of school, a crucial key to a conducive learning environment. If trusting students was the biggest mistake the teacher made, that reflects on our society when this is considered a risk.

This issue is truly about is personal responsibility. Students have to realize that cheating does not help them in the long run and it is up to each student to develop the study skills and work ethic necessary to succeed. The next time you have a temptation to copy someone's homework, make the right choice and instead work hard to further yourself. The temptation to take a shortcut is strong, which makes the individuals who ignore it look even stronger.

Make teacher absences productive, not wasteful

■ SARAH CHICOINE

co-Editor-in-Chief

With college applications finally finished and senioritis setting in, getting to class in the first place is hard enough. Attending a class with a substitute? Nearly impossible. Even in classes with the regular teacher, I find myself sizing up the worth of the particular class and wonder...why am I here? Thinking, "can I just leave?" And questioning, "Why am I wasting my time?" Is this busy work really going to help me next year? More importantly, will I even remember filling out this pointless worksheet? No.

As someone who recently went through about a month and a half of illness, I found myself picking and choosing which classes were essential for me to attend.



Barbara Heredia, substitute teacher, watches over the students from Gary Eppelsheimer's Photo I class. Often when teachers do not leave specific instructions, the time spent in class is unproductive. Photo by Malia Chong

When I knew it wasn't pressing for me to be there, I didn't go.

Now, I fully understand that teachers are, in fact, people and deserve a day off every once and awhile. I wonder, though, why must I waste my time since most class periods with subs turn into busy work? I also understand that legally, we have to attend school all day with a teacher present. Thus, the most desirable option, canceling class for that day, is impossible.

However, I feel as if that hour or hour and a half block we are given is not fully utilized. Am I really getting anything out of this movie that doesn't even pertain to what we are studying? No! Truthfully, I am wasting moments of my life half listening and most likely playing with the play-dough I got from Burgerville during lunch.

That movie, or answering questions out of the back of the book or perhaps filling out a worksheet are pointless exercises. They can all be accurately described as one thing, busywork. Even when a substitute is knowledgeable about the subject the class is focused on, it seems I spend most of the period trying to understand the lesson, only to be re-taught the same thing the next day.

If a test or quiz is planned for that day, I find it reasonable that the lesson plan is followed. However, in most other cases I can't help but think of all of other things I could be doing. Of course, sitting in a comfy chair sipping a white chocolate mocha at Starbucks, perhaps shopping, or even snuggling in my bed often seems to be my first

alternative choice.

Nevertheless, so do my constructive, class appropriate activities. Getting my math homework done early, reading that enormous chapter, studying for that test next period, or getting help from a peer who had last period with me. Countless, productive options come to mind that would benefit me so much more than that video or worksheet.

Turning a teacher's absences into a productive study hall seems so much more worthwhile. Having time to catch up or finish homework for later lessons would promote class attendance with teacher absences as well actually help students complete their work done and promote learning. After all, isn't that what school is all about?

Amplifier

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