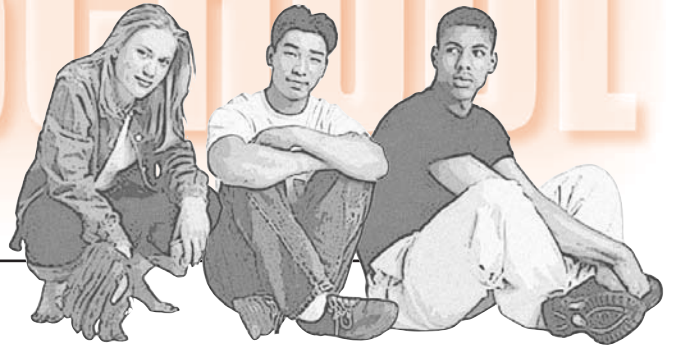


HIGH SCHOOL PARENT



Why some students cheat

—and how to help make sure your child isn't one of them

Why is it that 98 percent of the 33,000 middle and high school students who participated in a 2006 nationwide poll by the Josephson Institute agreed that “It is important for me to be a person of good character” — and yet, 60 percent of those same students admit to having cheated on a test in school at least once in the last year?

It's clear students think they should model good behavior, and yet, many don't live up to that standard.

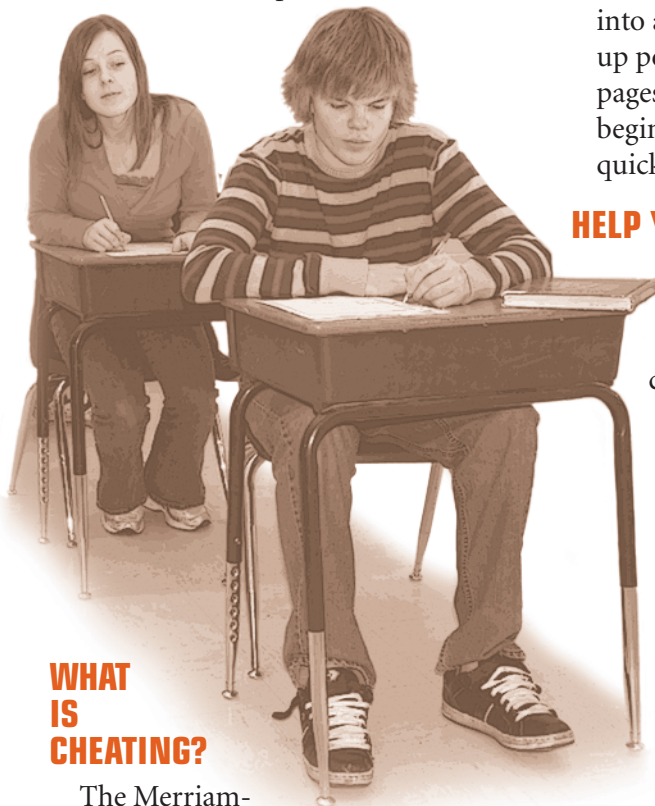
WHY DO STUDENTS CHEAT?

Even the best students may become tempted to cheat. Pressures to succeed or to avoid the stigma of failing can drive the most ethical child to choose the easy path. Seldom is there a single reason for cheating; more often it is a combination of several factors:

- ▶ **Time**—Today's schools offer a wide range of extracurricular activities from athletics to music and a wide variety of clubs. Add distractions like television or computer time, and students may suddenly find themselves without time to study or to complete assignments.
- ▶ **Self-confidence**—Students often don't believe they can do well. Past failures can fuel the idea that a student cannot succeed without cheating.
- ▶ **Apathy**—Not all students understand the value of education. Some students do not care how well they do; they simply want to get through.
- ▶ **Blurred ethics**—In society, athletes take performance-enhancing drugs to give them a “competitive” edge, while politicians bend the rules to their advantage. The underlying message is that it can be OK to break the rules to get ahead.
- ▶ **Rewards outweigh consequences**—Students are seldom caught cheating, and if they are, penalties

such as a poor grade or after-school detention are not severe enough to deter cheating.

- ▶ **Peer pressure**—Even students with solid ethics may find themselves pressured by fellow classmates who want “a little help.”



WHAT IS CHEATING?

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines cheating as “violating rules dishonestly.” In school, any action that inappropriately relies on other notes, recordings, people, or another person's work is cheating.

Among the most common forms of cheating in high school are:

- ▶ **Using notes or “cheat sheets” while taking tests**—One student used the smallest font on her computer to type her list of 20 English vocabulary words on a two-inch square piece of paper that she easily hid under her exam paper.
- ▶ **Copying**—Copying may be difficult during a carefully proctored exam, but copying another student's homework is an easy task. Copying homework can be more common

when students are short on time or if they view the assignments as “busy work.”

- ▶ **Plagiarism**—Plagiarism is directly copying or paraphrasing another's work without giving the original author credit. Type a few key words into an Internet search engine and up pop hundreds or thousands of pages on a given topic. What may begin as legitimate research can quickly result in blatant plagiarism.

HELP YOUR STUDENT COMBAT CHEATING

While teachers can monitor student behavior in the classroom, parents have the lead role in influencing how their children view cheating and how they respond to the temptation to “cut corners.”

Consider these suggestions to help your child:

- ▶ **Monitor your child's schedule**—Help decide when outside activities, even good ones, interfere with the ability to complete homework and other class assignments. Remind your child that his or her first responsibility is to be a student.
- ▶ **Share your expectations**—Be certain your child understands that cheating will not be tolerated.
- ▶ **Discuss the dangers of cheating**—Explain that cheating is a short-term solution. Copying someone's homework may help avoid a poor grade, but it only delays the learning process.
- ▶ **Model honesty**—High school students, like their younger peers, still look at the example their parents set. Cutting corners at work or fudging your taxes may not seem like much to you, but these dishonest actions may send a message that cheating is OK.

Tuning In to Teen Suicide

Earlier this year, the Schenectady school community experienced the death of a student who took her own life. This tragedy was felt by students, teachers, parents and many others in one way or another.

Schenectady High School is taking several steps to assist our grieving students and staff members. We know that everyone is faced with confusion and many questions during this time and the first step in answering these questions is creating awareness.

Steps we are taking include:

- ▶ Forming a mental health club.
- ▶ Increased communication and coordination with outside agencies.
- ▶ Staff development in suicide prevention.
- ▶ The formation of Waveriders Grief/Bereavement Group.
- ▶ Ongoing dissemination of information at school events.
- ▶ Yellow Ribbon activity.
- ▶ A special event, to be held in the near future at SHS, on the topic of Teen Suicide Prevention.

We know that incidences of teen depression and suicide are very real. Please “tune in” with your children and let them know that you are there for them and that there are many adults – guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, trusted teachers and others – who are willing to help them if they are in crisis.

If you have any questions about how to answer the questions and needs of your child during this difficult time or if you feel that your child or family needs some assistance, please contact our guidance office at 370-8200.

Upcoming Testing Dates:

- Dec. 1 – SAT Exam
- Dec. 8 – ACT Exam
- Dec. 26 – SAT registration deadline (Jan. 26 exam)
- Jan. 22-25 – Regents Exams
- Jan. 26 – SAT Exam
- Jan. 29 – SAT registration deadline (March 1 exam)

Applying to College? Thinking about it?

If your student hasn't already started thinking about college, now's the time to bring it up. Here's what your high schooler should be doing at this point in his/her high school career to prepare for college:

Freshmen: Start thinking about SAT II exams. It is often best to take these as soon as you complete a specific course. For example, you might want to consider taking the geometry SAT II if you take geometry in ninth grade. You can sign up now for the spring test, so ask your guidance counselor what he or she recommends.

Sophomores: Talk to your guidance counselor about your PSAT results and see where you might need to make improvements. It is probably too early for an SAT prep class, but start doing more reading in your free time and take challenging courses.

Did you know that SHS has 1 PTSO and PPT this year?

Please join us! The SHS PTO and PPT will meet the 2nd Thursday of every month at 6:30 p.m. in the SHS library. Upcoming meeting dates are: Dec. 13, Jan. 10, Feb. 14, March 13, April 10, May 8 and June 12.

Juniors: Think SATS! Talk to your guidance counselor about taking an SAT prep course or getting test-prep software. You can also practice on previous SAT exams. Talk to your counselor if you need to take SAT II exams.

Seniors: Start mailing in those applications! Your counselor will help you with this. You also need to start working with your parents/guardians on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. Go to www.fafsa.ed.gov or get a form in the guidance office.

For more college information and tips, visit: http://www.schenectady.k12.ny.us/Schenectady_High_School/GuidanceDepartment/collegeoutline.htm

Mark your CALENDAR



December 2007

- 4** – CC @ Steinmetz Family Picture Night
- 5** – Board of Education Meeting, Oneida MS, 8 p.m.
- 13** – SHS Winter Concert, 7 p.m. (snow date, Dec. 17); SHS PTO Meeting, 6:30 p.m., library
- 19** – Board of Education Study Session, MPMS, Rm. 128, 7 p.m.
- 21** – Second quarter interim reports mailed home
- Dec. 24-Jan. 2** – Holiday Recess

January 2008

- 9** – Board of Education Meeting, SHS, 8 p.m.
- 14** – Financial Aid Night
- 17** – SHS PTO Meeting, 6:30 p.m., library
- 21** – Martin Luther King Jr. Day, No school
- 23** – Board of Education Study Session, MPMS, Rm. 128, 7 p.m.
- 25** – Second quarter marks close

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Fall 2007