

Waterloo Independent Secondary School

September 24, 2020

Progress Reports

The Progress Report is an important vehicle for communication with:

- Students because it gives them a weekly **snapshot** of their academic progress and helps them understand the factors that affect their level of achievement.
- Parents because information of their child's progress opens avenues of communication with them.
- Teachers because it provides an opportunity to explain the **connection between behaviour (learning skills/work habits) and grade level** and to point out areas for improvement.
- Guidance Counsellor because the Report is the basis for discussion about progress, study habits, and future plans.

Teachers should take time on Mondays to:

- Emphasize that the report represents the teacher's judgement of progress for the week. **Judgement is formed using evidence** from quizzes, tests, assignments (product data), observations, and conversations, the quality of the information that students convey orally or in writing.
- Remind students that judgement is made using evidence based on criteria.
- Point out the connection between grades and behaviour.

Cheating - A Post-Secondary Perspective

Let them cheat: Why it's tempting for college and university

instructors to look the other way (CBC News, September 24, 2020)

Reasons for academic dishonesty haven't suddenly changed, but environment has, post-secondary teachers say.

*Judging by the amount of discussion within the university instructor community, the largest headache for many is student cheating. It's reported that **more than 50%** of Canadian undergraduates admitted to some form of cheating.*

The reasons why students cheat have not suddenly changed, but the environment has. There are many more ways to cheat: from consulting the internet, to using symbolic calculators and graphing software, to chats and social networks, to collaboratively working when expected to do individual work, to using a tutor or a peer or a sibling, to paying someone to take a test.

Moreover, "cheating online" seems to be much less risky than doing it in person, even if online invigilation is in place during an assessment.

So, what is a university instructor supposed to do?

One approach is – do nothing. Keep your sanity! Let the students cheat, if they do not know better. Here are some reasons why:

- If students want to cheat, they will find a way to do it. Trying to anticipate the ways in which a student can cheat, and then identifying the strategies to catch those who do, has been a losing battle for instructors and university administrators. We are advised to develop a "culture of honesty" in our classrooms, but to little avail.*
- If a university instructor repeatedly pleads with their students, underlining that cheating is an unhealthy and dangerous habit which will catch up to them sooner rather than later, and a student decides to cheat nevertheless, why would the instructor assume any further responsibility for their students' actions? Is it reasonable to expect that, say, a calculus instructor does a better job at providing a moral compass to a student than their parents, family, friends, or role models, including previous teachers, celebrities, social media influencers, professional athletes, politicians, activists? Definitely not.*
- "Academic integrity" is a myth. The current Canadian university model is a combination of a military/aristocratic hierarchy, a political entity, and a business enterprise. As the outcome of those dynamics, the idealistic side of academic integrity as the ultimate principle in academia necessarily becomes "flexible."*
- We often turn our cheek the other way in daily life, so why have different standards and principles in our classrooms?*
- Why bother to spend days of frustration proving that a student paid a tutoring online company to find a derivative of a function? As well, the penalties are not severe enough to send out a strong warning to the students. Some instructors decide to ignore dishonesty cases and act only when they have no other choice. Who can blame them?*
- Any instructor would prefer to commit their time and energy to supporting students who are eager to learn, than to live through the nightmare of a single academic dishonesty case. At least there is a tangible benefit to supporting those who want to learn.*
- Thinking about cheating is like cancer — it eats up our trust in our students and ruins the joy of teaching. We yearn to contribute, in positive ways, to the lives of students who are truly committed to learn, to explore their interests and talents through honest work.*

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- *And ... Say that a student cheats their way through their post-secondary degree. Has this experience prepared them adequately for the real world and a future career? The answer, we're afraid, could well be "yes".*

*As a conclusion, however, we offer to the reader our confession that, even though we are convinced that the points made above hold true, we will not follow our own advice. **When faced with student cheating, we are not going to look the other way. The main reason is that we care deeply about the well-being of our students.***

*We believe that, **as teachers, we have the responsibility to protect students who work diligently and honestly.***

*We must do whatever we can to educate all of our students, and to convince them that it is in their best interest to **adhere to the fundamental values of academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.***

A Principal's Advice

When stakes are especially high - grade 12s seeking university admission - the temptation to cheat can feel overwhelming and few students resist trying, even the very best ones. As educators we cannot, however, succumb to the temptation to overlook cheating because it takes time and energy to deal with it.

A student who cheats and gets caught should expect to face a consequence. WISS policy is clear about that. Teachers should point this fact out to students before assessments that count towards a report card mark.

However, to restate the university perspective, more time should be spent to educate all of our students, and to convince them that it is in their best interest to adhere to the fundamental values of academic integrity: **honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.**

It's a life lesson for them.

Cheating in school is a form of self-deception. We go to school to learn. We cheat ourselves when we coast on the efforts and scholarship of someone else. James E. Faust