Combating Cheating and Plagiarism

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THE TOPICS

This session’s topics:
- cheating in general
- plagiarism in particular
A PRIMARY TENSION

Teachers want to foster trust and mutual respect

BUT

They also want to eliminate academic dishonesty
WHAT TO DO?

Should teachers:
A. trust students and hope for the best?
B. take precautions that might have a chilling effect?
HOW NECESSARY ARE PRECAUTIONS?

Precautions should be proportionate to the threat of cheating

SO……..

How big a threat is it?
What % of high academic achievers admit cheating in high school?

A. 80%
B. 60%
C. 40%
D. 20%
THE DISMAL ANSWER

Fully 80% of high academic achievers admit cheating!


BOGUS?
WEB A BREAKTHROUGH FOR CHEATERS

• Cheating methods spreading via the World Wide Web

• Entire books on cheating available on-line
  – NY Times reports *Cheating 101* has sold “...tens of thousands of copies.”
CHEAT ON TESTS

- Clandestine signaling
  - Look for desktop rearrangement, etc.
- “You lost it” gambit
  - Take role separately and compare with tests
- Feigned illness or injury
  - Use different exams for make-ups
TEST CHEATING (Cont.)

- Back exam files
  - Change tests from year to year
  - Change forms from section to section

- Post test alterations
  - Fill in correct response or X out

- “Misunderstandings”
  - Assess penalties for no shows
TEST CHEATING (Cont.)

Crib Notes Old and New

- Pen scrolls
- Electronic organizers
- Concealed tape recorders
- Programmable calculators

- Electronic organizers
- Lavatory caches
- Snappling
- Skin writing
- Baseball cap bills
- Desk writing
PREVENTING CHEATING STRATEGIES

An ounce of prevention

- Coaching, not “covering”
- Awareness of student concerns
- Variety in assessment
- More authentic assessment
- Enjoyable learning
- A sense of belonging
NAILING DOWN THE PLAGIARISM PROBLEM

- Paper Mills
- Defining
- Detecting
- Tracing
- Preventing
WEB-BASED “PAPER MILLS”

• There are over 100 “paper mills” on the Web
• Students can:
  – Buy professionally written papers
  – Access libraries of student written papers
  – Access specialized papers (Shakespeare, etc.)
THE PROBLEM WITH PLAGIARISM

• DEFINITION is imprecise
  – Dictionaries vague
  – Style manuals often weak
  – What counts as “common knowledge” differs
  – Disciplines differ
  – Instructors differ
TEACHER VULNERABILITY

Without clear definition, teacher can be left twisting in the wind

To avoid the hangman:

• Craft your own
• Rely on school’s
• Adopt a style manual
• Use something like *The Plagiarism Book*
DETERRING PLAGIARISM

General Strategies

Be sure to:

- Define plagiarism in writing
- Indicate penalties in writing
- Enforce due dates
- Limit time extensions
- Say you know about cheat sites
DETERRING PLAGIARISM
Assignment Design Strategies

Consider requiring:

- Writing samples
- Topic proposals
- Rough drafts
- Interim bibliographies
- Course specific applications
  – You learned to X, do it
DETERRING PLAGIARISM:
Assignment Design Strategies (Cont.)

Consider requiring:

- Personal reflection
- Narrative or descriptive writing
  - avoid exposition or argument
- List of location of references
  - not on Web? not in library?
  - where did they come from?
DETERRING PLAGIARISM: Referencing Strategies

Consider requiring:

• Distinctive sources
  – Specific journals
  – Specific books

• Annotated bibliographies

• Photo-copied references
DETECTING PLAGIARISM:

Look for:

- Varying fluency or style
- Sophisticated vocabulary
  - Be careful here!
- “Cooked” citations
- Sophisticated citations
Awful papers might have been plagiarized too

Evil House of Cheat:

“Dyslexia is not any ones fault it simply occurs when the barrier in the language center of you brain cracks.”
TRACING PLAGIARISM

• Find distinctive text
  – “Find” it using search engine
    • Meta-search engines best
• Search electronic media
  – Use “FIND”
• Check student’s own references
  – Might take you to source
PHONY REFERENCES

• Not plagiarism, but related
• Hard to check
• Try giving known good and bad references to students for checking
• Mix in suspicious student references
• Teaches library skills and helps you verify references
POWERFUL META-SEARCH ENGINES

Many search sites at once

- www.dogpile.com searches 26 different files, three at a time
- www.metacrawler.com explores Web’s top search sites in customizable ways
- www.profusion.com indexes 9 popular search engines, you pick em
- www.Savvy Search.com quick, powerful and easy
- www.whatUseek.com indexes top four search sites
MODEL PLAGIARISM PAGES

- http://www.depauw.edu/acaser/1lag.htm
  - DePauw U provides 7 strong pages on most aspects of plagiarism

- http://www.chem.ukw.edu/courses/common/plagiarism.html
  - U of Ky Chem Dept 5 pages defining plagiarism, giving examples, dealing with lab reports

- http://www.condor.bcm.tmc.edu/Micro-Immuno/courses/igr/htm
  - 19 first class pages on plagiarism not just for science types

- http://webware.princeton.edu/Writing/wc4g.htm
  - 2 high quality pages from Princeton U defining plagiarism and discussing its causes and remedies
MODEL HONESTY POLICIES

- http://members.aol.com/jen0sophia/plagpage.htm
  - An outstanding plagiarism and academic honesty page for class use

- http://minbar.db.erau.edu/courses/plagiarism.htm
  - Contains model scary warning that suspects must be prepared to furnish notes, etc.

- http://www-hugsas.harvard.edu/we bfiles/student/
  - Harvard’s Graduate School of A&S provides a succinct policy with teeth

- http://www.nmsu/~english/policy/
  - Look here for admonition about submitting same work twice
Academic honesty is the bedrock of education

Failure to preserve it compromises all
THE MORAL OF THE STORY?

The classroom is forever East of Eden

Take precautions to:

- Protect honest students
- Preserve academic integrity