

# Dealing with the Tough Issues...Cheating and Dishonesty

## What is Cheating?

One good definition of cheating is that it occurs any time a student tries to pass off work that is his/hers and it is not. That means that all of the following should be considered cheating:

- Copying homework from another student
- Receiving any kind of help on a test—hidden answer sheets copying answers from others, or giving help to another student
- Plagiarism—copying work without citing the source
- Handing in a project that was actually done by a parent or another family member
- Buying a term paper and turning it in as their own

## Who Cheats?

Cheating isn't confined to any one group of students. Those with high grades are as likely to cheat as those with poor grades. In fact, 80 percent of high school juniors with at least a B average said they have cheated. A recent survey of high-achieving high school students found that most (76 percent) said they had cheated in school.

## Why Do Students Cheat?

The simple answer seems to be, "Because they can." Kids who have admitted to cheating usually say they thought they could get away with cheating because they'd seen so many other students doing it. In fact, nearly all of the students who admit to cheating (92 percent) said they weren't caught. Other reasons kids cheat include:

- Pressure from parents to get good grades
- They didn't think it was wrong
- They were trying to get into a good college and were worried about how a bad grade could affect their future

## What Can Parents Do To Prevent Their Child From Cheating?

1. Think about the messages you're sending to your child. One father was very critical because his son didn't bring home a report card with all A's. Finally, the son decided that his dad cared more about the grade than how he earned it—and decided to cheat to get the A.
2. Emphasize doing your best, not being the best. Children need to know that hard work pays off...that you love them for who they are, not what they do...and that if they've done their best, that's good enough for you.
3. Show your child that cheating is dangerous. Usually, students who get caught cheating on an exam earn zero points. You might try averaging out a zero on one test with three other tests that averaged 94 points. One zero changes that student's average to 70%...just passing in most grading systems. It is better to leave an answer blank or to get an answer wrong than it is to take the risk of cheating.
4. See if your school has an honor code. Make sure you and your child know the punishment for cheating. Support teachers and administrators when they enforce the consequences.

## My Child Was Caught Cheating. What Should I Do?

The most important thing is what not to do. When teachers catch students cheating, many parents will go to any lengths to get the decision overturned. Some parents angrily deny their children would ever lie or cheat. In some cases, these parents are worried that their child will have to report the punishment on a college application and may not get into a selective college. In others, parents simply refuse to believe that their child could have cheated.

The best approach is not to make excuses for your child. And don't listen when your child says that "everybody" cheats. Even if that's true, you can say, "But our family isn't 'everybody'". Let your child suffer the consequences of cheating. It may be the most important lesson your child learns this year.