

## Cheating Under a Microscope

By: Claire Goldes

We can all agree on one thing: cheating is unethical and wrong.

Cheating can be defined as anything from copying homework to looking at other students' tests. Other cheating techniques include "writing answers on your hand, texting, leaning backwards and looking at other people's papers, and writing answers on your foot," 8<sup>th</sup> grade student Sarah Salzman explains.

MCMS Librarian Mrs. Paniz defines cheating as "using and gaining an advantage to which you aren't entitled."

7<sup>th</sup> Grade Humanities teacher Mrs. Lavene defines cheating as "turning in work that isn't your own... as well as turning in oral work that isn't your own."

Lavene says that the most underestimated forms of cheating include "copying homework from each other and not understanding plagiarism," and that the strangest techniques she has witnessed include "writing answers on upper thighs and texting." The types of cheating that she has witnessed most often are "gazing around and quiet whispering."

7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher Ms. Franco says, "In my classes, I feel that the most serious form would be to cheat on a test. A test is used to measure what you know, not what your neighbor knows." She also says, "I believe that copying homework is the most underestimated form of cheating because students do not feel that there is anything wrong with it. Using anyone's work as your own is cheating no matter how small."

As you can see, cheating comes in many forms, but they all mean the same thing: "...you are only cheating yourself" as 8<sup>th</sup> Grade student Bella Pokras says.

Cheating has many long-term effects that can seriously damage a student's future. Salzman says two of these effects include "doing bad on tests, and getting bad grades."

Pokras says, "Even though you may get the answers correct on a certain test, you are not learning the material, so you won't know anything in the future. And if you are caught, you will get in serious trouble."

Lavene says that students will be affected because they "will not be prepared for the next level of skills required."

When asked the same question, Paniz says, "Everything is put out of kilter."

If students cheat and are not caught, they will not be prepared for final exams, and they will not be able to apply their knowledge to future assignments. Many students see cheating as an okay thing to do because they may get a good score on a specific test. As very good students who would never cheat, Salzman and Pokras explain that some students may see cheating as acceptable because "you could get a good grade on a test if you aren't caught." However, they continue to explain that if you get caught, you could get in big trouble.

Franco says, "I think cheating can affect students in the future because they will advance to the next level lacking the knowledge needed to succeed. Eventually, they will have to cheat again. Students who cheat are not learning anything about the real world. In the real world if you cheat, you have real consequences such as getting fired from a job."

To conclude, cheating can seriously affect a student in the long run, and the risk should not be taken, even if it means failing a test.

Cheating is present throughout every school, however it seems to appear more common in some areas over others. When asked if cheating is more common in academic

classes or in electives and P.E., Pokras says, “Academic classes usually have more cheating.”

Lavene says, “At the middle school level, cheating is pretty consistent year-round, but in high school, most cheating would probably take place during finals time.”

Franco says, “I do not think that any subject has more cheating than others. I think that there is cheating in all subject areas because cheating is determined by the student. If a student cheats in one subject, they are more likely to cheat in another.”

Salzman says she has witnessed one student cheating, and Pokras has witnessed two. When asked what she did about it, Pokras says she notified the teacher.

When asked about where cheating takes place most, Franco says, “I think that cheating happens more outside of the classroom because of the fear of getting caught. This is not true in all schools, but I think it is true to MCMS.” Also, cheating has become a very easy thing to do. Franco says, “Cheating has become easy for students through technology and an increase in creativity.

Then Pokras says, “Cheating has become easier because of oblivious teachers, as well as the well thought out systems students make up. They should use all of the time they spend on cheating to study!”

The awareness of the effects of cheating should be spread to all students. Students can make a difference, too. Salzman says students can help to stop the spread of cheating and create a awareness of its effects by “suggesting to the teacher that students are more spread out during tests, and advising other students not to cheat.”

Franco says, “In order to reduce the amount of cheating in my classroom, I have the students use dividers, stays silent until everyone is finished, I look/walk around

throughout the test, I separate students/tables, minimize the students walking around the classroom and what each student is allowed to have on their desks.”

When asked how students can help their peers refrain from cheating, Franco says, “Students can convince other students not to cheat by talking about the moral aspect of cheating. They can also discuss the consequences and how it would not be worth the possibility of getting caught.”

If students were more aware of the damage that cheating could do to their future, they may not feel the need to cheat. Therefore, it is important to spread this awareness, because even students can make a difference.

Cheating is a serious problem, which may never end. When asked if she thinks there will be an end to cheating, Paniz says, “I’m afraid not.”

Franco says, “Sadly, I do not think there will ever be an end to cheating. I believe that people will always strive to be the best at any cost. By design, we are all competitive to some extent. The competitive nature exposes many flaws, such as cheating.”

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