

Questions and Answers on Academic Honesty For Parents and Students

1. Why does the Toronto District School Board have a procedure on Academic Honesty?

The Growing Success Policy states “School boards will also develop policies that address at a minimum the following: prevention of cheating and plagiarizing; detection of incidents of cheating and plagiarizing; and consequences for students who cheat or plagiarize.” Pg. 42

Following this policy direction, Toronto District School Board undertook a consultation process and has developed *The Academic Honesty Operational Procedure* (PR 613) to provide direction for staff and students on issues of academic honesty, including cheating and plagiarizing.

2. What is the difference between cheating and plagiarizing?

Cheating is usually defined as the act of practicing deceit or breaking the rules. In the context of assessment and evaluation, cheating would be defined as the deviation from the behavior expected in an evaluation situation. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Copying another student’s homework;
- Using another student’s work on a test or any other evaluation;
- Bringing unauthorized notes or notations into an evaluation;
- Asking for or giving someone an answer during an evaluation;
- Unauthorized use of electronic media to obtain answers during an evaluation; and
- Presenting assignments that have been completed by someone else as one’s own.

Plagiarizing is defined as the use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another without attribution, in order to represent them as one’s own original work. (Growing Success 2010 p.151)

It can take many forms, including the following:

- Submitting an essay/assignment written by someone else, e.g., buying an essay online, downloading an essay from a website, having someone else complete one’s assignment, or copying or using work including homework done by another student;
- Piecing together material from one or several sources and adding only linking sentences;
- Quoting or paraphrasing material without citing the source of that material, including, but not limited to books, magazines, journals, websites, newspapers, television programs, radio programs, movies, videos, photographs, and drawings in print or electronic form;
- Copying and pasting from the internet or other electronic sites without citing the source; and
- Omitting quotation marks for direct quotations even if the sources have been cited.

3. What can students do to avoid academic dishonesty?

Students are expected to:

- (a) seek clarification from teachers about actions that constitute plagiarism;
- (b) seek remediation when their research skills are deficient;
- (c) understand the penalties for academic dishonesty and plagiarism; and

(d) ensure that all their work is original and that they cite sources accurately and consistently

Students must understand that tests/exams they complete and the assignments they submit for evaluation must be their own work and that cheating and plagiarism will not be condoned.

4. *How can students be supported to avoid academic dishonesty?*

To ensure academic honesty and avoid instances of plagiarism:

- teach students the research skills that help them avoid plagiarizing;
- use a variety of excellent print and electronic resources;
- model exemplary practices, ensuring that handouts and media used in class demonstrates adherence to current copyright and public performance laws;
- provide age-appropriate instruction about students' ethical responsibility to avoid plagiarism;
- create research assignments and tests that involve higher-order critical thinking that engage students, therefore reducing the opportunities for students to plagiarize;
- avoid creating assignments that require students to simply gather facts on a topic without engaging in problem solving, making choices or reflecting;
- give students time to work on the assignment occasionally in class so that the teacher can assess, on an ongoing basis, the research skills students are developing, and can provide support as needed;
- ensure that assignments for evaluation, tests and exams are to be completed, whenever possible, under the supervision of a teacher;
- in Grades 9-12, structure major research assignments so that process steps in completing the assignment (bibliographies, thesis statements, outline, notes, drafts) are required of the students and are assessed;
- ensure that students Grades 9-12 understand the function and purpose of www.turnitin.com as they may be required to submit their assignments through this website;
- clearly inform Grade 9-12 students of the consequences of plagiarism in the course outline distributed at the beginning of the course.

5. *What happens if a student engages in academic dishonesty?*

It is the intention of the TDSB to provide consistent and fair consequences to dealing with instances of academic dishonesty, specifically with plagiarism and cheating. When dishonesty is confirmed by a teacher following an investigation, the incident and the consequences will be communicated to the principal/vice-principal, the student and parent(s)/guardian.

A mark of zero may be awarded for the assignment in question and a repeated pattern of academic dishonesty may result in an escalating severity of consequences.

All students who face the consequences of plagiarism or cheating have the right to appeal the teacher's decision to the principal/vice-principal.

For a copy of the Procedure on Academic Honesty PR613:

Go to TDSB website at www.tdsb.on.ca

Click on "Parents" tab

Select and click on "TDSB Policies"

Select and click on Click on "Procedures"