

# Poll conducted nationwide finds high schoolers cheating

## 'You do what it takes to succeed in life,' student writes

By Ellen Sorokin  
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More than half of high school students cheat on tests or homework and most of them aren't ashamed of it, a recent Rutgers University study has found.

The survey of 4,500 high school students nationwide found 74 percent have cheated on a test at least once, and another 72 percent said they have cheated on at least one written assignment.

"I think that cheating has become so common that it's starting to become 'normal' in some cases," wrote one student who participated in the study.

Fifty percent of those surveyed said they didn't think copying questions and answers from a test was cheating.

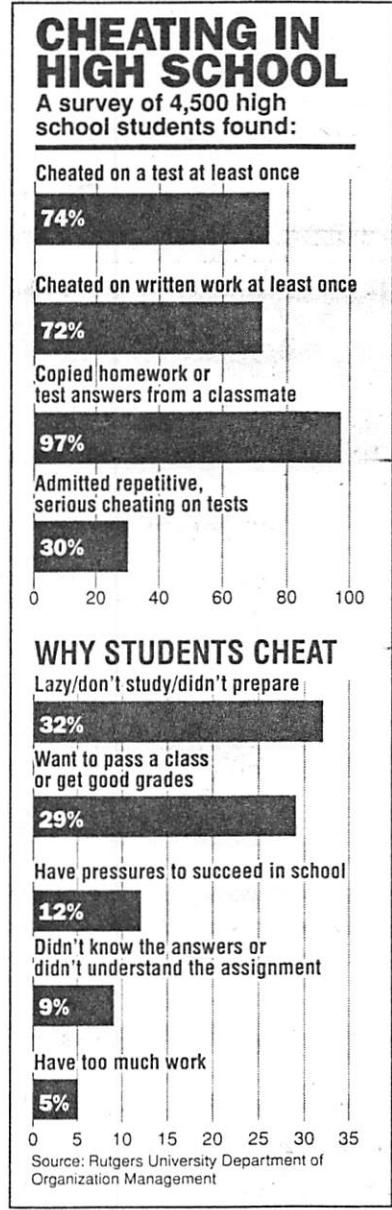
Some 57 percent of the students said they didn't think copying a few sentences without giving proper credit, sharing test answers, or getting answers from someone who had taken a test was cheating. Fifty-three percent didn't believe turning in work done by parents was cheating.

"You do what it takes to succeed in life," a student wrote on the survey. "We're afraid to fail."

Donald McCabe, a Rutgers University professor of management who conducted the survey, said yesterday the most disturbing part of the findings was that students didn't see anything wrong with cheating on their tests or papers, and they blamed others for their cheating.

"It's pretty discouraging how students today can rationalize their cheating with such ease," said Mr. McCabe, who also is the founding president of the Center for Academic Integrity.

Besides academic pressure, most of the students surveyed blamed their cheating on time constraints, laziness, and poor adult role models. Among the names mentioned in the survey were former President Bill Clinton and former "junk-bond



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that cheating was the American way of life. They think that cheaters either get ahead quicker or live easier lives."

The students surveyed represented 25 high schools — 14 public and 11 private — across the country. More than half of the respondents were high school juniors. The survey took place last year.

The issue of cheating among high school students became more evident late last year when a biology teacher in Kansas, Christine Pelton, failed 28 students after she suspected that they plagiarized a project. The local school board tried to force Miss Pelton to change the students' grades, but Miss Pelton resigned.

"It's not going to benefit the kids to go back and change their grades," Miss Pelton told the Associated Press last week.

Michael Josephson, president of the Josephson Institute on Ethics, said the case in Kansas and Mr. McCabe's study should send a clear message to school administrators that it's time to treat cheating as a serious violation. Otherwise, Mr. Josephson said, cheating will become a "real skill" among students.

"We are in a situation right now where we going to have to re-establish in our society that integrity is important, or become a nation of cheaters," Mr. Josephson said. "Unless we do something about this, it'll just get worse."

king" and felon Michael Milken, Mr. McCabe said.

"Many of the students said that, 'Well, if so-and-so lied and cheated, then what's the big deal?' " Mr. McCabe said. "Some of these kids said