

Youth Culture Lesson
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Test of Character

Temptations to Cheat in School Getting Bigger

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What Happened:

Samuel Eshaghoff, a 19-year-old sophomore at Emory University, recently was arrested for taking SAT tests for six New York high schoolers. The college student allegedly charged as much as \$2,500 every time he masqueraded as a test-taking high schooler.

While Eshaghoff claims he's not guilty and SAT officials say he's an isolated wrongdoer, many education experts worry that other teens may be hiring folks to take the test for them.

"As tests have become higher-stakes tests, as the competition between kids for scholarships and college entrance has increased, the likelihood of kids looking for ways to beat the system—to cheat—has increased," says Henry Grisham, superintendent of Jericho Public Schools in Long Island.

The SAT scandal is perhaps just a natural extension of some national trends. In the past several years, an increasing number of high school and college students have admitted to cheating in school. According to a 2010 study by the Josephson Institute of Ethics, nearly 60 percent of high school students say they cheated on a test in the past year, and more than a third admitted to cheating at least twice—and it might be worse.

"As bad as these numbers are, they appear to be understated," said Michael Josephson, president of the institute. "More than one in four students confessed they lied on at least one or two survey questions, which is typically an attempt to conceal misconduct."

Another interesting twist: Nearly nine in 10 of these same high schoolers say it's more important to be a good person than to be rich.

Talk About It:

Have you cheated on a test? If so, why? Do you know anyone who has cheated? Do you think there's a difference in cheating on an ordinary homework assignment compared to a major exam?

One reason more people cheat these days is that it's so much easier to do with smartphones having 24/7 access to the Internet. Do you think that's the only reason? Do you think there's more pressure to get fantastic grades now than there used to be? Why?

How big a deal is it to cheat? If there was a really important test coming up—one that might make a huge difference in your grade point average and maybe in which college you'd be able to attend—would you cheat? Why? Why not?

What the Bible Says:

“The Lord abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are His delight” (Prov. 11:1).

“No one who practices deceit will dwell in My house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in My presence” (Ps. 101:7).

“Am I still to forget, O wicked house, your ill-gotten treasures and the short ephah, which is accursed? Shall I acquit a man with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights?” (Micah 6:10-11).

“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Rom. 12:17).