



Academic Honesty Policy

Signal Mountain Middle/High School



Purpose

The purpose of this document is to serve as a guide for students, teachers, administrators, and parents about the expectations for academic honesty at SMMHS. The overall outline and content of this guide has tried to closely follow the academic policy requirements as outlined in *Academic honesty in the IB educational context*. In writing this guide, care has been taken to use language and a writing style that can be easily read and understood at the 6th grade level. Another major modification to our current academic honesty policy (reflected in this guide) is that the guide itself is written primarily to be a student-friendly, instructive document. In other words, whereas in the past our written policies have solely consisted of lists of infractions and penalties, IB now mandates that academic honesty policies also be comprised of “examples of support” as well as hypothetical scenarios and/or FAQs that help students navigate the sometimes confusing waters of source citation and acknowledgement (*Academic honesty 6*). Input from teachers, administration, and, of course, students should inform revisions to this document and is encouraged by IB.

What is academic honesty?

Simply put, academic honesty is being **principled** and **ethical** about how your work (projects, papers, reports, presentations, etc.) was created. Did you receive help from another student or your parent? Did you include an idea in your work that came from someone else? Did you discover a sentence or two that someone else wrote and include it in your work? Were you inspired to create a piece of art, music, writing, or film because you saw a creative piece someone else had made?

If so, then don't worry; you're not alone. In fact, very few ideas that we read, write about, or discuss are truly original. Most of our best learning happens when we **think** about the ideas of others and **communicate** about those ideas (often mixed with our own).

Considering the ideas of others also helps us to be more **open-minded**, especially when we encounter an idea that may sound strange to us. It's important to remember that being **knowledgeable** about our world will often mean that we have to consider points of view that may be different from our own.

Therefore, because our own ideas and words will often be combined with the ideas and words of others, it's important for us to be honest about whose ideas or words we are using (or what help we received) whenever we turn in an assignment, write a paper, complete a project, or give a presentation.

That is called being academically honest!

The SMMHS "Village"

SMMHS is called an International Baccalaureate World School. **Think** about that. You are not just a part of this local community, but you are also a part of a global community of learners. All over the world, other IB students are **inquiring** (asking questions), taking action, and **reflecting** on their learning just like you are!

SMMHS is like one village in this large global community of learners. As members of this village, students, teachers, administrators, and parents all have responsibilities to help our village remain academically honest.

What are the responsibilities of an academically honest village?

Students

Students in our academically honest village have a responsibility to create what is called “authentic” work. The word authentic means *genuine*--something that is exactly what it claims to be. So, in other words, students have a responsibility to turn in work that is honest about whose work, words, and ideas helped to create it. For example, your teacher may ask you to include a list of websites, videos, articles, etc. that you looked at or used to help complete your assignment. Also, when completing a group project, your teacher may ask you to keep track of how much work each member of the group contributes. Being genuine about where you got your ideas or how much work is yours is all part of academic honesty.

Students in our academically honest village also have a responsibility to know what the teacher expects for each assignment or task. Sometimes, an assignment or task will limit the amount of help you may have from others. For example, on a group project, your teacher may explain that the group should use the ideas of all group members as well as some ideas from internet research to help complete a project. During a test, however, your teacher may explain that asking for help from others is not appropriate. It is your responsibility to ask the teacher if you are unsure about what kind of help is allowed for each assignment.

Teachers

Teachers in our academically honest village have a responsibility to help their students learn what authentic work looks like in each subject area and for each specific task or assignment. Teachers should **communicate** specific expectations for each assignment regarding what outside sources or help from others the students may use. If the students are expected to use outside sources or help from others to complete their task, then the teacher should demonstrate how students can document the ideas and assistance of others in a way that allows the students to practice their documentation skills.

Teachers in our academically honest village also have a responsibility to teach students what kind of help is appropriate for each type of task or assignment. This is especially important to do considering the ease with which we can now **communicate** and **inquire** electronically. For example, teachers should specifically discuss when and how electronic devices may be used as part of a task.

Prior to each assignment, teachers should also address whether certain types of sources (for example, book summary sites, Wikipedia, parent assistance, etc.) are appropriate to consult.

For example, a teacher may allow the use of Wikipedia during the idea-gathering stage of a project about historical bridges, but may not allow Wikipedia to be consulted on a different project involving research about a specific civil rights leader. Teachers should be intentional and specific about their expectations for each assignment as well as clear about the consequences that will come about should any academic dishonesty be discovered.

Administration

Administrators in our academically honest village have a responsibility to enforce school policies fairly and consistently. Central records should be kept of all academic honesty infractions. This will ensure that when a student is shown to have violated an academic honesty policy that the consequences will be both objective and age-appropriate.

Administrators in our academically honest village also have a responsibility to recognize that collaboration amongst teachers is critical to help establish consistent student expectations. (*Academic honesty* 12). Therefore, administrators should both promote and provide opportunities for teachers to collaboratively plan and reflect.

Parents

Parents in our academically honest village have the primary responsibility of helping students become **principled** and **ethical** learners. Parents are often the most influential person in modeling for their students what honesty and integrity look like. Therefore, parents share the responsibility for understanding what type of help is appropriate for school assignments and projects.

Parents should also encourage healthy level of acceptance of personal responsibility in their students. For example, parents can help their student respect academic honesty (and encourage personal responsibility) by not permitting students to gain an unfair advantage by staying home to complete a past-due assignment or benefit from an extra day of study. Parents should help their child gain a **balanced** perspective on the desire to achieve and the reality that sometimes we all miss the mark. Parents, more than anyone, are uniquely suited to help their student that honesty is always more important than perfection.

How are we becoming more knowledgeable about academic honesty?

Here are some great ways to know what academic honesty is:

- Use this guide. At the end of this guide (appendix A), you'll find links to helpful resources that will show you how to be authentic about the work you do.
- Ask your teacher. Teachers really want to help you. If you're unsure about what help you can get on a project, what sources you can use, or how to show where you're using

ideas that belong to others then it's your responsibility to ask your teacher (before the due date, preferably).

- Ask Ms. Kirchmyer, the librarian. Ms. Kirchmyer loves to help students who are working on projects, writing papers, or doing research. She can show you how to properly document everything or point you toward resources that will help.

Let's inquire: How do I know what academic honesty looks like?

Sometimes we hear words like plagiarism or collusion (both things you want to avoid) and we aren't sure what they mean. Below are the four major categories of academic misconduct and how they may look different depending on the subject being studied. Note: Definitions are taken from *MYP: From Principles into Practice (September 2015/ January 2015)*

Plagiarism: the representation, intentionally or unwittingly, of the ideas, words or work of another person without proper, clear and explicit acknowledgment.

Plagiarism is a word that basically means that you aren't honest about where and how you used the ideas or words of another person as part of your own project or assignment. Here's what plagiarism might look like (keep in mind that your teacher may define plagiarism more specifically than this list, in which case you should go by his or her definition):

- You paraphrased (put someone else's words into your own words) but you didn't acknowledge the source.
- You copied words, phrases, or whole paragraphs from someone else and didn't use quotation marks or other required formatting to show that those are not your words.
- You purchased or downloaded a paper or essay that you didn't write and turned it in as your own work.
- In the arts, you copied or closely imitated another work of art, piece of music, stage blocking, set design, costume design, film plot, script, cinematography sound effect, etc. without acknowledging the original.
- You included a third-party map, photograph, data, or graph in your work without documenting the source.

Collusion: supporting academic misconduct by another student, as in allowing one's work to be copied or submitted for assessment by another

Collusion basically means that you cooperated with someone else in order to gain an unfair advantage on an assignment or task. Here's what collusion might look like:

- You copied someone else's assignment or problem solution (especially in math or science) and turned it in without saying you received help or copied.

- You received or shared information about a test, quiz or exam in a way that was not authorized by the teacher/examiner.
- You impersonate another student or know that another student is impersonating you when completing electronic or online work (including tests and papers).
- You gave another student your completed work so they could copy it or otherwise gain an unfair advantage (does not usually apply to class notes, but always ask first!)
- You complete an assignment collaboratively without being specifically told by the teacher that it's okay to work with partners on the assignment (again, always ask first!)

Duplication of work: the presentation of the same work for different assessment components.

What this basically means is that you shouldn't turn in the same work for more than one assessment.

Unfair advantages and misconduct: any other behaviour that gives an unfair advantage to a student or that affects the results of another student (falsifying data, misconduct during an examination, creating spurious reflections)

Examples of unfair advantages and misconduct (other than those already stated) might include:

- You use a calculator on an assignment or test that isn't approved by the teacher or that has information/programs that haven't been pre-approved.
- You learn a student, teacher, or administrator's password and use or attempt to use it to log in without their knowledge (this is also very likely a felony level computer crime).
- You share a person's private information, such as passwords or grades, with other students-whether directly or indirectly (i.e. social media post).
- You use a cell phone, wearable tech, or other electronic device to complete an assignment in class without getting approval from the teacher.
- You consult sources that are not permitted for use in completing an assignment, project or other assessment. For example, you use Google translate to complete a World Language assignment when your teacher has not approved its use.

What happens when academic dishonesty or misconduct is discovered?

Consequences for any of the above violations of this policy may include the following:

- Student conference with teacher
- Zero on assignment or assessment in which a violation occurred
- Parent contact from teacher
- Notification of administration and IB coordinator
- Conference with parent, student, and teacher/administration

- Disciplinary referral to administration who may then decide on additional consequences depending on the severity of the malpractice and whether it is a repeat offense.
Additional consequences may include:
 - Removal from athletic teams, clubs, and/or honor societies
 - Removal from the diploma program or diploma certificate courses
 - In-school suspension
 - Suspension

For the teacher/administrator:

It is important to note that consequences for academic honesty violations may vary due to the nature of the assignment, clarity of instructions given, documentation that students have been made aware of possible consequences, documentation that students have been given opportunities to practice proper acknowledgement of source (specific to the task), grade level of the student, history of past infractions, and evidence of intent to gain an unfair advantage.

Therefore, it is imperative that a central database of suspected/documented academic malpractice be kept to ensure fairness and consistency. Teachers who handle instances of academic malpractice (especially those that are unintentional) themselves should still document the incident in writing and submit it to the database. (See *Academic honesty 6*)

For the student:

Students who are suspected of academic malpractice have the right to submit evidence demonstrating that the academic honesty policy has not been violated. Such evidence may include:

- documentation of the creation process of an assignment (to demonstrate originality)
- a request that a paper be submitted to Turnitin.com to verify authenticity
- evidence that assignment expectations concerning collaboration, use of sources, etc., whether written or oral, were followed

In some situations, the teacher may require a student to redo all or a portion of an assignment or test.

For the parent:

Parents will be notified by a teacher in all cases where a student is accused of academic malpractice (regardless of the intentionality or severity).

How are we reflecting on what it means to be an academically honest village?

This document is, first and foremost, a community endeavor. Feedback and suggested amendments should be solicited from students, teachers, administrators, and parents of the SMMHS community on a regular basis.

The IB coordinator and the IB steering committee should appoint a faculty member to oversee this ongoing process.

IB publications cited

Academic honesty in the IB educational context. August 2014

Middle Years Programme. MYP: From principles into practice. September 2015.

Appendix A: Helpful Student Resources

The following list of resources is frequently updated. Check back regularly.

IB Effective Citing and Referencing Guide.

This resource contains useful practice examples for students to learn how and when to acknowledge sources properly. It also provides a good run down of MLA style.

Get it here:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B_n1BgXcfKXpRWRTaXAzNENrTG8&authuser=0

Purdue OWL

Learn how to cite your sources in MLA, use in-text quotations properly, paraphrase the right way and so much more!

Get it here:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

SMMHS Library Media Center

Ms. Kirchmyer has a ton of helpful online resources to help you learn how to find quality sources, how to research properly, and how to cite your sources in MLA style.

Get it here:

<http://www.smmhsmediacenter.net/>

Avoiding Accidental Plagiarism

High quality animated video that specifically gives tips to help students avoid accidental plagiarism (geared toward scientific writing, but can apply to other fields).

Get it here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwOJvWhF_08