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# A Look at the Opinion of Alfie Kohn on Dishonesty in Schools

## Who's Cheating Whom?

In Alfie Kohn's argument, "Who's Cheating Whom?" he explains that cheating happens because students are not engaged in class due to a few different factors, like a lack of interest in a subject, or the pressures of getting good grades instead of learning. He states evidence from different experiments, allowing him to appear more credible, showing that students are more likely to cheat because their school puts more emphasis on how well students do on tests and homework versus how much is being learned in class. Kohn effectively argues that if students were truly engaged in what is being taught, and learning was more encouraged than memorizing and passing a test, cheating would be less of a problem.

In simplest terms, cheating is wrong because teachers cannot accurately assess how much is being learned in class, and what they need to improve on the next time they teach that lesson. But Kohn states, "when teachers don't seem to have a real connection with their students, or when they don't seem to care much about them, students are more inclined to cheat." Kohn uses pathos in his argument because if a student reads the quote, they know how it feels when a teacher does not truly connect with them. From personal experience, I find this very true. When it feels like a teacher does not truly care to be at school and teach their students, it is harder to pay attention and want to learn what they are teaching. I zone out, and when tests arise, I panic because I have not learned what was being taught previously.

Kohn cites a study of ninth and tenth graders who were more likely to cheat because they believed the subject being taught was "boring, irrelevant, or overwhelming" (Kohn). When interesting information is being relayed to students, more learning occurs. Students are more engaged when they are in a class that peaks their interest, thus meaning that cheating is a less common occurrence. Every student has their own interests, and if they are forced to be in a math or science class when they really want to be in art, they are going to be less open to learning and more open to cheating. If they were in an art class instead of a math, then it would be apparent that they are more likely to do the assignments on their own instead of copying off of a friend.

When schools use honor rolls, like National Honor Society, or anything similar, students are more likely to cheat to be a part of that group (Kohn). They believe that the reward is more important than the time spent learning. Many people I have come across that are in an honor

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roll joke about how they would not be a part of it if it were not for them cheating on their tests and other assignments. They think that having “National Honor Society” on their college application is better than learning on their own. What is going to help them in the long run, being in an honor roll or the information they were supposed to absorb and learn?

Kohn does not believe that students should cheat, but understands why they do. Throughout his whole argument, he provides evidence and examples of why students cheat and explain that students feel more pressured to perform well than learn. If the school was more about learning and less about how well a student performs on a standardized test at the end of the year, cheating would be less of a problem.

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