

Plagiarism Contract

The Guidelines for Academic Honesty detailed in Section 3.40.1 of PUSD board policy state that “It is expected that students, parents/guardians, staff, and administrators shall be responsible for creating and maintaining a positive school climate that supports and encourages honesty.” Accordingly, I expect that students will not plagiarize, but if they do, they will be held accountable.

Plagiarism.org explains plagiarism as follows:

Many people think of plagiarism as copying another's work or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like "copying" and "borrowing" can disguise the seriousness of the offense:

According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, to "plagiarize" means:

- to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
- to use (another's production) without crediting the source
- to commit literary theft
- to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

But can words and ideas really be stolen?

According to U.S. law, the answer is yes. The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

All of the following are considered plagiarism:

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not (see our section on "fair use" rules)

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed and providing your audience with the information necessary to find that source is usually enough to prevent plagiarism.

PUSD Board Policy defines plagiarism as “Any use of another’s ideas, words, or work, and crediting such as one’s own. Plagiarism includes the misuse of published materials, Internet information, and the work of other students. This also includes copying another student’s work, allowing work to be copied, or completing assignments for them.” The policy continues, “At the high school level, violations are cumulative and do not start over at the beginning of each year.”

In this class, all student work is expected to be their own. Any material that comes from another source must be cited. When students use and cite outside sources, they should build on what their sources have said. The student’s job is to add to the conversation with ideas that are their own. **AI tools should not be used in class or for coursework unless explicitly permitted.**

Consequences

Sometimes, students plead ignorance, claiming that they didn’t understand what plagiarism was or didn’t know that they had to cite sources or that they couldn’t borrow from their friends/siblings’ work. Ignorance is not a valid excuse. If evidence indicates that student work is plagiarized, then it is indeed plagiarism.

- If a student plagiarizes, that student will fail the assignment, earn a zero, and not have a chance to make up that grade. Additionally, a referral will be turned in to the office. This referral may be for “Information Only” or for “Action,” depending on the assignment and the severity of the plagiarism. Parents will be notified.
- If a second offense occurs within this course, the student will fail that quarter of the class and receive a referral for administrative action.
- All plagiarism referrals will remain on file for the duration of a student’s time at Westview. The existence of referrals may limit a student’s chances at attaining leadership positions on campus (captain of a team, student-government office, editor of a publication, drum major, membership in NHS, office-holder in a club, etc.) Additionally, colleges may be made aware of acts of academic dishonesty, and teachers may refuse to write letters of recommendation for students who plagiarize.