



# The Knightly News

Where the pen proves mightier than the sword

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## Students and teachers describe culture of cheating at North

**Bushra Hasan**  
Editor-in-Chief

Two students sit at the back of the science classroom at the same lab table on exam day. As one struggles with a problem, the other unsheathes her eraser and passes it to the first student. Little does the teacher know that during this seemingly benign act of exchanging an eraser, two students are scribbling in four-point font the answers to a science test.

This wasn't the only time students cheated on a science test. Last spring, a student in Kerry Pross's AP Chemistry class found a version of the final exam online and shared questions with other students. However, Pross could not prove that the student cheated, and the incident went unpunished.

But academic integrity issues at North are more far-reaching than finding a final exam online. According to a student—uninvolved in the AP Chemistry cheating incident—who spoke on the condition that her name not be used, students cheat so often that “people talk about it pretty openly among classmates” in a “nonchalant” manner. Students frequently copy

homework assignments and email labs to each other, while some write answers or formulas in their calculators or on their hands.

The most common form of cheating at North is discreet—it involves students from earlier periods telling students in a later period the content of an exam or an essay question. AP US History teacher Greg Bugge said he creates different versions of tests and essay questions and distributes different Document Based Questions to each period. “There are always going to be students who will give morning questions to the afternoon classes,” Bugge said.

The school code of conduct states that “no matter how much pressure to achieve the appearance of academic and personal achievements without their realities, one must never betray oneself or others by giving into that pressure and compromising one's integrity by cheating, plagiarizing, stealing, or by being cruel to others.”

Despite this, students break the

rules on a daily basis and feel no remorse. “I've been told my by parents, ‘All that matters is the grade; I know that even if you get the knowledge, if I don't see the

so a lot of the students are overwhelmed with that kind of pressure and feel the need to cheat to do well,” said a second student, who also admitted to cheating on an exam.

But students are well aware of the academic rigor of the courses they take. “I feel like if you think you're qualified enough to take a higher-leveled class you'd have some more understanding about academic integrity and why you should uphold those standards,” said the second student.

But this simply isn't the case. The rigor does not obligate students to stick to conventional study methods. Nor does the urge to learn for the sake of learning; instead, students rely on cheating. The first student claims she does not do “extreme cheating,” but rather the “basic stuff.”

“The issue is, why is it so prevalent? They see it as ‘if I can get away with a grade’ rather than as a source of shame,” said AP Language and Composition teacher Maria Mingrone. Even in classes

that involve literary analysis and individual thought, students frequently try to cheat. “Some will do the best they can do, or some will get by and won't consider the consequences on others as a result.”

Some teachers have worked hard to prevent students from cheating—instituting a “no phone policy” on test days, checking palms before students take a test, and clearing calculators before exams. “I take it personally [when a student cheats]. It hurts me, since the student is disrespecting me,” AP Biology teacher Holly Crochetiere said. Crochetiere keeps an eye on her students during class assignments to make sure they don't copy each other. But she allows students to use their mobile devices if they need to look up a definition or clarify a concept. “I really see the value of allowing students to have a phone at their seats,” she said.

Bugge, who also lets students use their phones during class, said he considers cheating a serious problem: “In the words of one of my colleagues—I'm saying that so as to not plagiarize—do you want your heart surgeon to have cheated on his MCATs?”



Provided by Riya Patel

grade, it doesn't really matter in the end.’ I'm just doing what I have to do to secure my grade,” the student said.

“WW-P, specifically, focuses a lot and puts a lot of pressure on all of their students to get those straight As, and maintain a good GPA, and do extracurriculars,

## “Is there anything I can do?”:

**Liam Knox**  
Opinion Editor  
**David Yaffe-Bellany**  
Editor-in-Chief

A July Student Council campaign to prevent the involuntary transfer of North vice principal Melissa Levine generated a groundswell of community support, including hundreds of petition signatures and emails protesting the move, as students and teachers united around a popular administrator known for her helpfulness and flexibility.

The weekend before the July 22

WW-P Board of Education meeting at which Superintendent David Aderhold planned to formally request Levine's transfer, Student Council gathered 230 signatures on an Internet petition calling for Levine to continue as North's vice principal. In a Facebook post, Student Council Executive Board President Ambika Nair, a senior, urged students to email Aderhold and the school board with their concerns about the impending transfer.

Although Aderhold maintains that the campaign played no role in

his decision to abandon the transfer plan, Levine said she believes it was a contributing factor.

Levine declined to say why Aderhold wanted her transferred, and Aderhold said he could not comment on a personnel matter. Levine said her annual salary would not have changed.

The response to the campaign was more enthusiastic than Nair had anticipated. “I received a lot of chats that day asking, ‘Is there anything I can do?’” she said. Nair estimated that students, parents and faculty members sent a total of at least 150 emails.

Levine serves as a liaison between Student Council and administration. She helps organize school events and advises students hoping to start new clubs.

“Mrs. Levine is a can-do person,” said Student Council advisor Carl Romero. “Whenever we come to her, it's never, ‘No, you can't do

that.’ It's always, ‘Let's figure out a way to get it done.’ If we could do anything to keep her, we would do everything we reasonably could.”

“She has a respect for the student leaders that is hard to find,” said senior Shreya Sunderram, who participates in several clubs, including Model Congress and Model United Nations.

Levine is also a regular visitor to the LARKS classroom, where she converses with students and participates in an annual fundraiser. “Everyone's glad she's still here,” LARKS teacher Brian Gould said.

In early July, Aderhold told Levine she would be moved across town to fill the vacant vice principal position at Grover Middle School. “You could say that I was upset,” Levine said. “I've been here since the building opened” in 1997. But the day of the school board meeting, Aderhold met with Levine to tell her that she would remain at North after all.

“I don't think anyone should be forced to leave something they put so much time and effort into,” said senior Sarah Carlen, who wrote a letter to the school board in support of Levine. “Some people just see her as the person who gets everyone in trouble, but she does a lot for us that we don't see or notice.”

The Friday before the board meeting, Levine telephoned Student Council advisor Donna Ritz simply to tell her about the transfer, Levine said—not to request any kind of formal support. Ritz passed the news along to Romero, and the two emailed Aderhold requesting a meeting to discuss Levine's future. “This was not a rebellion,” Romero said. “We just wanted to let them know what Mrs. Levine does for us and how her move would, in all likelihood, negatively impact us.”

But Aderhold turned the offer down, saying he could not discuss personnel matters.

...Continued on page 2.

## No Homework Nights

October 22, 2014

December 16, 2014

February 10, 2015

May 8, 2015

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

News.....	1
Feature.....	3
Opinion.....	6
Arts & Review.....	11
Sports.....	14

Check out our coverage of Spirit Week on [pages 8-9](#).



## HOMEcoming: THE THROWBACK