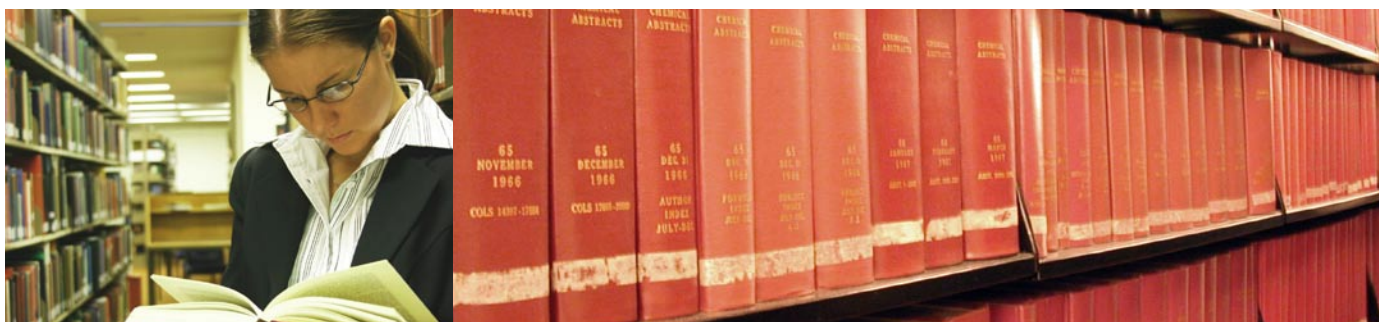


Teaching Academic Integrity at Broad Run High School

Plagiarism was rampant at Broad Run High School, but there was a reluctance on the part of the administration to adopt a policing tool to “catch” guilty students.



At a Glance

BRHS raised their academic standards by putting the Turnitin suite at the center of their teaching process.

- Plagiarism Prevention allows students to check for possible plagiarism problems during the draft stage, and eliminate them before submitting for a grade
- Peer Review gives students a forum for evaluating other students' writing and improving their own
- GradeMark gives students and teachers a system for tracking improvements, while making the grading process faster and more effective than ever.

Instead, they adopted the entire Turnitin suite and made plagiarism awareness just one of the ways they teach students to write. As a result, academic skills have dramatically improved, and plagiarism has been virtually eliminated.

The Problem No One Wanted To Face

In 1999-2000 plagiarism was undermining the academic programs at Virginia's Broad Run High School. Teachers were so unequipped to combat plagiarism that many of them had simply stopped teaching writing and research. The administration was uneasy about adopting a plagiarism-prevention tool because they were reluctant to open the Pandora's box of charging students with an academic crime. As a result the entire student body was suffering.

To solve the problem in a way that met everyone's needs, Broad Run decided that the best way to stop plagiarism was to do a better job of teaching students how to write in the first place. To accomplish this, they adopted the full suite of tools from Turnitin, including Plagiarism Prevention, Peer Review, and GradeMark.

“We treat it as a learning tool, and plagiarism is just one part of that,” says Dan Kent, Social Studies teacher and department chair at Broad Run. “You council the kids on what is plagiarism, why something is plagiarism, and what they can do to avoid it. And Turnitin gives us the power to do this very effectively.”

Turnitin has become so popular with the students and faculty at Broad Run High School that several new teachers chose to teach at Broad Run because they wanted to use Turnitin in the classroom, having been exposed to it during their own college careers.

Teaching Good Writing

At Broad Run, students submit rough drafts for peer review, and any potential plagiarism is identified at this early stage. Only after they've gone through the peer review process are papers submitted for a grade, and by then any originality problems have been corrected. The results have been striking. Before adopting Turnitin, administrators found that about 70% of students had plagiarized intentionally. During the 2003-2004 school year, there were just two incidents of plagiarism in a student body of 1600.

"It's a wonderful teaching tool."

Dan Kent, Social Studies Teacher and Department Head

Not only is plagiarism down, but academic standards are higher than ever. Broad Run receives regular report cards from Virginia universities on the quality of the students they're graduating, and their marks have gone up dramatically. "I had an admissions officer tell me that if he has a kid from Broad Run and a kid from another school, and their test scores and GPAs are the same, he'll admit our kid first because he knows our kids come prepared," says Kent.

The Extended Turnitin Suite

In combination with Plagiarism Prevention and Peer Review, every teacher at Broad Run has access to GradeMark, which extends Turnitin's value as a teaching tool. With GradeMark, teachers as well as students can easily track progress across the school year, identifying chronic problems and marked improvements. And the teachers love it because it makes grading so much easier. "I spend half the time grading papers that I used to spend," says Kent, "and my comments have gotten much more effective."

Because it has been so successful, Turnitin has been embraced by every department that teaches writing. Educators appreciate having a non-threatening way to teach their students about academic honesty, while the students have come to appreciate the value of the writing skills they acquire. According to Kent, some students confessed that they were working harder to plagiarize than simply to do the work properly in the first place.

"I know some schools just use it as a gotcha site, but we don't really use it that way because we don't have the need," says Kent. "It's really just a set of tools that help us teach writing more effectively. This makes it a much better experience for the kids, and it makes our jobs a whole lot easier."