



Prevent Plagiarism in the Classroom
Veteran Teacher Shares Experience with Plagiarism Prevention

Bruce Becker, a high school teacher at Lake Washington School District in Redmond, Washington, didn't know it at the time, but a phone call was about to change his life as an English, social studies and humanities teacher of 28 years.

"My son called from college and it was not to ask for money," said Becker. "Instead, he asked me to check out the anti-plagiarism site where he was required to turn in his papers."

Thus began Becker's journey with Turnitin (www.turnitin.com), an originality checking and plagiarism prevention service used by millions of students and thousands of teachers worldwide.

"My epiphany came when my son told me, 'I'm tired of competing against professional writers,'" said Becker. "He was right. No student should have to compete against material that others cut and paste from the Internet and submit as their own."

Becker soon discovered the service is less about playing "gotcha" with students and more about upholding academic honesty, rewarding those who do their own work, and encouraging young writers to find their own voices.

"I made many joyful discoveries—a culture of implicit trust in my classrooms, students rededicated to their writing, credible high stakes writing assessments, and grading as it should be: stress-free and focused on the writer's thoughts and style," said Becker.

After submitting a student's paper electronically, Turnitin sends Becker an originality report in mere seconds, giving him more time to do what he is supposed to do—grade papers without being sidetracked by questions of misappropriated prose. In fact, Becker and his colleagues discovered they could grade papers in half the time.

Just as important to them is an integrated suite of instructional tools from Turnitin called WriteCycle™ that addresses the process of composition, feedback and grading for writing-intensive assignments. In addition to originality checking, WriteCycle services include Peer Review and Gradermark digital grading tools with an integrated GradeBook. The entire WriteCycle solution is a 100 percent paperless classroom solution that Becker and his colleagues enthusiastically embrace.

As for solving the problem of plagiarism, Becker said, “In three years I have never had a student push back about being caught. I called one student to my desk and explained that I’d found plagiarism in his assignment. He asked, ‘Where?’ I just spun my display around to show the color-coded report. His response was, ‘Cool!’ It was cool all right: he was busted. Some kids start out thinking they can beat the system, a misconception that disappears as the deterrent effect takes hold.”

One unexpected outcome: Becker finds more and more students are coming from junior high school with established Turnitin accounts, habits and expectations. “They like going paperless and Turnitin helps them to make a smooth transition to high school with their electronic writing portfolios intact,” he said.

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