Acknowledgements
This publication would not be possible without the support of our colleagues and friends at The Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission:

Matt Verdugo, Executive Director
J.E. Wolfson, Education Coordinator
Cheyanne Perkins, Program Specialist
Esther Rivera, Communication and Education Specialist
Christian Acevedo, Hispanic Outreach Coordinator
Lynn Santos, Program Specialist

Creative Studios at The University of Texas at El Paso:
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Making the Grade is dedicated to the memory of Peter Berkowitz.

Visit us at https://ethics.utep.edu/
MAKING THE GRADE

A Comic from Creative Studios at
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WHAT HAPPENED!?

I can explain...

EXPLAIN WHAT?! WHY AM I HERE?!
I swear it was an accident.

Accident?! What was an accident? What...

Come with me.
Thanks for actually showing up.

I’ve been meaning to ask you something.

Oh, God. I knew it!

You’re asking me out?!
What?! No, no!

Oh. Okay, good. I was worried about that. Eww.

ANYWAY, no, I didn’t want to meet so I could ask you out. I have a different sort of proposition.

Eww? Pfft, you wish...

Listen, I need help in some of my classes. And everyone knows you’re kind of the “go-to” person for help with that.

Well, yeah. You do all that tutoring right?
Yeah, trying to save up for the Honors Trip in the summer.

Great!

That’s cool. There’s this music festival I’m literally dying to go to in the summer.

Literally...?

Got a job and saved up all the money and everything.

Problem is, my parents say I have to bring my grades up or I can’t go.

And summer school is obviously not an option.

Oh I see.

Well, I’d like to help out, but I’m busy enough as it is with all the tutoring I’m already doing, and keeping up with my own school work, so...

Yeeeah... that’s not what I’m asking for.

Then what...?

Look, I think we have an opportunity here where we can both help each other out.

I want to pay you to take some of the workload off my shoulders, you know?

Well, not some, most.

You want to pay me... to do your work for you?
Yeah, exactly! But not just that. I want you to help me with my quizzes and exams and all the other junk, too.

... And I already thought of some good ways to do it, so no worries about getting caught.

They're foolproof.

Hmm...

Look, I need the grades, you need the money.

I already told you I have enough saved up for my trip, so I can pay you a lot more than what you're making on any of those tutoring gigs.

I don't know.

C'mon! I can really make it worth your while.

What if we get caught?

We won't! I told you, foolproof ideas! Low risk, high reward. That's the thing they say, right?
I know you’re not making much with the tutoring. How could you? It’s small time. And even if you do save enough for your Honor’s trip or whatever, you have to keep your own grades up, too, right?

Bet it would be a lot easier if you didn’t have all those other gigs to worry about.

You feelin’ me?

Help you out? In other words, not pay for the whole thing, only some of it, right?

Bet it would be great to have that help. AND make some extra money on the side.

Well, my parents said they would help me out, so why risk it?

Help me, help you, by helping me! Get it?
You're sure we won't get caught?

100 percent! As long as we stick to what I have in mind, I guarantee you'll be safe.

Alright. I'm in.

YES!! Thank yo...err...
I mean, cool! Thanks. We'll go over the details tomorrow.

You're the best!
**CONSIDER THE ETHICS**

**REFLECT**
In the opening panels, what different emotions can you identify in the exchanges between Ozzy and Daisy? What is causing them?

Ozzy is proposing an “opportunity” to Daisy. How will each of them benefit from it? Will one of them benefit more?

**DISCUSS**
School can be a catalyst for various kinds of pressure. What are some of yours? How do you manage them?

Are Ozzy and Daisy equally responsible for the decision they are making?

“Integrity” is a word you hear almost every day, but it’s not a word that people spend a lot of time thinking about. If you had to explain it to someone, how would you do so? Provide examples to help support your definition.

Have you ever been in a situation where you were being asked to do something you know could potentially compromise your integrity? What did you decide? Why?

**WRITE**
The idea that “the end justifies the means” argues that if a goal is important enough, any method of achieving it is acceptable, even if the method is unethical. What are some situations or scenarios, where this belief has been exemplified? Did the end justify the means? Explain.

In contrast, others argue that the “means” are just as important, if not more so, as the “ends.” This means that there are situations or scenarios, where how we get to our goal is just as important as getting there? Do you agree? Explain.
You sure it’s okay meeting now? In the library of all places?

Why?

Just feels ... kind of open.

I'm here to tutor you, remember? Why wouldn't we do that?

Right...

All right, so what are all these foolproof plans you were boasting about?
So there are different things we have to do for different situations, right?

The homework is easy. We can do that anywhere.

CLICK CLICK CLICK CLACK

CLICK CLICK CLICK CLACK

My English Report

CLICK

BUZZZ

Just a matter of getting it to me before class starts.

BUZZZ

WHIRR-CCLICK

WHIRR-CCLICK
Okay, what about the exams and digital assignments?

That one I had to think about a bit.

It's easier in the classes we have together.

You just have to keep an ear out.
And, as for the digital stuff...
And all I have to worry about is making it look like I’m typing.

Wow...that’s...really dumb.
Dumb? I'd like to see you come up with a better plan!

No, it'll work. Just seems like a lot of effort. I'm game.

Good.

Anyway, there are plenty of other things I have in mind...

...but we'll cross those bridges when we reach 'em.

Good job, Ozzy!

Good job, Daisy!

Keep it up, Ozzy!

Wow, Ozzy!

Keep it up, Daisy!

Wow, Daisy!
Okay, class, bell's about to ring, so start finishing up those group assignments.

Hey, Ozzy!

I can't get #5 and my group's pretty much useless.

I know you've been doing good, so I was wondering if you could help me?

What do I do? I don't actually know any of this stuff... But I can't tell her that.
Okay, keep calm. Daisy can't help, so the only logical conclusion is for me to...ESCAPE! But how?!

I can fake a stomach ache! Yeah, that'll work! Perfect!

Oh. Uhh. Jeez. I dunno, Jen. My sto...

Great idea!

You've improved so much these past few weeks Ozzy, I think it'd be good for you to help some of the other students.

I'm kind of curious to see your process myself!

Well?
CONSIDER THE ETHICS

**REFLECT**

What are some of the ways Ozzy and Daisy are being academically dishonest in school? What are some of the short-term gains? Do you think there might be long-term consequences?

Ozzy and Daisy put a lot of effort into devising ways to cheat. Why are some students willing to do this instead of simply studying and completing their own work?

**DISCUSS**

In your experiences as a student, what are some of the ways you have seen other students being academically dishonest? Do you think they considered the long-term impact of their decision?

Why do you think students cheat? Discuss suggestions and/or strategies to help others maintain their academic integrity.

How is “collusion” different from “collaboration?” Use examples from the comic to differentiate between the two.

**WRITE**

When people face the decision to cheat, they often look to others to gain information about appropriate behavior. **Lab experiments** have shown that when people see others like them (e.g., their peers, or people they feel similar to) behaving unethically, they are more likely to cheat. Interestingly, others’ exemplary ethical behavior affects their likelihood to behave honestly, but it has a weaker influence, compared to others’ unethical behavior. Why do you think this is so?
Ok...let's see what we can do here.

...I think I'm actually getting a stomach ache now.

Crap! I'm taking too long. I have to do something. Run out? Yeah! I'll run out and blame it on lunch. First, act like you know it...

Okay, no prob. All you have to do is... huh?

Do I actually...

I think that's it?

This is good, but let me show you a little trick here that's easier.
What's up, Mister?

Just wanted to give you a sneak peek of your report card.

See how much you've improved?

Just thought you'd like to see that and tell you how impressed I am. Keep up the good work, Ozzy, knew you had it in you.

Uhh, thanks, Mister. Guess... Guess I did.
Hey.

You okay?

Yeah, I guess.

You guess?

Well, maybe not. We need to talk.

You didn’t get caught, did you?!

No, no, nothing like that, just...

Okay, good! You scared me for a second. That reminds me, have my money?
Oh, Right.

Great!

Continue.

It's just... I think we should stop this. The whole deal thing...

My, that's a bit of a surprise.

I mean, I feel like maybe this wasn't a good idea after all.
Don’t get me wrong, it’s been working pretty good. I just saw some of my grades, and they’re great.

Of course they are. But if they’re great, why do you want to stop?

I dunno... just... the teacher wouldn’t stop telling me about how good I’m doing or whatever...

... and then I think I’m understanding the stuff a bit more than I thought I was, and like...

I just think we should stop. I don’t need to do it anymore.

Oh, Ozzy...
If you think we're going to stop this just because you suddenly feel bad about it...

...you're dumber than I thought.

You said you'd make it worth my while, Ozzy, and you kept your promise.
And I'm going to make sure you continue to keep your promise.

Help me, help you, help me, right?

Daisy, I don't want to do this anymore. And I do.

I didn't want to have to use these...

... but I guess I have to now.
I... I never... These aren't our messages?!

You've been sending me a lot of material, Ozzy, and it's amazing what you can do these days with a little Photoshop.

If I even feel like you're trying to cheat me out of our deal, or turn us in...

I'll just have to show them these very mean messages.

Maybe with a little story about how you took advantage of the help I was so nice to give you.

But, that's not true... I'll tell them that! I'll show them the real messages.

Sorry -- I decided to do a little spring cleaning on our chat...
It was a lot to delete.  

DELETE
DELETE
DELETE
DELETE

Guess you just weren’t smart enough to back them up.

And honestly, who are they going to believe?

The wonderful Honors student all the teachers love, or you?

What if you gave me legit tutoring, then? No more cheating, just legit help.

Nope, I told you when we started that I don’t have time, remember?

This way is faster and easier. Don’t have to wait for you to actually learn anything.

You could just pay me to stay quiet if you don't want to cheat anymore.

It's an option, and you manage to keep your promise to me!

Either works for me. At least with the cheating, you still keep your grades. Think about it, K?

Just don't think about it too long, I can only feel bad for so long.

See you same time next week!
CONSIDER THE ETHICS

REFLECT

What sparks Ozzy’s crisis of conscience? Why has it taken him this long to realize he is doing something wrong?

What does Daisy reveal about her character? Why is Ozzy so surprised?

DISCUSS

Identity can be described as who we think we are, as well as who others think we are. What does this tell you about how identity is developed?

How does your perception of others affect how you treat them?

WRITE

A student caught cheating will typically insist that “It was the first time,” “It was stupid, and I’ll never do it again,” and, of course, “Please don’t tell my parents!” But get below the surface, and you’ll find an implicit attitude that says: “Everyone cheats,” “It doesn’t really hurt anybody,” and “I don’t really care about this class.” There is seldom a deep understanding of why cheating is wrong. So, why is it wrong?
RIIIIIIIINNNNNNNNGGGGGG!

This is so messed up. How did it get so messed up?

This wasn’t supposed to happen like this. Can I even get out of it?

What are my options?

I could turn her in first? Tell them she’s a psycho? Maybe they’ll believe me...
... without any proof...

No.

I could turn us both in. Own up to my part and pray they go easy on me?

Hey, just checking to see if tutoring is still on this week. Otherwise, I'll have to cancel 😞 ... Let me know, k?

"Have to cancel." She's good, I have to give her that.

BING!

SIGH
Hey Ozz, you doing okay, buddy? Maybe you should do it now? He's right here. Confess, come clean, be free of it.

There'll be other concerts, right? This is your chance. Just, DO IT! Yeah. Sorry, just didn't sleep well. Everything's fine.

Well, okay. Just making sure. You let me know if you ever need to talk. My door's always open.

SIGH
2 WEEKS LATER

Ozzy!

Hey, Mister, what's...

...Up?

PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

NOW

Explain.

...

Well...

Daisy.
Yes, sir?

I've noticed a few...similarities here. I'm hoping you can help clear up.

Similarities? What do you mean?

Ozzy forced me to do it! It's not my fault! I told him I didn't want to, but he made me!

This...isn't Ozzy's.

Care to elaborate on what exactly Ozzy made you do?
You were... cheating for other people?

Yeah...

...you weren't the only one.
VARSITY TRACK MEET

NAME | WK-1 | WK-2 | WK-3 | WK-4 | WK-5
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Lynn S. | $60 | $60 | $20 | $60 | $60
Cheyanne P. | $80 | $20 | $20 | $20 | $60
Jake W. | $80 | $80 | $60 | $60 | $40
Esther R. | $80 | $60 | $60 | $60 | $60
Christian A. | $80 | $60 | $60 | $80 | $60
Thurston M. | $60 | $60 | $60 | $60 | $60
Frank B. | $60 | $20 | $20 | $80 | $60
Jay Z. | $60 | $20 | $80 | $60 | $60
MARTIN FEIN
COMPUTER LAB

GRILLED
CHEESE

GRILLED
CHEESE

GRILLED
CHEESE

...That bottle thing was kind of clever, wasn't it?

SIGH
After getting caught, both he and Daisy were forced to take Summer School to make up for cheating. Ozzy felt he got off easy.

Daisy, on the other hand, got kicked out of all the programs and organizations she was in, and wasn’t allowed to go on the trip.

They also made her give back all the money. She didn’t take that too well.

On top of that, everyone else Daisy “tutored” was also forced to take Summer School, so she’s not the most popular kid in the classroom, to say the least.

Obviously, Ozzy wasn’t allowed to go to the concert.
**CONSIDER THE ETHICS**

**REFLECT**

What led to Ozzy and Daisy getting caught? How does each react to the situation?

What does “accountability” mean? Is Ozzy fully accountable for his actions? Is Daisy fully accountable for hers?

**DISCUSS**

Why do we let ourselves get away with unethical behavior that we would condemn in others?

In any organization, both formal structures (e.g., reporting unethical behavior) and informal cultures (e.g., acceptable/not acceptable norms formed and enforced by groups) shape conduct. How can both be important to reducing academic dishonesty?

Do you think Ozzy and Daisy were punished fairly? Explain.

**WRITE**

A fundamental ethical principle is “Do No Harm.” Discuss how academic dishonesty harms:

a. Other students

b. The instructor

c. Friends and family

d. The public/community at large
Ozzy and Daisy, the characters in *Making the Grade*, are confronted with the issue of academic integrity, and the ethics involved in their decision-making. What will they each decide when cheating for better grades is proposed?

The educational setting will hold many challenges for students - some academic, some economic, and quite often, those that confront the ethical systems students were raised on.

This inevitably puts into question, “Do students understand the deep impact their choices will have upon them and others?”

Our goal is to help students explore their own ethics, choose right over wrong, and be responsible for the consequences of their choices. To do so, students need to develop a value system that enables them to recognize how they affect others, to consider the consequences of their acts, and to adopt a mature set of goals. This can be achieved with consistent reinforcement in education--at all levels of schooling.