

Curriculum Hacking Examples

Mateo, a sixth grader, is learning about medieval societies in social studies. As a final project, the teacher assigns each student a different topic about which they write a research report. Mateo has completed all of his research about his topic, medieval food. Instead of writing his report, he borrows his dad's voice recording app, and in his best newscaster voice, he reports "live from medieval times" on how foods are grown, prepared, and eaten. On the day the report is due, when all of his classmates are turning in their reports, Mateo emails his teacher the recording.

Aliyah, an eighth grader, sometimes feels like her science class goes too slowly. She decides to use the right-hand pages in her notebook to take down the class notes she's supposed to be copying from the board, and use the left side for her personal questions and mind wanderings related to the day's topic. One day, the class is learning how to draw a Punnett square, a diagram that shows an organism's genotype (which genes it inherits) and phenotype (what it ends up looking like). As the teacher demonstrates how to draw Punnett squares that show genotypes and phenotypes of pea plants, Aliyah draws her two favorite video game characters and makes Punnett squares to show what their biological children and grandchildren might look like. She also writes the questions, *When people say I act just like Dad used to, is that genetic? I look nothing like my sister but we both look like our parents. How is that even possible? How am I like my grandparents and great-grandparents?*

Marisol is in ninth-grade honors English. Her class is reading J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, and she is supposed to write an essay about the book that introduces an arguable thesis, supports it with clear reasoning and specific evidence, and adheres to conventions as specified by state standards. Marisol understands *The Catcher in the Rye* and appreciates Salinger's writing style, and she has a few good ideas for her essay, but what's really on Marisol's mind is the fact that one of her close friends has an eating disorder and another of her close friends has been cutting herself. Although she's a little afraid of what her English teacher will say (especially because he loves *The Catcher in the Rye*), Marisol has decided to write an essay arguing that Holden from *Catcher* models terrible coping skills, and that today's teenagers need better coping skills so they don't resort to self-harm.

Theo is a junior in high school. Between his advanced classes, running varsity track, and his close-knit group of friends, he feels like he has a pretty great life. One day during practice, he overhears a few of his teammates talking about how their mathematics teacher hardly ever talks to boys of color except to yell at them. Theo is white and thinks of himself as color-blind. He has a diverse group of friends and doesn't think he pays attention to race, but he can't stop thinking about his teammates' discussion. The next day in mathematics, Theo starts tallying who the teacher calls on and scolds, broken down by race and gender, and he's surprised to find that his teammates might be right. He tries the same thing in the rest of his classes, and by the end of that day, he's decided that his science fair project will be a study of whether there are race and gender biases among teachers at his school.