

# No title

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The way students communicate with one another through social media and text messaging is creeping into high school classrooms across the country. Slang terms and text-speak such as IDK (I don't know), SMH (shaking my head), and BTW (by the way) have become a common sight on student assignments, befuddling some high school teachers who are unsure how to fix this growing problem. Terry Wood, a foreign language teacher at St. Mary's Ryken High School in Leonardtown, Md., has seen a "dramatic decline" in the writing abilities of her students "due to Tweeting, Facebook, and texting." "They do not capitalize words or use punctuation anymore," Wood, a teacher with 10 years of in-class experience, says. "Even in E-mails to teachers or [on] writing assignments, any word longer than one syllable is now abbreviated to one." [Discover five unique uses of Twitter in the classroom.] According to a survey of 700 students ages 12 to 17 by the Pew Internet & American Life Project, 85 percent of the respondents reported using a form of electronic communication, whether through instant messaging, text messaging, or social media. Growing up in a technological era, high school students may be unaware they are using language shortcuts in the classroom, says Allie Sakowicz, a rising senior at Maine South High School in Park Ridge, Ill. "I think that students don't even realize that they're doing it," Sakowicz notes. "When we're using all this social media we're not thinking about spelling words right, so naturally that's going to translate into the classroom." In fact, 64 percent of students in the study reported inadvertently using a form of shorthand native to texting or social networking. But, the problem does not end there, as Sakowicz acknowledges that younger teachers see the slang but "let it go." "Not that they like it, but

they kind of expect it," she says. " Teachers that are older and aren't familiar with all the social media devices are really upset that this is what's becoming of our language." [Read about the effort to develop better teacher evaluation systems.] While advocates of slang words may say this trend is simply an evolution of language, Chad Dion Lassiter, professor of race relations at the University of Pennsylvania, considers it " a dumbing down of culture." Lassiter leads an academic mentorship program for high school students in the Philadelphia area and has observed " this broken level of communication." " We're looking at some of these writing skills and what I'm noticing is [that] there is miscommunication due to the fact that their communication is so limited," he says. " The problem is the adults. We have to train adults to work with young people and hold them accountable." While slang terms may be most prevalent in the high school classroom, Lassiter notes that colleges are " getting [admissions] essays like they've never seen before." " Admissions officers have shared with me that a lot of the essays they're encountering now are deeply rooted in this technological culture of cut-off sentences where you're writing like you speak," he notes. " After the first few sentences, college admissions professionals toss them to the side.