

**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
SPECIAL INVESTIGATORS**



June 30, 2011

**HAND DELIVERED**

Governor Nathan Deal  
State Capitol  
Atlanta, GA 30335


Dear Governor Deal:

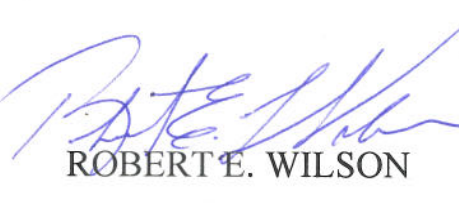
In January of this year, you continued our appointment as your special investigators to probe allegations of test tampering and related matters in the Atlanta Public School System (APS).


We have determined that cheating occurred throughout that school district. Our investigation found organized and systemic wrongdoing in APS well before the administration of the 2009 CRCT.

Our investigative report follows. The entire file is available to the appropriate authorities, as you direct. Please let us know if we may be of further service.

Very truly yours,

  
MICHAEL J. BOWERS

  
ROBERT E. WILSON

  
RICHARD L. HYDE

# **INVESTIGATIVE TEAM**

## **Governor's Special Investigators**

Robert E. Wilson  
Michael J. Bowers  
Richard L. Hyde

### **Balch and Bingham, LLP**

James L. Hollis  
Jeremy W. Gregory  
E. Righton Johnson

Kara M. Engelberger, Paralegal  
Deborah Daley, Legal Assistant  
Susan G. Hughes, Legal Assistant  
Barbara Watson, Legal Assistant  
Lydia Rooks, Legal Assistant  
Elizabeth A. Jackson, Project Asst.

### **Wilson, Morton and Downs, LLC**

Keri P. Ware  
Roslyn S. Mowatt

Linda Weaver, Paralegal  
Debbie Morelli, Paralegal  
Tracey Duren, Legal Assistant  
Cheryl Hicks, Legal Assistant

## **Georgia Bureau of Investigation**

Director Vernon M. Keenan  
Inspector John Heinen  
Special Agent Heather Strickland (Case Agent)

Kelly Aldrich  
Renea Anderson  
Elizabeth Bigham  
Rocky Bigham  
Amy Braswell  
Leigh Brooks  
Michael Brooks  
Tonya Cales  
Ryan Carmichael  
Derek Coffey  
Jerri Lynn Coody  
Karen Crowe

Dan Kirk, Assistant Director  
Monica Ling  
Gregory Linton  
Chad Lott  
Kendra Lynn  
ASAC Jesse Maddox  
Lindsay Marchant  
Christopher McKeown  
Megan Miller  
Rhiannon Morgan  
Carlos Murray  
David Norman

Agie George  
Lindsey Giddens  
Earl Glover  
Wendell Goodman  
Brian Hargrove  
James Harris  
Mary Holder  
Wesley Horne  
Eugene Howard  
Terry Howard  
Cecil Hutchins  
Cayce Ingalls  
Anita Ivy  
Marko Jones  
Deanna Jury  
Lawrence Kelly  
Klay Kilcrease

SAC Denise Norman  
Richard Otwell  
Trebor Randle  
Latoria Reynolds  
Janet N. Rhodes  
Evelyn Rodgers  
Deborah Rollins  
Amanda Rowlen  
Rebecca Shaw  
Jamie Skelton  
Kristina Smalley  
Paul Smith  
Jonathan Spurlock  
Sara Thomas  
Lisa Vorrasi  
Cynthia Wahl  
Benny Williams

**Georgia Information Sharing and Analysis Center**

Meredith Bailey  
Emily Butler  
Yvonne Darrell  
Heather Davis  
Kevin Garrett  
Yalanda Greene  
Laurie Lane  
ASAC Cynthia Ledford  
Stephanie Lockridge  
Jessica Price  
Mark Reinking  
Terri St. Romain  
Jan Roulain, Department of Corrections  
Deanna Scott  
Tammy Starckey  
Wendi Walker  
Keesha Walker

**Office of State Inspector General**

Elizabeth Pequeño Archer, Esq.  
Deron R. Hicks, Esq.  
William L. Donaldson, III, CPA, CFE  
Deborah Wallace, CIG

**District Attorney, Atlanta Judicial Circuit**

Hon. Paul Howard  
Judge Eleanor L. Ross (Formerly Executive Assistant District Attorney)

**Solicitor-General, DeKalb County**

Hon. Sherry Boston  
Investigator Steve Barresi

**Georgia State Patrol**

Col. Bill Hitchens  
Lt. Col. Mark McDonough  
Major Russell Powell  
Lt. Mark Lambert  
Sgt. Robert Moody  
Trooper Christopher Hinkle  
Trooper K. Reeder  
Trooper Chris Stallings  
Trooper Larry Miller



### **Report Limitations**

This report is an overview of the evidence and our findings. It is not intended to include every detail or fact developed during this investigation. Nor does it include every relevant document. All notes, documents, transcripts and interview summaries related to this investigation will be available to you, and the appropriate authorities for whatever action, if any, is appropriate.

### **Special Thanks**

The investigators wish to express their gratitude to Governors Perdue and Deal, and their staffs, for their support of our work. We also wish to extend our appreciation to Ms. Kathleen Mathers, Director of the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, for her indispensable assistance throughout this investigation.

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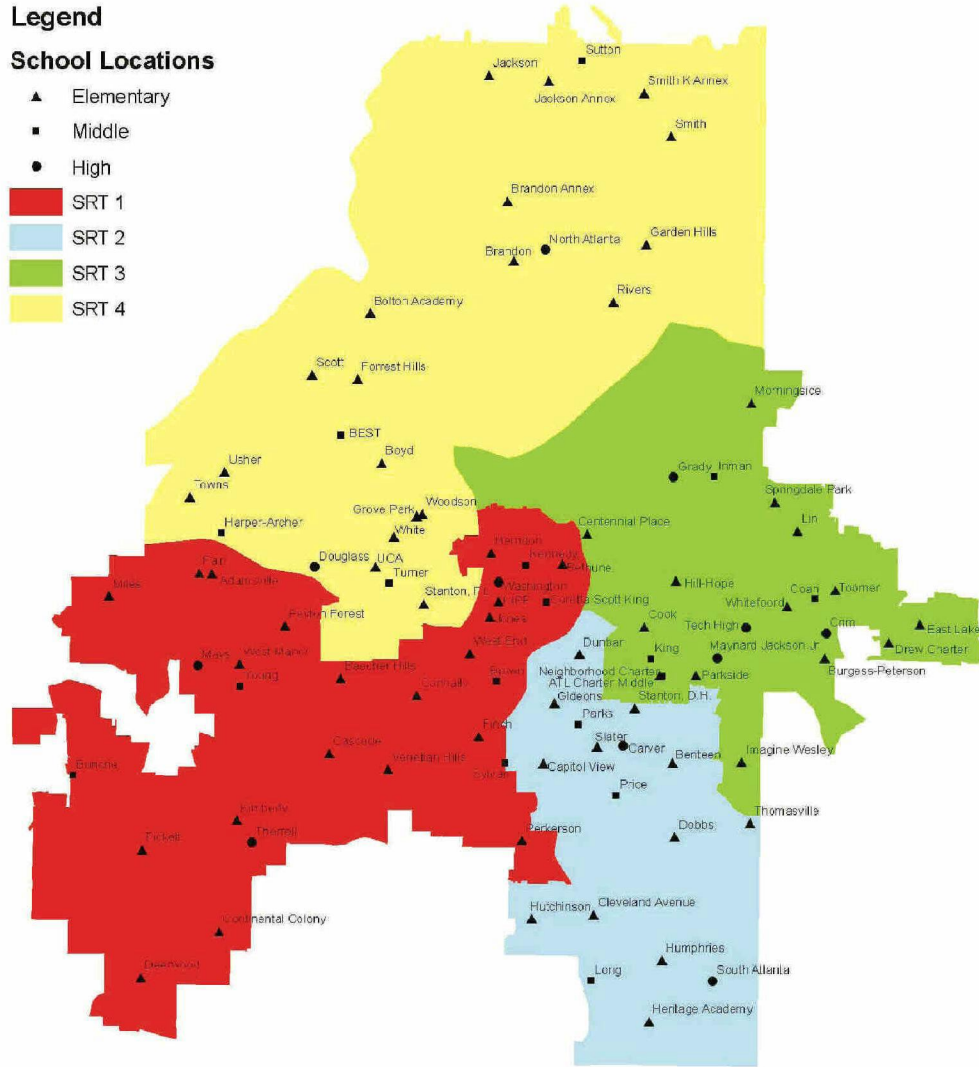
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# Map of Schools

## Legend

### School Locations

- ▲ Elementary
- Middle
- High
- SRT 1
- SRT 2
- SRT 3
- SRT 4



Atlanta Public Schools Facility Locations  
2009-2010



## **OVERVIEW**

Thousands of school children were harmed by widespread cheating in the Atlanta Public School System (APS). In 30 schools, educators confessed to cheating. We found cheating on the 2009 Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) in 44 of the 56 schools (78.6%) we examined, and uncovered organized and systemic misconduct within the district as far back as 2001. Superintendent Beverly Hall and her senior staff knew, or should have known, that cheating and other offenses were occurring. Many of the accolades, and much of the praise, received by APS over the last decade were ill-gotten.

We identified 178 educators as being involved in cheating. Of these, 82 confessed. Thirty-eight of the 178 were principals, from two-thirds of the schools we examined. The 2009 erasure analysis suggests that there were far more educators involved in cheating, and other improper conduct, than we were able to establish sufficiently to identify by name in this report.

A culture of fear and a conspiracy of silence infected this school system, and kept many teachers from speaking freely about misconduct. From the onset of this investigation, we were confronted by a pattern of interference by top APS leadership in our attempt to gather evidence. These actions delayed the completion of this inquiry and hindered the truth-seeking process.

The APS General Counsel told us that one of her main duties was to provide Superintendent Hall with “deniability.” Her aim was to insulate Dr. Hall from the burden of responsibility for making difficult decisions. This veil of deniability at the school level was aptly illustrated by long-time Gideons Elementary principal Armstead Salters, who told his teachers: “If anyone asks you anything about this, just tell them you don’t know . . . just stick to the story and it will go away.”

There was a failure of leadership throughout APS with regard to the ethical administration of the 2009 CRCT. There are two main reasons for this failure. Dr. Hall’s insular style and her isolation from the rank-and-file was a major factor. In addition, Dr. Hall and her top managers refused to accept responsibility for anything other than success. As Dr. Hall’s Chief of Staff, Sharron Pitts, explained to us, “nobody ever wants to take responsibility for anything” in APS.

Deputy Superintendent Kathy Augustine oversaw daily classroom instruction, and operated as the *de facto* second-in-command. She told us that she should not be held responsible for cheating that took place in APS classrooms under her authority.

While this may be an appropriate defense to criminal charges, it is an absurd leadership concept. Dr. Hall and her senior cabinet accepted accolades when those below them performed well, but they wanted none of the burdens of failure.

The first person to report cheating to us provided the same information months earlier to his superiors, only to have the wrongdoers quickly exonerated while he was reprimanded. This educator made these allegations known to the proper officials inside of APS. However, the district improperly handled this complaint in violation of its own policies. That inquiry was brought to a swift, and predictable, conclusion. The guilty went free; the whistle-blower was punished. This was not an isolated occurrence and was illustrative of the culture of fear and intimidation which promoted a code of silence.

The Office of Internal Resolution (OIR) was responsible for internal investigations, but lacked independence and gave those who wanted to report improper activity little confidence that complaints would be objectively, fairly and competently investigated.

As early as 2006, APS officials improperly manipulated and hid information relating to CRCT administration, and illegally altered documents related to that test. The school district often failed to comply with Georgia's open records laws, withheld public information and gave false data to an agency of this state.

Dr. Hall stated publicly, and several times, that she would "fully cooperate" with our efforts. However, the district was slow in producing documents and claimed legal exemptions where none existed.

All of this was done to keep from public view, and this inquiry, information which might raise doubts about the validity of the 2009 CRCT scores, and other indicators of success in the classroom.

Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) expert, Dr. John Fremer, wrote an op-ed piece for *The Atlanta Journal - Constitution* (AJC) which said: "...[w]holesale organized cheating in some Atlanta Public Schools occurred and must be addressed." (Ex. 1). Experts who assisted us expressed similar sentiments in saying that cheating is the only plausible explanation for the abnormally high standard deviations shown in the erasure analysis.

One of the first tasks we undertook was to test the validity of the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) erasure analysis. This was done with the assistance of our expert during a visit to the test facility of CTB McGraw-Hill. The erasure analysis is, without question, accurate and reliable.

The statistics are astounding. For example, of the approximately 1,800 non-APS elementary and middle schools in Georgia where the 2009 CRCT was given, 54 schools were flagged with more than 20% of their classes being greater than three standard deviations outside the state norm on wrong-to-right erasures. Yet in the 90 elementary and middle schools in the APS system where the 2009 CRCT was given, 52 schools were flagged with more than 20% of their classes being greater than three standard deviations outside the norm. Incredibly, almost half of

the schools flagged for being greater than three standard deviations outside of the norm in our state were from the Atlanta Public School System.

### **THE CRCT**

The CRCT is a multiple choice examination given annually to all public school students in Georgia. There are five subject areas that are tested: reading; English/language arts; math; social studies and science. Students are scored as “meets standards,” “exceeds standards” or “does not meet standards.” The CRCT is considered an important test because its results help determine whether a school makes “Annual Yearly Progress” (AYP) as required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Every elementary and middle school within a school district must administer the CRCT at the same time and in the same manner, during a nine-day window. During the first five days, a different subject area is tested each day. The last four days of the window are used for make-up testing.

Georgia law requires that the test be administered under tightly-controlled conditions. The test materials are delivered to the individual schools several days before the test begins. Each school designates a certified educator to be responsible for test administration. In APS, this person is known as the testing coordinator, who must ensure that the test is administered according to the test protocols. But the principal bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring how the test is administered.

Teachers receive training on test administration using procedures that specifically set forth how the test must be given. Any deviation from the test protocols is prohibited.

In first and second grade, teachers read the test questions aloud and students answer questions in the test booklet by marking the correct answer. (Ex. 2). Teachers must read each question only twice, with no voice inflection that could suggest the answer. Third through eighth graders read the test questions for themselves and answer questions on a separate Scantron® sheet by filling in the appropriate bubble by pencil. (Ex. 3). Each test section is timed and contains between forty and sixty questions. Only special education students with specified accommodations may have variances in the test administration.

### **INTERVIEWS AND DOCUMENT REVIEW**

On August 26, 2010, Governor Sonny Perdue appointed us as his Special Investigators to investigate alleged test tampering, and related matters, in the Atlanta Public School System. (Ex. 4). This order was augmented by oral directives that we were to:

- Find the truth with regard to cheating, if any, on the 2009 CRCT within APS;
- Assist state regulators in sanctioning educators who participated in cheating;
- Submit information to prosecuting authorities regarding criminal conduct, if discovered.

Governor Perdue emphasized that our mandate was to find the truth. He also stressed that teachers who were honest in their testimony should not be criminally prosecuted. You restated these directives to us upon assuming office. (Ex. 5).

In order to gain an understanding of the overall structure of APS, how the testing process works, the relevant players, and what documents would be needed, we first conducted benchmark interviews of top officials in the district, including Dr. Hall, Dr. Augustine, Dr. Cari Ryan, and Dr. Alexis Kirijan. Most of these officials were interviewed again toward the end of this investigation.

We interviewed the teachers and administrators at each of the flagged schools, as well as current and former executive directors of each school reform team (SRT). The SRT executive directors function as assistant superintendents, assigned to one of four geographic areas of elementary and middle schools for the district. They oversee principals at the schools within their SRT and report directly to Dr. Kathy Augustine.

In addition to interviews of district personnel, we also spoke with scores of individuals from outside the system, who participated in the BRC investigation or served as consultants. We conducted over 2,100 interviews and reviewed in excess of 800,000 documents.

## **2009 ERASURE ANALYSIS**

In February 2010, the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) produced an erasure analysis performed by CTB McGraw-Hill on the spring 2009 CRCT. The results of this analysis raised the possibility of testing irregularities. The GOSA erasure analysis, which was performed on the test answer documents for every elementary and middle school student in the State of Georgia, compared the number of wrong-to-right (WTR) erasures by grade, test subject and class to the average number of WTR erasures state-wide for the corresponding grade and test subject. The results of the erasure analysis showed that in 35 Georgia school districts, including APS, a significant number of classes had WTR erasures that were dramatically and disconcertingly higher than the state average.

Specifically, CTB McGraw-Hill determined that if a class had WTR erasures more than three standard deviations above the expected norm (i.e., the state average), it was almost statistically impossible for such a high number of WTR erasures to have occurred without some external force operating to cause it. For example, at three standard deviations there is only a one in 370 chance that the high erasures occurred by coincidence and at five standard deviations there is only a one in 1.7 million chance. By seven standard deviations, it is virtually impossible—only a one in 390 billion chance—that such a high number of WTR erasures occurred randomly.



## STANDARD DEVIATIONS CHART

Standard Deviations	Chance of Occurring Randomly
3	1 / 370
4	1 / 15,788
5	1 / 1,774,278
6	1 / 560,800,000
7	1 / 390,600,000,000

In other words, some external force operated to cause the WTR erasures. Although a WTR erasure analysis does not indicate that the external force was cheating, it does suggest that something other than normal student erasing occurred.

Thirty-five Georgia districts had schools with more than five percent of the classes flagged for standard deviations higher than three. (Ex. 6). The GOSA study grouped schools into four categories based on the percentage of flagged classrooms: “clear of concern”; “minimal concern”; “moderate concern”; and “severe concern.” Eighty-percent of Georgia’s elementary and middle schools fell into the “clear of concern” category, 10% fell into “minimal concern,” 6% fell into “moderate concern,” and 4% fell into the “severe concern” category.

## APS ERASURE ANALYSIS

The percentage of flagged classes in APS far exceeded any other district in Georgia. Of the middle and elementary schools 51% fell into the “severe concern” category. Of the “moderate concern,” were 18%, and 8% were of “minimal concern.” (Ex. 7). APS accounts for over half of the “severe” category schools in the state. Parks Middle School, with 89.5% of its classes flagged, led the state in percentage of classes flagged for WTR erasures, with Gideons Elementary and Peyton Forest Elementary not far behind at 88.4% and 86.1%, respectively.

The erasure analysis only flagged classes that departed from the norm by three or more standard deviations. But many classes in APS had standard deviations ranging from the 20’s to the 50’s. (Ex. 8). One classroom was at 53. It is virtually impossible for so many WTR erasures to occur without human intervention.

Amazingly, many APS teachers had high WTR erasures in all three subject areas—English/language arts, reading and math. Not only did numerous teachers do something that was virtually impossible one time, but did it three times in a row. Even more amazing, several teachers in the same school did this multiple times.

Dr. Gregory Cizek, our expert, analogized the chances of this occurring to the Georgia Dome being filled to capacity, with every person in the Dome being

seven feet tall. Dr. John Fremer of Caveon Test Security, hired by the BRC to conduct its own statistical analysis, described this in terms of flipping two coins three times in a row, and the coins land on their edge, perfectly balanced, one on top of the other, all three times.

### **VERIFICATION OF THE ERASURE ANALYSIS**

We verified that the results of the erasure analysis were accurate and consistent. This study served as a guide to identify where cheating may have occurred, and it established the foundation for this investigation. We took the following steps to ensure its validity:

- Retained an expert to review the GOSA erasure analysis;
- Inspected the CTB McGraw-Hill facility and interviewed several members of the staff who were involved in grading the CRCT and conducting the erasure analysis;
- Observed the answer document scanning process;
- Compared the results of the erasure analysis to the results of a reanalysis of selected and random test documents;
- Manually reviewed thousands of answer sheets and compared them to the results of the original erasure analysis; and,
- Interviewed experts in the educational testing and statistics field.

Based on these efforts, we concluded that the GOSA erasure analysis is accurate, reproducible, and reliable.

We retained Gregory J. Cizek, Ph.D., of the University of North Carolina, who is one of the foremost experts on educational testing and statistics in the nation. Dr. Cizek is a Professor of Educational Measurement and Evaluation in the School of Education at UNC. He currently serves as the President of the National Council on Measurement in Education. (Ex. 9). After Cizek reviewed the erasure analysis, he accompanied us to the CTB McGraw-Hill facility. We toured the CTB McGraw-Hill plant, observed the answer documents being re-scanned and interviewed CTB McGraw-Hill's statistician and other personnel familiar with the scanning process.

CTB McGraw-Hill's high-optical scanner read the students' test documents and recorded answers and erasures for each section. A computer used special software to determine when an answer was changed from wrong-to-right (WTR), right-to-wrong (RTW), or wrong-to-wrong (WTW). This data reflected the total number of erasures and the total number of WTR changes for each student in each subject area in Georgia.

Next, CTB McGraw-Hill employed a statistical test to flag excessive numbers of WTR erasures in a class. (Ex. 10). The average number of WTR erasures statewide in a given grade and subject were compared to the number of WTR erasures in a specific class within the APS district. The proximity of erasures to the expected norm is expressed in terms of standard deviations. CTB

McGraw-Hill flagged classes that were three or more standard deviations above the state average.

GOSA used a conservative criterion of three standard deviations. This was done to insure that only the most severe and questionable erasures were identified.

We interviewed company officials and manually reviewed answer documents, counted erasures, and compared our count with the computer's analysis. This manual count of erasures revealed more changes than the computer scanning process. The computer is not as stringent as the human eye. The difference is not because the scanner missed erasures, but because it is calibrated to give the benefit of the doubt to a certain level before it considers a lighter mark.

To confirm the study results, we asked that CTB McGraw-Hill re-scan both random and selected tests. The results of the re-scanned answer documents were consistent with the results of the original erasure analysis.

We interviewed the two individuals from Caveon Test Security who used the GOSA erasure data and conducted their own analysis on behalf of the BRC. Neither disputed the results of the GOSA study. The top 12 schools flagged under their "Caveon Index" were identical to the highest flagged schools under the GOSA analysis.

## **USE OF THE ERASURE ANALYSIS IN THIS INVESTIGATION**

The erasure data helped us prioritize interviews of educators at the schools to allow us to efficiently focus our efforts. We also used this information when we questioned teachers and administrators, since they had not been provided with this data by anyone in the district.

We compared the student scores with other evidence to better understand what occurred in classrooms. The student data listed every student in APS and set forth how many total erasures, versus how many WTR erasures, appeared on that student's answer document. This information provided an additional perspective for analyzing erasures.

When student-level data revealed a large number of students within a single class with high erasures that changed from wrong to right 70%-100% of the time, such information raised an additional suspicion that someone other than the students could be changing answers.

## **SCHOOL SUMMARIES**

Investigative summaries of the 56 schools we examined follow this section. We found that 178 teachers and principals were involved in cheating in 44 schools. Sixty-eight percent of the principals of the 56 schools were responsible for cheating, and six of those refused to answer all questions we asked them, including about their involvement in cheating. These six pled the Fifth Amendment, which

for civil law purposes, such as a Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) proceeding, is an implied admission.

An investigative compilation shows a breakdown of those found cheating by each school.

<b>INVESTIGATIVE COMPILATION</b>			
<b>School</b>	<b>Confessions</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
Parks Middle	7	6 (Incl. Prin.)	13
Venetian Hills Elementary	6	2 (Incl. Prin.)	8
Gideons Elementary	12 (Incl. Prin.)	0	12
Kennedy Middle	1	3 (Incl. Prin.)	4
FL Stanton Elementary	1	2 (Incl. Prin.)	3
Perkerson Elementary	0	3 (Incl. Prin.)	3
Connally Elementary	1	1 (Incl. Prin.)	2
Usher Elementary	3	2 (Incl. Prin.)	5
Peyton Forest Elementary	0	10 (Incl. Prin.)	10
East Lake Elementary	0	2 (Incl. Prin.)	2
Cook Elementary	2	4 (Incl. Prin.)	6
Woodson Elementary	2	3 (Incl. Prin.)	5
Scott Elementary	0	3 (Incl. Prin.)	3
Deerwood Academy	1	3 (Incl. Prin.)	4
Humphries Elementary	2	3 (Incl. Prin.)	5
Dunbar Elementary	1	7 (Incl. Prin.)	8
DH Stanton Elementary	0	2 (Incl. Prin.)	2
Finch Elementary	3	6 (Incl. Prin.)	9
Coan Middle	1	2 (Incl. Prin.)	3
Dobbs Elementary	4	2 (Incl. Prin.)	6
Toomer Elementary	3 (Incl. Prin.)	1	4
Benteen Elementary	0	3 (Incl. Prin.)	3
Beecher Hills Elementary	3	1 (Incl. Prin.)	4
Fain Elementary	2	2 (Incl. Prin.)	4
Slater Elementary	2	3 (Incl. Prin.)	5
Thomasville Heights Elementary	2	2 (Incl. Prin.)	4
Fickett Elementary	2	2 (Incl. Prin.)	4
Hutchinson Elementary	1	1 (Incl. Prin.)	2
Capitol View Elementary	0	1 (Incl. Prin.)	1
Towns Elementary	0	1 (Incl. Prin.)	1
Blalock Elementary	0	1 (Incl. Prin.)	1
Whitefoord Elementary	0	1 (Incl. Prin.)	1
Boyd Elementary	0	1 (Incl. Prin.)	1
West Manor Elementary	0	1 (Incl. Prin.)	1
Turner Middle	0	1 (Incl. Prin.)	1
White Elementary	0	1 (Incl. Prin.)	1
Harper Archer Middle	0	0	0
MA Jones Elementary	6	1	7
Parkside Elementary	3	0	3
Bethune Elementary	2	1 (Incl. Prin.)	3
Miles Elementary	2	1	3
Grove Park Elementary	2	0	2
Jackson Elementary	2	0	2
Cleveland Elementary	1	0	1
Crim Open Campus	0	0	0
Benjamin Carson Middle	0	0	0
CW Hill Elementary	0	0	0
Adamsville Elementary	0	0	0
Cascade Elementary	0	0	0
Heritage Elementary	0	0	0
University Community Academy	2	4 (Incl. Prin.)	6
Williams Elementary	0	0	0
Herndon Elementary	0	0	0
Bolton Elementary	0	0	0
Morningside Elementary	0	0	0
Morris Brandon Elementary	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>178</b>



For each school we have prepared analyses of relevant witness interviews, statistical data and other materials. Listed below is some of the misconduct found in the school summaries. What is revealed is outrageous:

- Teachers and administrators erased students' incorrect answers after the test was given and filled in the correct answers;
- The changing of answers by teachers and administrators was, in some cases, so sophisticated that plastic transparency answer sheets were created to make changing the test answer sheets easier;
- Changing of answers was often done at weekend gatherings, and in at least one instance at a teacher's home in Douglas County, Georgia;
- A principal forced a teacher with low CRCT scores to crawl under a table at a faculty meeting;
- Teachers arranged classroom seating for tests so that lower performing children could cheat off the higher scoring students;
- Children were denied special educational assistance because their falsely-reported CRCT scores were too high;
- Students requested that they be assigned to a certain teacher because that educator was said to cheat;
- First and second grade teachers used voice inflection while reading the test to identify the answer;
- Teachers pointed to the correct answer while standing at students' desks;
- Teachers gave the answers aloud to students;
- Some teachers allowed students to change the previous day's incorrect responses after giving them correct answers;
- Teachers looked ahead to discuss the next day's questions;

- In one classroom a student sat under his desk and refused to take the test. This child passed.

Following the school summaries is a comparison between the 2009 and 2010 erasure analyses. There was a dramatic drop in the percentage of flagged classrooms between these years. This was only after media attention and the state sent representatives to some district schools.

# **PARKS MIDDLE SCHOOL**

1090 Windsor Street SW  
Atlanta, Georgia 30310

Principal: Christopher Waller  
Testing Coordinator: Dr. Alfred Kiel

SRT-2 Executive Director: Michael Pitts

## **I. INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY**

Cheating occurred on the CRCT at Parks Middle School in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010. Fifty-nine people were interviewed at this school, some more than once. Seven teachers confessed to cheating. Cheating at Parks is evidenced by a high number of flagged classrooms, confessions and witness testimony. The cheating started when Principal Christopher Waller began at Parks and recruited two teachers to change answers in 2006. As the years progressed, more teachers got involved. In all years, the cheating was organized and facilitated by Principal Waller and Success-For-All Facilitator Sandra Ward. Assistant Principal Gregory Reid also participated. The cheating was reflected in the statistically improbable testing gains and extremely high numbers of flagged classrooms in 2009 for high wrong-to-right erasures. Parks had the highest percentage of flagged classrooms in the State of Georgia. Teachers gave students the answers to the tests, organized changing “parties” where the answer sheets were changed, and illegally accessed the test booklets before testing. The cheating was conducted covertly so that Testing Coordinator Dr. Alfred Kiel would not discover it.

## **II. STATISTICAL DATA**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Percentage of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	89.5	4
Number of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	51	3
Number of Teachers Flagged for WTR Standard Deviations above 3.0 (Number of Teachers Flagged in Multiple Subjects)	19(18)	3(0)
Mean WTR Standard Deviations from State Norm	11.9	3.2
High Flagged Standard Deviation	29.4	3.4
Low Flagged Standard Deviation	3.4	3.1

## **III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**

### **A. Narrative**

Christopher Waller became the principal of Parks in the fall of 2005. Waller directed cheating the first year he presided over CRCT testing in 2006. He gave teacher Damany Lewis a key to the room where the tests were kept. Lewis removed the plastic wrap from the test booklets and photocopied the tests. Lewis gave the copies to other teachers, who used the advance copies to give students the answers. A select group of teachers that Waller organized and trusted would change wrong answers to right answers each day during the week of testing. There is also evidence that Waller directed cheating on the secured writing tests.

Each year Principal Waller and his crew brought more teachers into the cheating conspiracy. Waller, Gregory Reid, or Sandra Ward went to these teachers’ classrooms and told

them it was “time to go.” The teachers understood that “time to go” meant they were to go to the room where the tests were kept and change answers.

Dr. Alfred Kiel was the testing coordinator for this school. He would not allow cheating so Principal Waller orchestrated Kiel’s absence from the school building so the cheating could take place. On one occasion in 2009, Principal Waller took Kiel out for a “retirement lunch.” In another year, Principal Waller scheduled an impromptu after-school dance so that the teachers could stay late in the afternoon and cheat without raising suspicion. Kiel once noticed that things in his office had been disturbed while he was out and became angry. After that occasion, teacher Damany Lewis took pictures of Kiel’s office before he altered the tests so that everything would be put back in exactly the same place so as not to raise Kiel’s suspicions. No one implicated Kiel except Principal Waller.

B. APS’ Knowledge of Cheating

District Leadership knew Principal Waller was cheating. *See discussion of Reginal Dukes’ investigation into Parks Middle School in Volume Three of this Report.* Dr. Beverly Hall, Dr. Kathy Augustine, Millicent Few, and others were aware of Dukes’ investigation and findings. No action was taken against Principal Waller.

Dr. Hall also should have known Waller was cheating at Parks because once he became principal, the school immediately made dramatic gains on the CRCT and other tests. For example, between the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years, eighth graders meeting or exceeding standards in reading increased by 31 percentage points, from 50% to 81%. The percentage of students meeting and exceeding standards in English/language arts increased by 27 percentage points, from 54% to 81%. In math, the percentage of eighth graders who met or exceeded the standards increased from 24% to 86%. The percentage of students exceeding expectations went from 1% to 46%, a 45 point increase. In 2006-2007, one year after Dukes’ investigation into Parks, the school met 100% of targets set by APS.

There is no evidence that APS management instituted any additional investigations into Parks despite the improbable gains in scores and Dukes’ conclusion that cheating occurred on the eighth grade writing test in 2006. Instead, APS publicly touted Waller and Parks Middle School for its achievements. Dr. Beverly Hall praised Principal Waller’s performance, saying, “You have to find someone who is able to go in and, while not being a dictator, gets people’s attention and articulates a vision and mission in a way that people want to be on board with it . . . .” A copy of Sarah Torian’s *Beating the Odds at Atlanta’s Parks Middle School* is included as **Attachment A**.

C. Testimony of Witnesses

1. *Damany Lewis (Teacher)*

Damany Lewis was the first teacher to assist Principal Waller in cheating. He admitted to cheating in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009. In 2006, Waller asked Lewis, “Do you think you could get into something undetected?” Lewis was not sure what Waller meant, but said yes. A few days later, Lewis was summoned to the main office where he found Principal Waller and Sandra Ward with the CRCT booklets. Principal Waller looked at Lewis and then immediately looked

at the test booklets. Lewis then knew what Principal Waller was asking him to “get into undetected”—the test booklets. Lewis found a key in his desk drawer that opened the room where the tests were kept. Lewis used a razor blade to open the plastic wrapping around the test booklets, copied the test for each grade, and resealed the wrapping using a lighter to melt the plastic. Once Lewis copied the booklets, he placed a copy of the social studies test in Damien Northern’s car and a copy of the reading and language arts test in Dorothea Wilson’s car.

After the students had taken the test, Lewis changed answers. On one occasion, Crystal Draper came to the room where Lewis was erasing. Lewis assumed Waller sent her. In 2006, Lewis and Draper worked together to change answers. Each year more teachers would assist in the cheating. In 2007 or 2008, Lewis, Draper, and Damien Northern changed answers. Teachers Adrienne Powell, Kimberly Oden, and Latasha Smiley may have also assisted that year. In 2009, the group of cheating teachers grew again. The following teachers were present in the room where the tests were being erased: Crystal Draper, Damien Northern, Starlette Mitchell, Dorothea Wilson, Adrienne Powell and Kimberly Oden. Principal Waller always knew when and where Lewis and the others were altering tests.

Lewis spent one to two hours per day altering tests. At Waller’s direction, Lewis cheated every year that Waller was Principal. Waller gave Lewis access to the test booklets before testing started and Lewis made copies of the tests, handed them out and changed answers. During testing week, Principal Waller, Ward, or Reid would tell Lewis to go to the main office. Principal Waller would tell Lewis, “Do what you do.” Lewis would get the tests and erase answers.

The teachers only changed answers when Testing Coordinator Kiel was out of the school. In 2007, Kiel noticed things in his office were in a different place than where he had left them. After that, Lewis started taking the tests from Kiel’s office into the room next door to change answers. Lewis either marked where the tests had been or took pictures of the undisturbed office, so he could put everything back without Kiel noticing.

## 2. Crystal Draper (Teacher)

Crystal Draper admitted cheating in 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009. Draper first changed tests in 2006 and continued through 2009. Gregory Reid usually told her where to go and alter the answer sheets. There was one year when Principal Waller said, “The bins [containing the tests] are in such-and-such room.”

In 2009, Reid sent Draper to Kiel’s office. Draper erased answers in the office with Damany Lewis, Damien Northern and Dorothea Wilson. While Draper was erasing answers, Sandra Ward and Starlette Mitchell came into the room with a blue cooler, put sixth grade tests in the container, and left the room with the cooler and tests. That same day, Kimberly Simpson, who had not participated in previous years, knocked on the door to Kiel’s office. Because Simpson had not helped cheat before, the teachers were not comfortable with Simpson seeing them change answers, so they did not answer the door.

Principal Waller directed Draper to cheat. In 2006, Principal Waller told her to go to the room where the tests were kept and change wrong answers to right answers. Principal Waller

would often walk by Draper and make comments such as, “I need those numbers.” She said that teachers were afraid of Principal Waller because he would punish people if they did not do what he asked.

3. *Damien Northern (Teacher)*

Damien Northern confessed to cheating in 2008 and 2009 and possibly in 2007 as well. Members of the Parks Middle School faculty cheated the entire time Waller was principal. Waller recruited Damany Lewis and Crystal Draper and directed them to get others involved. In 2007 or 2008, Waller told Lewis to recruit Northern because Lewis needed help. The teachers already cheating included: Damany Lewis, Crystal Draper, Starlette Mitchell, and Dorothea Wilson.

In 2009, Sandra Ward sent Northern to Kiel’s office where the tests were kept. When he arrived, he felt there were too many people in the room. He recalls that Starlette Mitchell, Charles Mitchell, Wilson, Draper, Adrienne Powell, and Latasha Smiley were there. Northern did not change answers that year because he did not trust everyone present.

One year Principal Waller was standing directly outside the door of the room while they were changing answers.

On another occasion, Northern found a copy of the test questions in his box. He does not know who put them there.

Northern believes cheating goes on all over the district. He has had students that cannot read yet scored very high on the reading portion of the CRCT.

Ward asked Lewis, Northern, Wilson, and Mitchell for copies of the Governor’s subpoenas they received with regard to this investigation. Ward told them that she would provide them with an attorney.

4. *Latasha Smiley (Teacher)*

Latasha Smiley admits to cheating in 2009. Francesca Thompson-Flagle, a PEC teacher, gave Smiley a copy of the 2009 CRCT. The copy was difficult to read. Later that day, Gregory Reid told Smiley that Damany Lewis had a “gift” for her. Smiley found a manila envelope containing a legible copy of the tests on her desk. During the test, Smiley improperly gave students the correct answers.

One afternoon, Lewis told Smiley to come with him. They went to Kiel’s office and Smiley erased answers with the other teachers in the room. After the testing period was complete, Lewis came to Smiley’s classroom and told her to come with him. They went together to Kiel’s office where Lewis took pictures of the room so that he could place everything back in its original place after they changed the tests. Smiley erased answers with the other teachers in the room.

Principal Waller told Smiley to let him know if anyone contacted her regarding this investigation.

5. Charles Mitchell (Teacher)

Charles Mitchell confessed to cheating in 2009. In 2008, he started receiving copies of various tests, including the CRCT and APS benchmark assessments, in advance of their administration. He reviewed the tests and made sure he covered all of the material with his students.

In 2009, Mitchell was told to report to Kiel's office. When Mitchell arrived he saw teachers were changing answers. While the teachers changed tests, Waller and Reid kept Dr. Kiel occupied. Mitchell changed answers three times that year. One of those times Waller was in the room. Principal Waller told the teachers that they were there to make sure the students passed the test and that they only had limited time to get the tests "corrected." Waller was holding a basket of the tests. He reached in and touched the tests and Ward said to Waller, "Don't touch those."

Principal Waller gave Crystal Draper \$1,000 in cash because her homeroom had the highest percentage of students pass the CRCT. He gave her the money on the way to the annual Convocation, in front of all the other teachers.

SRT-2 Executive Director Michael Pitts came to Parks Middle School after this investigation began and told teachers that he believed this inquiry was racially and politically motivated.

6. Starlette Mitchell (Teacher)

Starlette Mitchell admitted to changing answers on the 2009 CRCT, but denied changing answers prior to that year.

7. Dorothea Wilson (Teacher)

Dorothea Wilson confessed to cheating in 2008 and 2009. Wilson does not remember what year she began changing answers but knows she cheated in at least 2008 and 2009. She corroborates the testimony of Damany Lewis, Crystal Draper, and Damien Northern. Wilson cheated because she felt like her "back was up against a wall." Principal Waller walked by her classroom often and said, "I need the numbers, I need the numbers." Principal Waller also said to her, "I don't get no tests, my hands are clean."

Wilson testified that Waller "got greedy" in 2009. This led to more teachers erasing answers.

On the first day of the 2010-2011 school year, SRT-2 Executive Director Michael Pitts told the teachers that Principal Waller was being reassigned because of the cheating allegations. According to Wilson, Pitts told the teachers that "[you] better not start saying anything if [you] have not already said it, because [you will] get your own self in trouble."

D. Testimony of Individuals Implicated

1. Christopher M. Waller (Principal)

We interviewed Principal Waller twice and he was represented by counsel on both occasions. Waller denied causing or participating in cheating.

Principal Christopher Waller was first interviewed on November 8, 2010. He could not explain the high number of wrong-to-right erasures at his school. He suggested that if cheating occurred, it was likely at the Brewer Center where the schools submit the completed tests. Speaking specifically about the 2009 CRCT, Waller claimed that he was absent the week of testing. Despite Principal Waller's testimony, multiple teachers testified that he was present for the 2009 testing.

We interviewed Principal Waller a second time on April 18, 2011. After answering a few questions, he stepped out of the room to consult with his attorney. When Waller returned, his attorney informed us that Principal Waller would be invoking his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination. Nonetheless, he continued answering questions.

Principal Waller testified under oath that he was not aware of anyone erasing answers at Parks. He offered several defenses for why he would not have been involved in cheating, including: (a) his "financial situation," meaning he was wealthy and would not compromise his integrity for his principal's salary of approximately \$100,000 per year; and (b) the fact that he was a Reverend at a Methodist Church.

Principal Waller said that the only person with a key to the room where the tests were kept was Dr. Kiel. Waller denied ever having a key to that office. Principal Waller told us that we should talk to Kiel. When asked whether he remembered any reports of testing irregularities, Waller identified only one instance where a teacher reported that a student wrote an answer down for another student in 2010. (This is in conflict with the testimony of teachers. Fabiola Aurelien reported cheating in 2006. Megan Eckert reported a testing impropriety in 2010.) There was also an OIR investigation in 2006 related to cheating on the eighth grade writing test.

We covertly monitored a phone call and a meeting between Principal Waller and other parties. Waller told one of the cheating teachers that the "procedure was followed" and maybe it was the "school district or the state [that cheated]." He also said, "If you didn't erase yourself, you have nothing to worry about." Waller said that the investigators were going to try to get "everyone to lie" about what happened at Parks, and that no one had to talk them. Waller laughed about this investigation and said he intends to file a lawsuit against the Governor's investigators. At a monitored meeting, Principal Waller said that "no one [at the school] said they touched the tests" and that the investigators "[had] nothing."

2. Gregory Reid (Assistant Principal)

Gregory Reid was the Assistant Principal during all of Principal Waller's tenure. According to witnesses, Reid was actively involved and assisted Principal Waller in the cheating conspiracy. Reid denied any knowledge of cheating.



3. Sandra Ward (Success for All (SFA) Facilitator)

Sandra Ward was the SFA Facilitator at Parks. When interviewed by the GBI, Ward refused to answer questions after invoking her Fifth Amendment right not to incriminate herself.

4. Adrienne Powell (Teacher)

Adrienne Powell was a sixth grade teacher in 2009. While witnesses implicated Powell, she denied cheating or having any knowledge of cheating.

5. Kimberly Oden (Teacher)

Kimberly Oden was a teacher at Parks in 2009. She had no flagged classrooms; however, witnesses say she erased answers in 2009. Oden is no longer teaching in APS and we were not able to locate her for an interview.

6. Francesca Thompson-Flagle (Teacher)

Latasha Smiley says Thompson-Flagle gave her a copy of the CRCT booklet. Thompson-Flagle denied knowledge of cheating, or that she gave a copy of the test to anyone.

E. Testimony of Additional Witnesses

1. Stacey Johnson (Teacher)

Stacey Johnson taught math at Parks. Waller asked Johnson to cheat and said that he just wanted to look good and would Johnson help make him look good. Johnson refused to cheat and felt ostracized by Principal Waller for her refusal. For example, Waller would meet with all of the academic coaches but specifically excluded Johnson. Waller would also make references to Johnson not being on “his team” in front of other teachers.

Principal Waller ordered a clerk to alter attendance records so that the school would meet the attendance requirement of AYP. Johnson reported all of this information to SRT-2 Executive Director Michael Pitts in 2006.

According to Johnson, there has been cheating in APS at least as far back as 2002. Three APS elementary schools feed students into Parks Middle School: Dunbar, Gideons, and Capitol View. Students from those elementary schools arrive and immediately take a baseline assessment test. Many of these middle school students would score on a first grade level despite having done well on the CRCT while in elementary school. These students were expected to do equally well on the CRCT while in middle school. Those expectations were unreasonable since their scores in elementary school were artificially inflated.

2. Tameka Grant (Teacher)

Tameka Grant taught at Parks from 2003 until 2006 and knows of cheating there. She testified that eighth grade students were given the writing question prior to the administration of the test.

Many of her students at Parks previously attended Gideons Elementary. Since students scored well on the CRCT at Gideons, Principal Waller often said that the students should do equally well at Parks.

Tameka Grant corroborates the allegations of other witnesses. Grant's contract with APS was not renewed for the 2011-2012 school year. She believes that this is retaliation for speaking out about the misconduct at this school.

3. *Fabiola Aurelien (Teacher)*

Fabiola Aurelien taught at Parks from 2004 to 2006. She did not participate in, but was aware of, cheating. Teachers cheated on the CRCT by improperly giving students the correct answers. For example, Damany Lewis walked around the class during the administration of the test and pointed out the right answers. On the eighth grade writing test, someone gave Aurelien's students the question.

Principal Waller failed to give Aurelien a promotion because she refused to help him cheat. Waller told her she could have the position if she "would be on his team." Aurelien said that "being on his team" meant "cheating." She told Principal Waller she would not cheat and he did not promote her.

In 2006, Aurelien knew that Crystal Draper and Dorothea Wilson helped students with the CRCT. Aurelien reported the misconduct to Principal Waller, who said he could not take action unless she had more information. Shortly after Aurelien spoke up, Principal Waller informed all of the teachers that Aurelien reported cheating and then he reported her allegations to APS. APS conducted an investigation into Aurelien's allegations and she was interviewed several times.

Shortly after Aurelien was interviewed by an investigator for APS in January of 2006, SRT-2 Executive Director Michael Pitts held a meeting with the faculty. He told the teachers that "there is nothing you can do to make us think negatively of Principal Waller." Aurelien believes Pitts was trying to keep people from complaining about misconduct at the school.

4. *Megan Eckert (Teacher)*

Eckert taught special needs students and administered the CRCT in April 2010. While she was reading the test to her class, after most classrooms had finished, paraprofessional Chynel Walker came into Eckert's classroom and asked to see the test booklet. Eckert initially refused, but then gave her the document. Walker quickly took the test booklet out of the classroom. Eckert followed her into the hallway where Waller was standing. Eckert believes Principal Waller directed Walker to get a copy of the test booklet.

Eckert gave a written report of this apparent testing violation to her supervisor. Principal Waller summoned Eckert to his office and told her that she had committed a testing violation by giving Walker the test booklet. He ordered her to change the report to say that Walker took a "teacher's manual" rather than a "test booklet." Principal Waller told her what the report should say. He wrote up the report and gave it to Eckert to sign. Principal Waller submitted this false document to APS Research Associate Dr. Cari Ryan.

Eckert also heard about Sandra Ward and Starlette Mitchell taking tests out of the school in the coolers.

5. Chynel Walker (Paraprofessional)

Walker administered the CRCT to special needs children who are given accommodations on the CRCT. The test is read to them and there is no time limit for completing the test. In 2010, Walker started to turn in the tests when she realized two students had not finished. She told Principal Waller. Principal Waller instructed her to turn in all but the two unfinished tests and then go get another testing booklet from Eckert. Walker went to Eckert's classroom and took Eckert's testing booklet. Walker went back to her classroom to allow the students to finish the test. She then turned in the tests and gave Principal Waller the testing booklet. Principal Waller said he would take it back to Eckert. Eckert later told Walker that the booklet was not there when she turned the test in, so she was one booklet short and reported a testing violation.

F. Other Evidence

SRT-4 Director Tamara Cotman told teachers at Harper-Archer Middle School to visit Parks and see what they were doing to achieve such good CRCT scores. *See* Testimony of Lebroyce Sublett at Harper-Archer.

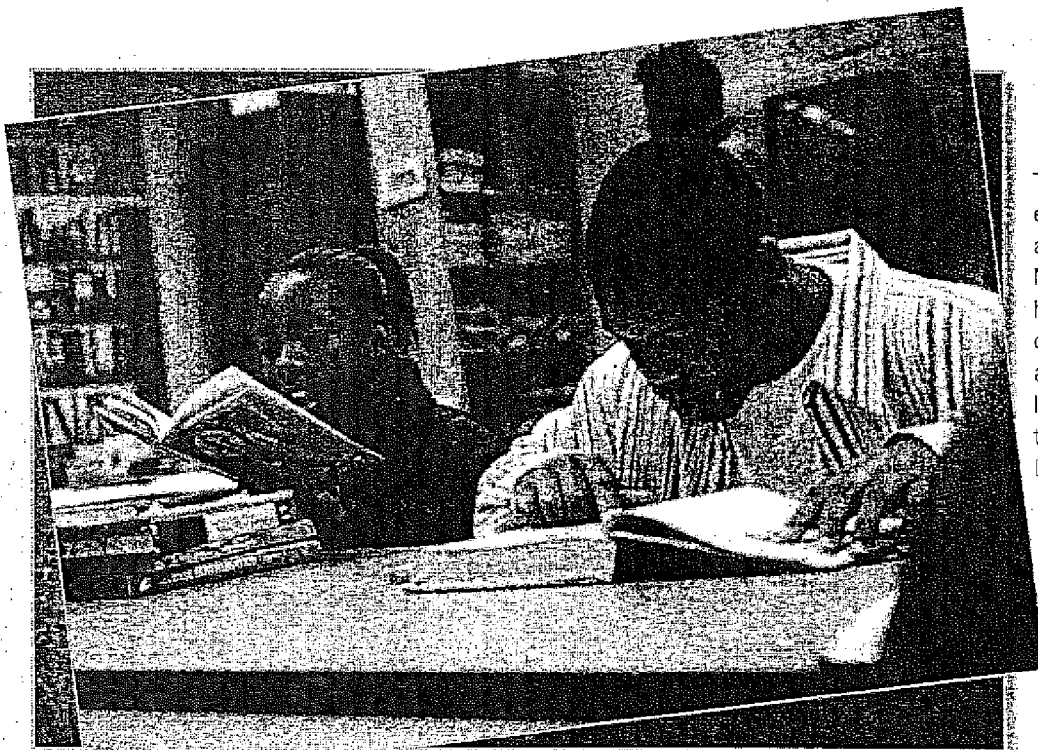
**IV. ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE**

We conclude that Principal Waller directed cheating on the CRCT and a number of other tests. Gregory Reid and Sandra Ward helped Principal Waller facilitate cheating. Principal Waller directed cheating in essentially the same manner all four years of his time at Parks Middle School.

We further conclude that Damany Lewis, Crystal Draper, Damien Northern, Dorothea Wilson, Charles Mitchell, Starlette Mitchell, Adrienne Powell, Kimberly Oden, Francesca Thompson-Flagle and Latasha Smiley cheated on the CRCT. Dr. Alfred Kiel was not involved in, and did not know of, the cheating at Parks Middle School. Given the efforts Principal Waller made to hide his scheme from Kiel, we conclude Kiel cannot be faulted for not discovering the cheating.

Due to the highly unlikely gains in scores under Principal Waller's leadership, the reports of cheating from teachers like Stacey Johnson, and the investigative report of Reginal Dukes in 2006, we conclude that Superintendent Beverly Hall and her cabinet knew, or should have known, that there was cheating at this school. Teachers felt as if they had no option but to do what Principal Waller directed them to. Several teachers reported Waller's misconduct in 2005 and 2006. APS did not discipline Waller. In fact, SRT-2 Director Michael Pitts held a meeting at Parks and told the teachers to "stop writing letters about Waller because he is not going anywhere." Dr. Hall held Waller out to the public as a "model principal." Michael Pitts dismissed our investigation and said that it was "racist." Pitts attempted to interfere with and suppress this investigation.

# Beating the Odds at Atlanta's Parks Middle School

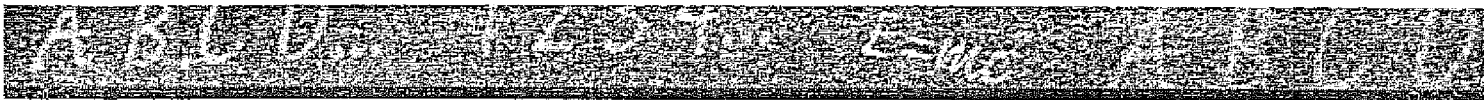


The learning environment at Parks Middle School has changed dramatically according to long-time Parks teacher Damary Lewis.

By Sarah Terian

An inner-city middle school with many risk factors—94% of its students are poor—has experienced a dramatic turnaround during the past few years. Why has this happened? The answers involve new leaders who received lots of support, a relentless focus on data, and involvement by a broad range of partners and community residents.

In recent years, Atlanta's Walter Leonard Parks Middle School has beaten the odds. Despite being defined as a "Needs Improvement" school for eight straight years—and despite serving predominantly low-income children from single parent households in a struggling urban neighborhood—Parks has witnessed remarkable improvements in student achievement. In math, for example, the percentage of eighth graders exceeding the state's standards rose from 1% to 46%.



In one year the percentage of eighth graders meeting standards in reading increased by 43 percentage points, from 35% to 78%.

These improvements have enabled the school to achieve "Adequate Yearly Progress" during both the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years. It is no longer being defined as a "Needs Improvement" school under Title 1 and the No Child Left Behind law.

Parks is the only middle school located in Atlanta's Neighborhood Planning Unit V (NPU-V). NPU-V is south of downtown and includes six historic neighborhoods, including the Pittsburgh neighborhood, where Parks is located. Pittsburgh has been a focus of the work of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Atlanta "Civic Site," a long-term effort to make low-income neighborhoods more supportive of children and their families.

During the 2005-2006 school year, Parks had 504 students, nearly all of whom were African American (97%) and low income (94%).

Between the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years, the percentage of eighth graders meeting standards in reading increased by 43 percentage points (from 35% to 78%), while the percentage meeting standards in English/Language Arts increased by 21 percentage points (50% to 71%). In math, the percentage of eighth graders who met or exceeded the standards increased from 24% to 86%.

**Why These Dramatic Gains?** A wide range of interrelated factors have contributed to Parks' success during the past few years, including improvements made under a former principal, effective and visionary leadership, data-driven planning and instruction, high expectations for staff and students, strategic partners (and the support and funding they offer), increased discipline and professional development.

### Finding Effective Leadership and a Strong Staff

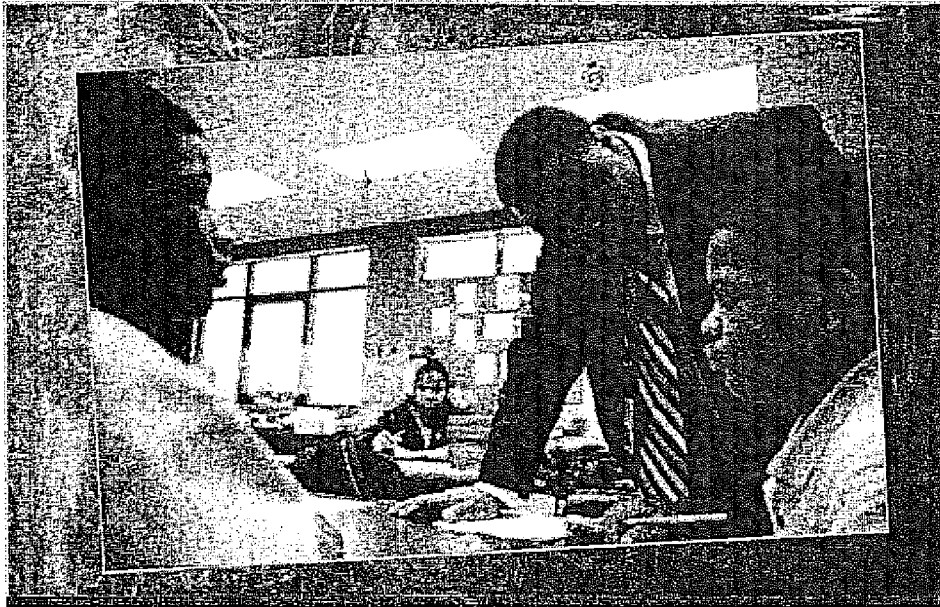
When Dr. Beverly L. Hall accepted the leadership of the Atlanta Public School system in 1999, she knew that she would have to look immediately at the leaders of the schools. She quickly began the process of changing principals based upon the performance of the students in their schools. "You have issues with principals when the schools are fail-

*Inside:*

- 2 Finding Effective Leadership
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“You have to find someone who is able to go in and, while not being a dictator, gets people’s attention and articulates a vision and mission in a way that people want to be on board with it....”

—Dr. Beverly L. Hall



Principal Christopher Waller hired an assistant principal to handle discipline so he could focus on improving academics.

ing,” she says. She sought leaders with high standards and a commitment to making sure students succeed.

“You have to find someone who is able to lead,” Hall explains. “That sounds vague, but they must be able to go in and, while not being a dictator, get people’s attention and articulate a vision and mission in a way that people want to be on board with it....”

Christopher Waller was that person for Parks Middle School, becoming principal in February 2005. “I thought [Waller] possessed the leadership skills,” Hall said. “I knew he cared personally for poor children. He identified with them and knew their potential.”

### About This Report

This report is based on interviews done by Atlanta Civic Site Diarist Sarah Torian with 17 administrators, teachers, Atlanta Public School System leaders, school resource providers, community partners and others, as well as site visits. It is also drawn from an analysis of No Child Left Behind test results and a review of information on the Atlanta Public Schools and Georgia Department of Education websites and other reports.

While this report focuses on the factors that contributed to the increases in student achievement during the 2005–2006 school year, strategies that were implemented during the 2006–2007 school year are also included because the interviews were conducted over the course of eight months in early 2007.

"Skepticism can mess up an organization. If you have folks on the team who don't think you can win, you are in trouble. We had to get some people *off* the bus first. Then, we had to get the right people *on* the bus."

—Christopher Waller

But Waller was not the first principal to improve test scores at Parks. During the previous three years, test scores had increased steadily, the result of a new approach to leadership begun by Superintendent Hall's "School Reform Team 2" (or SRT 2), according to SRT 2 Executive Director Michael Pitts.

"When I came in [to lead SRT 2], we brought in new leadership at Parks," explains Pitts. "All of the principals in SRT 2 and across Atlanta Public Schools were being trained to turn a school around using student data and keep students engaged through unit-based work. We were trying to build teacher and student morale."

But the principal who helped achieve this success had been dismissed in the summer of 2004, the result of alleged misconduct at a different school. This principal's dismissal caused unrest among the faculty and the community, and test scores faltered, creating an extra challenge for Waller.

To help meet this challenge, Waller brought in a team of new leaders that he recruited during his first summer. He hired a former elementary school teacher, Sandra Ward, to be the Success For All (SFA) reading facilitator.

"Mr. Waller intentionally hired an elementary school reading teacher to be the SFA facilitator because elementary school teachers have a strong background in helping students learn to read," explains Project GRAD Executive Director Kweku Forstall. (Project

GRAD is a reform model that provides support for teachers and students.)

At the recommendation of Jackie Daniels, the interim principal's mentor, Waller hired an assistant principal, Gregory Reid, to focus on student discipline. Waller recognized that his focus needed to be on instruction and partner recruitment.

"If I kept doing all of the disciplinary work, I would never really have become the principal..." explains Waller. "Having [Reid] on board has allowed me to be the principal, to deal with the things that principals have to deal with."

Waller also hired a new Special Education Administrator.

Not only did Waller have to focus on hiring new staff, he also had to focus on making sure the current staff was serving in the most effective positions. "Skepticism can mess up an organization," explains Waller. "If you have folks on the team who don't think you can win, you are in trouble.... So we had to get some people *off* the bus first. Then, we had to get the right people *on* the bus.

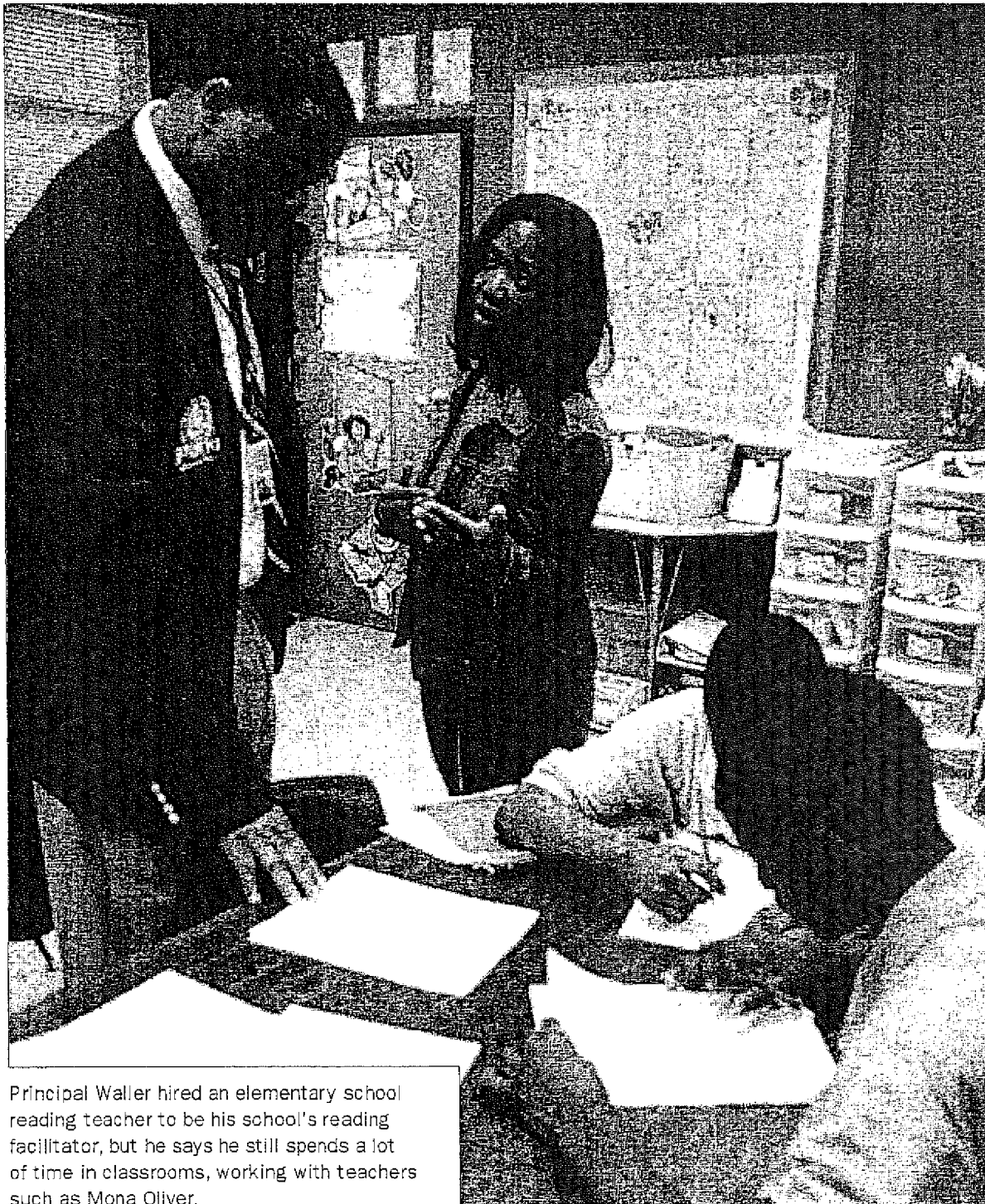
"At first, I thought that was it, but it wasn't. Once you get the right people on the bus, you have to get them in the right *seats* on the bus. That was the final stage and that is what we have been working on recently.... We are doing that based upon the data, performance, test scores and observation."





"Basically, all of the principals' issues are handled right here in this office. My job is to make sure that those issues are taken care of so that the principals can be instructional leaders and not have to worry about the more common things that they would have to worry about all of the time."

—Michael Pitts



Principal Waller hired an elementary school reading teacher to be his school's reading facilitator, but he says he still spends a lot of time in classrooms, working with teachers such as Mona Oliver.



"The rubber hits the road in the classroom every day.  
Teachers need ongoing support and coaching to become very proficient."

—Kweku Forstall

## Following Proven Reform Models and Emphasizing Professional Development

No school can increase student achievement without effective teaching in the classroom. To ensure that classroom instruction supported student success, Parks faculty and leadership drew on a variety of resources, including the School Reform Team 2, the Project GRAD reform model, the Georgia Department of Education and others.

### School Reform Team 2

When Dr. Beverly Hall became Atlanta Public Schools superintendent, she brought with her the idea of School Reform Teams (SRT). SRTs are designed to be one-stop shops, providing the schools in each team with the supports and services they need to most effectively serve and teach their students. Each SRT, led by an executive director who has been a successful principal, offers support to its schools on maintenance, hiring and legal issues as well as teacher training, mentoring and coaching.

"Basically, all of the principals' issues are handled right here in this office," explains SRT 2 Executive Director Pitts. "My job is to make sure that those issues are taken care of so that the principals can be instructional leaders and not have to worry about the more common things that they would have to worry about all of the time."

"Leadership team meetings have to be instructionally focused," explains Dr. Cheryl Hunley, a retired principal brought in to support principals at Parks and six other schools. "There are other meetings in which you can deal with the facilities and the technical aspects of the job, but the leadership team must have an instructional focus to determine what they need and where they go from here."

### Project GRAD

Project GRAD is the reform model that was launched in SRT 2 schools to help them improve student achievement and success at the beginning of the 2002–2003 school year. Project GRAD seeks to ensure a quality public school education for all at-risk children in economically disadvantaged communities so that high school graduation rates increase and graduates are prepared to enter and succeed in college. It focuses on training and support for teachers to help them deliver quality instruction and effectively manage their classrooms.

Project GRAD includes professional development for teachers, ongoing support with constructive feedback, coaching and re-training when necessary. This support has been critical, Waller believes. "It was the professional development that paved the way to increase the teachers' knowledge base and their arsenals of strategies."

“Data increases your awareness. You can't know where you are going if you don't know where you are.”

—Christopher Waller

## Using Data in the Classroom

Data has become a critical tool to improve student success at Parks Middle School, being used by the school's teachers and administrators in their planning and instruction. They use data to regularly assess how well students are learning, whether the school is meeting its School Reform Team-required benchmarks and whether students are prepared for their “Criterion Referenced Competency Tests.”

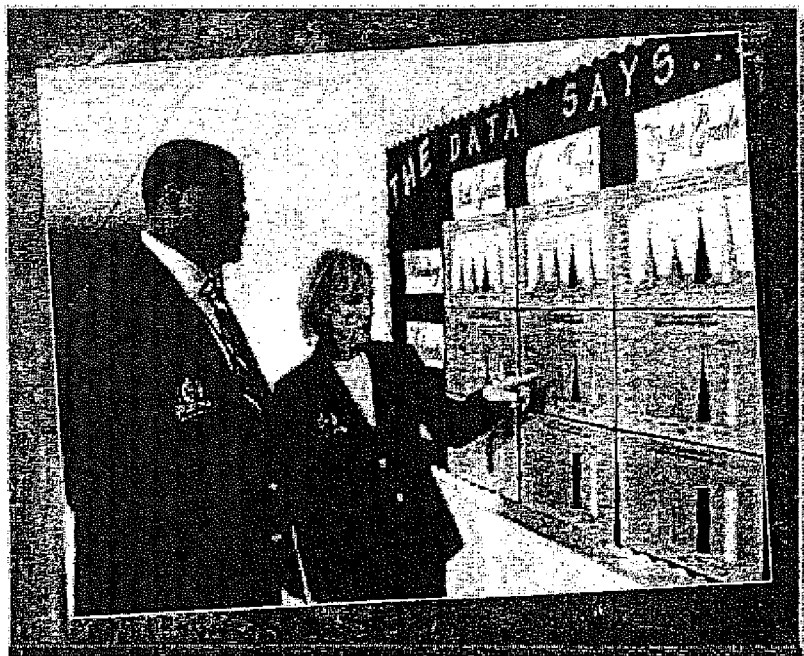
After conveying information focused on a set of objectives (such as measuring perimeter and area), a teacher will assess the students' mastery of those objectives with a short test. Each question will be linked to one of the covered objectives. The teacher will review the results of the

assessment and will compile a summary for each student of which questions they missed and how these questions align with the learning objectives.

The students will be assigned to small groups or “pods” based upon which objectives they hadn't mastered. For the next few days, the small groups will work together on problems related to that objective and review their homework and class notes on that topic. Students who did not miss any questions will be provided with more challenging work or reinforcement exercises targeted to their needs.

These regular class assessments are complemented by assessments required by SRT 2 every nine weeks, which ensure that students are pro-

gressing and which identify those who are falling behind so that they can receive additional support.



Waller says that when he became principal “I gave the data to everybody.... and they used it for instructional purposes.... Even the kids know their data.” Here Waller and Casey Foundation education consultant Elizabeth Kelly discuss data on test scores that is posted in the school's hallway.

"Ms. Hunley has been there, done that. She provides quality advice to our administrative leaders and they convey the ideas to us in a way that works for our school."

---Damany Lewis

"The rubber hits the road in the classroom every day," says Kweku Forstall, Project GRAD Atlanta's executive director. "Teachers need ongoing support and coaching to become very proficient in delivering their areas of instruction.... Experienced teachers who are good should be helping less proficient teachers through mentoring and visiting classrooms and sharing best practices."

Project GRAD also does data collection and evaluation. Data collection includes quarterly assessments in reading and math and semi-annual class visits to evaluate classroom management. Data are also collected to track discipline referrals, parent involvement and student attendance and to measure the change in public perceptions of school safety and organization.

"Data increases your awareness," says Waller. "You can't know where you are going if you don't know where you are."

Recognizing that non-academic issues can serve as barriers to student achievement, Project GRAD partners with Communities In Schools (CIS) to provide services to address those issues. CIS support helps increase student attendance and parent involvement and includes one-on-one and small group counseling with at-risk students, as well as access to dental, hearing and vision exams.

"GRAD is not an overnight results program," explains Forstall. "It's about incremental progress in trying to close the achievement gap."

### **Training and support from the Georgia Department of Education**

In an effort to support "Needs Improvement" schools, the Education Department's State School Improvement Division began to provide expert consultation to struggling schools in 2004. The state assigned Dr. Cheryl Hunley to serve in Parks and six other area schools. She was trained by the state and given a set of tools, instruments and resources to support school improvement in the targeted schools.

She came on board at Parks during the summer of 2004, immediately following the removal of the former principal. She worked closely with both the interim principal and Principal Waller to identify areas for potential improvement. She has also provided training to the staff, making sure they understood the state standards and how the curriculum prepares the students to meet those standards.

"We have had to go back and do professional learning on rigor, relevance and relationship," she explains. "If it is not important, we don't teach it.... A child's project is no better than the assignment you give them. You can't give them busy work.... [The teachers] are focused on the standards."

"Ms. Hunley has been there, done that," explains Damany Lewis, a seventh grade math teacher at Parks. "She provides quality advice to our administrative leaders and they convey the ideas to us in a way that works for our school."



"Many of the teachers talked about how well the students had done before. We had to have the conversation that, if they had done well before, I wouldn't be here because you would not be in restructuring...."

—Dr. Cheryl Hunley

The professional development provided through Project GRAD, SRT 2 and Georgia DOE has paved the way for increasing the teachers' knowledge base and their "treasure chests" of strategies to improve learning.

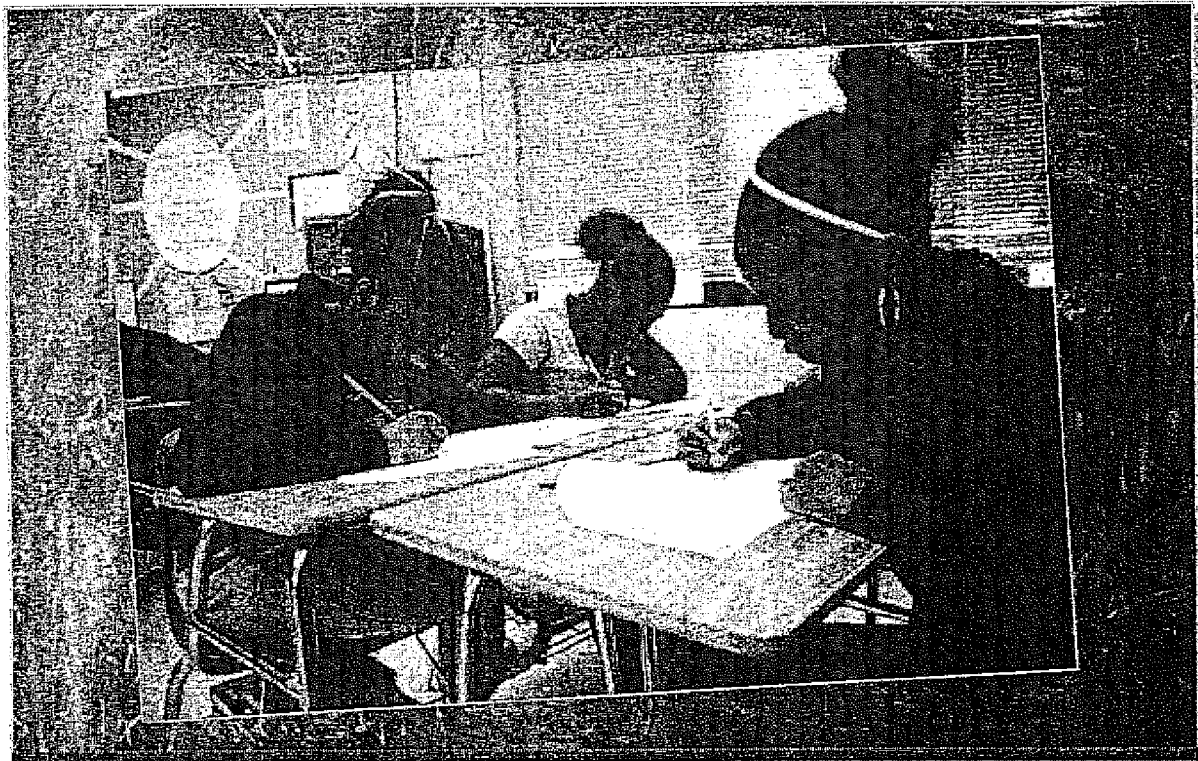
"There are more deliberate meetings around curriculum happening on a consistent basis," reports Catalina Sibilsky, Principal in Residence of Atlanta Public Schools and Project Manager of Atlanta's middle school transformation work. "There are more tools for consistent use of assessments. There are lots more conversations around curriculum instruction."

## Using Data To Drive Instruction and Develop Individual Learning Plans

During Superintendent Hall's eight-year tenure at APS, the system has increased its use of data to drive instruction and track student progress.

APS workshops emphasize the need to let the data drive instruction, and APS continues to implement new technology to support teachers' and schools' efforts to use data to increase student achievement.

To keep close track on how students are progressing, Parks Middle School students take frequent tests.



"It's not magic. You focus on the data to determine where to place resources. If the reading level is down in one grade, you focus additional resources on students and teachers at that level."

—Kweku Forstall

"It's not magic," explains Project GRAD's Forstall. "You focus on the data to determine where to place resources. If the reading level is down in one grade, you focus additional resources on students and teachers at that level. You look at the data and you hold people accountable."

As the 2005–2006 school year began, the teachers and administrators at Parks examined the data and planned accordingly. "[Waller] is a little more focused on the data and where they have to go with regards to AYP [Adequate Yearly Progress] in order to be successful," explains SRT 2's Pitts. "His acceleration in using the data and the data 'dashboards' probably allowed him to move faster than others."

Data were already being used to guide instruction and planning at Parks, but Waller changed the way that it was used and integrated it more deeply into the planning, decision-making and instruction. Before he joined the staff, awareness of the data was limited and those who were aware of it tended to use it for quotation purposes rather than planning purposes.

"When I came, I gave the data to everybody," Waller explains. "Everybody knew the data...and they used it for instruction purposes.... Even the kids know their data. They can tell you their individual scores and what their goal is."

"You have to let the data drive the instruction," says Sandra Ward, the school's reading facilitator. "Not just from bench-

marks and standardized tests. Data needs to drive day-by-day teaching. In each lesson you need to assess the students to make sure they have mastered it."

The limited awareness and understanding of the data was evidenced in Hunley's coaching of some of the faculty. "Many of the teachers talked about how well the students had done before [Mr. Waller was hired]," Hunley remembers. "We had to have the conversation that, if they had done well before, I wouldn't be here because you would not be in restructuring.... They perceived that the years before were so much better. They did not understand that the data did not substantiate what they were saying."

She began to realize that their evaluation of the school's performance was based not on student achievement, but on how comfortable they were in their job. "There was a culture, a comfort zone, that was good for them," she adds. "One of the things Mr. Waller had to do was break up that comfort zone because that was not good for the kids. They equated doing well with doing what they wanted to do."

Superintendent Hall agrees about the importance of insisting on accountability. "People have a hard time pointing out non-performance. They like the people and know their personal situations, so they will make excuses for them because they are too nice and unable to deal with low performance. A good leader goes in, takes time to assess, but knows that the core business is to make

"You have to let the data drive the instruction. Not just from benchmarks and standardized tests. Data needs to drive day-by-day teaching. In each lesson you need to assess the students to make sure they have mastered it."

—Sandra Ward

sure students succeed. You have to have courage."

Hunley helped Parks' teachers to look at the data and to understand what was required to meet Adequate Yearly Progress and why they were not achieving it. "We had some very intelligent teachers who just didn't understand the process," she explains.

"Once we got the numbers right, we could put names with the numbers.... We were able to pull the data by teachers so we knew who was being effective and who was not. When we identified the effective teachers, we could look more closely at what they were doing."

The data is not only used to guide school and class planning, it is also used to develop plans for each student. Beginning during the 2006–2007 school year, teachers and faculty at Parks break the data down for each student, creating prescriptive Individual Learning Plans.

"It's just like when you go to the doctor," explains Waller. "When we give them individual instruction based upon their chart, we are able to work on their individual deficiencies."

Each student has an academic chart displaying their strengths and weaknesses so that their teachers and tutors can provide targeted instruction. Traditionally, these types of prescriptive learning plans are used only for students in special education classes, but at Parks they are used for all students.

## Setting High Expectations and Cultivating Support

When Waller became principal at Parks, he was determined to turn around a long-time failing school by eliminating the achievement gap between Parks students and those at other Atlanta schools. Several faculty and staff members were wary and distrustful when Waller came on board, and he had to work hard to enlist their support for his new efforts.

The community was also uneasy. "We didn't know how long he would be there," explains Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association Executive Director LaShawn Hoffman. "I heard that a lot from the community at the beginning of his tenure. We had a new principal who had never been a principal before. We thought they were hiring him because APS didn't care. You better believe that we heard a lot of that."

Waller stressed the school's strengths and helped it to address its weaknesses. "Our comfort zone was snatched up when Mr. Waller was brought in, but he handled that well," remembers Lewis. "He didn't come in saying 'You are Needs Improvement; what you have been doing hasn't been working so you have to do it my way.' He said, 'You have been improving consistently over the past few years, so let's keep doing what you were doing, but let's improve it.'"



"People have a hard time pointing out non-performance. They like the people and know their personal situations, so they will make excuses for them because they are too nice and unable to deal with low performance. You have to have courage."

—Dr. Beverly L. Hall

### **A new way to build a team within the school**

One strategy that Waller used to enlist the support of school staff was to arrange for a professional development retreat in Destin, Florida, during his first summer as principal. There he was able to bond with his new team.

"The culture was such that they were stonewalling him," remembers Hunley. "He decided...to take them to Florida, for some team building. There are places they could have gone in town, but this was a way to really get them out of their normal frame of reference.... It was a wonderful trip! I could see when they were lighting up and connecting with him."



Principal Waller brought Parks' staff members to a retreat in Florida to help build a sense of team. Pictured in this photo (from the left) are Sonya Thompson, Gregory Reid, Sandra Ward, Christopher Waller, Nechelle Sharpe, Daymon Arnold and Dr. Alfred Kiel.





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—Dr. Cheryl Hunley

During the retreat, Waller introduced some new teaching strategies, including "Differentiating Instruction" and "Inclusion and Collaboration." Differentiating Instruction recognizes that individual students have different abilities and learn in different ways. It creates multiple paths so that all students experience equally appropriate ways to absorb, use, develop and present concepts as a part of the daily learning process.

Inclusion and Collaboration brings students with special learning and behavior needs into the general education program full-time with additional support staff in the classroom. It also provides teachers the comprehensive professional development to help them develop collaborative skills so that all students can succeed in this new environment.

"We didn't have teachers protesting because we didn't talk about that at school. We talked about it in Destin—on the beach," explains Waller with a grin. "It is hard to kick an idea when you are on the beach. I think we might have received a different reaction if we had introduced it in the school's media center."

Another strategy he used to gain the support of school staff was to increase discipline. "Once I became principal, I knew the very first thing I had to do was get the climate back under control," explains Waller. "Teachers love you when you are getting control of the kids so that was the first thing we did.... You have to have a climate that is conducive to learning."

## Setting a Clear Vision

At the 2005 ceremony to honor the eighth graders who were being promoted to high school, Waller outlined his vision of success for Parks. He told students, parents and faculty members, "If it can be done in Buckhead [a wealthy Atlanta neighborhood], it can be done right here in Pittsburgh," remembers Waller.

"Oh, they shouted and they clapped. That was the most amazing statement they had ever heard, that their children could succeed just like the children on the other, richer side of town."

Waller and his staff repeatedly stressed the simple vision of eliminating the achievement gap. "We didn't get into the 'la-la-la (comma) la-la-la (comma) la-la-la of educational jargon,'" he explains. "We kept it very simple. We said, 'If it can be done anywhere, it can be done right here at Parks. Academically, we will eliminate the achievement gap.'"

To achieve that simple vision, Waller immediately set higher expectations for the students, teachers, administrators and community partners at Parks. "Waller has informed the kids that they are not a hopeless cause," explains Hoffman of the Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association. "He sets high standards and demands accountability. From my perspective, he holds the children and adults in the school—including the teachers and paraprofessionals—accountable."



"Once I became principal, I knew the very first thing I had to do was get the climate back under control. Teachers love you when you are getting control of the kids. You have to have a climate that is conducive to learning."

—Christopher Waller

But high expectations by themselves "don't mean much without buy in," Waller says. "The students had to buy in, the parents had to buy in and the community had to buy in. That helped to implement the strategies that would make the expectations attainable."

Parents and community residents became more involved in the student success effort when the school began opening its doors to them and providing an array of services and programs. "We involved parents," explains Lewis. "We have a GED course here.... We have Saturday Schools. Last year, we had a program where parents could come to take a six-week computer class and get a free computer when they finished.... When you start bringing the community into it, the students respond."

Waller and others constantly highlighted the various small and large achievements the school made at every chance they got. Waller reports carrying an ever-changing note card in his pocket with him wherever he went. Whenever he got the chance—at faculty meetings, at community meetings, when he was speaking with students in the hall—he would pull the card out and announce the achievements.

To show the students that, despite their families' current economic conditions, they could achieve their dreams, Waller made sure that students knew that he had once walked in their shoes.

"When people and the students see us, they tend to see us just as we are today," shares Waller. "They don't know what you had to go through to get where you are. I realized that I couldn't be ashamed to show my children where I had been. I told them where they are today is not where they will be tomorrow. I told them, 'I have been where you are and now, look at where I am.' You talk about it. You model to them. You show them that they can get to where they want to go."

Superintendent Hall agrees with Waller's high expectations for the students at Parks. "When I can stand in front of my principals and read the list of highest-performing schools in the district, a list that runs the gamut from schools in the highest income areas to schools in the lowest income areas, there are no excuses," says Hall.

"While I believe the impact of extreme poverty should not be ignored, I know that we have to address the quality of teaching and learning, since that is the most important variable in this equation."

Parks staff, administrators and partners knew that the students were on board when they witnessed their reaction to a math benchmark test in the spring of 2006. The benchmark test showed that they were far from prepared for the CRCT ("Criterion Referenced Competency Test") math test. At the urging of Hunley (the retired principal brought in as a consultant by the state education department), Waller called an impromptu "community meeting" of the eighth graders in the school hallway.



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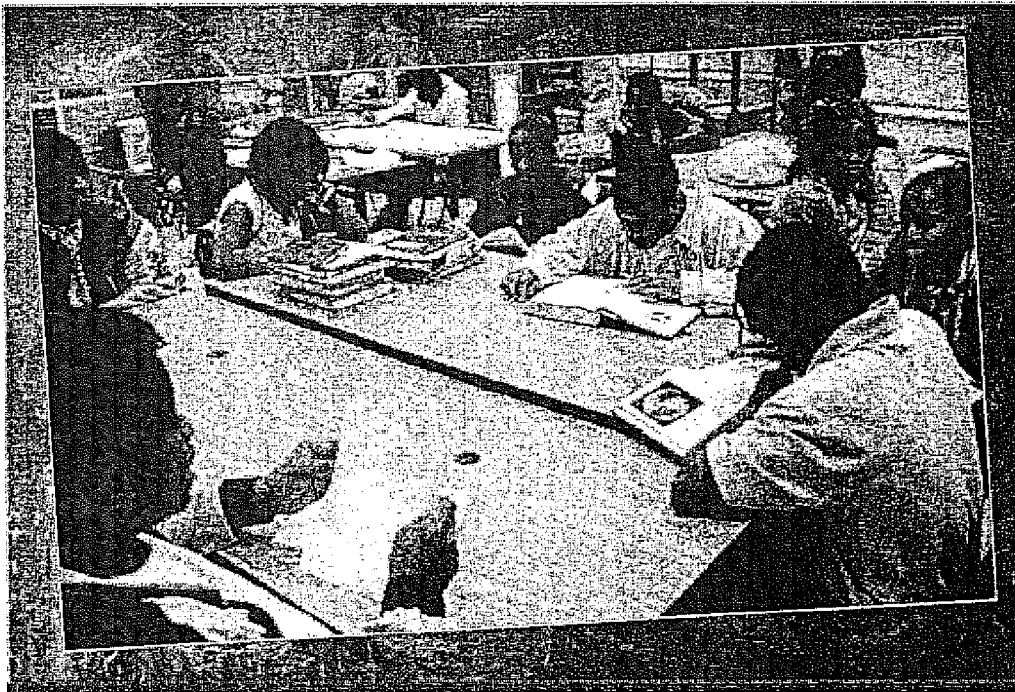
—Damany Lewis

Waller "preached" to them, lighting a competitive fire under them and explaining that the staff would do everything they could to help the students pass the test. Hunley remembers Waller saying, "A lot of folks outside of this school say you can't do it because of where you live, but I know you can do it! I know you are smart. I see you every day and I look at you. I know you can do this."

At that community meeting, the staff and faculty pledged to do whatever was necessary to help the students learn. A voluntary math tutorial class quickly filled to capacity with students sitting on the floor to attend. Weeks later, 40% of those students met the state standards in math while an additional 46% exceeded the standards.

"All children can learn," says Ward, Parks' reading facilitator. "This is what we have been telling our children over and over again. As long as you focus, develop a goal and a dream, you can accomplish it."

Celebration is another critical factor involved in getting the cooperation and buy-in of students and faculty members. The school celebrates at every opportunity, demonstrating to the students that, if they work hard, good things will happen. With the support of partners, including the Salvation Army, Communities In Schools (CIS) and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the school threw parties to celebrate high attendance rates and academic success. If a



Attendance at Parks has improved dramatically. Before, nearly 20% of students missed at least 15 days. Last year, only one student missed this many days (0.2%).



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—Sandra Ward

student came to school every day in a month, their name went into a drawing and they could win television sets, game systems or bicycles.

"With CIS and the NBA<sup>3</sup> (Never Been Absent) Program, we have lots of incentives in place to motivate them to come and to succeed," explains Assistant Principal Reid. "Just being in Parks everyday, you never know what might happen to you.... That gets and holds your attention."

Efforts to encourage student attendance have had a significant effect. Whereas 19.2% of students missed at least 15 school days during the 2003–2004 school year, that number was nearly cut in half the following year (down to 9.9%). Attendance has continued to improve dramatically, with only 2.5% missing at least 15 days in 2005–2006 and only one student (.2%) reaching that threshold during the last school year.

Lewis believes that one reason for the drop in absenteeism is the increased rigor of the class work. Students are given make-up assignments that become increasingly difficult to do when they miss multiple days of school. "If you miss a day, you can get behind; if you miss two or three days, you are lost," explains Lewis. "They come back saying that they don't get it. I say, 'That's good.' If you can miss a day and still get it, I'm not doing my job."

## Building Strategic Partnerships and Broad Support

When Waller was hired at Parks, the school had almost no corporate or community partners and only three parents came to meet him at an introductory meeting organized by the school's Parent-Teacher Association.

The Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association (PCIA) had been in partnership with the school, but that partnership had struggled as staff changes at the school and in the organization forced them to repeatedly build new relationships. PCIA had helped the school recruit two business partners, Jones Day Law Firm and Carey Limousines, located near Parks in the Pittsburgh neighborhood. Those businesses had become frustrated because of the changes at the school and a lack of structure to the partnerships.

"There was a consistent effort on the part of PCIA," remembers PCIA's Hoffman, "but the leadership changed so much at Parks that there was not an opportunity to establish a formal structure.... People didn't think their efforts would achieve anything and it was easier to not do anything than to keep trying."

Recognizing a need to recruit additional partners, Waller began to attend meetings of the neighborhood's Ministers' Alliance. There he met several strategic partners, including PCIA's Hoffman and Major Gloria Reagan of

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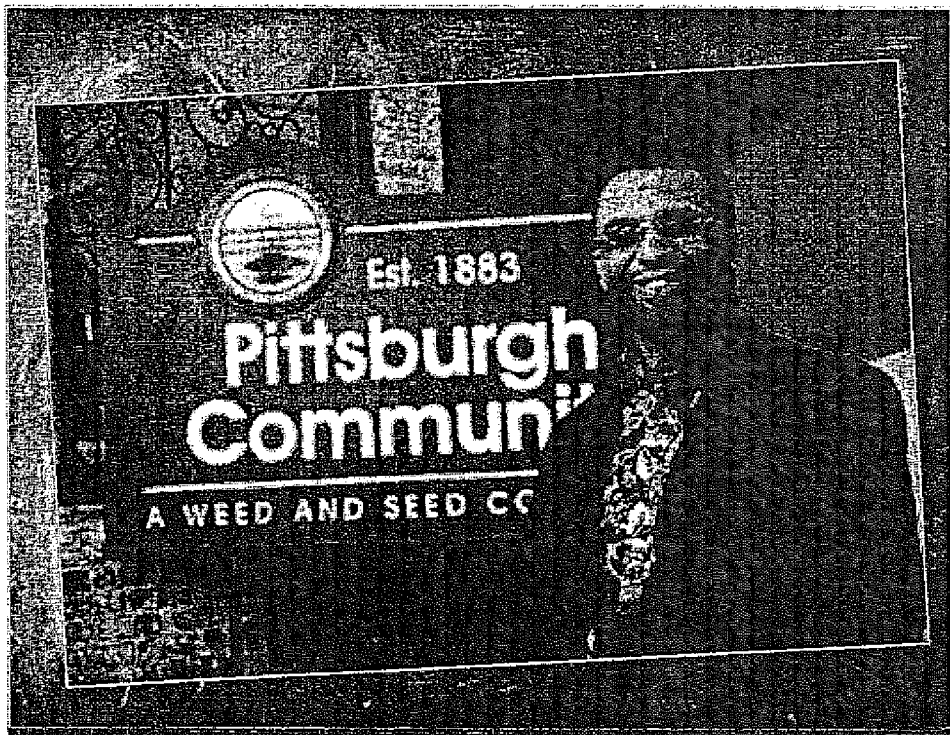
—LaShawn Hoffman

the Salvation Army College of Officer Training, located in the Pittsburgh neighborhood.

His efforts became more successful when the Casey Foundation's Atlanta Civic Site team contacted APS and Parks in an effort to establish a partnership. This occurred after The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation made an initial commitment to support the redesign of The New Schools at Carver, the high school into which Parks feeds. To date, The Blank Foundation has committed \$4.5 million to fund student support programs for students at The New Schools at Carver as a part of a larger redesign effort.

Leaders at The Blank Foundation prevailed upon Casey to work with Parks to ensure that its students were prepared for the rigor of The New Schools.

"[The Blank Foundation] said they felt that The New Schools at Carver would be more successful if the whole pipeline—the whole feeder system—was successful," explains the Casey Foundation's Atlanta Civic Site Manager, Gail Hayes. "They identified that Parks was a very low performing school. They saw high achieving elementary schools and a failing middle school feeding into The New Schools at Carver, and they knew that student achievement at Parks would have to



Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association's LaShawn Hoffman says that before Christopher Waller became Parks' principal, the leadership had changed so often that "people didn't think their efforts would achieve anything."

"I did a lot of reading and listening when I first began this work. What I determined—and this is not rocket science—is that the school needed to increase parent involvement and attract more corporate partners. They needed other supports to really increase student achievement."

—Elizabeth Kelly

increase in order for their investment to be successful."

The partnership began with a meeting in the summer of 2005 between Hayes, Principal Waller, SRT 2 Executive Director Pitts, Project GRAD Executive Director Forstall, Casey Senior Associate for Education Bruno Manno and Casey Consultant Elizabeth Kelly. In that meeting, Hayes challenged Waller and his team to set the ambitious goal of achieving Adequate Yearly Progress in the next school year, a goal that Waller and Pitts readily accepted.

Kelly began her work to support Parks by meeting with Waller and other school staff and partners and researching what programs were in place at the school and what opportunities existed for targeted supports.

"I did a lot of reading and listening when I first began this work," explains Kelly. "What I determined—and this is not rocket science—is that the school needed to increase parent involvement and attract more corporate partners. They felt that they were on track to meet AYP that year, but they needed other supports to really increase student achievement."

**A**fter Casey began partnering with Parks, Waller's efforts to recruit partners became much easier. "I want to make it clear that Casey brought other partners to the table.... I can focus on the instruction and implementation of the curriculum with integrity.... Prior to Casey, Parks wasn't

invited to the table. Now, when people talk about NPU-V, they are talking about Parks in some component." (NPU-V is the "neighborhood planning unit" that includes Parks Middle School.)

Parks' partners now include After School All Stars, Communities In Schools, Digital Connectors-One Economy, Georgia State University, Hands On Atlanta, Mendez Foundation, the Ministers' Alliance, Music Matters, Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association, Salvation Army College of Officer Training, United Way, Casey Foundation and community associations. While some of these partners joined Parks as a part of Project GRAD, the diversity and scope of partners has greatly increased in recent years.

These partners provide a wide variety of in-kind and financial support. **Salvation Army** supports the Never Been Absent Program, hosts GED and Literacy classes for adults during the evening at Parks, and provides food and materials when requested.

**United Way, Georgia State, Casey** and **After School All Stars** support the new after-school program launched in October 2006 to provide additional targeted assistance to students who are near the threshold of meeting standards. **Hands On Atlanta** provides tutoring to students in need of additional one-on-one support and has provided computers to students.

The **Casey Foundation** sponsored a staff celebration at Dave and Busters and



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purchased matching maroon blazers for faculty and staff to honor their first year of AYP success. The foundation also purchased planner notebooks for all students and supported professional development and training opportunities for school staff.

**Communities In Schools**, which is a component of the Project GRAD reform model, provides wrap-around services in the schools to help students address factors that could interfere with their academic achievement, including counseling, small group work with at-risk students, and in-kind resources such as dental check ups and eye exams. They also reach out to parents and caregivers to make them feel more comfortable in the school, helping to organize a Massage for Moms night and a Dinner with Dad night.

Superintendent Hall believes that partnerships and supports for students are a critical component of achieving success in low-income schools. "The impact of extreme poverty should not be ignored," Hall explains. "The supports play a big role. That is why Project GRAD has Communities in Schools. That is why Hands On Atlanta provides tutors and why Casey provides supports to mitigate against other issues.... Most of the schools that are doing well with poor children are schools that have strong partnerships. Those are real contributing factors."

"When you have support," Waller believes, "you don't feel like you are in it by yourself. So many times, Parks felt like it had been in it by itself."

### **Integrating what is taught in elementary, middle and high schools**

The Casey Foundation's support has also helped initiate "Vertical Alignment" efforts to link the curricula between the elementary, middle and high schools. "After talking to the principals at Parks, Gideons and The New Schools at Carver, I was struck by the fact that there was no bridge between the three stages," remembers Kelly. "There was a disconnect between the elementary and middle school curricula and no preparation in middle school for high school."

With funding support from Casey and senior leaders from APS, the Vertical Alignment steering committee began meeting in December 2005. The goal of the group was to develop a rigorous middle school curriculum at Parks that aligns with the academies of The New Schools at Carver and better prepares students upon graduation to be successful in high school.

Work groups—aligned with the four academies at The New Schools at Carver and comprised of staff from Carver, Parks, Project GRAD, SRT 2 and APS—met regularly in 2006, collecting data on current conditions and identifying high-performing teachers, training needs and achievement gaps (between Parks students and The New Schools' requirements).

Funding from the Georgia Department of Human Resources enabled Parks to launch a Summer Youth Program in 2006 to prepare incoming sixth graders for the transition to

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—Dr. Beverly L. Hall

middle school while simultaneously strengthening students' skills and knowledge. Because of the success of the summer program, DHR agreed to continue the funding year-round, enabling Parks to launch its After School All Stars Program in the fall of 2006 and to continue the summer program in 2007.

The Vertical Alignment work at Parks will continue as the model expands to other APS middle schools. "It has become a way of working for Parks and that work will continue," explains Hall. "Now we are beginning to model other schools' efforts around the Parks initiative."

## Improving the School's Physical and Social Environment

Principal Waller understood that many of the students attending Parks Middle School might not have a warm home environment where the adults in their lives provided love, support and structure. To ensure that Parks could provide them with a safe and nurturing environment during the school hours, Waller started to address the physical and social environment as soon as he came on staff.

He asked APS to paint the walls and put the school colors and mascot, Mustangs,



One of Principal Waller's first steps was to improve the look of Parks Middle School. This included a mural at the school's entrance that highlighted the school's colors (red and yellow) and mascot, a mustang. "We wanted the school to have a warm feeling."



"It was really that bad when I first came here. Now the students won't even litter. Now it is offensive to them.... Lately, if someone talks out of turn, I will pause, and the students will chastise them.... They are regulating themselves."

—Damany Lewis

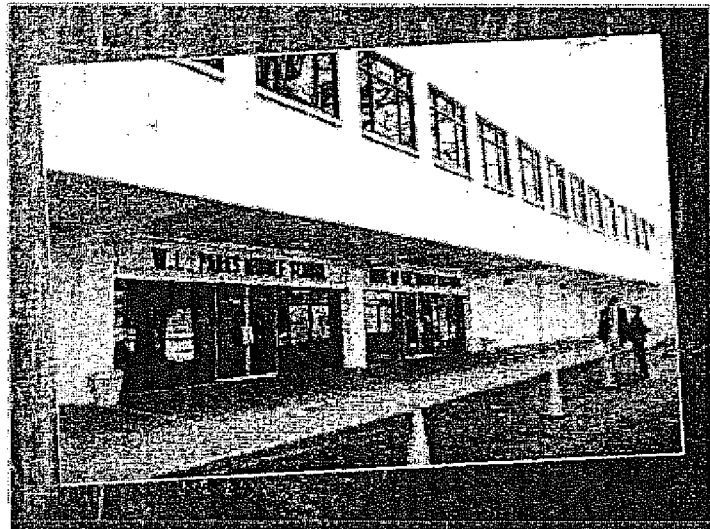
on the wall of the front entrance lobby. He encouraged teachers to post examples of good student work on bulletin boards in the hallways. He purchased pictures, park benches and greenery and placed them throughout the school building.

"We wanted the school to have a warm feeling when you walk in," explains Waller. "Regardless of what cold situation you might have come from, you are here and there is a warm feeling here."

In addition to improving the physical environment, Waller quickly tried to get the social environment under control by increasing discipline. This included the way the students carried themselves in the school. The faculty instituted "Operation Pull and Tuck," requiring all students to have their shirts tucked in and their pants around their waist.

"Discipline had been an issue here, but ... they don't walk the halls anymore," explains Hunley. "They put their shirt tails in their pants. While doing that seems minor, it really changes the way they carry themselves."

Damany Lewis, who began teaching at Parks in the 1999–2000 school year, remembers the challenges that a lack of discipline caused early in his career at Parks. He remembers students urinating in trashcans before tossing them into a classroom and running away. He remembers how there was



no toilet paper in the bathrooms because the students would wet it and throw it onto the ceiling.

"It was really that bad when I first came here," he explains. "Now the students won't even litter. Now it is offensive to them.... Lately, if someone talks out of turn, I will pause, and the students will chastise them.... They are regulating themselves."

"The school environment and how students feel about themselves is important," explains Kweku Forstall. "If they see other students running rampant in the schools with no boundaries, limits and respect for the teachers, they will take it less seriously.... When you beautify the school and enhance the environment, it supports a positive attitude and diminishes distractions to academics."



"The school environment and how students feel about themselves is important. If they see other students running rampant in the schools with no boundaries, limits and respect for the teachers, they will take it less seriously."

—Kweku Forstall

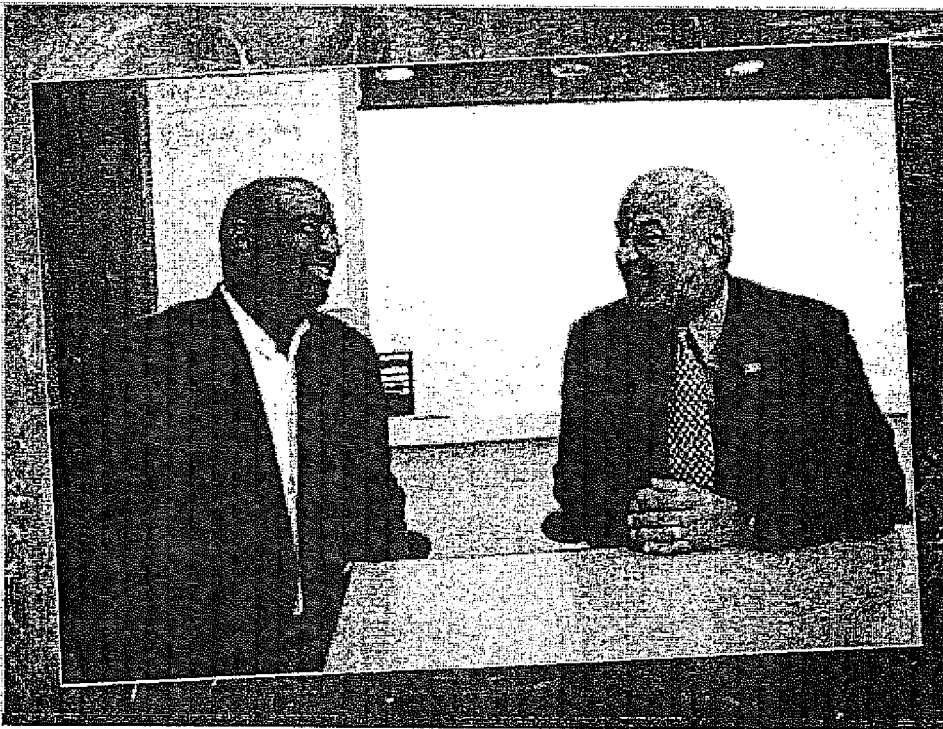
## Moving Forward

Having been successful in achieving Adequate Yearly Progress for two straight years, Parks Middle School is no longer defined as a Needs Improvement school under No Child Left Behind. Instead, it is defined as a School of Choice, meaning that parents with children enrolled at struggling schools in the district can elect to send their children to Parks.

This success has led to increased student morale, self-confidence and teacher ownership and commitment, as well as a strong sense of pride across the community. Parks has become a model reform school for the state and for partner agencies.

The school's success did, however, bring some negative financial consequences. Because it is no longer a Needs Improvement school, Parks will lose a significant amount of resources, including:

- \$124,000 from its supplemental budget
- \$450,000 in supplemental educational services
- \$100,000 in Title I funds
- \$75,000 in state consultant/professional development support
- Additional materials, supplies and technology



Project GRAD Executive Director Kweku Forstall (left) and School Reform Team-2 Executive Director Michael Pitts have both played key roles in supporting Parks' young principal.

"We are clearly improving. But we still have a long way to go. We are attacking those [challenges] with great vigor and intentionality with system-wide initiatives. The key lesson here is that it takes a long time to turn around a school system."

—Dr. Beverly L. Hall

Continuing to increase student success while losing these important resources will be a challenge, but Parks' leadership and staff believe they are prepared. Waller continues to set ambitious goals for the school and its students. Not satisfied with merely achieving AYP and APS system targets, Waller is challenging his faculty and students to help the school become a "90-90-90" school, meaning that more than 90% of students meet or exceed standards in Reading, English/Language Arts and Mathematics.

"Now that we have achieved AYP for two years in a row," explains Waller, "AYP is no longer a lofty goal. In order to keep our organization moving forward, we have to continue to increase our targets."

They will be supported in their efforts by an array of new programs and partners that will continue to support student learning in the future. The Parent-Teacher-Student Association has been expanded and revived. New educational partners are working with Parks to ensure that students have the supports and opportunities they need. The Family Literacy Program is providing parents and other area adults with GED and literacy classes, which demonstrate to students the importance of staying focused and staying in school.

The efforts at Parks will also be supported by district-wide reform efforts as Hall and her team work to transform middle and high schools and to improve student achievement and learning in math and science.

"There is still work to be done," explains Hall. "We are clearly improving. But we still have a long way to go in the areas of math and science grades K-12 and in high schools overall. But we are attacking those with great vigor and intentionality with system-wide initiatives. The key lesson here is that it takes a long time to turn around a school system."

"If it can be done anywhere, it can be done right here at Parks," said Principal Waller, shown with a Parks student.



"When I can stand in front of my principals and read the list of highest-performing schools in the district, a list that runs the gamut from schools in the highest income areas to schools in the lowest income areas, there are no excuses."

—Dr. Beverly L. Hall

## The Diarist Project

This is one of a series of publications about the Annie E. Casey Foundation's work in low-income neighborhoods put together by The Diarist Project. The project is a new approach the foundation is using to learn from its efforts to strengthen families and transform struggling neighborhoods.

Diarists work to capture strategies and insights of the people who are leading the neighborhood transformation work.

This story was written by Sarah Torian, the Atlanta Civic Site diarist. It was edited by Tim Saasta, diarist coordinator. Photos ©2007 by Stanley Leary. *Published in December 2007.*

The **Annie E. Casey Foundation** works to build better futures for disadvantaged children and their families in the United States. Its primary mission is to foster public policies, human service reforms and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families.

Atlanta is one of three **Casey Foundation civic sites**, which are cities where the foundation has "home-town" ties. Atlanta is the headquarters of UPS. The Casey Foundation was started by the founder of UPS, Jim Casey, and his siblings. (The other two Civic Sites are Baltimore, MD, and New Haven, CN.)

The **Atlanta Civic Site** focuses on five of Atlanta's oldest neighborhoods, all located just south of downtown. These neighborhoods—Adair Park, Mechanicsville, Peoplestown, Pittsburgh and Summerhill/Capitol Homes—comprise a once-thriving African-American community that has experienced a great deal of property disinvestment, population decrease and general economic decline over the past 30 years.

To help strengthen families in these neighborhoods, the foundation has been promoting neighborhood-scale programs, policies and activities that

contribute to strong, family-supporting neighborhoods. These efforts focus on education achievement, family economic success and neighborhood transformation.

For more information, contact: The Atlanta Civic Site, 477 Windsor Street, SW, Atlanta, GA 30312; [www.atlantacivicsite.org](http://www.atlantacivicsite.org); 404-222-3660.

For more information about **The Diarist Project**, contact Tim Saasta at [Tim@CharityChoices.com](mailto:Tim@CharityChoices.com). Diarist publications are available at [www.DiaristProject.org](http://www.DiaristProject.org).



A Parks Middle School Student



## VENETIAN HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1910 Venetian Drive, SW  
Atlanta, Georgia 30311

Principal: Clarietta Davis  
Testing Coordinator: Milagros Moner

SRT-4 Executive Director: Tamara Cotman

### **I. INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY**

Cheating occurred on the CRCT at Venetian Hills Elementary in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009. Five teachers and the testing coordinator at Venetian Hills confessed to erasing answers. Cheating at Venetian Hills is evidenced by the high number of flagged classrooms, confessions, witness testimony, and Principal Clarietta Davis' refusal to answer our questions about cheating.

### **II. STATISTICAL DATA**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Percentage of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	75.4	1.5
Number of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	52	1
Number of Teachers Flagged for WTR Standard Deviations above 3.0 (Number of Teachers Flagged in Multiple Subjects)	19(18)	1(0)
Mean WTR Standard Deviations from State Norm	12.8	3
High Flagged Standard Deviation	24.5	3
Low Flagged Standard Deviation	3.8	3

### **III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**

#### **A. Narrative**

The following teachers altered test documents at Venetian Hills Elementary School: Jacquelyn Parks, Melba Smith, Alma Keen, Angela Bennett, Tyrone Hankerson, Hardy Scott, and Milagros Moner. A group of teachers got together in Testing Coordinator Milagros Moner's office in the afternoons. The teachers met in that office, locked the door, and erased wrong answers, filling in right answers. Principal Davis had the teachers raise Level 1 (not meeting expectations) students up to Level 2 (meeting expectations) and raise Level 2 students up to Level 3 (exceeding expectations). Some teachers changed the tests in the morning when Moner handed them out, while others changed the answer sheets in their classroom after the test. The trusted "chosen ones" changed the tests in the afternoon.

Principal Davis altered answer sheets as well. She only erased in the presence of Milagros Moner. Principal Davis erased answer sheets in her office wearing gloves so that she did not leave fingerprints on the test documents.

#### **B. Testimony of Witnesses**

##### **1. Jacquelyn Parks (Teacher)**

Jacquelyn Parks taught third grade at Venetian Hills and confessed to cheating in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009. Testing Coordinator Milagros Moner had a special group of people—"the chosen ones." These teachers were either part of the leadership team or were "veteran" Venetian Hills teachers. Moner did not ask new teachers to cheat.

The group got together in Moner's office each afternoon during the testing period. The "chosen ones" were Melba Smith, Alma Keen, Angela Bennett, Tyrone Hankerson, Hardy Scott, Jaquelyn Parks, and Milagros Moner. They met in the windowless office and locked the door. They took the test themselves and changed the answer sheets when the student's answer was wrong. They would change the tests of only the grade they taught, but not just their own students. Some teachers changed the tests each morning in their classrooms. The "chosen ones" would change the tests in the afternoons and during the makeup testing days. Parks believes that the teachers that were not directly involved knew what was going on. There were other teachers changing test answers in their own classrooms.

Moner told the teachers that Principal Davis's instructions were to pull Level 1 students up to Level 2 and pull Level 2 students up to Level 3. When one of the group remarked, "Why isn't Ms. Davis in here helping us?" Moner responded, "She does help, she puts on her gloves."

One of teacher Nichole Jones' fifth grade students noticed that the answers on his test from the day before were not as he indicated. He thought his answers had been changed and told Ms. Jones. Jones later asked Hankerson, "What is going on around here?"

Parks first cheated in 2004 but believes cheating was going on at Venetian Hills prior to that. She heard cheating has been going on since Dr. Hall became the Superintendent. The

culture at APS is that if you are not a “team player,” there are ways that APS can get back at you. Parks was afraid of retaliation if she did not go along with cheating. “APS is run like the mob.”

2. Tyrone Hankerson (Teacher)

Tyrone Hankerson taught fourth grade and admitted to his involvement with cheating in 2009. ILS Milagros Moner told Hankerson that they needed to “clean up” the tests. He knew that “clean up the tests” meant to change answers from wrong to right on the CRCT. Hankerson told Moner he was not interested and Moner responded that Principal Davis wanted him to cheat. Moner kept asking and eventually Hankerson said that he might help. He went to Moner’s office and Jacquelyn Parks, Karen Batiste, Milagros Moner, and Alma Keen were there with the tests. He saw them change answers but says he did not assist.

Other teachers at the school knew what was going on. Leslie Badger called him once and said that she knew they were changing CRCT answers in Moner’s office.

3. Milagros Moner (Testing Coordinator)

Milagros Moner was the Instructional Liaison Specialist in 2009 and was considered the “Assistant Principal” by many teachers and staff at the school. She was also the testing coordinator in 2009 and says she cheated in 2008 and 2009.

In 2008, during the week of testing, Principal Davis asked Moner to “check the tests to see how the students [are] doing.” Moner looked at some of the tests and told Davis that the students were not doing well. Davis told her to get others to help her “look over the tests.” She also directed Moner to bring some tests to her office. Moner recruited others over the course of a day. She asked Alma Keen, Tyrone Hankerson, Hardy Scott, Jacquelyn Parks, and Melba Smith because those teachers had been at Venetian Hills long enough to understand the culture of “do not tell.” Dr. Angela Bennett was in the room but Moner does not recall if Bennett erased answers. Moner put tests in tote bags and took them to Principal Davis’ office. Davis was concerned about leaving fingerprints so she put on gloves to erase answers. Moner helped Principal Davis change answers in her office. Just the two of them were present.

Principal Davis pressured the teachers to get CRCT scores up. She constantly threatened teachers with PDPs for low test scores. Everybody knows that being on a PDP means their jobs are in jeopardy. Principal Davis was a tyrant and the culture at Venetian Hills was basically “rule by fear.” Moner said, “Teachers are afraid of losing their jobs and teachers compel themselves to do whatever they need to do to make sure that they do not lose their jobs because their students don’t meet or don’t exceed on the CRCT. Everybody was in fear. It is not that the teachers are bad people and want to do it, it is that they are scared.”

SRT Executive Director Dr. Davis-Williams liked Principal Davis because she won lots of awards and made Dr. Davis-Williams look good. Furthermore, Dr. Davis-Williams had a style similar to Principal Davis. Neither were approachable. Teachers did not feel they could complain about their principal to Dr. Davis-Williams.

4. Melba Smith (Teacher)

Melba Smith taught fourth grade in 2009 and admitted to changing answers on tests in 2008 and 2009. In 2008, Milagros Moner asked Smith if she could stay after school and “look over the tests.” She suspected that Moner was asking her to stay after school to change answers and thought someone at Venetian Hills was cheating. She noticed over the years that some students could not read at their grade level but received high CRCT scores.

Principal Davis told Moner to change the tests. Smith changed answers each afternoon with Tyrone Hankerson, Alma Keen, Jacquelyn Parks, and Angela Bennett. Moner stayed in her office and helped the others. Hardy Scott was changing the tests, but alone in his classroom. Teachers Karen Batiste and Wendy Howard gave their students their answers while administering the test in their classrooms.

Smith told students to review a question when she saw they had marked an incorrect answer. Smith cheated because if the teachers did not have good test scores, the principal “would ride [their] back until [they] left.”

5. Hardy Scott (Teacher)

Hardy Scott admitted to cheating in 2009 and in several years prior. At the end of the testing day he would get his tests from Moner and would take them back to his classroom, shut the door, and change the answers.

6. Dr. Angela Bennett (Teacher)

Angela Bennett confessed to being in the room with the tests and pretending to change answers in 2009. Moner directed her to help change answers. Bennett believed she had to agree to change answers. She did not want to do it, so she sat in the room and pretended to erase answers. She said that Principal Davis knew what they were doing. Hankerson, Keen, Moner, and Parks were also in Moner’s office changing answers.

The teachers used answer keys to change the answers.

C. Testimony of Individuals Implicated

1. Dr. Clarietta Davis (Principal)

Principal Davis refused to answer our questions, by asserting her Fifth Amendment right not to incriminate herself. A list of the questions she refused to answer is included as **Attachment A**.

We monitored a conversation between a school official and Principal Davis. In this conversation Davis is told that the Governor’s investigator knew what happened at Venetian Hills. Davis did not deny that she cheated; instead, she acted surprised that anyone knew what happened. Principal Davis said that they were talking about too much and concluded the conversation.

In a meeting, one of the “chosen ones” told Davis that the Governor’s investigator “knows everything.” She specifically mentioned that Hardy Scott took tests home: “I don’t know how he [Governor’s investigator] knew that . . . It’s like he [Governor’s investigator] was in the room.” Davis did not question the teacher’s statement; instead, she asked, “What did the employees [at Venetian Hills] say?”

When the school official told Principal Davis that the investigators appeared to be “more interested in principals than in teachers,” Davis responded, “That must be why they’re waiting to interview me last.” The official told Principal Davis, “I am thinking about telling him what happened in that room because I am scared.” Davis asked, “So you gonna call the others’ [teachers involved in changing answers] names?”

The official continued to talk about how scared he/she was of criminal prosecution when Principal Davis said, “I still think this is all gonna come back to me.” The official said to Principal Davis that the Governor’s investigator talked to the interim principal Mrs. Robinson several times. Davis responded, “Mrs. Robinson doesn’t know anything.”

2. *Karen Batiste (Teacher)*

Karen Batiste denied cheating but said that she knew it was going on.

Batiste heard that there was a recording of Melba Smith giving her students the questions on the fifth grade writing test. Smith told her students they were questions that would appear on the test the next week.

Principal Davis told the teachers that they were not allowed to give children a failing grade. Batiste said Davis is the “meanest person you’ve ever met.” It is not fun being a teacher because it is all about the test. “Everything is about the test.” “I am glad [Governor Perdue’s] not letting go though . . . I’m glad he’s not letting go, because if [cheating] doesn’t stop now it’s going to continue.” “The school system, I don’t think they want to get to the bottom of this.”

**IV. ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE**

We conclude that Principal Clarietta Davis cheated, and directed others to cheat, on the CRCT from 2004 to 2009. Six teachers admitted that they altered test documents, or were in the room when others were altering test documents, and that Davis directly, or indirectly, ordered them to cheat. Davis erased answers, wearing gloves, in her office. We have listened to monitored conversations with Principal Davis. She does not deny her involvement. Finally, Principal Davis refused to answer our questions, asserting her Fifth Amendment right not to incriminate herself.

Milagros Moner, the testing coordinator, cheated on the CRCT at the direction of Principal Davis. She recruited trusted and veteran teachers to assist. Jacquelyn Parks, Tyrone Hankerson, Melba Smith, Hardy Scott, Alma Keen, and Angela Bennett cheated on the 2009 CRCT, and in other years. They changed tests for the entire school. Most teachers were aware of the cheating.



We further conclude that Principal Davis failed in her ultimate responsibility for testing activities and for ensuring the ethical administration of, and proper security for, the 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 CRCT. It is our conclusion, from the statistical data and the other evidence secured in this investigation, that Principal Davis failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT and adequately supervise testing activities and test security. This resulted in, and she is responsible for, falsifying, misrepresenting or erroneously reporting the results of the 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 CRCT to the Georgia Department of Education.

CLARIETTA DAVIS

You have information concerning cheating at your school on the 2009 CRCT test, don't you?

You are refusing to provide these investigators with that information, aren't you?

By cheating on the 2009 CRCT, you denied struggling students the help they needed to succeed?

You directed school employees to cheat on the 2009 CRCT, didn't you?

You coordinated cheating on the 2009 CRCT at your school, didn't you?

You facilitated the ability of school employees to cheat on the 2009 CRCT test, right?

You knew that school employees were cheating on the 2009 CRCT, didn't you?

You provided school employees with access to the student's CRCT tests so that these school employees could cheat?

You knew that teachers were providing student's with answers to the 2009 CRCT, didn't you?

You changed student's answers on the 2009 CRCT test, didn't you?

You did not report violations of testing protocol as you were required to do by Georgia law, did you?

In 2009, you were entrusted with ensuring that school employees act ethically?

Cheating is unethical isn't it?

You instructed your teachers to cheat on the 2009 CRCT didn't you?

You pressured your teachers to cheat on the 2009 CRCT didn't you?

You accepted bonus money from APS based on test scores you knew to be false?

Your school accepted federal money based in part on test scores you knew to be false?

By cheating on the CRCT you denied the State of Georgia an accurate assessment of your student's academic performance?

By cheating on the CRCT you denied the parents of your students an accurate assessment of their children's academic performance, didn't you?

By cheating on the CRCT, you denied the children in your care an accurate assessment of their own academic performance.

# GIDEONS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

897 Welch Street  
Atlanta, Georgia 30310

Principal: Armstead Salters  
Testing Coordinator: Sheridan Rogers

SRT-2 Executive Director: Michael Pitts

## **I. INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY**

Cheating occurred on the CRCT at Gideons Elementary in 2009 and in other years. Sixty people were interviewed at this school, some more than once. Twelve people confessed to cheating. Cheating at Gideons is evidenced by a high number of flagged classrooms, confessions, and witness testimony. Principal Armstead Salters confessed to knowing of cheating at Gideons. Testing Coordinator Sheridan Rogers confessed to cheating. Both Principal Salters and Testing Coordinator Rogers instructed witnesses to obstruct our investigation by directing them not to tell the truth in interviews.

## **II. STATISTICAL DATA**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Percentage of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	88.4	25.0
Number of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	61	18
Number of Teachers Flagged for WTR Standard Deviations above 3.0 (Number of Teachers Flagged in Multiple Subjects)	21(21)	11(5)
Mean WTR Standard Deviations from State Norm	15.2	4.9
High Flagged Standard Deviation	53.2	8.3
Low Flagged Standard Deviation	3.4	3.0

## **III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**

### **A. Narrative**

Since 2001, Principal Salters, Testing Coordinator Sheridan Rogers, and numerous teachers participated in a coordinated, school-wide cheating scheme. Principal Salters instructed certain teachers to see Rogers to change students' CRCT answer sheets. Rogers provided teachers with the students' CRCT answer sheets, the test booklets and answer key transparencies so the students' answers could be changed. Rogers instructed teachers to prepare answer keys on transparencies for the different versions of the CRCT. Teachers prepared the answer keys by taking the tests themselves and marking correct answers on transparency sheets. Teachers returned the completed answer keys to Rogers who distributed the answer keys and the students' CRCT answer sheets to other teachers. Teachers also prompted their students to change answers during the administration of the test.

Veteran teachers understood that changing students' CRCT answer sheets was expected at Gideons. They changed the answer sheets of the students taught by newer teachers until the new teacher was trusted to be brought into the cheating scheme. When they decided a new teacher was ready, veteran teachers instructed them to "go see Ms. Rogers and check your tests."

Not all teachers, veteran or new, participated in the cheating, but the scheme was an open secret at Gideons Elementary.

One group of teachers took their students' answer sheets to the home of a teacher and held a "changing party" over the weekend in Douglas County, Georgia. Other teachers changed their students' answer sheets after hours at school during the testing window.

Principal Salters obstructed this investigation when he instructed teachers not to cooperate. He said to them, "If anyone asks you anything about this just tell them you don't know. You did not. Stick with it." Principal Salters also told teachers to "just stick to the story and it will all go away." Sheridan Rogers told at least one teacher to not say anything to investigators about CRCT cheating.

B. Testimony of Witnesses

1. Oliver Banks (Teacher)

Oliver Banks admitted to changing answers on the 2008 and 2009 CRCT.

Principal Salters instructed Banks and other teachers to change answers on the 2008 and 2009 CRCT. Banks erased and changed answers in 2008 at Gideons with Bernadine Macon, Daisey Bowser, and Veronica Jordan. He also erased and changed answers on the 2009 CRCT at Bernadine Macon's home in Douglas County, Georgia over a weekend along with Macon, Bowser, Jordan, and Michael Walker.

Principal Salters saw Bowser, Jordan, Macon, and Banks erasing and changing answers at Gideons. Principal Salters asked Banks, "How is everything going?" He was referring to erasing and changing answers.

Principal Salters told Banks, Jordan, Macon, and Bowser, "If anyone asks you anything about this just tell them you don't know. You did not. Stick with it." He also said, "just stick to the story and it will all go away." Banks told Salters that he could not lie to the GBI. Salters replied, "They don't know anything about this. They are searchin'. Stick to the fact that y'all did not make any changes."

2. Daisey Bowser (Teacher)

Daisey Bowser admitted to changing answers on the 2009 CRCT. Sheridan Rogers gave Bowser CRCT test booklets, students' answer sheets and transparency answer keys. Using the materials provided by Rogers, Bowser erased and changed 2009 CRCT answer sheets at Macon's house with Jordan, Walker, and Banks.

3. Veronica Jordan (Teacher)

Veronica Jordan admitted to changing answers on the 2008 and 2009 CRCT.

Jordan testified that Principal Salters instructed teachers to report to Rogers to "check their tests," which was code for erasing answers. When teachers reported to Rogers, she gave

teachers CRCT answer sheets and answer keys to change the answers. Rogers instructed Jordan to prepare an “answer key” to one version of the CRCT by marking the correct answers on a blank transparency.

Jordan erased and changed CRCT answers in Rogers’ office in full view of Rogers. She also admitted to changing CRCT answers at Macon’s house along with Macon, Banks, and Walker.

Jordan testified that fourth grade teachers at Gideons also changed answers but could not provide details. Sheridan Rogers instructed Jordan not to say anything to investigators about CRCT cheating.

4. *Bernadine Macon (Teacher)*

Bernadine Macon admitted to changing CRCT answers at her home in Douglas County, Georgia and at the school.

Walker, Bowser, Banks, and Jordan all went to Macon’s home over a weekend and changed CRCT answers using answer sheet transparencies provided by Rogers. Macon also testified that Principal Salters called during this investigation to tell her to “hang in there” and that she would be “ok because she didn’t do anything.”

5. *Michael Walker (Paraprofessional)*

Michael Walker admitted to erasing and changing CRCT answers in 2009. Walker admitted to driving Banks to Macon’s house to change CRCT answers with Jordan, Macon, and Bowser.

6. *Tremelia Donaldson (Teacher)*

Tremelia Donaldson admitted to cheating on the 2009 CRCT. Principal Salters told her, “Do what you need to do. The kids have to pass.” Donaldson also testified that teachers at Gideons have erased and changed answers since 2001. She learned of the cheating conspiracy when Denethia Weddington-Ward told Donaldson “go see Rogers to check your tests.” This was code for erasing and changing answers. When she “went to see” Rogers, Rogers gave her CRCT test booklets, students’ answer sheets, and nineteen transparency answer keys, one for each test form. The transparencies consisted of clear sheets of plastic normally used for overhead projectors, with the correct answers to the 2009 CRCT written on them in marker. Donaldson used these materials provided by Rogers to erase and change students’ answer sheets in her classroom at Gideons after school.

7. *Denethia Weddington-Ward (Teacher)*

Denethia Weddington-Ward admitted to erasing and changing students’ answer sheets, both those of her students and those of other teachers.

Weddington-Ward told LaTonya Washington to “go get her tests and answer sheets” from Rogers to erase and change answer sheets. She believes Washington did so. Rogers gave

Weddington-Ward both her own and other teachers' students' test booklets, answer sheets, and transparencies with the correct answers to use in erasing and changing answer sheets.

We monitored a telephone call between Weddington-Ward and Rogers where Rogers admitted to giving answer sheets to teachers, but denied knowing what the teachers did with them. When asked about the current location of the answer sheet transparencies and whether she destroyed them, Rogers said she "got rid of them," and that she "could legitimize them as teaching aides."

8. Cheryl Hunt (Teacher)

Cheryl Hunt admitted to erasing and changing answers in Rogers' office and in her own classroom in 2009, and in other years. Rogers gave Hunt test booklets and students' answer sheets, as well as transparencies with answers to the CRCT. Hunt stated that Donaldson, Weddington-Ward, Washington and Neely changed CRCT answers.

9. Irene Ellerbe (Teacher)

Irene Ellerbe admitted to prompting students to change their answers during the CRCT. Irene Ellerbe asked students "are you sure this is what you want to put down?" multiple times. In response to her prompting, students erased their answers and changed them to the correct answer.

C. Testimony of Individuals Implicated

1. Sheridan Rogers (Testing Coordinator)

Rogers admitted to giving test booklets and answer sheets to teachers after Principal Salters instructed her to do so. She denied any knowledge of answer key transparencies but stated that blank transparencies were used as teaching aides. Multiple teachers testified that they received answer keys from Rogers.

On February 22, 2011, we monitored a phone call between Rogers and Denethia Weddington-Ward. During this call, Weddington-Ward brought up the transparencies by asking Rogers what she did with them and informing Rogers that investigators were aware of the transparencies. Rogers responded by saying that she got rid of the transparencies and that she could "[l]egitimize those as teaching aides."

2. Camille Neely (Teacher)

Camille Neely stated that Rogers gave her answer sheet transparencies, but she did not use them because her students did well on the CRCT in 2009. All of Neely's classes were flagged with standard deviations from the state-wide norms being 9.6 for reading, 5.7 for language arts and 3.4 for math. She was unable to explain why her students would have been so far above the state-wide norms for wrong-to-right erasures.

3. Armstead Salters (Principal)

Principal Salters admitted to knowing that Rogers and teachers at Gideons cheated on the CRCT. He did nothing to stop it. He denied directing Sheridan Rogers, or any teacher, to cheat. He also denied instructing his teachers not to cooperate with this investigation. Salters acknowledged that Gideons was his school and that he was responsible for the cheating that went on there. He denied his involvement in cheating, except to the extent he knew it was occurring.

Principal Salters testified that he never told SRT-2 Executive Director Michael Pitts or Dr. Beverly Hall that teachers at Gideons cheated. Principal Salters testified that although he met with Dr. Hall after the Blue Ribbon Commission Report was issued, Hall never asked him if teachers at Gideons cheated.

Principal Salters met with Pitts in December of 2008 to tell him that he intended to retire. SRT-3 Executive Director Pitts told him that “a scandal was brewing,” and requested he put off his retirement until after the scandal. Principal Salters agreed.

4. LaTonya Washington (Teacher)

LaTonya Washington testified that she received answer sheets and transparencies from Sheridan Rogers, but did not use them to erase students’ answers. She stated that her students did well on the 2009 CRCT and she did not need to cheat. None of Washington’s classes were flagged by GOSA for abnormally high wrong-to-right erasures.

D. Testimony of Additional Witnesses

1. Dr. Beverly Hall (Superintendent)

When Dr. Hall met with Principal Salters after the Blue Ribbon Commission Report she asked him if cheating occurred at Gideons, and he replied “I don’t know,” instead of denying cheating occurred. When we interviewed Dr. Hall, she said that she did not believe teachers in APS cheated, but that she “sure would like to know what happened at Gideons.”

**IV. ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE**

We conclude a school-wide conspiracy to erase and change students CRCT answer sheets occurred at Gideons in 2008, 2009, and other years. We conclude that Principal Salters and Sheridan Rogers orchestrated this school-wide effort to erase and change students’ answer sheets and ordered teachers to lie to the GBI. We conclude that Irene Ellerbe cheated on the 2009 CRCT test. We conclude that third grade teachers Tremelia Donaldson, Cheryl Hunt, Camille Neely, and Denethia Weddington-Ward erased and changed students’ CRCT answer sheets at the school in 2008 and 2009. We further conclude that fifth grade teachers Oliver Banks, Daisey Bowser, Bernadine Macon, Veronica Jordan and Michael Walker erased and changed students’ CRCT answer sheets at the school in 2008, and at Macon’s house in Douglas County in 2009.

Based on the statistical evidence and the evidence we have found at schools with similar statistical data, we believe that the teachers in other grade levels also cheated, but we lack sufficient evidence to determine which additional teachers cheated.

It is also our conclusion, from the statistical data and the other evidence that Principal Armstead Salters failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT, and adequately supervise testing and test security. This resulted in, and he is responsible for, falsifying, misrepresenting or erroneously reporting the results of the 2009 CRCT to the Georgia Department of Education.



# **KENNEDY MIDDLE SCHOOL**

225 Griffin St. NW  
Atlanta, GA 30314-3917

Principal: Dr. Lucious Brown  
Testing Coordinator: Tanya Green

SRT-1 Executive Director: Dr. Sharon Davis-Williams

## **I. INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY**

Cheating occurred on the CRCT at Kennedy Middle in 2009. Fifty people were interviewed at this school, some more than once. One person confessed to cheating on the 2009 CRCT. Cheating at Kennedy is evidenced by a high number of flagged classrooms, a confession and witness testimony. Principal Brown answered all questions asked of him during his first interview, but then refused to answer our questions in his second interview by asserting his Fifth Amendment rights. Principal Brown failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT.

## **II. STATISTICAL DATA**

### **A. 2009 vs. 2010**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Percentage of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	53.2	6
Number of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	42	5
Number of Teachers Flagged for WTR Standard Deviations above 3.0 (Number of Teachers Flagged in Multiple Subjects)	22(13)	4(1)
Mean WTR Standard Deviations from State Norm	7.8	3.6
High Flagged Standard Deviation	25.8	3.9
Low Flagged Standard Deviation	3.1	3

B. Flagged Classrooms

Teacher	Grade & Test	Standard Deviation
BROWN	6 RD	5.089088174
BROWN	6 MA	5.117179761
CHAMPION	6 RD	15.04780325
CHAMPION	6 LA	5.546467781
CHAMPION	6 MA	8.753403409
CURRAN	6 RD	7.324830923
JEFFERSON	6 RD	15.32740273
JEFFERSON	6 LA	4.929384429
JOHNSON	6 RD	10.1809325
JOHNSON	6 LA	6.309160842
JOHNSON	6 MA	7.421849417
MCEACHERN	6 RD	9.344362535
MCEACHERN	6 LA	8.097544447
MCEACHERN	6 MA	5.277854699
P JACKSON	6 RD	11.240114
P JACKSON	6 LA	6.094625784
P JACKSON	6 MA	8.104675596
WILLIS	6 RD	7.793203967
WILLIS	6 MA	3.071301497
ALEXANDER	7 RD	4.89332047
ALEXANDER	7 LA	3.806064018
ALEXANDER	7 MA	19.64457009
EDWARDS	7 MA	25.76111746
KIEL	7 MA	5.31374061
MACK	7 RD	10.07194437
MACK	7 LA	11.40441189
MACK	7 MA	12.40487778
PARKER	7 LA	3.676303193
PARKER	7 MA	7.375069176
CRAWFORD	8 MA	3.505275347
DAVIS	8 MA	3.53922506
EASTERLING	8 RD	9.535627614
EASTERLING	8 MA	7.788329721
ELLIS	8 MA	7.774976862
EVANS	8 RD	3.231092674
EVANS	8 MA	4.527173489
LANDRUM	8 MA	7.400048393
LOVETT	8 MA	4.386037999
RAGLAND	8 MA	4.582951024
VINCENT	8 RD	4.805024492
VINCENT	8 LA	3.819640899
VINCENT	8 MA	6.880745321

III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

A. Overview

There are several facts which point to the conclusion that Kennedy Middle School was not managed to ensure that the 2009 CRCT results were accurately reported.

First, the percentage of flagged classrooms is 53.2% for the 2009 CRCT. With state monitors present in 2010, the percentage of flagged classrooms dropped significantly from 53.2% to 6%.

Second, of the approximately 1,800 non-APS schools in the state taking the 2009 CRCT, only four schools had a higher percentage of flagged classrooms than Kennedy Middle School.

Third, of the 42 flagged classrooms at Kennedy 29 (69% of the total) had standard deviations that exceeded five, and nine classrooms exceeded ten standard deviations. At five standard deviations, the probability that the number of wrong-to-right erasures occurred without adult intervention, or cheating, is no better than one in a million. At ten standard deviations the probability is no better than one in a trillion. This signifies that the deviations from the state mean were, for a number of classrooms, a strong indication of cheating on a broad scale at Kennedy Middle School.

Fourth is the individual student wrong-to-right (WTR) erasure analysis. Of the WTR erasures, 85.1% were produced by the flagged classrooms which account for only 53.2% of total classrooms in the school.

Fifth, Principal Lucious Brown directed and participated in an organized scheme to erase and change students' test answer documents. When he was subpoenaed by us, he refused to answer questions about his knowledge of, or participation in, cheating and asserted his Fifth Amendment rights.

Finally, Principal Brown intimidated witnesses in this investigation by requiring the teachers and staff at Kennedy Middle School to meet with his personal criminal defense attorney at school, during school hours.

## B. Narrative

In 2009, Principal Lucious Brown, School Improvement Specialist Dr. Tameka Goodson, Secretary Carol Dennis, and Barbara McDaniel participated in a coordinated cheating scheme. These women moved from West Fulton with Principal Brown when he became Principal at Kennedy in 2007. Brown directed these individuals to check the students' tests and "make them right" so that the school could meet targets. Although no evidence exists that Principal Brown personally erased answers, he was present when Dennis, Goodson and McDaniel carried out his directive. Moreover, one witness observed Principal Brown carrying tests from the vault to the conference room after the test period ended for the day. After testing ended, Principal Brown, Dennis, Goodson and Barbara McDaniel carried the tests from the "vault" into the conference room or Principal Brown's office and changed student answers on the test. Only Principal Brown and his secretary, Carol Dennis, had keys to the vault where the tests were stored.

## C. Testimony of Witnesses

### 1. *Barbara McDaniel (Teacher)*

Following the first or second day of the administration of the CRCT in 2009, Carol Dennis, Principal Brown's secretary, summoned Barbara McDaniel and Dr. Tameka Goodson to the conference room where Dr. Brown and Ms. Dennis were located. Dennis asked McDaniel and Goodson to stay until 4:00 or 5:00 and help change CRCT answer sheets. Dennis explained that a certain percentage of the tests needed to be "checked" and made right. McDaniel told them she would have to think about it because she knew what they were doing was wrong.

McDaniel described Principal Brown as “like a son to her.” She wanted to talk with her husband about what she was asked to do, but knew he would tell her not to cheat. She wanted to help Principal Brown. She did not ask her husband.

On the third or fourth day of testing, after the students left school, Dennis, Goodson and McDaniel stayed at school until approximately 11:00 p.m. to finish changing answers. Principal Brown was in the room while the others changed answers. McDaniel was ashamed of what they had done.

2. Michelle Hayes (Teacher)

Michelle Hayes stated that she had no direct knowledge of cheating. However, she noted that students who could not read would often meet or exceed expectations on the reading portion of the CRCT. Hayes confronted Principal Brown about this discrepancy in June 2009, but he did not give her any explanation. In the fall of 2009, Principal Brown suddenly transferred Hayes to Brown Middle School.

3. Tiffany Edwards (Teacher)

Tiffany Edwards heard there was cheating at Kennedy and that Principal Brown and his friends were involved. Teachers talked about the unrealistic jump in math scores. Edwards heard students talking about teachers giving answers. She does not recall the students’ names. Some teachers complained that their answer sheets were returned to them in a different order than the teacher left them the day before.

4. Michelle Bowman (Teacher)

Principal Brown ordered teachers to meet with his personal criminal defense attorney in his office at the school during school hours.

5. Francesca Favors (Office Clerk)

Francesca Favors stated that during the 2009 CRCT, Tanya Green, the Testing Coordinator, returned tests to the vault and locked the door. However, Favors observed Dennis, Principal Brown, Dr. Goodson and Morris going in and out of the vault during the day. Only Principal Brown and Dennis kept a key to the locked room.

6. Tanya Green (Testing Coordinator)

Tanya Green denied cheating. She did not have a key to the vault where tests were stored. Only Principal Brown and Dennis kept that key.

7. Matthew Hall (Teacher)

Matthew Hall reported that during test week, Principal Brown ordered everyone to leave the school by 4:00 p.m. and cancelled after-school activities.

8. Margo Morris (Attendance Clerk)

Margo Morris stated that during the 2009 CRCT, Dennis pulled her into her office and asked Morris to sharpen the pencils. At that time, Morris saw Principal Brown, Barbara McDaniel, Dr. Goodson and Dennis in the conference room. Morris heard Ms. Favors say “y’all think I’m stupid. I know y’all are back there with those tests.”

9. Rosalin Triplett (Teacher)

During the 2009 CRCT, Triplett’s students raised their hands and reported that their answers from the previous day had been changed. She reported this to Tanya Green who told Principal Brown. Finley, another teacher, told Triplett that everything in her test containers was in disarray when she got it back. Triplett witnessed a confrontation between Principal Brown and teacher Michelle Hayes. Hayes asked Principal Brown how some of her students could have passed the CRCT. Principal Brown said “I’m not going to talk about it.” Triplett believes Principal Brown subsequently fired Hayes. Triplett reported that while the GBI was at the school, Margo Morris was moved from the front office and into a hallway. Triplett overheard a group of students say that their teacher, Willis, helped them on the test.

10. Robin Banks (Teacher)

During the 2008 CRCT, Ms. Robin Banks went to pick up her tests from the testing coordinator one morning toward the middle of the test week. She noticed that one of her test answer booklets was missing, so she went to report it to Dr. Brown. When she got back to the room where the tests were stored, the book was sitting beside the box. Dr. Brown wanted her to believe it was just an oversight on her part.

D. Testimony of Individuals Implicated

1. Dr. Lucious Brown (Principal)

When confronted with evidence of his involvement in changing answers, Principal Lucious Brown denied cheating. When he was subpoenaed for an additional interview, he refused to answer questions about his participation in, or knowledge of, cheating and asserted his Fifth Amendment right not to incriminate himself.

2. Carol Dennis (Secretary)

Carol Dennis denied participating in, or having any knowledge of, cheating.

3. Dr. Tameka Goodson (Instructional Coach)

Dr. Tameka Goodson denied any participation in or knowledge of cheating. The GBI confronted Ms. Goodson with evidence of her involvement in cheating and advised her that lying to a law enforcement agent was a felony, but if she told the truth she would be offered immunity. Goodson said she wanted to “make a statement,” but wanted an attorney present. Goodson was given that opportunity, but failed to return with her attorney. The Special Investigators ultimately served Ms. Goodson with another subpoena. Despite her previous representation that

she would like to give a statement to the GBI, during her interview with the Special Investigators, with her attorney present, Ms. Goodson denied any involvement in or knowledge of cheating.

E. Other Evidence

- In 2006-2007, the State placed Kennedy Middle on a “Needs Improvement” list for repeated failure to meet AYP.
- In 2007-2008, Principal Lucious Brown’s first year at Kennedy, math scores jumped in every grade and Kennedy not only made AYP, but met 83% of its targets.
- In 2008-2009, the state removed Kennedy from the Needs Improvement list.

**IV. ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE**

We conclude that Principal Lucious Brown, Dr. Tameka Goodson, Carol Dennis and Barbara McDaniel conspired to erase and change student answer sheets on the 2009 CRCT.

We further conclude that Principal Brown failed in his ultimate responsibility for testing activities and for ensuring the ethical administration of, and proper security for, the 2009 CRCT. It is our conclusion, from the statistical data and the other evidence secured in this investigation, that Principal Brown failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT and adequately supervise testing activities and test security. This resulted in, and he is responsible for, falsifying, misrepresenting or erroneously reporting the results of the 2009 CRCT to the Georgia Department of Education.

# F.L. STANTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1625 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive  
Atlanta, Georgia 30314-2207

Principal: Dr. Marlo Barber  
Testing Coordinator: Arthurline Taylor

SRT-4 Executive Director: Tamara Cotman

## **I. INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY**

Cheating occurred on the CRCT at F.L. Stanton Elementary in 2009. Twenty-two people were interviewed at F.L. Stanton, some more than once. One teacher confessed to cheating. Cheating at F.L. Stanton is evidenced by a high number of flagged classrooms, a confession, witness testimony, and Principal Marlo Barber's refusal to answer questions about cheating. Principal Barber failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT.

## **II. STATISTICAL DATA**

### A. 2009 vs. 2010

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Percentage of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	83.3	7.1
Number of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	35	3
Number of Teachers Flagged for WTR Standard Deviations above 3.0 (Number of Teachers Flagged in Multiple Subjects)	13(12)	3(0)
Mean WTR Standard Deviations from State Norm	12.1	5.2
High Flagged Standard Deviation	24.4	7.4
Low Flagged Standard Deviation	3	3.4

B. Flagged Classrooms

Teacher	Grade & Test	Standard Deviation
FOSTER	1 RD	6.286587288
HILL	1 RD	7.500066144
HILL	1 LA	10.44392629
HILL	1 MA	8.66682616
DURR	2 RD	5.41699529
DURR	2 LA	5.552714374
DURR	2 MA	4.387625289
GOSHA	2 LA	3.047853543
GOSHA	2 MA	7.146005432
MOODY	2 LA	8.730602629
MOODY	2 MA	6.292689078
BULLOCK	3 RD	5.986352294
BULLOCK	3 LA	7.839884187
BULLOCK	3 MA	9.484205905
WAGNER	3 RD	14.13076082
WAGNER	3 LA	13.30066687
WAGNER	3 MA	14.3635691
WILSON	3 RD	9.837047618
WILSON	3 LA	9.282695136
WILSON	3 MA	4.869839776
CONLEY	4 RD	20.87167223
CONLEY	4 LA	16.54364876
CONLEY	4 MA	14.10174659
CURLEY	4 RD	10.53598496
CURLEY	4 LA	13.361446
CURLEY	4 MA	13.00004071
GAUSE	4 RD	23.58719127
GAUSE	4 LA	14.54204378
GAUSE	4 MA	18.98069243
EDWARDS	5 RD	15.71063404
EDWARDS	5 LA	11.36015746
EDWARDS	5 MA	20.94304662
MCRAE JONES	5 RD	20.73790807
MCRAE JONES	5 LA	24.41721866
MCRAE JONES	5 MA	20.77030433

III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

A. Overview

There are several facts which point to the conclusion that F.L. Stanton Elementary School was not managed in a way that ensured the 2009 CRCT results were accurately reported.

First, the percentage of flagged classrooms is 83.3% for the 2009 CRCT. There were only three schools in APS with a higher percentage in 2009.

Second, of the approximately 1,800 non-APS schools in the state taking the 2009 CRCT, no school had a higher percentage of flagged classrooms than F.L. Stanton Elementary School.

Third, with state monitors present in 2010, the percentage of flagged classrooms dropped sharply, from 83.3% to 7.1%.

Fourth, of the 35 flagged classrooms at F.L. Stanton Elementary School, 32 (91% of the total) had standard deviations that exceeded five, and 19 classrooms exceeded ten standard deviations. At five standard deviations, the probability that the number of erasures occurred without adult intervention, or cheating, is no better than one in a million. At ten standard



deviations the probability is no better than one in a trillion. This signifies that the deviations from the state mean were, for a number of classrooms, a strong indication of cheating on a broad scale at F.L. Stanton Elementary School.

Fifth, is the individual student wrong-to-right (WTR) erasure analysis, which compares the number of WTR erasures to the total erasures for each student by subject. Of the WTR erasures at F.L. Stanton, 95.3% were produced by the flagged classrooms, which account for only 83.3% of the total classrooms in the school.

#### B. Narrative

In 2009, Principal Marlo Barber and Theresa Bell remained at the school after hours and erased and changed student answers on the CRCT from wrong to right. Principal Barber and Bell had a very close relationship. Bell frequently acted as Principal Barber's representative in her absence.

Three separate witnesses saw Principal Barber's and Bell's cars at the school after hours during test week and thought it was unusual. One of those teachers noticed that her test documents were not in the same order as they had been when she turned them in to the testing coordinator the previous day.

Bell denied she was at school after hours, and produced documents showing she was not there on some days. Bell did not deny cheating, but instead stated that she was afraid of losing her teaching certificate. Principal Barber refused to answer questions and asserted her Fifth Amendment right not to incriminate herself.

One teacher confessed that during the test she prompted a student using a non-verbal signal if she noticed the student had a wrong answer.

#### C. Testimony of Witnesses

##### 1. Christi Giddens (Teacher)

Christi Giddens stated that she observed Theresa Bell staying late during test week and thought it was unusual. Giddens recalled that on one occasion during testing when she picked up her tests in the morning, they were in a different order than when she turned them in the day before. Giddens denied providing answers to students or erasing answers, but admitted that she would signal when she noticed a student had a wrong answer.

##### 2. Julian Daniels (Teacher)

Julian Daniels observed Barber and Bell staying late after testing. Daniels thought this situation was highly unusual.

##### 3. Bonita Summons (Teacher)

Bonita Summons observed Barber and Bell staying late after testing. Summons stated she thought this situation was highly unusual.

4. Dr. Arthurline Taylor (Testing Coordinator)

Dr. Taylor stated that the tests were stored in a secondary room inside the principal's office. Prior to 2010, the secondary room did not have a lock on it.

D. Testimony of Individuals Implicated

1. Dr. Marlo Barber (Principal)

Principal Barber refused to answer our questions and asserted her Fifth Amendment rights in response to all questions posed to her, including questions as to whether she participated in, directed or knew about cheating on the CRCT at F.L. Stanton. She also refused to answer when asked about staying at the school with Theresa Bell after hours during testing week in 2009. A copy of the questions Principal Barber refused to answer is attached hereto as **Attachment A**.

2. Theresa Bell (Testing Facilitator)

Theresa Bell referred to herself as the "testing facilitator." She worked very closely with Principal Barber, attended meetings in her place and acted as her representative. Ms. Bell initially denied participating in, or having knowledge of, cheating. However, during a second interview at the school, the GBI confronted her with the allegation that witnesses saw her car and Dr. Barber's car at the school after hours during test week. Bell became visibly shaken.

Bell did not deny cheating, but stated that she was "afraid of losing [her] teaching certificate." The GBI informed Bell that she should tell the truth about what happened during the 2008-2009 CRCT, and Bell again stated that she was "afraid of losing her certification." Ms. Bell was given a subpoena for a third interview. She retained an attorney and during the third interview produced ATM receipts and medical records indicating that she was not present at the school after hours on some days.

E. Other Evidence

CRCT scores at F.L. Stanton declined in 2010 for first, third, fourth, and fifth grades.

**IV. ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE**

We conclude that Christi Giddens cheated on the 2009 CRCT by telling students when they had a wrong answer. We further conclude that Principal Marlo Barber and Theresa Bell erased and changed student answer sheets after the tests were concluded each day and after school hours.

Principal Marlo Barber failed in her ultimate responsibility for testing activities and for ensuring the ethical administration of, and proper security for the 2009 CRCT. It is our conclusion, from the statistical data and the other evidence secured in this investigation, that Principal Barber failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT and adequately supervise testing activities and test security. This resulted in, and she is responsible for, falsifying, misrepresenting or erroneously reporting the results of the 2009 CRCT to the Georgia Department of Education.

**MARLO BARBER**

You have information concerning cheating at your school on the 2009 CRCT test, don't you?

You are refusing to provide these investigators with that information, aren't you?

You directed school employees to cheat on the 2009 CRCT, didn't you?

You coordinated cheating on the 2009 CRCT at your school, didn't you?

You facilitated the ability of school employees to cheat on the 2009 CRCT test, right?

You knew that school employees were cheating on the 2009 CRCT, didn't you?

You provided school employees with access to the student's CRCT tests so that these school employees could cheat?

You knew that teachers were providing student's with answers to the 2009 CRCT, didn't you?

You changed student's answers on the 2009 CRCT test, didn't you?

In 2009, you were entrusted with ensuring that school employees act ethically?

Cheating is unethical isn't it?

You instructed your teachers to cheat on the 2009 CRCT didn't you?

You pressured your teachers to cheat on the 2009 CRCT didn't you?

You accepted bonus money from APS based on test scores you knew to be false?

Your school accepted federal money based in part on test scores you knew to be false?

By cheating on the CRCT you denied the State of Georgia an accurate assessment of your student's academic performance?

By cheating CRCT you denied the parents of your students an accurate assessment of their children's academic performance?

By cheating on the CRCT, you denied the children in your care an accurate assessment of their own academic performance.

# **PERKERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

2040 Brewer Blvd.  
Atlanta, GA 30315

Principal: Dr. Mable Johnson  
Testing Coordinator: Tony Allen

SRT-1 Executive Director: Dr. Sharon Davis-Williams

## **I. INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY**

Cheating occurred on the CRCT at Perkerson Elementary in 2009. Forty-seven people were interviewed at this school, some more than once. Cheating at Perkerson is evidenced by a high number of flagged classrooms, witness testimony, and Principal Mable Johnson's refusal to answer questions about cheating. Principal Johnson was voluntarily interviewed one time. When questioned for a second time, Johnson invoked her Fifth Amendment rights to every question asked of her. Johnson failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT.

## **II. STATISTICAL DATA**

### **A. 2009 vs. 2010**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Percentage of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	66.7	7
Number of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	48	4
Number of Teachers Flagged for WTR Standard Deviations above 3.0 (Number of Teachers Flagged in Multiple Subjects)	21(17)	2(1)
Mean WTR Standard Deviations from State Norm	10.6	4.2
High Flagged Standard Deviation	20.3	5.2
Low Flagged Standard Deviation	3.7	3.3

B. Flagged Classrooms

Teachers	Grades & Test	Standard Deviation
ALAMUTU	1 RD	8.365568365
ALAMUTU	1 LA	6.574424292
ALAMUTU	1 MA	9.106573403
LEWIS	1 RD	8.916466874
LEWIS	1 LA	8.711163427
LEWIS	1 MA	8.597585527
MACK	1 RD	6.132385614
MACK	1 LA	5.00774642
PUCKETT	1 RD	9.733870686
PUCKETT	1 LA	9.037050626
PUCKETT	1 MA	11.5915851
JEFFERSON	2 RD	14.18133963
JEFFERSON	2 LA	9.483542231
JEFFERSON	2 MA	12.43892961
MATHIS	2 RD	11.06323561
MATHIS	2 LA	9.954272787
MATHIS	2 MA	5.195483394
WAY	2 RD	12.28624396
WAY	2 LA	6.964563335
WAY	2 MA	10.41366695
EDWARDS	3 RD	5.931015202
HOLLOWAY	3 RD	12.29778189
HOLLOWAY	3 MA	4.176565426
JEMISON	3 RD	9.028582779
JEMISON	3 LA	6.267767815
JEMISON	3 MA	6.798387298
MUWANDI	3 RD	9.964211081
MUWANDI	3 LA	7.926227511
MUWANDI	3 MA	7.443704649
SHORTER	3 RD	20.27421538
SHORTER	3 LA	16.51745073
SHORTER	3 MA	18.75781028
BLAKE	4 RD	16.26859827
BUTLER	4 RD	18.51564608
TANNER	4 RD	20.14382621
WILLIAMS, D	5 RD	16.65595403
WILLIAMS, D	5 MA	11.51391888
DAVIS	5 RD	12.27913871
DAVIS	5 MA	11.36464914
DEAS	5 RD	10.35042432
DEAS	5 MA	8.971351964
WILLIAMS, P	5 RD	18.29664333
WILLIAMS, P	5 MA	11.1196125
THOMAS	5 RD	14.01911714
THOMAS	5 MA	10.02938701
TOOKES	5 RD	10.86346983
TOOKES	5 LA	3.707339187
TOOKES	5 MA	4.40641695

III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

A. Overview

There are several facts which point to the conclusion that Perkerson Elementary School was not managed to ensure that the 2009 CRCT results were accurately reported to the Georgia Department of Education.

First, the percentage of flagged classrooms was 66.7% for the 2009 CRCT. There were only ten schools in APS with a higher percentage that year.

Second, of the approximately 1,800 non-APS schools in the state taking the 2009 CRCT, only two had a higher percentage of flagged classrooms than Perkerson.

Third, with state monitors present in 2010, the percentage of flagged classrooms dropped from 66.7% to 7%.

Fourth, of the 48 flagged classrooms at Perkerson, 45 (93.8% of the total) had standard deviations that exceeded five and 23 classrooms exceeded ten standard deviations. At five standard deviations, the probability that the number of erasures occurred without adult intervention, or cheating, is no better than one in a million. At ten standard deviations, the probability is no better than one in a trillion. This signifies that the deviations from the state mean were, for a number of classrooms, a strong indication of cheating on a broad scale at Perkerson.

Fifth is the individual student wrong-to-right (WTR) erasure analysis. Of the WTR erasures at Perkerson, 91% were produced by the flagged classrooms which account for only 66.7% of the total classrooms in the school.

Last, Principal Johnson condoned cheating at Perkerson. Dr. James Boyce told her about cheating at her school and she did nothing. SRT-1 Executive Director Sharon Davis-Williams also knew, and she instructed Dr. Boyce to cover up the cheating. Moreover, Principal Johnson refused to answer our questions about cheating, and invoked her Fifth Amendment right to remain silent in response to direct questions from us.

## B. Testimony of Witnesses

### 1. *Dr. James Boyce (Education Specialist)*

Dr. Boyce worked for Dr. Sharon Davis-Williams at School Reform Team 1. He monitored testing at Perkerson during the 2009 CRCT. Dr. Boyce witnessed several teachers giving students the right answers during the testing period. He could not recall the names of any of the teachers other than LaShaine Blake. He was certain Blake was prompting her students. (Blake's fourth grade reading class was flagged with a standard deviation of 16.3.) Dr. Boyce told Principal Johnson about the prompting and she "blew him off." Dr. Boyce noted these discrepancies on testing forms, but said Davis-Williams instructed him to improperly change the forms. Dr. Boyce saw the testing coordinator, Tony Allen, by himself with the tests on multiple occasions.

### 2. *Patricia Williams (Teacher)*

Patricia Williams was a fifth grade teacher in 2009. Her reading and math classes were flagged with standard deviations of 18 and 11 respectively. She would collect the tests in a specific order at the end of the day. Williams stated that the tests would be in a different order when they came back to her the next morning. She says that Principal Johnson did not tell the teachers how the students scored in 2009, which she felt was highly unusual. Principal Johnson

directed the teachers to give investigators from the Blue Ribbon Commission reasons why the students did well on the tests. Johnson provided the teachers with explanations for the high scores, such as school instructional programs. Williams admitted that she erased stray marks. She was surprised that numerous “at risk” students passed the CRCT in 2009.

3. Shaun Lewis (Teacher)

Shaun Lewis was a first grade teacher for the 2009 CRCT. In 2009, the tests were kept in a conference room next to Principal Johnson’s office. At the first staff meeting of the 2008-2009 school year, Johnson posted the prior year’s CRCT scores for all teachers to see. This embarrassed some teachers based on their student’s performance. Lewis said that first grade teachers were surprised that some of their students passed. Most first grade teachers thought answers were changed by either Johnson, Testing Coordinator Tony Allen or at the Brewer Center when the tests were returned.

4. Jocelyn Mack (Teacher)

During the 2009 CRCT, Jocelyn Mack was a first grade teacher. Her reading and language arts classes were flagged for high wrong-to-right erasures with standard deviations of six and five. Principal Johnson asked Mack if she wanted her tests early. Mack received her tests by 7:00 a.m., when they normally were not distributed until 8:15 a.m. Mack also was told to erase stray marks, but was not comfortable doing so. Tony Allen erased stray marks for Mack and other teachers.

Mack was surprised that two of her students passed the 2009 CRCT. One student sat under a table, then randomly filled in answers and still passed. There was a student Mack wanted to keep in first grade at the request of the student’s parent. Johnson said the student had to be promoted to second grade because the student passed the CRCT. Several students passed first grade reading but are now struggling to read in the third grade. Everyone at the school was afraid of Johnson.

5. Edia Andrews (Teacher)

Edia Andrews was a second grade teacher during the 2009 CRCT. She said Tony Allen and Principal Johnson erased stray marks so the teachers did not have to. She heard that Johnson or Allen changed the students’ answers. None of Andrews’ classes were flagged for high wrong-to-right erasures.

6. Olufunke Oyebanjo Alamuta (Teacher)

Olufunke Oyebanjo Alamuta was a first grade teacher in 2009. All three of Alamuta’s classes were flagged in reading, language arts and math with standard deviations of 8.3, 6.5 and 9.1. Alamuta picked up his tests early each morning from Principal Johnson and Tony Allen and erased stray marks. He was surprised that children with disabilities received high scores.

7. Crystal Cleveland-Thomas (Teacher)

Crystal Cleveland-Thomas was a fifth grade teacher during the 2009 CRCT. She had two subjects flagged in reading and math with standard deviations of fourteen and ten. She received her tests early each morning from Principal Johnson and Tony Allen. Cleveland-Thomas erased stray marks as she was instructed to do and was surprised when some students passed.

8. Marcus Bishop (Paraprofessional)

Marcus Bishop was a paraprofessional for kindergarten during the 2009 CRCT and did not participate in testing. He heard teachers talking about behavior problems during testing days but yet these students had abnormally high test scores.

9. Alicia Booker-Duradia (Paraprofessional)

Alicia Booker-Duradia was a kindergarten paraprofessional during 2009 CRCT testing. She said Principal Johnson changed the testing procedures in 2009 by not requiring proctors in the testing room, instead using hall monitors. Booker-Duradia was surprised at the high test scores posted due to the amount behavioral problems. Previous principal Dr. Rowe was forced to resign because of low test scores.

10. The following people testified that they generally had no knowledge of cheating but that there were one or more students in their class whose passing scores surprised them.

Robin Holloway (third grade teacher); Dorcas Muwandi (third grade teacher); Keyaneshia Tanner (fourth grade teacher); Gloria McCullough-Wright (fifth grade teacher); and Carla Davis (fifth grade teacher).

C. Testimony of Individuals Implicated

1. Mable Johnson (Principal)

Principal Mable Johnson was interviewed the first time with her counsel present and she answered questions. The 2008-2009 school year was her first at Perkerson after transferring to Perkerson from Tullwater Elementary School. Tullwater closed the previous year. She denied any knowledge of cheating on the CRCT test. Only Tony Allen and Johnson had access to the tests after they were collected from the teachers. She once saw Allen by himself in the room where the tests were stored. If answers were changed, it would have been done by Allen, although Johnson did not think he would change student's answers. She trusts Allen. Johnson had no explanation for the high number of erasures.

During her second interview, Principal Johnson invoked her Fifth Amendment rights and refused to answer all the questions asked. A copy of the questions she refused to answer is included as **Attachment A**.



2. Tony Allen (Testing Coordinator)

Tony Allen was the testing coordinator for Perkerson during the 2009 CRCT and was interviewed twice during the investigation. He answered all questions asked of him during both interviews. Only he and Johnson had access to the tests after they were collected from the teachers. He denied that he changed any student's answers, or that he had any knowledge of answers being changed.

Allen erased stray marks. While he was packing the tests to be returned to the Brewer Center, he noticed a lot of erasures and smears on the tests. One girl sat under her desk, refusing to take the test, but nevertheless passed. If someone changed answers, it could not have been the teachers because they would not have had time. It would have to be Principal Johnson because he did not do it. Allen said there is no question in his mind that something happened, but he did not see anything. He "knew in his heart" that cheating occurred.

3. Lashaine Blake

During the 2009 CRCT testing, Blake was a fourth grade teacher. She testified that she had no knowledge of cheating. She attributed her high wrong-to-right erasures to testing strategies she taught the children. Blake also denied being close to Principal Johnson. During her second interview, Blake told investigators that she saw Lera Middlebrooks, a proctor, pointing to the questions and prompting students to change their answers during testing.

**IV. ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE**

We conclude that Principal Mable Johnson cheated on the 2009 CRCT. She did not offer any alternate explanation for the erasures and refused to answer our questions. Tony Allen assisted Principal Johnson in the altering of test documents. It is further our conclusion that LaShain Blake cheated on the 2009 CRCT. Principal Mable Johnson also failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT and adequately supervise testing activities and test security. This resulted in, and she is responsible for, falsifying, misrepresenting or erroneously reporting the results of the 2009 CRCT to the Georgia Department of Education.

**MABLE JOHNSON**

You have information concerning cheating at your school on the 2009 CRCT test, don't you?

You are refusing to provide these investigators with that information, aren't you?

By cheating on the 2009 CRCT, you denied struggling students the help they needed to succeed?

You directed school employees to cheat on the 2009 CRCT, didn't you?

You coordinated cheating on the 2009 CRCT at your school, didn't you?

You facilitated the ability of school employees to cheat on the 2009 CRCT test, right?

You knew that school employees were cheating on the 2009 CRCT, didn't you?

You provided school employees with access to the student's CRCT tests so that these school employees could cheat?

You changed student's answers on the 2009 CRCT test, didn't you?

You did not report violations of testing protocol as you were required to do by Georgia law, did you?

In 2009, you were entrusted with ensuring that school employees act ethically?

Cheating is unethical isn't it?

You instructed your teachers to cheat on the 2009 CRCT didn't you?

You pressured your teachers to cheat on the 2009 CRCT didn't you?

You accepted bonus money from APS based on test scores you knew to be false?

Your school accepted federal money based in part on test scores you knew to be false?

By cheating on the CRCT you denied the State of Georgia an accurate assessment of your student's academic performance?

By cheating CRCT you denied the parents of your students an accurate assessment of their children's academic performance?

By cheating on the CRCT, you denied the children in your care an accurate assessment of their own academic performance.

The State of Georgia entrusted you to educate the children in your care, right?

The children of your school entrusted you to educate them?

By cheating on the CRCT, you violated the trust placed in you by the State of Georgia, the parents of your students and the children these parents placed your care?

# CONNALLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1654 S Alvarado SW  
Atlanta GA 30311-2637

Principal: Mimi Robinson  
Testing Coordinator: Wanda Moore-Williams

SRT-1 Executive Director: Dr. Sharon Davis-Williams

## **I. INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY**

We conclude that cheating occurred on the CRCT at Connally Elementary in 2009. Forty-four people were interviewed at this school, some more than once. One teacher confessed to cheating. Cheating at Connally is evidenced by a high number of flagged classrooms, a confession, witness testimony, and Principal Mimi Robinson's refusal to answer questions about cheating. Principal Robinson failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT.

## **II. STATISTICAL DATA**

### **A. 2009 vs. 2010**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Percentage of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	70.5	9.9
Number of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	55	8
Number of Teachers Flagged for WTR Standard Deviations above 3.0 (Number of Teachers Flagged in Multiple Subjects)	20(18)	5(2)
Mean WTR Standard Deviations from State Norm	11.5	4.9
High Flagged Standard Deviation	27.6	11.1
Low Flagged Standard Deviation	3	3.1

B. Flagged Classrooms

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Grade &amp; Test</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
HARBOUR	1 RD	4.989645814
HARBOUR	1 LA	5.948463026
HARBOUR	1 MA	5.123165044
HASSAN	1 MA	10.29977713
SANDERS	1 LA	4.795188887
SANDERS	1 MA	5.250436483
BAILEY	2 RD	3.042883907
BAILEY	2 LA	3.012080598
BAILEY	2 MA	5.053521828
PHARR	2 MA	3.704999627
ROFIE	2 RD	11.13795134
ROFIE	2 LA	4.279818594
ROFIE	2 MA	11.44561239
WILSON	2 RD	13.88070319
WILSON	2 LA	5.396477417
WILSON	2 MA	14.38656966
MC CLOUD	3 RD	18.07141354
MC CLOUD	3 LA	13.27374433
MC CLOUD	3 MA	16.56172273
PAUL	3 RD	14.68962972
PAUL	3 LA	14.04421981
PAUL	3 MA	16.12151382
SYLVESTER	3 RD	12.09258306
SYLVESTER	3 LA	9.47995225
SYLVESTER	3 MA	5.506745306
WILLIAMS	3 RD	27.58655485
WILLIAMS	3 LA	25.32523529
WILLIAMS	3 MA	23.01671268
BRAMWELL	4 RD	9.255002155
BRAMWELL	4 LA	3.532059716
BRAMWELL	4 MA	6.792958536
BUTLER	4 RD	19.70970725
BUTLER	4 LA	16.62610924
BUTLER	4 MA	15.40790528
FULFORD	4 RD	17.23554221
FULFORD	4 LA	10.86630583
FULFORD	4 MA	10.92209498
KING	4 RD	6.909275388
KING	4 LA	6.673814443
KING	4 MA	5.56832219
TAYLOR	4 RD	17.03092435
TAYLOR	4 LA	14.08628719
TAYLOR	4 MA	14.77419759
DARVILLE	5 RD	16.06406154
DARVILLE	5 LA	11.2401808
DARVILLE	5 MA	12.08839125
FRANKLIN	5 RD	13.34900034
FRANKLIN	5 LA	8.524406345
FRANKLIN	5 MA	13.49814414
LEITNER	5 RD	7.764803562
LEITNER	5 LA	3.026178452
LEITNER	5 MA	5.355609079
MATHIS	5 RD	27.23956893
MATHIS	5 LA	18.18849872
MATHIS	5 MA	14.06163679

### **III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**

#### **A. Overview**

There are several facts which point to the conclusion that Connally Elementary School was not managed to ensure that the 2009 CRCT results were accurately reported.

First, the percentage of flagged classrooms is 70.5% for the 2009 CRCT. With state monitors present in 2010, the percentage of flagged classrooms dropped significantly from 70.5% to 9.9%.

Second, of the approximately 1,800 non-APS schools in the state taking the 2009 CRCT, only one school had a higher percentage of flagged classrooms than Connally.

Third, of the 55 flagged classrooms at Connally, 47 (85% of the total) had standard deviations that exceeded five, and 32 classrooms exceeded ten standard deviations. At five standard deviations, the probability that the number of wrong-to-right erasures occurred without adult intervention, or cheating, is no better than one in a million. At ten standard deviations, the probability is no better than one in a trillion. This signifies that the deviations from the state mean were, for a number of classrooms, a strong indication of cheating on a broad scale at Connally Elementary School.

Fourth is the individual student wrong-to-right (WTR) erasure analysis. Of the WTR erasures 94% were produced by the flagged classrooms which account for 70.5% of the total classrooms in the school.

#### **B. Narrative**

One witness observed Testing Coordinator Wanda Moore-Williams, James Howard and Michael Robinette in an office with the tests erasing answers. All three deny any involvement with cheating. However, only two individuals had access to the tests – Ms. Williams and Principal Mimi Robinson. Principal Mimi Robinson pled the Fifth Amendment in response to our questions about her participation in, knowledge of, or direction to cheat on the CRCT.

#### **C. Testimony of Witnesses**

##### ***1. Joyce Bucklen (Paraprofessional)***

Joyce Bucklen observed James Howard, Wanda Moore-Williams, and Michael Robinette in Principal Robinson's office and it "looked like they were erasing on the test." Each person had a stack of tests in front of them. At the end of the day, Bucklen heard Howard say he changed the tests to get the bonus money. Bucklen stated that Howard would stand in the hall during testing and warn teachers who were administering the test if people were coming down the hall. Bucklen also observed Howard do this in prior years.

2. Bobbi Garlington (School Improvement Specialist)

Bobbi Garlington states she “heard” that Moore-Williams, Robinette and Howard were in Robinson’s office, but does not recall where she heard this information.

3. Renard McCloud (Teacher)

Renard McCloud recalled that on the 2008 CRCT, he placed his students’ answer sheets in alphabetical order at the end of the test day and returned them to the testing coordinator. When he picked them up the following morning, the answer sheets were out of order.

4. Latasha Wilson (Teacher)

Latasha Wilson admitted that when a student in her class bubbled two answers on the same question, Moore-Williams directed her to erase both answers and allow the student to answer the question again.

5. Michael Darville (Early Intervention)

Michael Darville stated that a student reported to him that Gwen Bramwell improperly assisted students on the test.

6. Violet Franklin (Teacher)

Violet Franklin stated that a student reported to her that Gwen Bramwell improperly assisted students on the test.

7. Klarissa Hightower (Teacher)

Klarissa Hightower stated that a student reported to her that Gwen Bramwell improperly assisted students on the test.

D. Testimony of Individuals Implicated

1. Mimi Robinson (Principal)

Principal Robinson asserted her Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination in response to each question asked, including specific questions about her involvement in, and knowledge of, cheating at Connally. A copy of the questions Principal Robinson refused to answer is included as **Attachment A**.

2. Wanda Moore-Williams (Testing Coordinator)

Wanda Moore-Williams denied erasing student answers or engaging in any other form of cheating. She stated that the only time she was in the office with Howard and Robinette was during ITBS testing. Howard and Robinette assisted Moore-Williams in packing up the students’ ITBS tests because Moore-Williams could not lift anything due to a medical condition. Moore-Williams believes that Bucklen falsely accused her of changing answers because of a

personal vendetta against Moore-Williams. She denied ever instructing a teacher to erase a students' answer or allowing a student to answer the question again.

3. James Howard (Band Director)

James Howard denied cheating. He stated that he assisted Moore-Williams with the ITBS test.

4. Michael Robinette (Hands on Atlanta)

Michael Robinette denied cheating or being in an office with Moore-Williams erasing answers. Robinette said he would erase stray marks and darken ovals that had already been answered.

5. Gwen Bramwell (Teacher)

Gwen Bramwell denied cheating on the CRCT.

E. Other Evidence

- Connally met AYP in school years 2006-2007, 2007-2008, and 2008-2009.
- In 2009-2010, Connally did not meet AYP. The percentage of classrooms flagged for WTR erasures decreased from 70.5% in 2009 to 9.9% in 2010.

**IV. ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE**

We conclude that teachers and administrators erased and changed student answer documents on the 2009 CRCT at Connally Elementary, but we lack sufficient evidence to say which people erased and changed. We also conclude that Gwen Bramwell cheated. Principal Mimi Robinson asserted her Fifth Amendment right and refused to answer our questions.

We conclude that Principal Robinson failed to adequately monitor the 2009 CRCT. Principal Mimi Robinson failed in her ultimate responsibility for testing activities and for ensuring the ethical administration of, and proper security for the 2009 CRCT. It is our conclusion, from the statistical data and the other evidence secured in this investigation, that Principal Robinson failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT and adequately supervise testing activities and test security. This resulted in, and she is responsible for, falsifying, misrepresenting or erroneously reporting the results of the 2009 CRCT to the Georgia Department of Education.



**MIMI ROBINSON**

You have information concerning cheating at your school on the 2009 CRCT test, don't you?

You are refusing to provide these investigators with that information, aren't you?

You directed school employees to cheat on the 2009 CRCT, didn't you?

You coordinated cheating on the 2009 CRCT at your school, didn't you?

You facilitated the ability of school employees to cheat on the 2009 CRCT test, right?

You knew that school employees were cheating on the 2009 CRCT, didn't you?

You provided school employees with access to the student's CRCT tests so that these school employees could cheat?

You knew that teachers were providing student's with answers to the 2009 CRCT, didn't you?

You changed student's answers on the 2009 CRCT test, didn't you?

You did not report violations of testing protocol as you were required to do by Georgia law, did you?

In 2009, you were entrusted with ensuring that school employees act ethically?

Cheating is unethical isn't it?

You instructed your teachers to cheat on the 2009 CRCT didn't you?

You pressured your teachers to cheat on the 2009 CRCT didn't you?

You accepted bonus money from APS based on test scores you knew to be false?

Your school accepted federal money based in part on test scores you knew to be false?

By cheating on the CRCT you denied the State of Georgia an accurate assessment of your student's academic performance?

By cheating CRCT you denied the parents of your students an accurate assessment of heir children's academic performance?

By cheating on the CRCT, you denied the children in your care an accurate assessment of their own academic performance.

# USHER/COLLIER HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

631 Harwell Road, N.W.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30318

Principal: Gwendolyn Rogers  
Testing Coordinator: Donald Bullock

SRT-4 Executive Director: Tamara Cotman

## **I. INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY**

Cheating occurred on the CRCT at Usher Elementary in 2009. Forty-three people were interviewed at this school, some more than once. Three teachers confessed to cheating at the direction of the test coordinator, Donald Bullock. Cheating at Usher is evidenced by a high number of flagged classrooms, confessions and witness testimony. Principal Gwendolyn Rogers failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT.

## **II. STATISTICAL DATA**

### A. 2009 vs. 2010

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Percentage of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	78.4	13.3
Number of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	40	8
Number of Teachers Flagged for WTR Standard Deviations above 3.0 (Number of Teachers Flagged in Multiple Subjects)	14(14)	5(2)
Mean WTR Standard Deviations from State Norm	18.5	4.74
High Flagged Standard Deviation	38.1	5.8
Low Flagged Standard Deviation	3.1	3.4

B. Flagged Classrooms

Teachers	Grades & Test	Standard Deviation
BROOKS	1 RD	17.95822191
BROOKS	1 LA	14.78425145
BROOKS	1 MA	16.28163999
HOLLAND	1 RD	9.053141313
HOLLAND	1 LA	9.06061194
HOLLAND	1 MA	6.662318539
SOYINKA	1 RD	10.84326451
SOYINKA	1 LA	15.16342855
SOYINKA	1 MA	12.81760464
ZACHERY	2 RD	3.110352653
ZACHERY	2 MA	7.728348335
BURNEY WATSON	3 RD	24.83074131
BURNEY WATSON	3 LA	8.113355496
BURNEY WATSON	3 MA	11.71760927
LOVETT	3 RD	26.70142647
LOVETT	3 LA	9.176189494
LOVETT	3 MA	10.01352536
SANDERS	3 RD	22.46947552
SANDERS	3 LA	14.14114288
SANDERS	3 MA	22.0128703
SMITH	3 RD	32.46467819
SMITH	3 LA	12.85840002
SMITH	3 MA	7.866562513
GREEN D	4 RD	15.57168685
GREEN D	4 LA	3.398073475
JACKSON	4 RD	17.20925912
JACKSON	4 LA	10.21667976
JACKSON	4 MA	7.181248635
WARE	4 RD	21.71258285
WARE	4 LA	22.97407218
WARE	4 MA	31.1458192
ARONSON	5 RD	37.44090207
ARONSON	5 LA	30.77499827
ARONSON	5 MA	38.11328458
BRADFORD	5 RD	35.93530231
BRADFORD	5 LA	26.16562644
BRADFORD	5 MA	37.57052406
LABRIE	5 RD	34.68063584
LABRIE	5 LA	22.11837313
LABRIE	5 MA	20.47356742

III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

A. Overview

There are several facts which point to the conclusion that educators at Usher cheated on the 2009 CRCT.

First, the percentage of flagged classrooms is 78.4% for the 2009 CRCT. There were only four schools in APS with a higher percentage in 2009.

Second, of the approximately 1,800 non-APS schools in the state taking the 2009 CRCT, no school had a higher percentage of flagged classrooms than Usher.

Third, with state monitors present in 2010, the percentage of flagged classrooms dropped significantly from 78.4% to 13.3%.

Fourth, of the 40 flagged classrooms at Usher, 38 had standard deviations that exceeded five (95% of the total), and 30 (75% of the total) classrooms exceeded ten standard deviations. At five standard deviations, the probability that the number of erasures occurred without adult intervention, or cheating, is no better than one in a million. At ten standard deviations the probability is no better than one in a trillion. This signifies that the deviations from the state mean were, for a number of classrooms, a strong indication of cheating on a broad scale at this school.

Fifth is the individual student wrong-to-right (WTR) erasure analysis. Of the WTR erasures at Usher, 95.2% were produced by the flagged classrooms which account for only 78.4% of the total classrooms in the school.

Finally, three teachers testified that testing coordinator Donald Bullock encouraged and allowed teachers to erase and change students' CRCT answer sheets. Principal Rogers knew Bullock improperly provided access to the CRCT materials when he announced over the school intercom that teachers could keep their tests beyond the testing period.

#### B. Narrative

In 2009, Testing Coordinator Donald Bullock, and numerous teachers participated in coordinated, schoolwide cheating. Testing Coordinator Bullock announced that teachers could pick up their tests early before the test began and keep them until the end of the school day. Principal Gwendolyn Rogers was present in the building when Bullock made this announcement and should have been aware that Mr. Bullock distributed the tests early. Mr. Bullock also allowed teachers to retrieve their tests in the afternoons after testing ended so that they could erase students' answers and change them from wrong to right. Specifically, Mr. Bullock approached numerous teachers and asked them how their students performed on the CRCT that morning. He then asked the teachers whether they needed to "review" the students' tests to make sure the students performed well and met targets. The teachers said they understood that Mr. Bullock meant that the teachers should change student answers. If a teacher agreed to "review" the tests or "stay late," Mr. Bullock would take the tests and answer documents to the teacher's classroom in the afternoon after testing ended for the day. Mr. Bullock placed the tests in his briefcase, dropped them off at each teacher's classroom and then retrieved them from each teacher, placing them back in his briefcase.

Prior to the CRCT, Dr. Rogers required the teachers to make a list of their students and indicate whether the teacher expected that the student would score high, middle or low. The teachers provided this list to Principal Rogers prior to the CRCT. Principal Rogers threatened to put any teacher on a PDP who did not have good CRCT scores. She stated to the staff: "If Johnny does not know how to read, he had better know how on test day."

There was tremendous pressure on the teachers to meet targets. Teachers said they feared for their jobs if their students failed to meet targets. Other teachers stated that they changed answers so that they would be recognized by the school for good test scores.

Several teachers admitted being surprised by how well their students performed on the CRCT.

C. Testimony of Witnesses

1. Diane Green (Teacher)

Diane Green changed answers on the 2009 CRCT at Usher. Ms. Green stated that she corrected the students' answers because she wanted to get recognized by the school for good test scores in reading. A known consequence for poor test results within APS is being placed on a PDP. Donald Bullock served as Testing Coordinator at Usher for the first and only time in 2009. Bullock made the tests accessible to teachers in order to change student answers by providing the tests early on each day of testing or allowing them to retain the tests after the testing period ended. On one occasion, Mr. Bullock returned the test to Ms. Green after the test period ended using a book bag. He brought them to her classroom where she kept them for approximately thirty minutes and changed answers. Mr. Bullock then came back around to collect the tests. Ms. Green stated that she only changed the students' tests who had previously been identified as "exceeds expectations" on the CRCT because she wanted to make sure they stayed in that category. Ms. Green told Mr. Bullock that she was afraid, and he told her, "you don't let anyone know that you did it."

2. Mary Ware (Teacher)

On at least two days during the 2009 CRCT Mr. Bullock delivered Mary Ware's tests back to her in her classroom after the students left for the day. Mr. Bullock told her that she needed to meet targets. Ms. Ware changed student answers in her classroom. Mr. Bullock then returned to her classroom to collect the tests. Mr. Bullock also directed Ms. Ware to a teacher workroom where he instructed her to check the answers of other students in the same grade level.

3. Stacy Smith (Teacher)

Stacy Smith confessed to erasing student answers on the 2009 CRCT and changing them from wrong to right. In 2009, Mr. Bullock approached Ms. Smith after the test period was over and asked whether Ms. Smith was staying after school. Mr. Bullock told Ms. Smith to look over the tests and see how the students did. Mr. Bullock told Ms. Smith "If you want I can make sure your children do well. If you want to get the tests back let me know." Mr. Bullock delivered the student answer documents and tests to Ms. Smith's classroom where Ms. Smith changed student answers from wrong to right on the reading portion of the test. Mr. Bullock returned to Ms. Smith's classroom and retrieved the student answer documents and tests. Ms. Smith changed answers because Dr. Rogers put incredible pressure on the teachers to meet targets and told them that teachers who did not have good CRCT scores would be placed on a PDP.

4. Joe Sanders (Teacher)

Sanders denied that he cheated but stated that Mr. Bullock approached him three different times during the 2009 CRCT and asked him whether he wanted to keep his tests and look over them to make sure his students did well. Mr. Bullock was more persistent on reading days than on math and science days. Sanders told Mr. Bullock he did not want to keep his tests. Two other third grade teachers, Ms. Burney and Ms. Lovett, as well as a fifth grade teacher, Ms. Warner, told him that they had also been approached by Mr. Bullock.

5. *Sheretha Lovett (Teacher)*

Lovett denied any knowledge of cheating.

6. *Jessica Watson-Burney (Teacher)*

Watson-Burney denied any knowledge of cheating.

7. *Monique Campbell (Teacher)*

At faculty meetings, Dr. Rogers told the teachers that they would be placed on a PDP for low test performance and that this message came to Rogers from Executive Director Tamara Cotman.

8. *Stephanie Warner (Teacher)*

Warner states that Mr. Bullock once asked her if she needed to keep her tests a little longer after the students took a particular section. Warner declined and asked, "why would I?" Mr. Bullock said, "Oh, just checking" and never approached her about it again.

9. *Brittany Aronson (Teacher)*

Aronson taught fifth grade at Usher in 2009. Her class had an unusually high amount of erasures, but she denied that she had any involvement with cheating. She recalled being surprised by how many children did well in her class. She stated that one child in particular was doing very poorly in school and she recommended that the child receive special education instruction. Ms. Aronson stated that this particular student not only passed the CRCT, but exceeded. Ms. Aronson stated that in a staff meeting principal Rogers told the staff that "if Johnny does not know how to read, he had better know how on test day." Ms. Aronson states that principal Rogers ordered her to change certain students' grades from Ds and Fs to Cs.

10. *Tiffany LeBree (Teacher)*

LeBree denied having any knowledge of cheating, but confirmed that principal Rogers stated in a staff meeting that "little Johnny may not be able to read now, but he better be able to read on test day."

11. *Ameerah Malcolm-Hill (Teacher)*

Malcolm Hill confirmed that Donald Bullock made an announcement that the CRCT tests could be picked up early and kept until the end of the day. Ms. Malcolm-Hill believes that principal Rogers knew this announcement had been made, as it was heard by all personnel in the building.

D. Testimony of Individuals Implicated

1. Gwendolyn Rogers (Principal)

Principal Rogers denied participating in, or having knowledge of, cheating on the 2009 CRCT or any other year. She denied ever making a statement in a faculty meeting that “if Johnny can’t read he’d better be able to read on test day.” She denied having any knowledge that Mr. Bullock allowed teachers to pick up tests early or keep them late, and denied that she ever heard Mr. Bullock make any such announcement over the P.A. system.

2. Donald Bullock (Testing Coordinator)

Mr. Bullock denied participation in, or knowledge of, cheating. He never allowed teachers to pick up tests early or keep them late. He also denied approaching any teacher about retrieving their tests after hours and changing answers.

E. Other Evidence

- Several teachers stated that they were surprised that so many students in their class passed the CRCT.
- Numerous teachers stated that Dr. Rogers and the APS Administration placed unreasonable pressure on them to meet targets, or be placed on a PDP or lose their job.
- Discrepancies exist among some teachers’ testimony. While some teachers went to the conference room on the morning of testing to pick up their tests and sign them out early, others remained in their classroom and Mr. Bullock or another individual delivered the tests to their class.
- Usher made AYP from 2006-2009, but did not in 2010.

**IV. ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE**

We conclude that Testing Coordinator Donald Bullock and Principal Rogers directed and orchestrated a schoolwide scheme to erase and change student answer sheets. Mr. Bullock provided teachers access to student answer documents by allowing them to pick up tests early, keep them throughout the day, or by returning tests to certain teachers each day after the testing period ended. Bullock instructed teachers to change answers to make sure their students made targets. We further conclude that Diane Green, Mary Ware and Stacy Smith cheated on the 2009 CRCT.

We found no direct evidence that flagged fifth grade teachers erased and changed student answer sheets. However, indirect evidence of cheating exists in those grades based on the testimony of Tiffany LeBree and others who testified that Bullock approached them and asked them to keep their tests after the test period ended. The statistical probability of even the lowest wrong-to-right standard deviations present in these classes, in conjunction with Mr. Bullock’s practice in other grades of directing teachers to change student answers, as well as the culture of

intimidation created by Principal Rogers and Bullock, lead us to believe that at least some of the first, second and fifth grade teachers erased and changed student answer sheets. Even if the teachers did not change his or her own student answers, based upon the above evidence, we conclude that another teacher or Mr. Bullock changed the students' answers.

It is also our conclusion from the statistical data and the other evidence that Principal Rogers failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT, and adequately supervise testing activities and test security. This resulted in, and she is responsible for, falsifying, misrepresenting or erroneously reporting the results of the 2009 CRCT to the Georgia Department of Education.



# **PEYTON FOREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

301 Peyton Road, SW  
Atlanta, Georgia 30311

Principal: Karen Barlow-Brown  
Testing Coordinator: Cornelia Primous

SRT-1 Executive Director: Dr. Sharon Davis-Williams

## **I. INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY**

Cheating occurred on the CRCT at Peyton Forest Elementary in 2009. Forty-seven people were interviewed at this school, some more than once. Cheating at this school is evidenced by a high number of flagged classrooms and witness testimony. Many teachers were involved in the cheating and Principal Karen Barlow-Brown knew of and encouraged cheating. Principal Karen Barlow-Brown failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT.

## **II. STATISTICAL DATA**

### **A. 2009 vs. 2010**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Percentage of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	86.1	26.1
Number of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	62	18
Number of Teachers Flagged for WTR Standard Deviations above 3.0 (Number of Teachers Flagged in Multiple Subjects)	22(20)	10(5)
Mean WTR Standard Deviations from State Norm	11.9	6.0
High Flagged Standard Deviation	34.4	14
Low Flagged Standard Deviation	3.9	3.2

B. Flagged Classrooms

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Grade &amp; Test</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
FULLER	1 RD	6.845316639
FULLER	1 LA	7.721533846
FULLER	1 MA	5.238670023
MANNING	1 RD	13.7723999
MANNING	1 LA	9.724302665
MANNING	1 MA	12.40459958
MCRAE JACKSON	1 RD	5.305964802
MCRAE JACKSON	1 LA	7.014674263
MCRAE JACKSON	1 MA	6.806217113
MERRITT	1 RD	7.329495331
MERRITT	1 LA	6.93873241
MERRITT	1 MA	6.590727549
WILEY	1 RD	5.622259282
WILEY	1 LA	6.190539421
WILEY	1 MA	10.87495625
BICKHAM	2 RD	15.21267896
BICKHAM	2 LA	15.74843919
BICKHAM	2 MA	22.54176257
CAGLE	2 LA	4.523932656
HERARD	2 RD	6.062562011
HERARD	2 LA	11.4619935
HERARD	2 MA	8.160896224
LAWSHEA	2 RD	12.03279573
LAWSHEA	2 LA	16.90360985
LAWSHEA	2 MA	14.60836393
COLLIER	3 RD	6.806191242
COLLIER	3 LA	10.77508464
COLLIER	3 MA	3.997514131
HARRIS	3 RD	7.709715267
HARRIS	3 LA	7.19057874
HARRIS	3 MA	5.600461058
JAMES	3 LA	13.2243945
WALKER	3 RD	12.25766118
WALKER	3 LA	14.67697977
WALKER	3 MA	8.80635491
WOODS	3 RD	10.7826517
WOODS	3 LA	9.760537304
WOODS	3 MA	8.429190928
BATTLE	4 RD	24.03628557
BATTLE	4 LA	15.03660444
BATTLE	4 MA	12.07701994
CAMPBELL	4 RD	4.89549029
CAMPBELL	4 LA	9.162667904
CAMPBELL	4 MA	7.977518957
WACKERMAN	4 RD	15.85135131
WACKERMAN	4 LA	23.63240343
WACKERMAN	4 MA	23.22866993
WEAVER	4 RD	12.37150789
WEAVER	4 LA	12.48255027
WEAVER	4 MA	19.43110253
BROWN	5 RD	12.27913871
BROWN	5 LA	21.19101291
BROWN	5 MA	16.2515037
MORRIS	5 RD	30.35376941
MORRIS	5 LA	13.72581941
MORRIS	5 MA	3.728938885
PASCHAL	5 RD	34.44880292
PASCHAL	5 LA	10.56260183
PASCHAL	5 MA	10.65198285
PATTERSON	5 RD	17.50383665
PATTERSON	5 LA	10.30954442
PATTERSON	5 MA	9.93931656

### **III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**

#### **A. Overview**

There are several facts which point to the conclusion that Peyton Forest Elementary School was not managed to ensure that the 2009 CRCT results were accurately reported.

First, the percentage of flagged classrooms is 86.1% for the 2009 CRCT. There were only two schools in APS with a higher percentage in 2009.

Second, of the approximately 1,800 non-APS schools in the state taking the 2009 CRCT, no school had a higher percentage of flagged classrooms than Peyton Forest Elementary School.

Third, with state monitors present in 2010, the percentage of flagged classrooms dropped significantly from 86.1% to 26.1%.

Fourth, of the 62 flagged classrooms at this school, 59 (95% of the total) had standard deviations that exceeded five, and 34 classrooms exceeded ten standard deviations. At five standard deviations, the probability that the number of erasures occurred without adult intervention, or cheating, is no better than one in a million. At ten standard deviations the probability is no better than one in a trillion. This signifies that the deviations from the state mean were, for a number of classrooms, a strong indication of cheating on a broad scale at Peyton Forest Elementary School.

Fifth is the individual student wrong-to-right (WTR) erasure analysis. Of the WTR erasures, 97.1% were produced by the flagged classrooms which account for 86.1% of the total classrooms in the school.

Finally, witnesses testified that they heard a select group of teachers were changing answers on the CRCT after school and on the weekends. Cynthia James testified that Olivia Harris gave her a copy of the 2008 CRCT so that she could use it to prepare her students. Olivia Harris should not have had a copy of the 2008 CRCT because it was still secured. Principal Barlow-Brown knew that Harris gave the test to James. A witness saw teachers cheating on the district benchmark assessment tests and the Fifth Grade Writing Test.

#### **B. Testimony of Witnesses**

##### **1. Cynthia James (Teacher)**

In the fall of 2008, Olivia Harris gave Cynthia James a copy of the 2008 CRCT. The test was clearly marked, "SECURE MATERIALS. MAY NOT BE DUPLICATED." James knew that no one should have a copy of the 2008 CRCT so when Principal Barlow-Brown later said to James, "I know Ms. Harris gave you some materials," James pretended to be confused. James kept the copy of the CRCT and gave it to the GBI and to the Blue Ribbon Commission. We have confirmed the test James had was a copy of the 2008 CRCT.

James recalled another occasion when Harris had a transparency of a page from the CRCT on her classroom wall. Principal Barlow-Brown was walking out of the classroom as James walked in, so Principal Barlow-Brown must have seen the transparency as well. James

heard Harris say to teacher Kassia Walker, “I wish Ms. [DePaula] Woods would get back because I only know the reading” portion of the test.

On the makeup day for the CRCT, James saw that Harris’ students were in teacher Nicole Collier’s classroom and at a different time Collier’s students were in Harris’ classroom. James believed that Collier and Harris were taking turns watching each other’s students while the other altered test documents.

A student told James that teachers had given her answers to the CRCT, but did not identify specific teachers.

Students were pulled out of the classroom to be tested separately. James attended a third grade meeting at which teachers discussed which students to pull out of their classrooms and test in a small group. These students were tested separately by Loretta Hairston, a retired teacher who was brought in to help administer the test.

James identified two reasons why Principal Barlow-Brown must have known about the cheating. First, after Harris gave James a copy of the test, Principal Barlow-Brown said to James, “I know Ms. Harris gave you some materials.” Second, Harris had a student with learning disabilities who was about to be placed in PEC (special education); however, the student scored so well on the CRCT the previous year that he could not qualify for special education. Harris shared her concerns about the discrepancy between the child’s ability and test scores with administrator Evelyn Britton. Britton told Principal Barlow-Brown about Harris’ concerns.

James told Cornelia Primous that something “not right” was going on with the tests and that Primous should protect the tests. Primous then locked up the tests in her office.

James’ contract with APS was not renewed after the 2008-2009 school year. She believes that Principal Barlow-Brown terminated her in retaliation for not cheating and for questioning the actions of the others.

## 2. Tameka King (Teacher)

Tameka King taught special education at Peyton Forest in 2009-2010 and believes Principal Barlow-Brown cheated.

King heard about cheating when she started at the school in the fall of 2009. She heard that the following teachers changed answers on the tests in the library after school and on the weekends: Cornelia Primous, Stephens (King believes she is a retired teacher), Evelyn Britton, Olivia Harris, and a paraprofessional.

The abilities of the children in King’s class did not match the high scores they received on the 2009 CRCT. King e-mailed Dr. Alexander and Delicia Goodman-Lee with her concerns.

King believes teachers cheated on the 2010 test as well. She heard children talking to each other about how they had the answers to the test.

3. *Bahji Varner (Teacher)*

Bahji Varner's first year at Peyton Forest was the 2009-2010 school year. Varner was not at the school for the 2009 CRCT, but witnessed cheating in 2010.

Varner saw teachers cheat on the APS district-wide benchmark tests. She proctored during this test and saw teachers point to certain questions and then identify the correct answer. After completion, the tests were scanned and scored at the school. Enolar Callands would watch the tests as they were scored. If the scores were not high enough, the teachers would review the tests with the students. Then, the students with low scores were sent to Callands' or Bess Mae Paschal's classroom to retake the test.

On the Fifth Grade Writing Test, Paschal instructed students to write drafts, and bring them to her to review and revise. Only after her revisions were the students allowed to write the essay on the official paper.

Varner said the following teachers cheated on the benchmark tests and the Fifth Grade Writing Test: fourth grade teachers Jamie Manning, Cernitha Battle, and Angela Campbell, and fifth grade teachers Enolar Callands, Karen Patterson, Milo Morris, Travis Brown, and Bess Mae Paschal. Varner stated that Callands was the ringleader.

Varner did not report the cheating to anyone because she believed everyone to whom she should report knew of, and condoned, cheating.

4. *Jessica Wackerman (Teacher)*

In 2009, teacher Enolar Callands took approximately four students from Wackerman's class to test them because of behavior problems.

Wackerman believes that fellow teachers Cernitha Battle and Enolar Callands changed answers for the fourth grade students. Principal Barlow-Brown reprimanded teacher Alisha Weaver at a meeting because one of Weaver's students wrote "stomp the CRCT" in her test booklet. Principal Barlow-Brown knew what the student wrote because Battle and Callands had to go through all of the test booklets and answer sheets to "erase stray marks." The "erasing of stray marks" in test booklets would not be necessary because the test booklets are not scanned.

When the 2009 CRCT results came back, Wackerman was shocked at how well her students performed. She believes someone changed her students' tests.

5. *Brenda Bickham (Teacher)*

Brenda Bickham's third and fifth grade students failed the benchmark tests, but did well on the CRCT. When the 2009 CRCT results came out, Bickham told Principal Barlow-Brown that her students were not on the level indicated by the CRCT scores. She thinks that the administrators changed the tests and that Principal Barlow-Brown, Testing Coordinator Cornelia Primous, Assistant Principal Jacquelyn Poindexter, and teacher Olivia Harris were involved.

Teacher Cynthia James told Bickham that she had a copy of the CRCT for the third grade and that she got it from Harris.

6. Kassia Walker (Teacher)

Kassia Walker taught third grade at Peyton Forest in 2009. She heard that Harris had a copy of the CRCT and transparencies of the test as well. Walker also heard that teachers were asked to look at the CRCT booklet. Harris did not give Walker a copy of the test.

Walker saw that Collier's students would sometimes be in Harris' classroom with Harris' students and vice versa, on several occasions during the CRCT testing days.

7. Ramona Rivers (Teacher)

Ramona Rivers taught at Peyton Forest until 2007. Rivers had no knowledge of cheating in 2009 but recalled that Principal Barlow-Brown ridiculed Cernitha Battle for low test scores, and that every subsequent year Battles' scores improved. Rivers testified that Dr. Beverly Hall replaced former principal Cornelius Watts with Principal Barlow-Brown because of the low test scores under Watts.

C. Testimony of Individuals Implicated

1. Karen Barlow-Brown (Principal)

Karen Barlow-Brown was the principal of Peyton Forest for seven years. She has no reason to believe anyone cheated at Peyton Forest. No one ever reported to her that there might be cheating on the CRCT and she has never heard rumors of cheating. She would not call teachers together to "erase stray marks" on tests because that is against her own belief system and personal integrity. She denied asking James if she received anything from Harris.

Principal Barlow-Brown did not offer any alternative explanation for Peyton Forest's extremely high number of erasures.

2. Cornelia Primous (Testing Coordinator)

Cornelia Primous was the counselor and testing coordinator at Peyton Forest in 2009. She denied knowledge of cheating.

She and Principal Barlow-Brown disagreed about where the tests should be sorted in 2009. Principal Barlow-Brown told Primous to sort them in the cafeteria but Primous argued that they needed to be sorted in a more secure location. The tests were sorted in a conference room and were stored in a room in the media center. She thinks that the only people with keys to that room were Librarian Cynthia Thomas and Principal Barlow-Brown.

She heard that Harris had a copy of the CRCT in 2008 prior to the administration of the 2009 test. Primous believes Principal Barlow-Brown fired teacher Ramona Rivers because she would not take a copy of the test.

Principal Barlow-Brown moved children who were "slower" to a separate room to be tested by Loretta Hairston. This was a testing violation, but Primous did not report it because she was intimidated by Principal Barlow-Brown and feared retribution.

3. Olivia Harris (Teacher)

Olivia Harris denied the allegations made by Cynthia James. Harris claimed that she downloaded practice test materials from the Georgia Department of Education website and provided the practice material to other teachers. GOSA compared the test allegedly given by Harris to James and confirmed it is a copy of the 2008 CRCT and not practice material.

Harris had three subjects flagged in 2010 as well.

4. Jamie Manning (Teacher)

Jamie Manning denied knowledge of cheating on the CRCT.

5. Cernitha Battle (Teacher)

Cernitha Battle denied knowledge of cheating on the CRCT.

6. Angela Campbell (Teacher)

Angela Campbell denied knowledge of cheating on the CRCT.

7. Enolar Callands (Teacher)

Enolar Callands denied knowledge of cheating on the CRCT.

8. Karen Patterson (Teacher)

Karen Patterson denied knowledge of cheating on the CRCT.

9. Milo Morris (Teacher)

Milo Morris denied knowledge of cheating on the CRCT.

10. Travis Brown (Teacher)

Travis Brown denied knowledge of cheating on the CRCT.

11. Bess Mae Paschal (Teacher)

Bess Mae Paschal denied knowledge of cheating on the CRCT.

#### **IV. ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE**

We conclude there was cheating at Peyton Forest on the CRCT and other tests. Olivia Harris had a copy of the 2008 CRCT and used it to prepare students for the 2009 CRCT. She also gave copies of the 2008 CRCT to other teachers. One teacher admitted she received a copy of the 2008 test, and the evidence indicates other teachers received a copy as well. We also conclude that teachers at Peyton Forest violated testing procedure because students who were not documented as special needs were tested separately from their homeroom by Enolar Callands and a retired teacher.

There is eyewitness testimony that Jamie Manning, Cernitha Battle, Angela Campbell, Enolar Callands, Karen Patterson, Milo Morris, Travis Brown, and Bess Mae Paschal cheated on the Fifth Grade Writing Test and APS benchmark tests in 2010. These teachers' extremely high wrong-to-right erasures on the 2009 CRCT lead us to conclude they cheated on the CRCT as well. We believe teachers were not truthful with investigators because they feared retaliation.

Finally, some students' high CRCT scores were not consistent with their actual abilities and teachers shared their concerns about this with Principal Barlow-Brown. There was a precipitous gain in CRCT scores in 2009 and a drop in 2010 (20 declines out of 21 subject comparisons).

Principal Barlow-Brown knew of the cheating this school. She knew that Olivia Harris had a copy of the 2008 CRCT. She should have known that teachers were cheating on the benchmarks and writing tests. Furthermore, Principal Barlow-Brown failed to ensure the ethical administration of and proper security for the 2009 CRCT. It is our conclusion from the statistical data and the other evidence that Principal Barlow-Brown failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT and adequately supervise testing activities and security. This resulted in, and she is responsible for, falsifying, misrepresenting or erroneously reporting the results of the 2009 CRCT to the Georgia Department of Education.

We also conclude there were rule violations in the administration of the 2009 CRCT and that Testing Coordinator Cornelia Primous failed in her responsibility to provide a secure testing environment.



## EAST LAKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

145 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE  
Atlanta, Georgia 30317

Principal: Gwendolyn Benton  
Testing Coordinator: Fran Standifer

SRT-3 Executive Director: Dr. Gloria Patterson

### **I. INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY**

Cheating occurred on the CRCT at East Lake Elementary in 2009 and in other years. Thirty-five people were interviewed at this school, some more than once. Cheating at East Lake is evidenced by a high number of flagged classrooms and witness testimony. Principal Gwendolyn Benton and Testing Coordinator Fran Standifer erased and changed students' answers on the 2009 CRCT. They also altered the results of the Fifth Grade Writing Test. Principal Benton failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT.

### **II. STATISTICAL DATA**

#### **A. 2009 vs. 2010**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Percentage of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	42	0
Number of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	21	0
Number of Teachers Flagged for WTR Standard Deviations above 3.0 (Number of Teachers Flagged in Multiple Subjects)	9(8)	0
Mean WTR Standard Deviations from State Norm	7.1	0
High Flagged Standard Deviation	14.2	0
Low Flagged Standard Deviation	3.4	0

#### **B. Flagged Classrooms**

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Grade &amp; Test</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
MILLER	1 RD	4.497074103
MILLER	1 LA	12.82386133
MILLER	1 MA	9.186071087
SMITH	1 RD	14.17018511
SMITH	1 LA	12.987849
SMITH	1 MA	11.56563203
OLIVE	2 RD	4.639239175
OLIVE	2 LA	6.699333434
HADLEY	3 RD	11.43460607
HADLEY	3 LA	4.064295785
HADLEY	3 MA	3.976207527
JONES ALLIE	3 LA	4.907894118
JONES ALLIE	3 MA	6.70508625
STAHL	3 LA	3.367696838
STAHL	3 MA	4.159624824
ROGERS MARTIN	4 RD	6.774758244
ROGERS MARTIN	4 LA	3.791735331
WASHINGTON	4 RD	8.709784986
WASHINGTON	4 LA	3.752489229
WASHINGTON	4 MA	6.136764455
WALLS	5 MA	4.452757051

### **III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**

#### **A. Overview**

There are several facts which point to the conclusion that East Lake Elementary School was not managed to ensure that the 2009 CRCT results were accurately reported to the Georgia Department of Education.

First, the percentage of flagged classrooms is 42% for the 2009 CRCT. With state monitors present in 2010, the percentage of flagged classrooms dropped significantly from 42% to 0%.

Second, of the 21 flagged classrooms at East Lake Elementary School, 11 (52% of the total) had standard deviations that exceeded five, and five classrooms exceeded ten standard deviations. At five standard deviations, the probability that the number of erasures occurred without adult intervention, or cheating, is no better than one in a million. At ten standard deviations the probability is no better than one in a trillion. This signifies that the deviations from the state mean were, for a number of classrooms, a strong indication of cheating on a broad scale at East Lake Elementary School.

Third is the individual student wrong-to-right (WTR) erasure analysis. Of the WTR erasures at East Lake, 70.5% were produced by the flagged classrooms which account for only 42% of the total classrooms in the school.

Fourth, Principal Benton created an environment that encouraged cheating. She threatened teachers with PDPs if CRCT scores did not improve. She told her teachers to “do whatever we have to do even if it means breaking the rules” to make APS targets. She instilled fear of reprisal into her teachers so they would not report cheating at East Lake.

Finally, Principal Benton and Testing Coordinator Fran Standifer instructed teachers to arrange their students in a way that caused lower performing students to receive easier Fifth Grade Writing Tests.

#### **B. Narrative**

Principal Benton pressured teachers at East Lake to “find a way” to improve CRCT scores “even if it meant breaking the rules.” She threatened teachers with PDPs if CRCT scores did not improve. Teachers at East Lake did not voice concerns over testing irregularities and cheating for fear of reprisal against them by Principal Benton.

They cheated in three ways. First, Principal Benton instructed teachers to erase stray marks on their students’ answer sheets, and expected teachers to fill in answers to questions the students left blank, and erase an answer when the student bubbled in more than one answer selection.

Second, they erased wrong answers. Principal Benton required teachers to provide her with frequent updates on students’ benchmark testing progress. Principal Benton kept posters containing students’ testing data in her office, so she could easily identify the students who were

struggling. During the administration of the CRCT, Principal Benton required teachers to provide her with the names of students who failed the test – immediately after each section of the CRCT was administered. The only way for teachers to know which students failed was to review the tests right after the students completed them.

During the CRCT testing window, Principal Benton and Fran Standifer often met in Benton’s office where the CRCT materials were stored for extended periods of time with the door closed. During the 2010 CRCT, however, when state monitors and security cameras were in the building, both Benton and Standifer left the building early. In 2010 Principal Benton told teachers that the newly-installed security cameras would make sure “nothing came back on her,” referring to CRCT cheating.

Teachers described students whose skills and abilities did not correspond to their high CRCT scores. Teachers also described students who fell asleep or refused to complete portions of the CRCT, but met or exceeded expectations on the CRCT. One teacher testified that two of her students asked her if she would give them the answers for the CRCT “like our teacher did last year.”

During the administration of the CRCT, a student complained to his teacher that his answer sheet was placed in his test booklet in a different spot than where he left it the previous day. The teacher examined the answer sheet and saw that it contained heavy erasures. As she examined the answer sheet, Principal Benton entered her classroom and instructed the teacher to put the answer sheet down. The next day Principal Benton transferred the teacher to kindergarten.

Third, Principal Benton and Fran Standifer devised a scheme to allow the lower performing students to receive the easiest questions for the Fifth Grade Writing Test. The tests were supposed to be handed out at random. Principal Benton and Fran Standifer instructed teachers to seat their students in a particular order and to hand out writing tests in a particular order. By pre-arranging the students and the tests, Principal Benton and Fran Standifer attempted to alter the results of the State writing test in 2009 and in other years.

Principal Benton interfered with and obstructed this investigation. She told teachers that the GBI was “putting words in people’s mouths.” She threatened teachers that she would “sue them out the ass,” if any of them “slandered” her to the GBI. Teachers told GBI agents that they would not have testified truthfully to us if Principal Benton was still in charge of East Lake, for fear of retaliation.

C. Testimony of Witnesses

1. Claudia Abboud (Teacher)

After reviewing East Lake’s wrong-to-right erasure data, Claudia Abboud believes cheating occurred on the CRCT at East Lake in 2009 and in other years; however, she does not think teachers cheated because teachers did not have time to erase students’ answer sheets. Abboud noted that although East Lake’s students met 100% of their APS targets on the 2008 CRCT, the students’ abilities did not match these scores. She heard that another teacher

witnessed Principal Benton's car parked at the school over the weekend when the 2009 CRCT materials were in the building.

2. Morresia Withers (Media Specialist)

Morresia Withers remembers that Principal Benton and Standifer stayed late behind closed doors during the CRCT testing period in 2009 and other years. After a security camera was installed around Principal Benton's office for the 2010 testing window, however, Principal Benton and Standifer did not stay late at the school during the CRCT testing window.

Withers proctored the 2009 CRCT writing test in Stephanie Walls' classroom. She said that Principal Benton and Standifer instructed Withers and Walls to seat the students in a particular order for the Fifth Grade Writing Test. Withers explained the writing test was supposed to be handed out randomly, and the seating arrangement scheme ensured that the lowest performing students received the easiest writing question. Withers and Walls ignored Principal Benton and Standifer's instruction, but did not report the attempted violation to APS's testing hotline.

Withers said that APS had a "mafia atmosphere" and that employees feared retaliation if they spoke up. Principal Benton threatened to place teachers on PDPs for low CRCT scores, and stated: "We will do whatever it takes to make sure the students pass the test."

3. Raqketa Williams (Teacher)

On her first day at East Lake in 2009, Principal Benton told Raqketa Williams, "At East Lake we do whatever we have to do even if it means breaking the rules," pointed to the prior year's CRCT scores and said, "See the scores? East Lake makes its targets."

Williams recalls that Principal Benton referred to the new security cameras around her office during the 2010 CRCT testing window, and stated, "nothing is coming back on me," Williams understood Benton meant the security cameras would not show Principal Benton altering students' CRCT answer sheets.

Because of fear of reprisal by Principal Benton, Raqketa Williams would not have testified truthfully to us if Principal Benton was still at East Lake.

4. Stephanie Walls (Teacher)

Principal Benton instructed Stephanie Walls to create a seating chart for her students to be used during the 2010 Fifth Grade Writing Test. Principal Benton instructed Morresia Withers to pass out the writing test to Walls' students in a particular order. Walls explained that by passing the tests out in the order Principal Benton wanted, the lower performing students would receive easier writing questions. Walls and Withers discussed Principal Benton's instruction and decided to ignore it. They passed the tests out randomly.

Walls stated that another teacher, Rashida Davis, received similar instructions from Standifer and discussed the matter with Principal Benton. Walls is unaware of the outcome of that conversation.

5. Verna McGhee (Teacher)

Principal Benton asked each teacher which students met, exceeded, and failed to meet expectations after each daily session of the CRCT. Verna McGhee further testified that Principal Benton instructed teachers to erase stray marks on the CRCT answer sheets, and “expected” teachers to fill in answers for questions left blank, erase answers if the student bubbled in two or more answer choices, and fill in partially-filled circles. Principal Benton instructed teachers to never discuss the CRCT.

Another teacher, Viola Nears, told McGhee that the first and second grade teachers used voice inflection to prompt their students during administration of the CRCT.

In 2008, McGhee saw Principal Benton’s car parked at the school on a Saturday when the CRCT materials were in the building. McGhee noted that Principal Benton’s car was parked in the back of the building and this was unusual because Principal Benton always parked in the front of the building.

McGhee described a meeting between Principal Benton and teachers where Principal Benton stated that the GBI “was putting words in people’s mouths, and interrogating them.” Principal Benton further stated that her son was a lawyer, and that “if anyone slanders me I will sue them out the ass.” McGhee stated that she could only testify truthfully without fear of reprisal because Principal Benton was no longer employed at the school.

Former testing coordinator at East Lake, Royce Love-Diagne, once told McGhee, “Dr. Hall expects us to cheat.”

6. Marla Johnson (Teacher)

During the 2004 CRCT, Marla Johnson saw a proctor prompt students to change answers. She reported the violation to then-testing coordinator Royce Love-Diagne, but is unaware if any action was taken. Two of Marla Johnson’s students asked if she would give them the answers to the 2010 CRCT like their teachers did the previous year. Johnson had a student who exceeded on the CRCT one year and was placed on a PEC the next year for low performance.

Principal Benton threatened to place teachers on a PDP if their low CRCT scores did not improve. Johnson believes Principal Benton changed answers on the 2009 CRCT because teachers did not have access to the tests. Specifically, Johnson identified a Saturday when she volunteered at a Hands On Atlanta event at East Lake. The CRCT materials were in the building on that Saturday. All of the volunteers worked outside the school building except Principal Benton and her daughter, a teacher in Gwinnett County, who stayed in the building.

7. Kori Smith (Instructional Coach)

Principal Benton required teachers to provide her with a list of students who did not do well after each section of the CRCT.

Kori Smith recalled a student who failed every class but exceeded expectations on the CRCT. She believes that based on the student’s skills, his test score was not possible. Principal

Benton instructed Smith to change that student's classroom grades from failing to C's. Smith refused to change the grades. She later reviewed his file and noticed that someone else had changed his grades. Smith recognized the handwriting that made the changes as belonging to Principal Benton's secretary.

During one CRCT test session, a student complained to Smith that his answer sheet was in a different place in the test booklet than where he placed it the previous day. Smith examined the answer sheet and noticed that it had heavy erasures. As she was examining the answer sheet, Principal Benton entered her classroom. Principal Benton motioned for Kori Smith to put down the answer sheet. Smith was transferred to a kindergarten class the next day.

8. Cheryl Jones-Allie (Teacher)

Cheryl Jones-Allie identified one student who could not read on a third grade level but passed the CRCT. Jones-Allie did not believe that student was capable of passing the CRCT. Another student fell asleep during the reading section of the CRCT for the first half hour of the testing session, but passed that portion.

After reviewing her classroom's wrong-to-right erasure data, Jones-Allie stated that her students did not have time to make all the erasures on their test sheets during the testing period.

Another teacher told Jones-Allie that she had seen an administrator's car at the school building on a Sunday afternoon when the CRCT answer sheets were in the building.

9. Julie Rogers-Martin (Teacher)

Principal Benton kept charts and posters on her walls with the benchmark scores and previous CRCT scores for students, so she was aware of which students would perform poorly on the CRCT. Principal Benton threatened to place teachers on PDPs if their CRCT scores did not improve, and singled out teachers with low CRCT scores at meetings.

Julie Rogers-Martin recalled that 100% of her students met expectations on the Social Studies portion of the 2008 CRCT. She was surprised by this result because she knew that she did not focus on Social Studies throughout the school year, but focused on the AYP subjects of math, reading, and language arts.

Rogers-Martin had a student who could barely read in her class one year. She filled out paperwork to place him on a PEC but to her knowledge he was never placed on a PEC. That student failed the CRCT but was socially promoted to the third grade. Inexplicably, the student exceeded expectations on his third grade CRCT. He was then placed on a PEC in fourth grade.

In 2009, a student told Rogers-Martin that his previous teachers gave him answers on the CRCT. Rogers-Martin recalled two students who refused to complete sections of their 2009 CRCT. Both were removed from her classroom. Both passed the CRCT.

10. Shonda Fulton (Secretary)

Nobody is allowed to enter Principal Benton's office without first checking with Shonda Fulton. If the office door is shut, Fulton always knocks and waits for a response from Principal Benton before entering. If she receives no response, she will not enter the office. She recalls leaving between 4:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. during the weeks of CRCT testing, and that Principal Benton and Fran Standifer were often still meeting in Principal Benton's office.

11. John Stahl (Special Education)

Principal Benton required teachers to provide lists of students who they thought would not pass the CRCT. Principal Benton often told teachers to "find a way" for these students to pass the CRCT. She instructed teachers to "assign quotas, figure it out, and do what you gotta do," for students to pass the CRCT. John Stahl also heard that other teachers used voice inflection to prompt their students on the CRCT at East Lake.

12. John Young (Teacher)

Many of John Young's students' skills and abilities did not match their prior CRCT scores. He thinks that cheating happened at East Lake on the CRCT in 2009 and in other years, but stated that teachers could not cheat because they did not have time to erase and change students' answer sheets.

Young recalled one year at East Lake a "clean up the school" event was planned for the weekend when the CRCT materials would be in the school. A storm was predicted for that weekend, and many people asked Principal Benton to reschedule the event for a different weekend. Principal Benton insisted the event be held when the CRCT materials were in the building. John Young and other teachers at East Lake think Principal Benton changed answers on the CRCT over that weekend.

13. Rashida Davis (Teacher)

Many of Rashida Davis' students' skills did not match their previous CRCT scores. She recalls that in prior years, Fran Standifer and Principal Benton always stayed at the school late during the CRCT testing window. During the 2010 year, however, both Principal Benton and Standifer left early during the Fifth Grade Writing Test.

One year Standifer and Principal Benton instructed Davis to prepare a seating chart for her students to sit in during the Fifth Grade Writing Test. She prepared a seating chart based on her knowledge of students' relationships to one another to minimize disruption during the test. Principal Benton and Standifer revised the seating chart heavily, and provided Davis with specific instructions as to how to pass out the Fifth Grade Writing Test. Davis believes that the instructions for passing out the Fifth Grade Writing Test were to make certain that lower performing students received easier Fifth Grade Writing Tests.

D. Testimony of Individuals Implicated

1. Fran Standifer (Testing Coordinator)

Testing Coordinator Fran Standifer described Principal Benton as overbearing. Standifer was forbidden to count CRCT materials or place those materials in bins without Principal Benton present. Standifer did not have a key to Principal Benton's office where the CRCT materials were stored.

Standifer purchased pencils and erasers for distribution at East Lake during the CRCT. When she collected the erasers they were extremely worn. Fran Standifer denies any knowledge of cheating.

2. Royce Love-Diagne (Former Testing Coordinator)

Royce Love-Diagne recalled Principal Benton often stating "teachers need to get their students to pass the CRCT by any means necessary." She denied ever instructing teachers to cheat on the CRCT.

3. Gwendolyn Benton (Principal)

Principal Benton denied any knowledge of cheating on the CRCT at East Lake. She opined that all erasing done on the CRCT in 2009 was done by the students. She stated that for the fourth grade reading portion of the CRCT, East Lake's scores only dropped one percentage point between 2009 and 2010. Since no classes were flagged in 2010 for having high wrong-to-right erasures, and the scores in one section for one grade did not drop, Principal Benton believes that proves there was no cheating at East Lake in 2009.

Principal Benton denied telling a new teacher, "At East Lake we do whatever we have to do even if it means breaking the rules." She denied that she instructed Kori Smith to put down a student answer sheet, as Kori Smith described, and did not transfer her to kindergarten in retaliation.

E. Other Evidence

On April 13, 2010, anonymous staff members at East Lake Elementary sent a letter to SRT-3 Executive Director Robin Hall detailing the oppressive environment created by Principal Benton, and describing cheating and testing violations at East Lake. A copy of that letter is included as **Attachment A**. Robin Hall contacted Kathy Augustine and described the letter. Augustine told Robin Hall that APS previously investigated the matter, and instructed her to take no action. A copy of Robin Hall's letter to Millicent Few describing Augustine's instructions is included as **Attachment B**.

IV. ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE

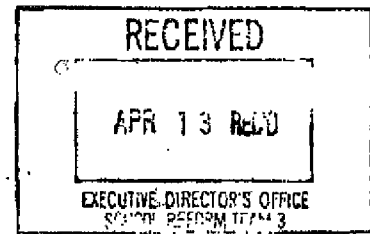
We conclude that Principal Benton and Fran Standifer erased and changed student answer sheets on the 2009 CRCT and in other years. We further conclude that Principal Benton and



Fran Standifer altered the results of the Fifth Grade Writing Test in 2009 and other years by manipulating the distribution of the writing test.

It is also our conclusion from the statistical data and the other evidence secured in this investigation, that Principal Benton failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT and adequately supervise testing activities and test security. This resulted in, and she is responsible for, falsifying, misrepresenting or erroneously reporting the results of the 2009 CRCT to the Georgia Department of Education.

11-19-10P12:47 RCVD



To: Dr. Robyn Hall  
 From: East Lake's Staff (present and former)  
 Date: March 3, 2010

Welcome to SRT3. We at East Lake have decided to tell the truth concerning the Erasure Analysis. It is not our intent to embarrass the Atlanta School Board or Dr. Beverly Hall. We know as well as the powers to be that there is validity to these findings, no one would ever tell a student to cross out on their answer sheet and then erase. They are instructed to use all of their testing strategies within the booklet. We can't speak for any other school but we can certainly state facts about East Lake Elementary. We are losing about half of our staff because the system did not do anything to Mrs. Benton when she committed FORGERY. She was given a slap on the wrist and told not to do it again. It was stated that if it became public knowledge that it would affect not only her but others as well. Where is your INTERGRITY? The system allowed the BEAST to roam freely and she has destroyed everything in her path. One can only assume that Dr. Hall (superintendent) will allow anyone to stay as long as they make her look good regardless of what they do or say. We have or had to deal with her on a daily basis and it is or was not pleasant. Everyone (parents, teachers, ILS's, students) told you about her but you simply ignored it. You all started the fire so we are going to put it out! How DARE you have some one stand before us and say that she is for the children. She like the rest is only for HERSELF, and in the process the staff has or had to work under someone that we don't or didn't RESPECT or TRUST. We are only extending Atlanta this courtesy because none has ever been extended to us. This information will be passed on to the Governor's office as well as the press. We have agreed to take Polygraphs because she will deny everything. Here are some of the CRCT testing irregularities that took place at East Lake. We strongly suggest that you send her to another school so that everyone will stay. Trust us; they ARE leaving or DID leave because of her. People are trying to find jobs not lose them. The situation here is that BAD!

- Threats if your scores showed where the children actually were and not where she wanted them to be. (making your targets)
- Intimidation if you ever disagree or disagreed with her. (The Miller and Love-Juan cases)
- Questions: Such as how many of your students are testing on level three during the actual testing period? (asked by Mrs. Benton)
- Moving teachers from upper grades to lower grades if their students didn't make the targets or vice-versa.
- A War Room where all students had to be listed under each level by the teachers. Therefore, making it easier (for her) to erase answers from wrong to right on students listed under levels two and three without suspicion.
- Teachers being allowed to see a copy of the test during make-up testing.
- Coming on the weekend parking her car behind the building. The students' tests and answer sheets are locked in a room in her office.



ATLANTA  
PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS

Making A Difference

ROBIN C. HALL, D.A.H.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

K-8 SCHOOL REFORM TEAM-3  
1831 LAFRANCE STREET, N. E.  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30307

PHONE (404) 802-3751  
FAX: (404) 802-8894; 404 378-9616--TEAM FAX

November 22, 2010

TO: Millicent Few, Chief Human Resources Officer

FROM: Robin C. Hall, D.A. H. *rch*  
Executive Director, SRT 3

Re: East Lake Letter Received April 13, 2010

On April 13, 2010, I received a letter regarding concerns at East Lake to include actions by the principal and climate at the school that may have resulted in unethical testing practices. I then contacted my immediate supervisor, Dr. Kathy Augustine, to inform her of this letter. She asked who the letter was from and I indicated that it stated from former and current staff of East Lake. Dr. Augustine replied that she had received correspondence about East Lake from the same sender (former and current staff of East Lake) and that all complaints were investigated. At that time, I was not advised to take any further action. Therefore, I gave the letter to Sharon Curtis to file.

If additional clarification is needed, please do not hesitate to let me know.

RCH:sac

*"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."*

*- Maya Angelou*

APS-OIR 05382

## COOK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

211 Memorial Drive SE  
Atlanta, GA 30312-2021

Principal: LaPaul Shelton  
Testing Coordinator: Carla Ross

SRT-3 Executive Director: Dr. Gloria Patterson

### I. INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

Cheating occurred on the CRCT at Cook Elementary in 2009 and in previous years. Twenty-one people were interviewed at this school, some more than once. Two teachers confessed to cheating. Cheating is evidenced by a high number of flagged classrooms, confessions, and witness testimony. Principal LaPaul Shelton provided low performing students with accommodations which were not allowed. Principal Shelton knew of cheating by teachers. He confirmed at least one eyewitness report of cheating on the CRCT, but took no action against the teacher. Principal LaPaul Shelton failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT.

### II. STATISTICAL DATA

#### A. 2009 vs. 2010

	2009	2010
Percentage of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	40.7	5
Number of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	22	3
Number of Teachers Flagged for WTR Standard Deviations above 3.0 (Number of Teachers Flagged in Multiple Subjects)	10(8)	3(0)
Mean WTR Standard Deviations from State Norm	7.4	3.2
High Flagged Standard Deviation	23.6	3.3
Low Flagged Standard Deviation	3.1	3.1

#### B. Flagged Classrooms

Teacher	Grade & Test	Standard Deviation
ANDERSON	3 LA	4.376594004
NELSON LYNCH	3 LA	5.07848474
NELSON LYNCH	3 MA	4.551656176
VAN WALKER	3 RD	5.801215391
VAN WALKER	3 LA	3.6491074
VAN WALKER	3 MA	3.339858491
WILLIAMS	3 RD	4.666014429
WILLIAMS	3 LA	5.713336681
WILLIAMS	3 MA	3.379414277
REIMNITZ	4 RD	6.630912183
REIMNITZ	4 MA	3.88169777
ROBERTSON	4 RD	5.200395825
ROBERTSON	4 LA	3.837983558
ROBERTSON	4 MA	3.065196438
WATKIS	4 RD	4.791002758
OFOUHENE	5 RD	14.4839867
OFOUHENE	5 LA	10.99026074
OFOUHENE	5 MA	17.75189629
VASSAN	5 LA	3.917899606
VASSAN	5 MA	11.5343103
WEEMS	5 RD	13.1011272
WEEMS	5 MA	23.63884013

### **III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**

#### **A. Overview**

There are several facts which point to the conclusion that Cook Elementary School was not managed to ensure that the 2009 CRCT results were accurately reported to the Georgia Department of Education.

First, the percentage of flagged classrooms is 40.7% for the 2009 CRCT. There were only 23 schools in APS with a higher percentage in 2009.

Second, of the approximately 1,800 non-APS schools in the state taking the 2009 CRCT only nine schools had a higher percentage of flagged classrooms than Cook Elementary School.

Third, with state monitors present in 2010, the percentage of flagged classrooms dropped from 40.7% to 5%.

Fourth, of the 22 flagged classrooms at Cook Elementary School, 11 (50% of the total) had standard deviations that exceeded five, and six classrooms exceeded ten standard deviations. At five standard deviations, the probability that the number of erasures occurred without adult intervention, or cheating, is no better than one in a million. At ten standard deviations the probability is no better than one in a trillion. This signifies that the deviations from the state mean were, for a number of classrooms, a strong indication of cheating on a broad scale at this school.

Fifth is the individual student wrong-to-right (WTR) erasure analysis. Of the WTR erasures, 68% were produced by the flagged classrooms which account for only 40.7% of the total classrooms in the school.

Sixth, testing protocols were not followed at Cook. Principal Shelton, Cheryl Dumas, and Terri Smith pulled low performing students from their regular classrooms and administered the CRCT to them separately in a room with the door closed and windows covered. Many of these students' answer sheets have high wrong-to-right erasures.

Finally, two teachers confessed to cheating at Cook. Principal Shelton knew cheating occurred, but instead of reporting it, he erased and changed the previously changed answers.

#### **B. Narrative**

In 2008 and 2009, cheating occurred at Cook Elementary through various means. Two teachers, Deborah Weems and Kwabena Ofusuhene, confessed to erasing and changing student answers in the parent conference room while they were supposed to be erasing stray marks. Weems changed answers for her own class, as well as other teachers' classes. Weems used a "go by" test from a student who she knew would "exceed" on the test. Weems used a transparency created for one of the test forms. Weems and Ofusuhene also prompted students and directed them to the right answers during administration of the test, causing students to erase and change their own answers.

Teachers cheated because they feared for their jobs if they failed to make targets or AYP. Principal Shelton constantly reminded teachers that if they could not make AYP, they should not be in the profession and threatened teachers with PDPs for failure to meet targets. He also publicly humiliated and demeaned teachers in faculty meetings if their students performed poorly.

Principal Shelton should have been on notice of potential cheating when numerous teachers complained that their students' performance in class and on diagnostic tests did not match their performance on the CRCT the prior year. Principal Shelton knew that teachers at Cook were cheating and covered it up. A teacher reported to Shelton that she witnessed another teacher change one of her student's answers, and suspected others were changed as well. Shelton retrieved the students' tests and confirmed the answers had been changed, so he changed the students' new, correct answers back to the original wrong answer. Despite his assurance that he would handle the situation, Principal Shelton never addressed the accused teacher, filed an OIR report or took other action.

Principal Shelton also violated testing protocols by pulling students out of class and testing them in the afternoon in small groups outside of the normal testing period. The students, tested in a room with the window covered and door closed, were typically low performers but were not entitled to special accommodations. Principal Shelton asked teachers to provide him with a list of students in their class who were low performers or behavior problems. He also allowed some students to "re-take" sections of the CRCT if, according to their teacher, they were distracted or did not perform well during the morning testing session.

A review of the student data reveals that several students who Shelton pulled out for small group testing had very high wrong-to-right erasures. Moreover, several flagged teachers testified that the erasure analysis indicated that they tested more students than they actually did because Principal Shelton pulled students from these teachers' classes and tested them elsewhere.

### C. Testimony of Witnesses

#### 1. Deborah Weems (Teacher)

In 2008 and 2009, Deborah Weems cheated on the CRCT by erasing and changing student answers and by giving students answers during testing. Weems admitted to cheating and said she felt pressured to cheat by Principal Shelton. Principal Shelton told teachers that if they could not make AYP, then they needed to look for another profession. Shelton never told Weems to cheat, but it was understood that it needed to be done. Principals could be put on PDPs if the school failed to perform. The principal would then put teachers on the "chopping block" and APS would "blacklist" them. Shelton felt it was very important to be "on the floor" and get recognized during the annual Convocation ceremony.

During testing, Weems improperly assisted her students. She told her students in advance that if she walked by them and told them they needed to check their answer or if she called out that a certain question needed to be reviewed again, that was a signal that they had the

answer wrong. Then Weems would walk back to the student and look at the question again. If she walked away, that meant the student had the answer correct.

Teachers erased stray marks from the tests before turning them in. While “erasing stray marks,” Weems changed students’ answers for the tests on her grade level, as well as others. In 2009, Weems changed answers with Kwabena Ofusuhene, a fellow fifth grade teacher. When changing answers, Weems used a “go-by” or key. In 2008, the former media specialist, Tiffonia Lamar-Sanders, gave her answers for the tests. Weems suspected they may have come from tests of students who were late or absent and were tested separately. Weems and Ofusuhene looked over the tests at the end of each test day so they would not get “backlogged” while they made the changes.

Weems does not believe that Testing Coordinator Carla Ross knew about the cheating. Ross left the parent room where the teachers were erasing stray marks so the teachers could stay in the room with the tests as long as they wanted. In 2009, Ofusuhene distracted Ross so that Weems could change answers on the tests.

In 2009, Daniela Vassan was present in the room while Weems and Ofusuhene changed answers. Vassan told Weems she was tempted to fill in one of her student’s answers, but did not do it. Weems took the test from Vassan and filled in the answer.

She thinks that Jacinta Williams and Amanda Lynch may also have changed student answers. She saw them erasing.

Weems denied that she was ever approached by Principal Shelton regarding any allegations of cheating made against her.

2. *Kwabena Ofusuhene (Teacher)*

Kwabena Ofusuhene admitted that while “erasing stray marks” in the parent center, he erased and changed student answers. Weems provided him with the answers to the test for the math section and he used it to “fix answers.” Weems knew which of her students would exceed on the test and used one of their answer sheets as a guideline. He denied changing answers on other teachers’ papers.

He heard that the third grade teachers “fixed” answers.

3. *Tiffonia Lamar-Sanders (Former Media Specialist)*

During the four or five years she was at Cook, Principal Shelton pulled students for small group testing. These students were typically behavioral problems or had “test anxiety.”

4. *Jacinta Williams (Teacher)*

Jacinta Williams saw Weems take a sheet from Daniela Vassan and fill in a student answer. In 2009, Weems and Ofusuhene stayed in the parent conference room much longer than other teachers to erase stray marks. Williams denied changing any answers.

Principal Shelton came to Williams at the end of each test day and inquired how she thought her students performed. She informed Shelton which students did not complete, or who were distracted, during the test. Principal Shelton, Tiffonia Lamar-Sanders and Cheryl Dumas pulled those students out of class later that day and gave them additional time to complete the test. None of those students had an Individualized Education Plan.

Prior to testing, Williams' team created a list of lower achieving students and provided it to Principal Shelton. Shelton then had these students tested in small groups. These students did not have an Individualized Education Plan either.

5. *Amanda Lynch (Teacher)*

During the 2009 CRCT, Daniela Vassan told Amanda Lynch that she suspected Weems had changed Vassan's students' test answers. Lynch told Vassan to report it to Shelton. Vassan later told Lynch she reported it to Principal Shelton and he changed the answers back to the original answers.

Lynch was surprised by one student's high test scores because he did not know all of his letter sounds. He passed the reading portion of the test.

Principal Shelton pulled students from Lynch's class for small group testing. Lynch selected which students would most benefit from this environment. Typically, those were students who had behavior problems. On one occasion, Shelton pulled a student from her class after the testing period was over and allowed the girl to retake the test. He explained to Lynch that this student did not perform well, so he was going to re-administer a section of the test to her. Lynch denied changing any answers.

6. *Cheryl Dumas (Teacher)*

During the 2009 CRCT, Cheryl Dumas administered the test to a small group of eight to ten fourth grade girls. Teachers selected which students should be tested away from their peers. No monitor was present during these sessions.

7. *Carla Brice Ross (Testing Coordinator)*

Carla Ross denied any knowledge of cheating. She became visibly upset when confronted with the statistical results of the wrong-to-right erasure analysis. Ross said that teachers for third, fourth and fifth grades were not supposed to clean up stray marks since the students were required to do so before turning in the tests.

8. *Daniela Vassan (Teacher)*

The 2008-2009 school year was Daniela Vassan's first year in APS. During the 2009 CRCT, Vassan witnessed cheating. During the testing week, Vassan returned her tests to the parent center at the end of the day. She noticed that a student left a question blank on the section. Weems looked up the problem in the test booklet, solved it, and told Vassan the correct answer to bubble in. Vassan refused, so Weems filled in the answer on the student's answer



sheet herself. Vassan retrieved the answer sheet from Weems and erased the answer Weems improperly marked. She then turned in her tests and left the parent center.

Two hours later, Weems and Osufuhane were still in the parent center. Vassan went to the testing coordinator and asked to verify her test booklet count. When she pulled the student's answer sheet that Weems had bubbled in, Vassan noticed it had been changed again. She also noticed eraser marks on other students' tests as well, and the tests were out of alphabetical order as she had left them.

Vassan reported the situation to Principal Shelton. Shelton pulled the test documents of the students whose answers Vassan believed had been changed. Shelton then erased those students' new, correct answers and changed them back to the original wrong answer. Vassan did not report Shelton's actions to anyone at that time, as she did not feel comfortable reporting him to the SRT Executive Director. However, in December 2010, she reported the incident to her new Principal, Sharon Briscoe, who took over for Shelton when APS promoted him to Best Academy. Briscoe filed an OIR report.

At the end of each test day, Principal Shelton asked Vassan how her students performed or inquired whether she had any that were inattentive or sleepy. Shelton later pulled those students from class. Shelton also pulled a group of fourth grade boys for testing in a small group. Those students did not have an IEP.

9. Tawanna Robertson (Teacher)

Tawanna Robertson believed that her fourth graders' prior test scores (from third grade) did not accurately reflect their abilities. Robertson expressed her concerns to Principal Shelton. Principal Shelton advised her to teach the students and get them to the level where they should be rather than harp on what they did not know.

Robertson reviewed the erasure analysis data for her class. She could not provide any explanation for the high erasures, but she was certain that her students did not erase that many answers in her classroom. Robertson also indicated that the erasure analysis did not accurately reflect the number of students in her class. She administered the test to 15 students, but the erasure analysis showed that she tested 20. In 2009, Principal Shelton called several students out of her class for "small group testing" with himself or Cheryl Dumas.

10. Lesma Watkis (Teacher)

Lesma Watkis taught at Cook from 2001 until 2010. During the 2009 CRCT, Principal Shelton pulled seven or eight students out of her class for "behavioral issues" and tested them in small groups.

Shelton also tested certain third and fifth graders in small groups. This "small group testing" occurred in the afternoon, after the normal testing period ended, in a classroom with the door closed and the window covered with paper.

In addition to pulling "behavioral students," Terri Smith, a substitute teacher who assisted with the CRCT, asked Watkis for a student who performed well in math to be pulled out at the

same time. Watkis only administered the 2009 CRCT to ten or eleven students, but the erasure analysis flagged a classroom of 20 students.

Watkis believed that cheating occurred on the CRCT because some students who passed the CRCT were not functioning on their grade level and failed in class. These students performed poorly on diagnostic tests (benchmark tests), but performed well in reading and math on the CRCT. Osmond, Dye, Reimnitz and Robertson expressed their concern about this inconsistency to Watkis as well. Watkis told her concerns to Principal Shelton, explaining that her students especially struggled with reading. The very same students that Watkis informed Shelton were struggling in reading ended up being the students Shelton pulled for small group testing. Watkis is only flagged in one class – reading.

Principal Shelton ridiculed teachers whose students did not perform well on the CRCT. When CRCT scores came out, Shelton publicly singled out teachers in a meeting and told them they did not need to be at Cook if their students did not perform better. Teachers could be placed on a PDP or lose their jobs for poor student performance.

Just prior to testing, Principal Shelton held a meeting in the auditorium and reiterated that the teachers were expected to do “everything possible” to ensure the students passed. Some teachers expressed concern to Watkis that they felt that Shelton wanted them to cheat in order for the students to pass.

11. *Nancy Milledge (Teacher at Best Academy)*

Nancy Milledge was a teacher at Best Academy during 2009-2010 school years where LaPaul Shelton is currently the Principal. Milledge reported that during the 2009-2010 CRCT, Principal Shelton pulled students for small group testing under the guise of “behavioral issues.” Milledge reported this as a testing problem during the 2009-2010 year because she believed it was disruptive when Principal Shelton came into the classroom to pull out students during testing. She knew those students were tested elsewhere.

D. Testimony of Individuals Implicated

1. *LaPaul Shelton (Principal)*

Shelton became Principal at Cook in the 2004-2005 school year. He confirmed that he put pressure on the teachers to meet APS targets.

Shelton denied any knowledge of, or participation in, cheating or violations reported to him with regard to the CRCT. He claimed he could not recall Daniela Vassan coming to him with concerns that her students’ test answers had been changed by Deborah Weems. He could not recall erasing those students’ answers and changing them back to the original answers as marked in the students’ test booklets. He also did not recall pulling a student from Amanda Lynch’s class to be re-tested.

Principal Shelton stated that he tested students in small groups who came to school late or were absent during testing. He initially denied pulling students who were “behavioral problems,” but ultimately admitted that he tested some of these students in small groups. He

chose these students based upon data, performance and the recommendation of the teacher. Shelton admitted to asking teachers for a list of students who were not performing well, but explained that he used that list to determine which students needed individual attention throughout the year.

Shelton also admitted that teachers reported to him that some students were not performing in class at the same high level they performed on the CRCT, but he explained it was due to a “high mobility rate” at Cook.

When confronted with the erasure analysis data, he reluctantly admitted that cheating was one explanation.

E. Other Evidence

- In 2006-2007, 2007-2008, and 2008-2009, Cook met AYP.
- In 2010, after Principal Shelton was transferred to Best Academy, Cook did not meet AYP.
- In 2010, after Principal Shelton was transferred to Best Academy, the classes flagged at Cook for wrong-to-right erasures dropped dramatically from 40.7% to 5%.
- At Best Academy, where APS transferred Shelton, the percent of classes flagged increased from 3.9% in 2009 to 19.4% in 2010, with Shelton as Principal. Best was the only school in the district that increased its percentage of classes flagged in 2010 by double digits.

**IV. ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE**

We conclude that Principal Shelton cheated by pulling students for small group testing who were not entitled to accommodations. Cheryl Dumas and Terri Smith assisted Principal Shelton in his cheating scheme. Deborah Weems and Kwabena Osufuhane cheated on the CRCT by erasing and changing student answers for their class as well as other classes. Principal Shelton knew Weems erased and changed answers but took no action. The cheating occurred in 2008 and 2009.

Although no direct evidence exists that Dr. Carla Ross, the testing coordinator, knew of or condoned cheating, we conclude that Dr. Ross failed to follow testing protocols, and thereby allowed cheating to occur.

It is our conclusion, from the statistical data and the other evidence secured in this investigation, that Principal Shelton failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT, and adequately supervise testing activities and test security. This resulted in, and he is responsible for, falsifying, misrepresenting or erroneously reporting the results of the 2009 CRCT to the Georgia Department of Education.

# **WOODSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

1605 Donald Lee Hollowell Pkwy. NE  
Atlanta, GA 30318

Principal: Dr. Viola Blackshear  
Testing Coordinator: Ketchia Smith

SRT-4 Executive Director: Tamara Cotman

## **I. INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY**

Cheating occurred on the CRCT at Woodson Elementary in 2009. Fifty-five people were interviewed at this school, some more than once. Two teachers confessed to cheating. Cheating at Woodson is evidenced by a high number of flagged classrooms, confessions, witness testimony, and Principal Viola Blackshear's refusal to answer our questions. Principal Viola Blackshear answered our questions during her first interview, but during her second interview, she refused to answer questions and instead asserted her Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination. Principal Viola Blackshear failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT.

## **II. STATISTICAL DATA**

### **A. 2009 vs. 2010**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Percentage of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	63.3	15.7
Number of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	38	10
Number of Teachers Flagged for WTR Standard Deviations above 3.0 (Number of Teachers Flagged in Multiple Subjects)	16(13)	4(3)
Mean WTR Standard Deviations from State Norm	7.9	6.6
High Flagged Standard Deviation	15.8	10.8
Low Flagged Standard Deviation	3.4	3.2

B. Flagged Classrooms

Teacher	Grade & Test	Standard Deviation
GAMBLE	1 MA	4.274325147
LADIPO	1 RD	6.996825212
LADIPO	1 LA	9.802024308
LADIPO	1 MA	5.006408649
PICKETT	1 RD	7.614992557
PICKETT	1 LA	15.73260912
PICKETT	1 MA	13.41230842
SMITH	1 LA	4.132890062
SMITH	1 MA	4.547985923
DANIELS	2 RD	6.398818908
DANIELS	2 LA	3.999849742
DANIELS	2 MA	4.811222851
KING	2 RD	3.866378599
LEE DAVIS	2 MA	4.948431478
KIRKLAND	3 RD	11.40088789
KIRKLAND	3 LA	8.725414963
STARKS	3 RD	5.867326539
STARKS	3 LA	5.329997169
STARKS	3 MA	6.674076464
WOODSON	3 RD	12.82810116
WOODSON	3 LA	9.748608194
WOODSON	3 MA	12.82614325
BAUGH	4 RD	6.73483161
BAUGH	4 LA	4.886074383
BAUGH	4 MA	5.760674426
COLEMAN	4 LA	4.603220731
COLEMAN	4 MA	4.170944435
STROZIER	4 RD	15.55542851
STROZIER	4 LA	15.83102627
STROZIER	4 MA	10.45287493
JOHNSON	5 RD	10.58464209
JOHNSON	5 LA	4.995338884
JOHNSON	5 MA	15.43702794
MOSS	5 RD	3.393715479
MOSS	5 LA	8.948834018
MOSS	5 MA	6.585089103
WARTHEN	5 RD	8.999403937
WARTIEN	5 LA	6.008572654

III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

A. Overview

There are several significant facts which point to the conclusion that Woodson Elementary School was not managed to ensure that the 2009 CRCT results were accurately reported.

First, the percentage of flagged classrooms is 63.3% for the 2009 CRCT. There were only 13 schools in APS with a higher percentage in 2009.

Second, of the approximately 1,800 non-APS schools in the state taking the 2009 CRCT, only two had a higher percentage of flagged classrooms than Woodson Elementary School.

Third, with state monitors present in 2010, the percentage of flagged classrooms dropped significantly from 63.3% to 15.7%.

Fourth, of the 38 flagged classrooms at Woodson, 26 (68% of the total) had standard deviations that exceeded five, and ten classrooms exceeded ten standard deviations. At five standard deviations, the probability that the number of erasures occurred without adult intervention, or cheating, is no better than one in a million. At ten standard deviations, the probability is no better than one in a trillion. This signifies that the deviations from the state mean were, for a number of classrooms, a strong indication of cheating on a broad scale at Woodson.

Fifth is the individual student wrong-to-right (WTR) erasure analysis. Of the WTR erasures at Woodson, 87.8% were produced by the flagged classrooms which account for only 63.3% of the total classrooms in the school.

Last, two teachers admitted to prompting students to erase and change answers during the administration of the 2009 CRCT. Testing Coordinator Dixon instructed teachers to seat students strategically so students could copy one another's work on the CRCT. Principal Blackshear refused to answer questions about cheating at Woodson and asserted her Fifth Amendment right to remain silent in response to every question. A copy of the questions Principal Blackshear refused to answer is included as **Attachment A**.

#### B. Narrative

Principal Viola Blackshear is the principal at Woodson. Prior to the 2009 CRCT, Woodson made AYP, but failed to meet targets. As a result, Dr. Blackshear was on a PDP at the time of the 2009 CRCT.

In 2009, teachers cheated on the CRCT at Woodson by using non-verbal signals to assist students, or strategically seated students so that they could cheat off of each other. One teacher cheated at the suggestion of Instructional Liaison Specialist Debra Dixon. Dixon, as well as Testing Coordinator Ketchia Smith and Principal Viola Blackshear, denied knowledge of or participation in cheating.

No one at Woodson confessed to erasing or changing answers, but two teachers confessed to cheating in other ways. However, when Principal Blackshear was interviewed, she asserted her Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination in response to every question, including specific questions about whether she erased and changed answer documents. It is undisputed that Dr. Blackshear had twenty-four hour access to the tests and habitually stayed at the school after hours.

Throughout the school year and in the weeks leading up to the CRCT, Principal Blackshear and Dixon tracked how the teachers expected each student to perform on the CRCT – meets, exceeds, or not meets. Teachers used these “projection sheets” to determine where to focus instruction for each student. Administrators used these “projection sheets” to determine if the school would make AYP or targets. The erasure analysis data reveals a correlation in some flagged classes between students on a teacher's “not meets” list and the students with the highest number of wrong-to-right erasures.

C. Testimony of Witnesses

1. Deloris Pickett (Teacher)

Deloris Pickett worked in APS for 41 years and retired after the 2008-2009 school year. Initially, Pickett denied doing anything to contribute to the high volume of erasures on her students' test documents, but ultimately admitted that she may have frowned or looked at students with displeasure when they missed questions. Pickett believed her actions likely caused the students to erase and change their answers.

2. Ashlyn Strozier (Teacher)

Ashlyn Strozier admitted to cheating on the 2009 CRCT by seating students so that students with the same test form could cheat off of each other's test. Debra Dixon suggested that the teachers strategize and seat the students so that they could cheat off of one another's paper. Strozier also admitted to prompting students by giving them a certain look when she saw them missing questions. Strozier knew that Celesia Baugh also seated her students strategically because they discussed it.

To assist the teachers in reaching targets and AYP, the teachers were required to prepare projection sheets that reflect which students the teacher expected would meet, exceed or not meet expectations on the CRCT. The teachers prepared this data several times a year. The most recent set of "projections" would be turned over to the administrators approximately six weeks before the CRCT. The school administrators also used these projections to determine if the school would make AYP and targets.

The 2008-2009 school year was Strozier's first year at Woodson, but she quickly noticed that her students' performance in class did not match their passing CRCT scores from the prior year. Strozier believed her students' scores had been inflated. Two particular students exceeded in reading and language arts on the CRCT in the third grade, but when Strozier taught them in fourth grade, she had to tutor them because they could not read. Strozier had several students who passed certain subjects on the CRCT that should not have. She especially questioned one student's scores in reading and language arts when the student could not read.

In 2010, Strozier informed Principal Blackshear that her students' previous CRCT scores had been inflated because there was no way the students in her class achieved the test results reflected from the previous year. Principal Blackshear told her she did not know what happened.

When the news broke about the 2009 CRCT erasure analysis, Principal Blackshear held a meeting with the teachers to "calm them down". During that meeting, Principal Blackshear warned teachers to be careful what they said to people outside of the school. Principal Blackshear reminded the teachers that the tests were kept in a secure area in her office, which was a vault, and that she knew, and the teachers knew, that she did not touch any of the tests. She also reminded the teachers that she instructed them during the week of testing to leave the school as soon as school ended, and that they were not allowed to report to the school on weekends during the testing window. Principal Blackshear stressed the importance of knowing the testing rules and reminded the teachers of the process of elimination testing strategies used at

Woodson. Strozier interpreted the meeting by Blackshear as an opportunity for Blackshear to prepare the teachers for any upcoming interviews.

Principal Blackshear is now on a PDP for having low test scores for a third year in a row.

3. Jeannie Collins (Front Office Staff)

Only Principal Blackshear, Ms. Crawford (secretary), Testing Coordinator Ketchia Smith, Brandon Green (paraprofessional) and Collins have alarm codes to the building.

4. Edith Ladipo (Teacher)

Edith Ladipo provided a list of students to ILS Dixon that delineated which students she believed would fail the CRCT. Ladipo recalled being shocked that one of her students passed.

On the morning of the day Ladipo was subpoenaed for an interview by the GBI, Principal Blackshear provided Ladipo with a list of her students from the 2008-2009 school year. This document reflected how her students had performed on the CRCT. Ladipo confirmed that Principal Blackshear was aware that Ladipo was to be interviewed the same day.

5. Brandon Green (Paraprofessional)

Brandon Green assisted with after school programs and Saturday school. During the CRCT, he was a hallway monitor. Due to his weekend responsibilities, he had 24 hour key card access. During the CRCT, Principal Blackshear told him not to come to the school on weekends or let anyone else into the school.

Green typically reported to work between 6:30 a.m. and 6:45 a.m. Jeannie Collins, Principal Blackshear and Ketchia Smith also arrive around 6:30 a.m. Debra Dixon would arrive around 7:30 a.m.

Principal Blackshear often stayed late in the evening to work, but Green did not recall if he saw anyone staying late during the 2009 testing window.

6. Ketchia Smith (Testing Coordinator)

Ketchia Smith does not believe any cheating occurred at Woodson. Smith has worked with Principal Blackshear for five or six years and has been the testing coordinator since 2002. After the reports came out alleging cheating in APS, Principal Blackshear held a meeting with the staff. Smith believed the purpose of the meeting was to encourage teachers not to alarm the students. Smith does not recall Principal Blackshear reminding the teachers that the tests were kept in a vault, that she made them leave at the end of each day, that she did not allow anyone at the school on weekends during testing, that Principal Blackshear did not handle the tests herself, or that teachers should refresh their memory on testing procedures. Smith confirmed that Principal Blackshear talked about testing strategies during that meeting.



Smith was not aware that Principal Blackshear met with teachers and provided them with students' CRCT data prior to the teachers appearing for our interviews. Smith said it would be unusual for Blackshear to provide this information.

During the 2009 CRCT, teachers picked up their test at 7:45 a.m. Smith conceded this early pickup meant that the teachers had the tests in their possession an hour and fifteen minutes before testing began, but Smith denied suggesting the teachers do anything unethical with the tests. The teachers were not allowed to erase stray marks without being monitored. Smith stored the test documents in Principal Blackshear's conference room overnight. Smith and Principal Blackshear were the only people with keys to the conference room where the tests were stored. Principal Blackshear had 24 hour access to the building, but Smith was unsure of whether she had limits on her card. She left the school each day at 3:00 p.m.

Smith denied participating in, or having knowledge of, cheating or testing irregularities. She could not explain the high number of wrong-to-right erasures for many students.

D. Testimony of Individuals Implicated

1. Dr. Viola Blackshear (Principal)

When confronted by the GBI about meeting with teachers in advance of their interviews, Blackshear denied providing teachers with CRCT data analysis for the purpose of assisting them in interviews. She stated that several teachers approached her after their interviews with the GBI and asked for their data. Blackshear prepared the CRCT data analysis because she needed to justify the drop in test scores to her Executive Director, Tamara Cotman. Blackshear attributed the drop in scores to new programs in reading and math.

When interviewed by the GBI, Principal Blackshear denied knowledge of, or participating in, cheating. However, when we interviewed her, Principal Blackshear refused to answer questions and asserted her Fifth Amendment rights to all questions asked.

2. Celesia Baugh (Teacher)

Celesia Baugh denied cheating. She further denied seating students in a particular order or being instructed to do so. However, Baugh explained that the high numbers of wrong-to-right erasures must be a result of someone altering the tests. Although students do erase, Baugh does not believe that her students erased to the degree shown by the erasure analysis.

Baugh recalls Principal Blackshear telling teachers she believed the investigation to be a "witch hunt" and that innocent people would get hurt. Blackshear stated she was glad that everyone left school on time during test week. Blackshear mentioned certain common sense things during that meeting that did not need to be pointed out. For example, Principal Blackshear mentioned that the tests were locked up and then discussed the testing strategies used at Woodson – the process of elimination and marking C as a placeholder if a student wanted to skip a question and come back to it.

Baugh confirmed that she provided projection sheets to Principal Blackshear and Dixon in the weeks leading up to the CRCT.

3. Debra Dixon (Instructional Liaison Specialist)

Debra Dixon was the Instructional Liaison Specialist at Woodson from 2005 until November 2010 when she became the interim Principal at Usher Elementary. While at Woodson, Dixon assisted with the CRCT as a hall monitor and as a classroom proctor for new or struggling teachers.

During the 2009 CRCT, the materials were stored in the conference room next to Principal Blackshear's office. Smith and Principal Blackshear had access to that room. Blackshear had 24 hour access to the building. She requested that everyone leave the school after administering the CRCT and that no one remain in the building after Blackshear left.

Dixon denied advising faculty to "do what they needed to do" to make targets.

E. Other Evidence

- In the 2006-2007, 2007-2008, and 2008-2009 school years, Woodson met AYP.
- In 2010, Woodson did not make AYP.
- Principal Viola Blackshear was on a PDP in 2008-2009 for not meeting APS targets.
- In some classes a correlation exists between students categorized by teachers on projection sheets as "not meets" and students with the highest erasures.
- A correlation exists between students who were "prompted" or assisted by a teacher on the CRCT and students identified by the erasure analysis as having the highest number of erasures.
- In some classes where teachers denied cheating, student data reveals that a large number of students' answers were changed from wrong to right at a 70-100% success rate.

**IV. ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE**

We conclude that Delores Pickett, Celesia Bough and Ashlyn Strozier cheated on the 2009 CRCT. While other teachers denied assisting their students, based upon the statistical improbability of even the lowest standard deviations in the flagged classes, we conclude that other teachers likely prompted students in their classes as well, but were not truthful during this investigation.

We also conclude that Testing Coordinator Dixon cheated by instructing teachers to seat students strategically so the students could copy one another's work during the CRCT.

Principal Blackshear failed in her ultimate responsibility for testing activities and for ensuring the ethical administration of and proper security for the 2009 CRCT. We conclude from the statistical data and other evidence secured in this investigation that Principal Viola Blackshear failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT and adequately supervise testing activities and test security. This resulted in, and she is responsible for, falsifying, misrepresenting, or erroneously reporting the results of the 2009 CRCT to the Georgia Department of Education.

**VIOLA BLACKSHEAR**

You have information concerning cheating at your school on the 2009 CRCT test, don't you?

You are refusing to provide these investigators with that information, aren't you?

You directed school employees to cheat on the 2009 CRCT, didn't you?

You coordinated cheating on the 2009 CRCT at your school, didn't you?

You facilitated the ability of school employees to cheat on the 2009 CRCT test, right?

You knew that school employees were cheating on the 2009 CRCT, didn't you?

You knew that teachers were providing student's with answers to the 2009 CRCT, didn't you?

You changed student's answers on the 2009 CRCT test, didn't you?

You did not report violations of testing protocol as you were required to do by Georgia law, did you?

In 2009, you were entrusted with ensuring that school employees act ethically?

Cheating is unethical isn't it?

You instructed your teachers to cheat on the 2009 CRCT didn't you?

You pressured your teachers to cheat on the 2009 CRCT didn't you?

You accepted bonus money from APS based on test scores you knew to be false?

Your school accepted federal money based in part on test scores you knew to be false?

By cheating on the CRCT you denied the State of Georgia an accurate assessment of your student's academic performance?

By cheating CRCT you denied the parents of your students an accurate assessment of their children's academic performance?

By cheating on the CRCT, you denied the children in your care an accurate assessment of their own academic performance.

# **SCOTT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

1752 Hollywood Road  
Atlanta, Georgia 30318

Principal: Roxianne Smith  
Testing Coordinator: Dr. Juanessa Booker

SRT-4 Executive Director: Tamara Cotman

## **I. INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY**

Cheating occurred on the CRCT at Scott Elementary in 2009. Forty-six people were interviewed at this school, some more than once. Cheating at Scott is evidenced by a high number of flagged classrooms and by witness testimony. Principal Roxianne Smith failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT.

## **II. STATISTICAL DATA**

### **A. 2009 vs. 2010**

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Percentage of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	68	1.4
Number of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	51	1
Number of Teachers Flagged for WTR Standard Deviations above 3.0 (Number of Teachers Flagged in Multiple Subjects)	19(17)	1(0)
Mean WTR Standard Deviations from State Norm	12.1	3.2
High Flagged Standard Deviation	20.2	3.2
Low Flagged Standard Deviation	3.4	3.2

B. Flagged Classrooms

Teacher	Grade & Test	Standard Deviation
BLACK	1 LA	4.826004496
NARCISSE	1 RD	3.474138687
SMITH	1 LA	7.690591885
SMITH	1 MA	6.070464107
DORSEY	2 LA	6.972660013
DORSEY	2 MA	15.4142974
GREEN	2 RD	8.746386998
GREEN	2 LA	6.164641216
GREEN	2 MA	5.017181495
HARRIS	2 RD	6.574296329
HARRIS	2 LA	11.59803391
HARRIS	2 MA	16.56563092
WORLDS	2 RD	11.3504833
WORLDS	2 LA	15.95132699
WORLDS	2 MA	13.68729712
GONGLEFSKI	3 RD	20.28051075
GONGLEFSKI	3 LA	6.422355453
GONGLEFSKI	3 MA	15.06647269
RUCKER	3 RD	19.43475948
RUCKER	3 LA	9.856691098
RUCKER	3 MA	16.49481446
QUACKENBUSH	3 RD	16.53018878
QUACKENBUSH	3 LA	9.627092713
QUACKENBUSH	3 MA	17.8510615
HINES	3 RD	15.39361764
HINES	3 LA	8.938297558
HINES	3 MA	13.29794642
MCNABB	4 RD	11.59287424
MCNABB	4 LA	12.79366698
MCNABB	4 MA	9.484797502
HARVEY	4 RD	15.01810238
HARVEY	4 LA	16.4742188
HARVEY	4 MA	16.918895
YOUNG	4 RD	15.922633
YOUNG	4 LA	13.05905558
YOUNG	4 MA	16.74915896
CARTER	4 RD	15.57551544
CARTER	4 LA	13.95805355
CARTER	4 MA	15.74959352
GRAVES	5 RD	14.69595248
GRAVES	5 LA	5.226172536
GRAVES	5 MA	14.9440121
LAMORTE	5 RD	7.244467584
LAMORTE	5 LA	5.178221109
LAMORTE	5 MA	5.100796052
JOHNSON	5 RD	16.12806351
JOHNSON	5 LA	8.327324423
JOHNSON	5 MA	14.08356504
SANTIAGUE	5 RD	17.03215583
SANTIAGUE	5 LA	13.29241273
SANTIAGUE	5 MA	14.41592043

III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

A. Overview

There are several facts which point to the conclusion that Scott Elementary School was not managed in a way to ensure that the 2009 CRCT results were accurately reported to the State Department of Education.

First, the percentage of flagged classrooms is 68% for the 2009 CRCT. There were only nine schools in APS with a higher percentage in 2009.

Second, of the approximately 1,800 non-APS schools in the state taking the 2009 CRCT only one school had a higher percentage of flagged classrooms than Scott.

Third, with state monitors present in 2010, the percentage of flagged classrooms dropped from 68% to 1.4%.

Fourth, of the 51 flagged classrooms at Scott, 49 (96% of the total) had standard deviations that exceeded five, and 32 classrooms exceeded ten standard deviations. At five standard deviations, the probability that the number of erasures occurred without adult intervention, or cheating, is no better than one in a million. At ten standard deviations the probability is no better than one in a trillion. This signifies that the deviations from the state mean were, for a number of classrooms, a strong indication of cheating on a broad scale at Scott.

Fifth is the individual student wrong-to-right (WTR) erasure analysis. Of the WTR erasures at Scott, 93% were produced by the flagged classrooms which account for only 68% of the total classrooms in the school.

Finally, test security was lax at Scott. People were allowed to come in and out of the testing coordinator's office while the CRCT materials were inside, and black paper covered the window in the door.

#### B. Narrative

Principal Smith and Dr. Juanessa Booker had access to the CRCT materials. The tests were stored overnight in a locked closet in Smith's office. Dr. Booker took the tests to her office during the day for distribution and collection. The tests remained in Dr. Booker's office throughout the day after testing ended. A teacher testified that the paraprofessional assigned to her classroom, Letrecia Walker, admitted to changing answers in Booker's office at Principal Smith's direction.

Booker's cousin, Antwan Joseph, was the math coach at Scott and was observed in Booker's office where the tests were accessible during testing week. Several witnesses reported that the window in Booker's door was covered with black paper during the 2009 CRCT.

APS received anonymous calls in February 2010 reporting cheating at Scott during 2009 and other years. One caller reported that tests were erased and changed in Dr. Booker's office in 2009 and that her window was covered with paper. Another caller reported that in 2008 and 2009, teachers covered their doors with paper during CRCT testing. In April 2010, APS hired attorney Penn Payne, to conduct an external investigation into the charges at the same time the Blue Ribbon Commission was investigating Scott and other schools flagged by GOSA. Payne interviewed eight people, including Booker and Principal Smith, who denied knowledge of cheating and denied that any windows were covered with paper. Payne's report, issued on May 25, 2010, concluded that the anonymous tips were unsubstantiated.

C. Testimony of Witnesses

1. Edwina Monique Browne (Special Education)

Monique Browne was a special education teacher at Scott in 2009. She stated that her paraprofessional, Letrecia Walker, admitted to changing answers on the 2009 CRCT for Principal Roxianne Smith. Principal Smith had a group of “favorites” who would do anything for her, including Letrecia Walker, Testing Coordinator Juanessa Booker, and math coach Antwan Joseph. Principal Smith had access to the tests because they were secured in her office closet, and Booker also had access to the tests because teachers picked them up and returned them to Booker’s office. People came in and out of Booker’s office during test week.

Browne stated she felt undue pressure by administrators to get students to score higher on the CRCT. She was surprised that her students scored so high on the test, and said that third grade teachers were also surprised by their students’ performance.

Browne said the general discussion around school was that there was cheating and that it came from the “top down.”

2. Cynthia Butler (Teacher)

Cynthia Butler testified that she saw black paper placed over the window in Booker’s door. Math coach Antwan Joseph and Juanessa Booker are cousins. Joseph was in Booker’s office many times during testing. Butler stated that any cheating would have been done by administrators because teachers had no time or opportunity to change answers.

3. April Graves (Teacher)

April Graves was a fifth grade teacher in 2009. She was flagged in all three subjects and stated that she did not witness her students making the amount of erasures indicated by the GOSA data.

4. Darin Johnson (Teacher)

Darin Johnson, a fifth grade teacher flagged in all subjects, stated students passed the CRCT who typically performed poorly throughout the year and on other tests. Students who missed school and did not turn in homework passed the CRCT. Johnson stated that one student considered “mediocre” had one of the highest wrong-to-right erasure counts.

5. Bonita Dorsey (Teacher)

Bonita Dorsey, a flagged second grade teacher, stated that she did not believe her students erased as much as the GSOA data indicates.

6. Stacey Carter (Teacher)

Stacey Carter heard of cheating at Scott. She denied cheating and did not know of anyone who cheated, but believed something must have happened to produce the data reported.



7. Lorrae Walker (Teacher)

Lorrae Walker was a teacher at Scott in 2009 who tested three students requiring special accommodations. Walker said it was inconceivable that they could have managed to change so many answers from wrong to right without intervention, as one student could not read and the others were not high functioning. Walker believes cheating occurred at Scott even though the cheaters did not manage to have Scott meet targets. Walker had no direct knowledge but believes administrators were most likely involved in the cheating.

8. Etoile Green (Teacher)

Etoile Green saw Antwan Joseph in Juanessa Booker's office where tests were kept. Green recalled being very surprised by her students' high scores.

9. Liza Williams (Teacher)

Liza Williams saw black paper over the window of Juanessa Booker's door during testing week. She stated that Booker, Principal Smith, Antwan Joseph, and Letrecia Walker were a close-knit group.

10. Erin Quackenbush (Teacher)

Erin Quackenbush had no direct evidence but believes the answers were changed by Booker because she had access to the tests.

11. Tonette Hunter (Teacher's Assistant)

Tonette Hunter was a teacher's assistant at Scott in 2007. Hunter served as a proctor during the 2007 CRCT. She stated that on the Thursday or Friday before the CRCT was to begin, Principal Roxianne Smith held a meeting with Ms. Hunter and other teacher's assistants and paraprofessionals. Smith told them that they needed to "do all they could to make sure the children pass" the CRCT. As she spoke, Principal Smith demonstrated her point by walking among the group, looking over their shoulders, and pointing down as if pointing out answers. After the meeting, Hunter said to Smith, "Well, this is not going to help the children." Principal Smith replied that Hunter would not be helping her salary if she did not cooperate. Smith also told Hunter, "You're overstepping your boundaries."

Hunter testified that she did not participate in prompting or assisting students during the test administration. After the CRCT concluded, Principal Smith asked Hunter how the testing went. Hunter told her, "I don't know, you're going to have to wait for your results."

A week after the CRCT, Hunter telephoned SRT Executive Director Tamara Cotman to report Principal Smith's directive to prompt students during testing, and other concerns she had about the school. The next day Cotman arrived at Scott and called Hunter into a meeting with Principal Smith. Cotman told Hunter that if she "did not keep her mouth shut" and kept causing problems at Scott, "you will be gone." Hunter then went to see Dr. Beverly Hall to discuss the cheating allegations and other concerns, but could not get an appointment. A woman from Dr. Hall's office met with Hunter in the lobby and listened to her, but took no notes during the

meeting. Hunter felt that she was being treated as if she were a “problem employee.” She heard nothing from the Superintendent’s office in response to her report. Hunter subsequently spoke to Atlanta School Board member LaChandra Butler Burks about the incidents at Scott Elementary, but Ms. Butler Burks did not respond as promised. In June 2010, during the Blue Ribbon Commission’s investigation, Hunter reported the 2007 CRCT cheating allegations to the APS hotline. A copy of Hunter’s hotline complaint is included as **Attachment A**.

Ms. Hunter was fired in May 2007, allegedly for attendance issues, although Hunter contends her termination was in retaliation for her complaints about cheating and other matters she reported about Scott Elementary.

D. Testimony of Individuals Implicated

1. Roxianne Smith (Principal)

Roxianne Smith came to Scott as principal in 2006-2007. She deferred to Juanessa Booker’s experience as testing coordinator and took a hands-off role other than monitoring the halls. The tests were locked in Principal Smith’s office overnight, and Booker took them to her office daily for distribution. The tests remained in Booker’s office during the day “because that’s the way it was done” before Principal Smith came to Scott. She did not recall whether there was paper covering the window of Booker’s door, and was unsure whether it was permissible. Principal Smith claimed no knowledge of people gathering in Booker’s office with the tests and erasing answers. She also stated that if anyone said that Letrecia Walker changed answers at her direction, they were lying.

Principal Smith was interviewed by Penn Payne concerning testing irregularities at Scott in 2009. Payne did not inform her of the specific allegations and Smith did not inquire into the details of the accusation. When the report of Payne’s investigation was made public, Smith made no attempt to obtain a copy. She did not recall whether she spoke with Booker about Payne’s investigation and did not recall asking Booker whether she had been interviewed.

Scott Elementary School did not meet targets under Principal Smith’s leadership. She “did not know” if she felt pressure to meet targets or whether her job could be in jeopardy, although she was placed on a PDP twice, in part for failure to meet targets. She was evasive when asked if she had spoken with anyone about this investigation, and reluctant to name those to whom she had spoken.

Smith denied that she directed Juanessa Booker to change answers. She was not aware if teachers had the opportunity to change answers in the classrooms. When asked repeatedly if she believed students had made the erasures on their own, she only stated each time that they were the people “who had pencils and erasers” during the test.

2. Letrecia Walker (Paraprofessional)

Letrecia Walker was a paraprofessional for Monique Browne. She denied that she changed answers at Principal Smith’s direction and denied being in Juanessa Booker’s office with the tests. She heard that Booker’s door was covered with black paper.

Letrecia Walker stated that Principal Smith called teachers and paraprofessionals separately into her office after learning about the flagged classes. Smith questioned her about the testing and she felt that Smith was trying to intimidate her.

3. Dr. Juanessa Booker (Testing Coordinator)

Dr. Juanessa Booker was the Instructional Liaison Specialist and Testing Coordinator at Scott in 2009. She was aware of allegations she changed answers on the 2009 CRCT and denied erasing any answers. Students should have erased stray marks but if tests were turned in with stray marks, they could be erased by teachers. Booker denied there was paper covering her door and denied she was inside her office with test booklets. Booker claimed the tests were kept locked in Principal Smith's office. Both she and Principal Smith had the key.

Booker denied cheating or knowledge of cheating. She felt the CRCT scores accurately reflected the students' performance and was not surprised by the results.

4. Antwan Joseph (Math Facilitator)

Antwan Joseph was the math coach at Scott in 2009. Joseph denied cheating on the CRCT. During the 2009 CRCT, Joseph tested small groups of special education students and administered makeup tests. He and Testing Coordinator Juanessa Booker are first cousins and worked together previously at Towns Elementary. Joseph, Booker, and reading facilitator Cynthia Butler were considered part of Principal Smith's "administrative team." He and Butler assisted Booker with distributing and collecting the tests, which Joseph stated were kept in the lounge/parent center across the hall from Dr. Booker's office. Joseph thought that the custodian, Principal Smith and Dr. Booker had keys to the lounge. He did not recall the window being covered with paper and believed that the door to the lounge was usually open. Joseph stated that the tests were only in Booker's office when they were initially sorted and when they were packed up to go back to the Brewer Center. He did not believe that the tests were stored in the principal's office in 2009, but was not certain.

When asked why people would report that he and Booker were seen together in Booker's office during testing, Joseph first stated that it would not be unusual for people to see them together because the "administrative team" worked together closely. He did not know why anyone would state that he and Booker spent "extra" time together in her office during testing, because she was very busy. Later Joseph admitted that there were times when he was with Booker in her office with the tests. He did not elaborate. He denied that Booker's office window was covered with paper.

Joseph knew there were allegations about cheating at Scott, but did not know the details. He was surprised to learn during his interview that his cousin, Dr. Booker, had been investigated by Penn Payne concerning the cheating allegations. Although they were "very close," Booker had not informed him of the Payne investigation.

#### **IV. ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE**

We conclude that Testing Coordinator Juanessa Booker erased and changed student answer sheets with Antwan Joseph in her office after testing concluded. Principal Roxianne

Smith directed others to cheat. We believe teachers and proctors followed Principal Smith's directive to cheat, but do not have sufficient evidence to determine which teachers.

Principal Roxianne Smith failed in her responsibility for testing activities and for ensuring the ethical administration of, and proper security for, the 2009 CRCT. It is our conclusion from the statistical data and the other evidence secured in this investigation that Principal Smith failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT, and adequately supervise testing activities and test security. This resulted in, and she is responsible for, falsifying, misrepresenting or erroneously reporting the results of the 2009 CRCT to the Georgia Department of Education.

### Ethics and Compliance Reporting

#### General Information

Caller Name: TONETTE HUNTER Type: Former Employee Title: TEACHER ASSISTANT Phone: (404)914-2811 Best Time to Call: BETWEEN 8 AM AND 3 PM Email: tonichunter@hotmail.com	Client Name: Atlanta Education Fund Location #: SCOTT ELEMENTARY DBA: ATLANTA EDUCATION FUND (C Address: HOLLOWAY ROAD City, State, Zip: ATLANTA - GA Country: USA Phone:	Report #: 114060574 Priority: Trans #: 1 Rpt Date: 06/23/2010 Time: 01:15PM Origin: Phone Call
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#### Summary Information

<b>WHO:</b>	Caller, TONETTE HUNTER, reported ROXANNE SMITH and BEVERLY HALL.
<b>WHAT:</b>	Cheating on Standardized Tests
<b>WHEN:</b>	ONGOING SINCE 03/2007, EXACT DATE UNKNOWN
<b>WHERE:</b>	AT THE LOCATION

#### Incident Description

6/23/2010 1:15:00 PM - Original Call  
 Caller, HUNTER, reported ongoing since 03/2007, exact date unknown, during testing time for the Criteria Reference Tests. Principal, Roxanne SMITH, advised all Teacher's Assistants to guide Students to the right answers when they were taking this test. HUNTER stated that when she worked at this location, Superintendent, Beverly HALL, ignored requests for help regarding this issue.

HUNTER would like for HALL and SMITH removed from their positions within the school system because HUNTER feels that HALL and SMITH are not qualified to oversee the education of children.

How does the caller know about the incident?: Witnessed

What documentation is available?: none

#### Involved Parties

Reported Individuals: Name: BEVERLY HALL Title: SUPERINTENDENT
Name: ROXANNE SMITH Title: PRINCIPAL

Management Notified: NO

Involved/Aware Parties : NO

#### Supplemental Information

How does the caller know about hotline: Poster

Interviewer Observations:

#### Additional Information

Have you reported this incident to Atlanta Public Schools, the Atlanta Board of Education, Georgia Department of Education or other organization? YES

Which organization did you report it to? THE OFFICE OF BEVERLY HALL

Is the issue you're reporting related to a specific grade or class?	NO
What is your relationship to the school or school system? (i.g., parent, teacher, concerned citizen, etc.)	PREVIOUS EMPLOYEE

**Client Instructions**

The caller has provided his/her name and/or contact information indicating an interest in discussing this matter with a company representative

Conditions

The information contained in this report was provided by a third party source. The Network, Inc. does not verify the accuracy or the completeness of the information contained in this report, and therefore, cannot guarantee its accuracy or completeness.

If you have questions, concerns or updates such as escalation and/or dissemination instructions relative to our service or this incident report please contact us at "clientcommunication@inwin.com."

## DEERWOOD ACADEMY

3070 Fairburn Road  
Atlanta, Georgia 30331

Principal: Dr. Lisa Smith  
Testing Coordinator: Lavonia Ferrell

SRT-1 Executive Director: Dr. Sharon Davis-Williams

### **I. INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY**

Cheating occurred at Deerwood Academy on the CRCT in 2009 and the summer of 2008. Thirty-seven people were interviewed at this school, some more than once. One person confessed to cheating on the CRCT in the spring of 2009 and the summer of 2008. Cheating at Deerwood is evidenced by a high number of flagged classrooms, confessions, and witness testimony. Principal Smith knew of cheating in 2009 and failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT.

### **II. STATISTICAL DATA**

#### A. 2009 vs. 2010

	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Percentage of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	47.8	8.6
Number of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	43	7
Number of Teachers Flagged for WTR Standard Deviations above 3.0 (Number of Teachers Flagged in Multiple Subjects)	21(15)	6(1)
Mean WTR Standard Deviations from State Norm	6.5	3.8
High Flagged Standard Deviation	15.3	4.4
Low Flagged Standard Deviation	3	3.4

B. Flagged Classrooms

Teacher	Grade & Test	Standard Deviation
HORNBUCKLE	1 LA	10.44227521
HORNBUCKLE	1 MA	11.35407784
LOWMAN	1 RD	4.144850139
LOWMAN	1 LA	4.295942077
LOWMAN	1 MA	6.847181265
MCDOWELL	1 RD	4.144850139
MCDOWELL	1 LA	6.425074404
MCDOWELL	1 MA	8.018708526
MONROE	1 LA	6.42562461
MONROE	1 MA	9.157537747
PEEK	1 RD	3.322749422
PEEK	1 LA	6.539778922
PEEK	1 MA	10.56596305
STEPIENS	1 MA	7.425305497
COKLEY	2 RD	7.907423342
COKLEY	2 LA	13.23261099
COKLEY	2 MA	15.25769515
FORD	2 RD	6.745223584
FORD	2 MA	5.508251047
HENREY	2 LA	6.428498378
HENREY	2 MA	3.55562147
HUFF	2 RD	4.186202842
HUFF	2 LA	3.02748816
HUFF	2 MA	4.131228906
WILLIAMS	2 LA	5.340175108
WILLIAMS	2 MA	3.670695498
BROWN	3 LA	5.64631291
BROWN	3 MA	3.356460954
JONES	3 RD	6.41558976
TRICHE	3 RD	3.653439181
MALLORY	4 RD	13.44280868
MALLORY	4 LA	4.020487133
MALLORY	4 MA	8.110691366
MCCULLEY	4 RD	3.067927107
WRIGHT	4 MA	4.754356328
DIGGS	5 LA	4.325432673
FRIEDLAND	5 RD	3.988983477
FRIEDLAND	5 MA	4.684581072
WARMACK	5 RD	6.530709212
WARMACK	5 LA	8.598697939
WARMACK	5 MA	5.589028002
WOODARD	5 RD	7.371264749
WOODARD	5 LA	9.676369378

III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

A. Overview

Several facts point to the conclusion that Deerwood Academy was not managed to ensure that CRCT results were accurately reported to the Georgia Department of Education.

First, the percentage of flagged classrooms is 47.8% for the 2009 CRCT. With state monitors present in 2010, the percentage of flagged classrooms dropped from 47.8% to 8.6%.



Second, of the approximately 1,800 non-APS schools in the state taking the 2009 CRCT, only five schools had a higher percentage of flagged classrooms than Deerwood.

Fourth, of the 43 flagged classrooms at Deerwood, 26 (60% of the total) had standard deviations that exceeded five, and six classrooms exceeded ten standard deviations. At five standard deviations, the probability that this number of erasures occurred without adult intervention, or cheating, is no better than one in a million. At ten standard deviations the probability is no better than one in a trillion. This signifies that the deviations from the state mean were, for a number of classrooms, a strong indication of cheating on a broad scale at Deerwood.

Fifth is the individual student wrong-to-right (WTR) erasure analysis. Of the WTR erasures at Deerwood, 70% were produced by the flagged classrooms which account for 47.8% of the total classrooms in the school.

Last, teacher Margaret Merkerson says that she and Testing Coordinator Lavonia Ferrell changed student answer sheets during the summer 2008 CRCT retest, and the 2009 CRCT. Assistant Principal Tabeeka Jordan knew of and approved this cheating in 2008 and 2009. Principal Lisa Smith knew of and approved this cheating in 2009.

#### B. Narrative

In July 2008, students from five schools came to Deerwood for the CRCT math retest. This was the first year that the summer CRCT scores would count towards AYP. Deerwood Assistant Principal Tabeeka Jordan was in charge of testing and asked Lavonia Ferrell to be Testing Coordinator. Ferrell asked retired teacher Margaret Merkerson to assist with organizing the testing materials. Tabeeka Jordan and Lavonia Ferrell orchestrated a scheme to ensure that the school made AYP. Jordan pulled several Deerwood students out of class and had Merkerson test them separately, although Merkerson had not been trained to administer the test. After testing was over, Ferrell asked Merkerson to assist her in erasing and changing test answer sheets of Deerwood students, using the answer keys Ferrell made. The window on the conference room door was covered with paper while Ferrell and Merkerson changed answer sheets in the conference room adjoining the principal's office. Assistant Principal Jordan came in and out of the room and witnessed their actions.

The results from the summer of 2008 CRCT retest showed improbable gains for Deerwood students. This resulted in a state investigation and an investigation done by APS.

For the 2009 CRCT at Deerwood, Jordan again asked Lavonia Ferrell to serve as testing coordinator. Merkerson had a temporary assignment at Deerwood and also assisted Ferrell. Merkerson and Ferrell erased and changed student answer sheets in the principal's conference room for several days, just as they did in 2008. Ferrell prepared answer keys for various versions of the tests. Ferrell sometimes selected answer sheets of students she knew were proficient in math to prepare those answer keys. Jordan came in and out of the room and witnessed the erasing. Principal Lisa Smith also came in and out from her adjoining office while erasing was in progress.

C. Testimony of Witnesses

1. Margaret Merkerson (Teacher)

Margaret Merkerson confessed to cheating on the 2008 and 2009 CRCT.

In 2008, Merkerson was a substitute teacher at Fickett Elementary. In July 2008, she was asked by Lavonia Ferrell to assist with the administration of the summer 2008 CRCT math retest to be given at Deerwood. Ferrell was the testing coordinator at Deerwood. Jordan supervised this testing. Working as an unpaid volunteer, Merkerson assisted Ferrell in organizing the tests in the conference room that adjoined the principal's office. Ferrell told Merkerson that Jordan wanted to ensure Deerwood made AYP. Merkerson and Ferrell sat at the conference room table and changed answers from wrong to right, using test keys that Ferrell made. Students from five different schools were tested. Merkerson thinks that they only changed answers of Deerwood students, but was not certain because Ferrell selected the answer sheets to be changed. A piece of paper covered the window on the door that led into the hall. Jordan came in and out of the conference room and saw the erasing. Jordan asked Merkerson to administer the test to Deerwood students she pulled out of class, although Merkerson had not received the required training. Merkerson recalled meeting Principal Smith in summer 2008 when Smith was at the school. Smith was not acting as the principal of Deerwood during the summer session.

In 2009, Merkerson worked at Deerwood as a long-term substitute. During the 2009 CRCT, she served as a proctor for Mr. Warmack's fifth grade class. She assisted Testing Coordinator Lavonia Ferrell in Principal Smith's conference room by erasing and changing answer sheets for three or four days, just as they had done the previous summer. Ferrell prepared answer keys and the window of the door leading into the hall was covered with paper. Ferrell sometimes complained that Merkerson erased "too slowly." The first group of answer sheets Merkerson changed were from Warmack's class. She does not think that she or Ferrell changed answers of first and second grade students.

Principal Smith and Jordan were aware of the cheating. Both came in and out of the conference room at various times while answers were being erased and changed. The test booklets and answer sheets were stacked on the table in plain view. Principal Smith would walk in from her office and ask how they were doing, as she grabbed a snack and returned to her office. Jordan would come in more often and sometimes stayed and talked awhile. Merkerson and Ferrell did not stop erasing when Jordan or Smith came in and did not try to hide the answer sheets, which were on the table.

Merkerson is remorseful for what she did in 2008 and 2009. She was shocked to learn after the April 2009 CRCT that an investigation was being launched concerning the results of the 2008 retest. When attorney Penn Payne began her investigation in June 2009, Merkerson received calls from Ferrell and Jordan, who tried to convince her that she had not actually administered the test to anyone in summer 2008.

We monitored several conversations between Margaret Merkerson and Lavonia Ferrell. During one discussion, Merkerson told Ferrell that she was thinking about telling the truth to the Governor's investigators about being in the room erasing answers with Ferrell. Lavonia Ferrell

told Merkerson that they had done nothing wrong and warned her not to tell what they had done, unless she wanted to be “locked up.” In other conversations, Ferrell stated that investigators had no evidence. Merkerson asked Ferrell if they should both just tell the truth to which Ferrell responded that if they did they might get in trouble for perjury.

2. Tabitha Martin (Reading Facilitator)

Tabitha Martin was certain there was cheating on the CRCT because she had access to students’ test scores and knew that some students who could not read were scoring at high levels. The students’ scores did not match their classroom performance. She recalled that Jordan was in charge of the summer 2008 CRCT testing, and afterward there were a lot of good grades and students had vastly improved test scores. She noticed that during testing in 2009, Jordan, Ferrell, and Merkerson would stay late. Martin heard some teachers used voice inflection when reading questions, and that hand signals were being used.

Tabitha Martin said the administration knew from the data how many students needed to pass the CRCT. Teachers would be told how many students they needed to exceed expectations and were asked how many they thought would pass. Teachers were asked how they were going to get the students to pass the test.

3. Kristy McDowell (Teacher)

Kristy McDowell had a student who could not read. The student passed the reading section of the CRCT. She knew other students who should have had lower test scores. McDowell denied any involvement in cheating.

4. Amy Lowman (Teacher)

Amy Lowman recounted discussions of cheating she heard. She heard that Kristy McDowell used voice inflection, Zanetta Hornbuckle gave answers, and Betty Jean Peak taught students to listen to her pauses for cues. Lowman heard that during the Summer 2008 retest, Tabeeka Jordan pulled some Deerwood students out to be tested separately. Lowman was shocked that her classes were flagged for high wrong-to-right erasures since her students scored so low.

5. Abigail Currens (Teacher)

Abigail Currens was an Early Intervention Program teacher in 2009 and taught math and reading to fifth graders. Currens heard several discussions of cheating on tests. Students taking the ITBS test told her that they had seen the test questions before in Rita Lawrence’s class.

6. Mary Mallory (Teacher)

Mary Mallory was a fourth grade teacher in 2009. She was surprised that one particular student who typically scored in the 600 range, made over 800 on the CRCT.

7. Betty Jean Peak

Betty Jean Peak was a fifth grade teacher at Deerwood in 2008. She stated there were students in her class who could not read. She identified specific students who did not pass the spring 2008 CRCT and had to attend summer school. Although Peak knew that those students did not have the ability to pass the summer 2008 CRCT, they were promoted to sixth grade and some passed the CRCT by 2 to 3 points. Peak denied cheating on the CRCT.

D. Testimony of Individuals Implicated

1. Lisa Smith (Principal)

Lisa Smith stated that she saw no cheating at Deerwood and no one reported cheating to her. Principal Smith felt that she had been wrongly targeted for cheating during the Summer 2008 CRCT. She said she was not the principal in residence during the 2008 summer session. She felt she had been referred to the Professional Standards Commission as part of a witch hunt. Smith was temporarily removed as principal of Deerwood after the 2009 CRCT, but was reinstated in June 2010.

Dr. Smith admitted that paper covered the window in the door of her conference room in 2008 and 2009. The window was uncovered at the recommendation of the PSC.

Principal Smith was placed on a PDP in 2008 for low student achievement. She said she only told her administrative staff she was on a PDP. She admitted putting Jordan on a PDP in 2008 but claimed it was for behavioral issues.

With regard to the CRCT, Principal Smith said that she never touched CRCT materials and never went into the classrooms during testing. Smith did not feel pressure to meet targets but also did not like the feeling she and her staff experienced at the Convocation when the school's targets were not met. Deerwood did not make targets or AYP in 2008, but did make AYP in 2009 and 2010. Principal Smith denied ever directing anyone to cheat or change answers on the 2009 CRCT, and denied any knowledge or involvement in cheating. She did not understand how it would be possible for testing administrators to make answer keys or breach the security measures.

Smith was informed by SRT-1 Executive Director Sharon Davis-Williams in early 2009 that inquiries were being made into Deerwood's summer 2008 results. Testing protocols were to be tightened for the 2009 CRCT. Principal Smith requested that Ferrell return as the testing coordinator. She denied ever seeing anyone erasing and changing answers in her conference room. Anyone claiming they changed answers in the conference room was lying.

2. Lavonia Ferrell (Testing Coordinator)

Lavonia Ferrell was questioned about allegations of cheating and testing improprieties on the 2008 Summer Retest and 2009 CRCT. She had no information to provide. Ferrell was informed that investigators monitored telephone calls between her and others. Investigators played a portion of one recording to show her that calls had been recorded. Ferrell reiterated that she had no information to provide.

3. Tabeeka Jordan

Jordan was suspended from APS from August 2009 until June 2010, and since that time has been on medical leave pending hearings into allegations of cheating at Deerwood. Jordan denied any cheating or knowledge of cheating at Deerwood during the summer of 2008 and the spring of 2009. She denied knowledge of Lavonia Ferrell and Margaret Merkerson erasing and changing answers in the principal's conference room during either test administration. She did not know how they would have had the opportunity to cheat. Jordan claimed she did not go in and out of the conference room except when the tests were being distributed. She stated that if she had witnessed erasing she would have questioned what was happening. Jordan admitted that Merkerson tested a small group of Deerwood students, but maintained that Merkerson had been trained by Ferrell to administer testing.

Jordan admitted she was friends with Ferrell and Principal Smith, and had spoken with both of them concerning their interviews during this investigation. She did not believe that Ferrell participated in cheating and believed that Merkerson had "memory problems." Anyone who claimed that Jordan directed or facilitated cheating was lying.

E. Other Evidence

Teachers say they were pressured by Principal Smith to meet targets. Several were placed on a PDP for not meeting performance standards. It was important to Principal Smith to "make the floor" each year.

**IV. ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE**

We conclude that Lavonia Ferrell and Margaret Merkerson erased and changed student answer sheets during the 2008 summer retest CRCT and the spring 2009 CRCT. Tabeeka Jordan directed and witnessed the cheating in 2008 and 2009. Principal Lisa Smith witnessed the cheating in 2009.

It is our conclusion, from the statistical data and the other evidence secured in this investigation, that Principal Smith failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT, and adequately supervise testing activities and test security. This resulted in, and she is responsible for, falsifying, misrepresenting or erroneously reporting the results of the 2009 CRCT to the Georgia Department of Education.

## HUMPHRIES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

3029 Humphries Drive  
Atlanta, Georgia 30354

Principal: Donald Clark  
Testing Coordinator: Christi Davis-Langston

SRT-2 Executive Director: Michael Pitts

### I. INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

Cheating occurred on the CRCT at Humphries Elementary in 2009 and in other years. Fifty people were interviewed at this school, some more than once. Two people confessed to cheating. Cheating at Humphries is evidenced by a high number of flagged classrooms, confessions, witness testimony, and Principal Donald Clark's refusal to answer questions about cheating. Clark and Testing Coordinator Christi Davis-Langston knew or should have known of the cheating in 2009 and in other years. Principal Clark failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT.

### II. STATISTICAL DATA

#### A. 2009 vs. 2010

	2009	2010
Percentage of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	46.7	10.4
Number of Classrooms Flagged for WTR Erasures	21	5
Number of Teachers Flagged for WTR Standard Deviations above 3.0 (Number of Teachers Flagged in Multiple Subjects)	8(7)	3(1)
Mean WTR Standard Deviations from State Norm	9.0	5.4
High Flagged Standard Deviation	21.4	7.2
Low Flagged Standard Deviation	3.1	3.7

#### B. Flagged Classrooms

Teacher	Grade & Test	Standard Deviation
POWERS	1 RD	3.509111489
POWERS	1 LA	4.586102472
POWERS	1 MA	4.260461109
BUTLER	2 MA	5.190621156
SEALS	2 RD	4.228229406
SEALS	2 LA	3.880424229
MCNAMEE	3 RD	9.624865356
MCNAMEE	3 LA	6.422355453
MCNAMEE	3 MA	3.104472432
PASIVE	3 RD	7.025927454
PASIVE	3 LA	6.658610242
PASIVE	3 MA	4.300672458
ABELLA	4 RD	13.25179281
ABELLA	4 LA	21.43438688
ABELLA	4 MA	13.12665736
AHMED	4 RD	16.64351795
AHMED	4 LA	8.056040448
AHMED	4 MA	10.84091485
TERRY	4 RD	15.55531856
TERRY	4 LA	12.53867805
TERRY	4 MA	15.68865008

### **III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**

#### **A. Overview**

There are several facts which point to the conclusion that Humphries Elementary School was not managed to ensure that the 2009 CRCT results were accurately reported to the Georgia Department of Education.

First, the percentage of flagged classrooms was 46.7% for the 2009 CRCT. There were only 25 schools in APS with a higher percentage that year.

Second, of the approximately 1,800 non-APS schools in the state taking the 2009 CRCT, only eight schools had a higher percentage of flagged classrooms than Humphries Elementary School.

Third, with state monitors present in 2010, the percentage of flagged classrooms dropped significantly from 46.7% to 10.4%.

Fourth, of the 21 flagged classrooms at Humphries Elementary School, 14 (67% of the total) had standard deviations that exceeded five, and eight classrooms exceeded ten standard deviations. At five standard deviations, the probability that the number of erasures occurred without adult intervention, or cheating, is no better than one in a million. At ten standard deviations the probability is no better than one in a trillion. This signifies that the deviations from the state mean were, for a number of classrooms, a strong indication of cheating on a broad scale at this school.

Fifth is the individual student wrong-to-right (WTR) erasure analysis. Of the WTR erasures at Humphries, 71.4% were produced by the flagged classrooms which account for only 46.7% of the total classrooms in the school.

Sixth, at least three proctors asked to be assigned other duties because they witnessed cheating by teachers on the ITBS test or the CRCT. Two teachers admitted to cheating on the 2009 CRCT.

Last, Principal Clark knew that cheating occurred on the 2009 CRCT, and attempted to cover up the misconduct. Lillian Lockhart told Clark she witnessed cheating. Mr. Clark told her, "If you don't tell me anything, I won't have to report anything."

#### **B. Narrative**

The fourth grade at Humphries was compartmentalized, meaning that one teacher taught science and social studies, one taught math, and one taught language arts and reading. The fourth grade teachers were instructed by Principal Clark to walk between each other's homerooms during the 2009 CRCT. While walking in each other's classrooms, Wendy Ahmed, Ingrid Abella, and Lisa Terry prompted students, and verbally gave answers or hand signals to indicate the correct answers. Two proctors, Demetrius Carroll and Adrienne Woods, witnessed

testing violations by Wendy Ahmed, Ingrid Abella, or Lisa Terry during testing in 2009 and asked to be removed as proctors. Lillian Lockhart also witnessed Wendy Ahmed giving hand signals to students during the administration of the 2009 CRCT and asked to be removed as a proctor. She was removed. No action was taken by the testing coordinator or Principal Clark to report this misconduct.

In 2010, Principal Clark informed the teachers at a meeting that GBI agents would be coming to the school to investigate allegations of cheating. Lillian Lockhart approached Principal Clark and told him what she saw in 2009, and told him she would tell the investigators what she saw. Principal Clark asked Lockhart why she was reporting this to him now, and stated “if you don’t tell me anything, I don’t have to report anything.” Lockhart told Principal Clark that she only witnessed hand signals, not erasing. The next day Principal Clark called Lockhart to his office and asked her if she wanted to talk about what she saw, but again cautioned her, “If you don’t tell me anything, I won’t have to report anything.” Confused and fearful, Lockhart told him she had nothing to report.

Lockhart later told Testing Coordinator Christi Davis-Langston what she witnessed in 2009, and that she had relayed the same to Principal Clark. Davis-Langston went to Principal Clark and relayed what Lockhart told her. Principal Clark separately instructed Lockhart and Davis-Langston not to discuss the matter with anyone. Lockhart ignored this instruction and discussed the matter further with Davis-Langston, and both went to Principal Clark’s office. Principal Clark became angry and berated them for refusing to follow his instruction of silence.

Later, Principal Clark told Lockhart that he would have to file an OIR report on the incident. Clark instructed Lockhart to prepare a statement about what she witnessed in 2009. She prepared a statement but left out the majority of the details, because she believed that is what Principal Clark wanted her to do.

APS sent Penn Payne to investigate the matter. Lockhart testified that Ms. Payne’s questions seemed designed to make her feel as she were betraying her friends and her school. Lockhart admitted she minimized the cheating she witnessed to Payne.

### C. Testimony of Witnesses

#### 1. Joanne Carroll (Proctor)

Joanne Carroll witnessed Maria Pasive prompt students during the administration of the 2009 ITBS test, and requested to be removed as her proctor for the 2009 CRCT. We attempted to interview Maria Pasive on multiple occasions, but did not locate her.

#### 2. Adrienne Woods (Proctor)

Adrienne Woods witnessed “irregularities” on the 2008 CRCT, and requested to be assigned to a different classroom for the 2009 CRCT. In 2009 many of the fourth grade students could only read on a second grade level, but exceeded expectations on the CRCT.



3. Tonia Clark (Proctor)

Tonia Clark admitted to prompting students during the 2009 CRCT. She witnessed Lisa Terry instructing students to change answers during the 2009 CRCT. She also saw Wendy Ahmed verbally giving students the answers on the test.

4. Lillian Lockhart (Proctor)

Lillian Lockhart witnessed Wendy Ahmed giving students answers to the 2009 CRCT by giving hand signals while standing in front of the classroom. After witnessing Wendy Ahmed cheating, Lockhart requested a new assignment for the remainder of the 2009 CRCT from Testing Coordinator Christi Davis-Langston. Lockhart did not provide a reason for this request, nor did she report the cheating she witnessed.

Later, in 2010, Principal Clark informed Humphries' teachers that investigators would be coming to the school with regard to cheating on the 2009 CRCT. Lockhart went to Clark and disclosed the cheating she witnessed, and told Principal Clark she would tell the investigators what she saw. Clark asked Lockhart why she failed to report the incident in 2009, and said, "If you don't tell me anything, I won't have to report anything." Lockhart told Principal Clark that she only witnessed Wendy Ahmed making hand gestures and not any erasing. The next day Clark again called Lockhart to his office and told her, "If you don't tell me anything, I won't have to report anything." Lockhart told Principal Clark that she had nothing to report.

Clark instructed Lockhart not to speak with anyone about the incident but she spoke with Davis-Langston, who in turn spoke with Clark. He called them both to his office and berated them for talking to one another when he instructed them not to. He then told Lockhart that he would have to report the incident to OIR, and instructed her to write a statement about what she witnessed. Lockhart wrote a statement and intentionally left out most of the details because she believed Principal Clark wanted her to leave out many details.

APS sent attorney Penn Payne to question Lockhart. Lockhart said that Penn Payne's questions were designed to make her feel as if she were betraying her friends and her school. She minimized the cheating she saw in response to the pressure she felt from Penn Payne.

During the 2010 CRCT, Lockhart was assigned to monitor a kindergarten class and was not allowed to proctor the CRCT. Lockhart believes she was placed in a kindergarten class in retaliation for reporting the testing violation in 2009.

5. Demetrius Carroll (Proctor)

Demetrius Carroll heard that Lisa Terry, Wendy Ahmed, and Ingrid Abella cheated on the CRCT. During the 2008 CRCT, Carroll witnessed a student copy from another student's answer sheet in Abella's classroom. He reported the violation to Abella. She did not seem surprised and moved the student's desk a few inches away from the other student. Carroll asked for a different proctoring assignment because of this incident and because he heard that Abella prompted students on the CRCT. He reported the violation to then-testing coordinator Yolanda Faison.

6. Tia Brown (Proctor)

Tia Brown saw Ingrid Abella approach many students' desks during the administration of the 2009 CRCT, but she could not tell what Ingrid Abella was doing.

7. Cawanna Powers (Teacher)

Cawanna Powers heard that the third, fourth, and fifth grades erased and changed students' answers on the 2009 CRCT.

D. Testimony of Individuals Implicated

1. Donald Clark (Principal)

Donald Clark denied any knowledge of cheating, and does not believe anyone cheated at Humphries.

2. Christi Davis-Langston (Testing Coordinator)

Christi Davis-Langston testified that Lillian Lockhart did not report the cheating described in Section IV(C)(4) until March of 2010. She immediately reported this to Principal Clark, and prepared the statement included as **Attachment A**.

Davis-Langston said she was surprised at how well the students of Wendy Ahmed, Lisa Terry, and Ingrid Abbella performed on the 2009 CRCT.

3. Wendy Ahmed (Teacher)

Wendy Ahmed denied making hand signals or otherwise prompting students on the 2009 CRCT. Principal Clark instructed her to write a statement detailing what she did and what testing protocols she violated. She drafted a statement and turned it in to Principal Clark. She heard nothing further until Penn Payne's investigation.

4. Ingrid Abella (Teacher)

Ingrid Abella denied prompting students on the 2009 CRCT and denied that Demetrius Carroll ever pointed out a student cheating in her classroom. She also denied moving that student's desk a few inches away.

5. Lisa Terry (Teacher)

Lisa Terry admitted to cheating by prompting students during the administration of the 2009 CRCT.

#### **IV. ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE**

After observing cheating, multiple proctors asked that they be removed from fourth grade classrooms during the CRCT and the ITBS test. Based on this evidence, we conclude that Christi Davis-Langston knew, or should have known, cheating occurred on the 2009 CRCT at this school.

We conclude that Wendy Ahmed, Ingrid Abella, Lisa Terry, and Tonia Clark cheated on the 2009 CRCT.

Based on the statistical evidence and evidence we have found at schools with similar statistical data, we believe that other flagged teachers cheated. However, we lack sufficient evidence to determine who engaged in this misconduct.

Lillian Lockhart reported to Principal Clark that she witnessed Wendy Ahmed cheating on the 2009 CRCT. Instead of immediately reporting this, Clark attempted to dissuade Lockhart from telling the truth by saying, "If you don't tell me anything, I won't have to report anything." Principal Clark knew of cheating in 2010, if not before. He attempted to prevent Lockhart from reporting Wendy Ahmed's cheating on the 2009 CRCT.

We further conclude that Principal Donald Clark failed in his ultimate responsibility for testing activities and for ensuring the ethical administration of, and proper securing for the 2009 CRCT. It is our conclusion, from the statistical data and other evidence, that Principal Clark failed to properly monitor the 2009 CRCT, and adequately supervise testing activities and test security. This resulted in, and he is responsible for, falsifying, misrepresenting or erroneously reporting the results of the 2009 CRCT to the Georgia Department of Education.

## Statement of Events

I, Christi Davis-Langston, the 2008-2009 testing coordinator for Humphries Elementary School, was approached on the fourth day of the CRCT administration around 2:00p.m by Mrs. Lillian Lockhart, one of the testing proctors. Mrs. Lockhart approached me with a concern saying she felt a little uncomfortable with proctoring in the classroom to which she was assigned. I immediately informed her that if an irregularity occurred, I needed to know so it could be reported to Mr. Clark and the testing office. She paused for a moment and said, "No, just assign me another duty; I can handle it."

At that point, I thought it had something to do with some sort of tension between the two teachers. My main concern was the importance of maintaining a nurturing environment for the students. Therefore, without hesitation I immediately assigned her to a new duty for the remaining days of the CRCT administration. I thought her concern was resolved after being placed as hall monitor. This concern was not brought to my attention again until March 25, 2010.

Mr. Clark called a faculty meeting March 24, 2010, and informed us that the State would be coming to our school to investigate the testing procedure at our school. He told us how proud he was of his staff and that we had not done anything wrong, so we had nothing to be concerned about.

On March 25, 2010, Mrs. Lockhart came to my office and told me that she went to Mr. Clark immediately after the faculty meeting about the concern that she had last year while proctoring in Mrs. Abella's 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom. I asked her why did she not report this irregularity to Mr. Clark and me on last year. She said she thought she could handle it, but her conscious kept bothering her.

While in my office, Mrs. Lockhart began telling me what she told Mr. Clark. She stated that she told Mr. Clark that Mrs. Ahmed, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade science and social studies teacher, came into the classroom where Mrs. Lockhart was proctoring to look in on her students to provide a little motivation while her students were taking that portion of the test. She stated that she told Mr. Clark that Mrs. Ahmed started giving answers out in front of the class. She said she told him that she pulled her aside and told her that she could not do that. Mrs. Lockhart went on to say that she told him that she and Mrs. Ahmed had a conversation about Mrs. Ahmed's actions, and she felt a little better. During the course of her telling me what she told Mr. Clark, she said Mr. Clark asked her if she saw Mrs. Ahmed erase any answers and she said, "No."

On Friday morning, March 26, 2010, Mr. Clark called me into his office to share a concern that Mrs. Lockhart had regarding proctoring in Mrs. Abella's class during CRCT testing 2008-2009. Mr. Clark informed me that Mrs. Lockhart stated an irregularity was committed by Mrs. Ahmed during the 2008-2009 testing session. At that point I informed him that Mrs. Lockhart only voiced a concern about feeling uncomfortable while proctoring the CRCT and requested that she be moved. I granted her request because, as I stated above, I thought there might be some tension between them, and I wanted to preserve the testing environment for our students.

10-0110-25-11

EXHIBIT \_\_\_\_\_

## GLOSSARY

TERM	DEFINITION
APS	Atlanta Public Schools. An independent school system in the City of Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia. Officially the “Atlanta Independent School System.”
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress. Part of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, AYP is a measure of year-to-year student achievement on statewide assessments. Schools, school districts, and states must demonstrate a certain level of performance on reading and/or language arts and mathematics assessments. Schools that do not “meet AYP” for two consecutive years in the same subject area are designated as schools in “Needs Improvement.”
Certified educator	Individuals trained in education who hold teaching, leadership, service, technical specialist, or permit certification issued by the PSC.
Classroom level data	CRCT erasure analysis data for specific teacher or homeroom, including the subject tested, number of students, total number of wrong to right erasures, and resulting standard deviation.
Confessed	Admitted to the truth of a charge or accusation.
Convocation	Annual celebration held by APS to recognize schools that have met at least 70 percent of its performance targets. All APS schools’ faculty are expected to attend.
CRCT	Criterion-Referenced Competency Test. A standardized test used by Georgia as the AYP assessment tool for elementary and middle schools. Tests grades 1-8 in reading, English/language arts, and math. In addition, grades 3-8 are tested in science and social studies.
ELA	English /language arts
Fifth (5 <sup>th</sup> ) Amendment	The privilege against self-incrimination grounded in the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, providing that no person will be compelled to be a witness against himself. In a criminal case, if a defendant invokes the 5 <sup>th</sup> Amendment and refuses to testify, he may not be presumed guilty based on that refusal. However, in a civil case, if a witness invokes the 5 <sup>th</sup> Amendment and refuses to answer questions concerning whether he or she committed a particular act, “it creates an implied admission that a truthful answer would tend to prove that the witness had committed the act.” <i>Perez v. Atlanta Check Cashers, Inc.</i> , 302 Ga. App. 864, 870 (2010).
GOSA	Governor’s Office of Student Achievement. State agency which provides accountability for Georgia's schools, pre-K through postsecondary levels. The intent is to improve student achievement and school completion in Georgia.
GTR ID#	Unique identification number assigned to each student.

IEP	Individualized Education Program. Free, appropriate, public special education services which students with certain disabilities or impairments are eligible to receive. An IEP is a written plan developed by a team of teachers, other qualified personnel, parents, guardians, and the student if appropriate.
Implicated	Shown to be also involved, usually in an incriminating manner.
LA	Language arts
MA	Mathematics
Makes the floor	At Convocation, schools that “make the floor” have met at least 70 percent of its targets. Those schools’ faculty members are seated in groups on the floor of the host venue, with the schools meeting the highest percentage of its targets seated closest to the stage. Schools that do not make the floor are seated in bleachers or other remote seating.
Meets, exceeds	Refers to a measurement, usually expressed as a percentage, of students who “met” or “exceeded” state standards in certain core curriculum subjects (math, reading, English/language arts, science, and social studies) as measured by the CRCT.
Monitors	Persons assigned to a school to observe test administration procedures; e.g. test distribution, test collection, storage of test materials. Observes testing sites to see that schedules are being followed, reports unusual activity.
OIR	APS Office of Internal Resolution/Employee Relations. Processes and investigates complaints and reports of employee wrongdoing and related employment matters.
Paraprofessional	A person who may have less than professional-level certification, who relates in role and function to a professional and does a portion of the professional’s job under the professional’s supervision, and whose decision-making authority is limited and regulated by the professional. O.C.G.A. § 20-2-204. Georgia paraprofessionals must be certified by the PSC.
PDP	Professional Development Plan. A plan developed and implemented to correct perceived deficiencies in performance of teachers and administrators, used to encourage and support improvement in specific areas.
PEC	Program for Exceptional Children. Program offering specialized, educational testing, evaluation and other services to eligible children with certain disabilities or impairments. Each eligible student must have an IEP.
Preponderance of the evidence	A standard of proof in civil cases. Evidence which is of greater weight or more convincing than the evidence which is offered in opposition to it; that is, evidence which as a whole shows that the fact sought to be proved is more probable than not.
Proctors	Persons assigned to monitor classrooms or other specific areas during testing; circulate to observe students and discourage misconduct; assist test examiner to maintain testing security; report unusual activity or irregularities.

Prompting	Assisting students during testing by use of verbal or nonverbal cues. Examples include voice inflection, pointing to answers, repetition or rephrasing of words or passages, physical cues, movements, sounds, or signals meant to suggest or convey the answer or encourage students to erase and change an answer.
PSC	Georgia Professional Standards Commission. A state agency created “to set and apply high standards for the preparation, certification, and continued licensing of Georgia public educators.” The PSC also handles the investigation and due process of cases referred for disciplinary action.
RD	Reading
RPA	APS’ Department of <b>R</b> esearch, <b>P</b> lanning and <b>A</b> ccountability. Among other functions, RPA manages and oversees all testing programs at APS.
Social promotion	The practice of promoting a student from one grade level to the next on the basis of age rather than academic achievement.
SRTs	School <b>R</b> eform <b>T</b> eams. APS is organized into four (4) geographically aligned areas comprised of elementary and middle schools, each headed by an executive director. The structure is meant to provide greater accountability and faster service to schools and parents.
Standard deviation	A measure of the variability or dispersion of a distribution of scores that represents the average difference between individual scores and the mean. The more the scores cluster around the mean, the smaller the standard deviation.
Student level data	CRCT erasure analysis data for each individual student for each subject tested (RD, ELA, MA) showing the total number of erasures made on that test, and the number of those erasures that changed from wrong to right.
Stray marks	Pencil markings made on answer sheets that are visible outside of the “bubble” or oval area where answer choices are to be marked.
Targets	An accountability program implemented by APS, consisting of specific performance goals set for each school at the beginning of the school year. The targets are based on quantifiable measures, primarily CRCT test scores, and also include factors such as student attendance, and enrollment in rigorous academic courses.
Testing accommodation	A change in a test administration that modifies how a student takes or responds to the assessment. Accommodations are designed to provide equity and serve to level the playing field for students with disabilities and English Language Learners.
Totality of the evidence	Finding or conclusion based on all of the circumstances of a particular case, rather than any one factor.
WTR	<b>Wrong To Right</b> = an incorrect answer choice is erased and changed to a correct answer choice on an answer sheet, as detected by erasure analysis using high speed optical scanners.