



Fulton County Taxpayers Foundation


Non-Profit Advocate Of Lower Property Taxes In Atlanta/Fulton County

Property Tax Appeals

Best Practices

Advocacy and Education

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A stylized, grayscale background illustration of the Atlanta skyline, featuring various skyscrapers and buildings. In the foreground, there are curved lines representing roads or highways, with small white circles indicating streetlights or traffic lights.

An Update On Massive Test Cheating in Atlanta Public Schools: The Cover-Up!

The Problem

On February 10, 2010, the Governor's Office Of Student Achievement reported that massive wrong-to-right erasures occurred in 37 of Atlanta's 55 elementary schools (67% of the total elementary schools) on the State Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT), the annual achievement tests in grades one through eight. In 37 elementary schools, "severe levels" of wrong to right erasures were found; six Atlanta middle schools were found to have "severe levels" of wrong-to-right erasures and another 15 Atlanta schools showed a "moderate" level of wrong-to-right erasures.

The Delay, Procrastination & Costs

Instead of looking at the evidence of the Governor's Office of Student Achievement and verifying the mass erasures from wrong to right, the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Beverly Hall, and the Atlanta Board of Education needlessly procrastinated for a month and a half. Finally, the Superintendent and the School Board created the Atlanta Education Fund and, finally appointed a Blue Ribbon Commission which hired a Utah-based firm, Caveon Test Security, at a cost of \$100,000 plus \$10,000 travel expenses. The AJC reported that Caveon visited Atlanta on March 29th, two days before the State deadline for viewing the test papers. According to the AJC, Caveon did not comment on the massive cheating, but complimented the Atlanta Public Schools for their progress.

The Chairman of the Blue Ribbon Commission, Gary Price, a partner of PricewaterhouseCoopers, and other Commission members, proposed involving Deloitte or KPMG and a law firm in the investigation. This suggests months and months and millions of dollars of costs, although the Atlanta Education Fund is attempting to privately fund these unnecessary, costly and time-consuming efforts.

"The Culture at Atlanta Public Schools (APS)"

According to the Deputy Editorial Page Editor of the AJC, Jay Bookman, "The lack of outrage, the grasping at implausible explanations, and the rush to protect APS Superintendent Beverly Hall, offers an insight into the culture at the Atlanta Public Schools. There is little sign that APS officials have come to grips with the real implications of 58 schools linked to improbably high numbers of erasures. When test scores are given such emphasis, the temptation to cheat increases. There is no sign that Superintendent Hall recognized that danger. To the contrary, even after smaller scale investigations by the AJC and State officials produced evidence of cheating, Hall and her staff and the School Board downplayed those findings. Even now, Atlanta School Board Chairwoman, La Chandra Butler Burks, still expressed absolute total confidence in Hall's performance as Superintendent." Jay Bookman has won several national awards and is an eight-time winner of the Best of Cox newspapers awards.

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What Is Demanded By The Taxpayers

The problem of massive cheating at 67% of APS Elementary Schools is of the greatest concern to the taxpayers. In Fiscal Year 2009, the Atlanta Public Schools received \$460 million from the property taxes; in Fiscal Year 2010, as of March 21st, the Atlanta Public Schools received \$515 million. Additional funding by the State of Georgia is \$122,184,406, plus a 1% Special Sales Tax of \$92,000,000. The total cost-per-student at the Atlanta Public Schools, with an enrollment of 49,752 students, is the highest in the State and one of the highest in the country!

The Foundation interviewed eight Atlanta Public Schools elementary teachers who would talk only on the assurance of anonymity. All eight informed me that the pressure by their Principals and Assistant Principals to increase test scores was "constantly intense on a daily basis." Interestingly, the teachers did not have access to the test papers which were collected by each school's Assistant Principal. Massive cheating through tens of thousands of wrong-to-right erasures could not have been done without the knowledge of each cheating school's Principal and Assistant Principal.

If massive cheating is confirmed, the Superintendent, Dr. Beverly Hall, together with her Senior Staff, should resign or be fired by the Atlanta Board of Education. Moreover, the Principals and Assistant Principals of every school where massive cheating has been found and confirmed, should be fired summarily by the Atlanta Board of Education. The Board will then need to recruit a Superintendent from a respected system, someone with the ability to repair the profound damage that has occurred. Atlanta's young people need real educational reform, not the public relations magic that we have endured for the past decade.

John S. Sherman



President

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to Atlanta and Fulton County!***

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