



For Immediate Release
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State Board of Education Accepts GOSA's CRCT Audit Recommendations

ATLANTA –The State Board of Education today voted to adopt recommendations made by the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) arising from GOSA's audit conducted on summer 2008 5th grade Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) retests. Four schools whose retest scores were significantly higher than the state average proved to need closer examination: Atherton Elementary (DeKalb), Parklane Elementary (Fulton), Burroughs-Molette Elementary (Glynn), and Deerwood Academy (Atlanta). The resulting investigation demonstrated that someone intentionally changed students' answers on the 5th grade CRCT retest.

"The Office of Student Achievement conducted a thorough investigation and presented the State Board with compelling information", said Kathleen Mathers, Executive Director of GOSA. "I'm pleased that the Board voted today in favor of helping students who were cheated".

GOSA highlighted four indicators to support their findings that someone intentionally changed students' answers. First, each of the four schools showed statistically improbable gains on the summer retest compared with their spring scores. Second, GOSA had an erasure analysis conducted by the Georgia Center for Assessment at UGA and learned that the 5th grade retest answer sheets at the four schools had 300% to 2300% the number of changed answers that the state would expect to see on such a test. Third, GOSA, in consultation with the Professional Standards Commission (PSC), interviewed personnel from the four summer school programs and identified details that supported a conclusion that an adult – not the students – changed the answers. Finally, the students at issue in the 5th grade retest showed a marked decrease in achievement this year in 6th grade math.

The State Board of Education voted unanimously on five recommendations, each focused on taking corrective action for students affected directly or indirectly by the testing violations:

1. Invalidate the 2008 5th grade CRCT retest scores for Atherton Elementary, Deerwood Academy, Parklane Elementary, and Burroughs-Molette Elementary.
2. Reinstate the spring AYP determinations of "did not make AYP" for Atherton Elementary, Deerwood Academy, Parklane Elementary, and Burroughs-Molette Elementary.
3. Require that formal accountability consequences for Atherton Elementary, Deerwood Academy, Parklane Elementary, and Burroughs-Molette Elementary follow from July 2008 accountability determinations to July 2009 determinations.
4. Require Dekalb, APS, Fulton, and Glynn school systems to send a first class letter to parents or guardians of each affected retested 5th grade student to inform them of the audit findings.

5. Require the receiving middle schools of the four systems to design and follow an individual support plan for students affected by the CRCT retest infractions who continue to struggle with mathematics.

The CRCT is a standardized assessment given to students in 1st-8th grade in Georgia. The test is designed to measure how well students at each grade level have learned the state's curriculum. CRCT results are used to determine whether schools have made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as required by No Child Left Behind (NCLB). In 2008, schools for the first time were allowed to use their summer CRCT retest scores towards their AYP determinations.

"I appreciate the State Board's decisive vote today to conclude our investigation by taking corrective action at these four schools", said Dr. Eric Wearne, Deputy Director of GOSA. "I look forward to learning about the PSC's work to identify and hold accountable those responsible for this wrongdoing".

GOSA will release a plan for future audits this fall. The plan will include analysis of standardized test scores, including the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), End of Course Test (EOCT), and Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHS GT), as well as graduation and dropout rates and other factors that determine student achievement.

GOSA made additional recommendations in its preliminary report that do not require action by the State Board. Please visit www.gaosa.org to see GOSA's full report.

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