



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
Kenneth P. LaValle

Statement of Senator Ken LaValle: Higher Education Hearing on SAT Cheating

KENNETH P. LAVALLE October 27, 2011

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Good morning and welcome to SUNY Farmingdale for The New York State Senate Committee on Higher Education public hearing to investigate Truth-in-Testing: A Comprehensive Look at Standardized Testing Security Procedures.

This hearing will focus specifically on testing security and procedures. Test site security lapses are alleged to have occurred when a man was charged with being paid to take the SAT for 6 Long Island high school students. The students now face misdemeanor charges for allegedly paying \$1,500 to \$2,500 to have the test taken for them. The test taker has also been criminally charged. Just as disturbing, the test taker –a male -- is alleged to have taken the

SAT for a female, a fact that points to serious flaws in the administration of the test that determines high schoolers' academic future.

Here we go again.

More than 20 years ago, I introduced the first *Truth-in-Testing* laws. They required that any admissions test given in New York State be open to students' review of test questions, their answers and the correct answers.

The foundation of the laws of our nation is due process. Recognizing this concept was absent from testing procedures, I also passed a law requiring that there be due process for any student accused of cheating or other irregularities.

I am sure we all agree: cheating on your SAT is wrong and criminal.

I am also sure we can agree that this is something we can work together to repair.

Cheating cannot be tolerated in our society. Fairness and decency demands that every student enter the game on a level playing field.

There are some who will say that this topic is not worth the time of the Higher Education Committee nor the local prosecutor. We have to ask ourselves: Do we take this seriously or only confront the problem and deal with it when someone is caught? Sadly, the losers in this are the honest, hard-working students who play by the rules.

Let me be clear. This is not a case of sneaking a peak at a fellow student's test paper. Rather it is a well planned and executed scheme to game the system by utilizing forgery and impersonation. Large sums of money changed hands, which itself begs the question: Where and how did the teenagers get the cash? Are parents involved? Who knew about this and when did they know it?

I do not believe cheating on the SAT is unique to Long Island.

According to a Josephson Institute Center for Youth Ethics survey, a majority of students -- 59 percent -- admitted cheating on a test during the last year, with 34 percent doing it more than two times.

We live in the age of the Tiger Mom and "helicopter parent" -- terms for a parent who pays

extremely close attention to his or her child's experiences and problems, particularly at educational institutions.

“Competition magnifies the importance of choices people make, as failure for penalties and rewards for cheating increase. What would you do if faced with a high pressure choice in an environment which tolerates cheating?” – The Carnegie Council

I thank each of the witnesses who are appearing to testify today and expect we will begin the process of determining which procedures work and those that do not.