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10 in cheating scandal have teaching certificates revoked, 23 suspended

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By Nancy Badertscher
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

More than half of the educators implicated in widespread test cheating in Atlanta Public Schools have been disciplined by the state, including 33 who had their teaching licenses revoked or suspended Thursday.

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Bob Andres, bandres@ajc.com

Kelly Henson, Executive Secretary of the PSC, during Ethics Committee discussions that included APS teacher and administrator cheating.

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The Georgia Professional Standards Commission, which certifies and polices educators, has now punished 115 teachers and administrators for their role in the nation's worst cheating scandal.

Another 67 still face discipline by the commission. But most if not all of those cases cannot go forward until the commission receives the results of an investigation by Fulton County District Attorney Paul Howard into potential criminal wrongdoing, said Kelly Henson, commission executive secretary.

A spokeswoman for Howard's office said Thursday that the investigation is ongoing. She said she could not comment further on the investigation.

Members of the standards commission voted Thursday to revoke the teaching certificates of 10 school-level administrators and testing coordinators. They suspended 22 teachers for two years, and one teacher for 90 days.

Henson said commission investigators could not prove the one teacher cheated, but believed there was ample evidence that the teacher at least failed to report cheating.

The harshest discipline an educator can face is to have his or her teaching certificate revoked, since without a certificate they cannot teach in Georgia.

Revocations are considered permanent, though after three years educators can appeal to the commission to regain their teaching certificates, Henson said.

All educators can appeal any disciplinary action they receive from the commission, and some APS employees have already started that process, Marietta attorney Mel Goldstein said.

"It's my opinion that a lot of these cases will be negotiated to a lesser sanction," Goldstein said.

He said the commission is revoking the teaching certificates of all administrators and test coordinators and suspending teachers without taking into account that each case is different.

"I believe [the sanctions] are too severe," Goldstein said.

APS is taking steps to fire educators accused of cheating, though that has proved to be a long and costly legal process.

As of Thursday, APS had issued 50 charge letters, the first step in firing an educator, and has had 35 resignations and retirements, district spokesman Keith Bromery said.

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About 80 employees are on administrative leave because of the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests investigation. Four have been terminated as a result of the tribunal hearing process, Bromery said.

Last month, the standards commission revoked the teaching certificates of 19 educators in leadership positions, such as principals and testing coordinators. Forty-seven teachers were given two-year suspensions, and one teacher was given a one-year suspension.

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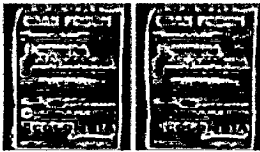


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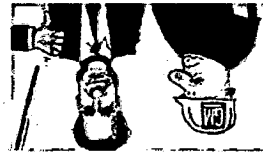
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