



11 APS educators notified: You're going to be fired

By Nancy Badertscher
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Atlanta School Superintendent Erroll Davis took the first steps late Friday to fire 11 educators suspected of some of the most egregious of the school system's widespread test-cheating.

Davis sent certified letters to the 11, all of whom were given the chance to resign last week, but refused.

The letters -- officially know as "charge letters" -- outline the justification for the educators' firing and allow that process to go forward.

The school system is withholding the identities of the 11, said Keith Bromery, school system spokesman.

Davis met last week with about 60 educators, who either confessed to or are suspected in some of the worst cheating. He asked them to resign, a move that could save taxpayers and the district hundreds of thousands of dollars in payroll costs and legal fees.

A state investigation, completed last summer, uncovered evidence that 180 APS educators were involved in systemic cheating focused on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test, a standardized test that's been a pivotal measure of a school's achievement. The investigation concluded some APS staffers, for perhaps as long as a decade, worked in secret to transform testing failures into successes by changing wrong test answers into correct ones. Some administrators either covered up the behavior or turned a blind eye to it, the investigation said.

After a round of resignations and retirements, about 120 educators remain on the district payroll but on suspension as the district seeks to force them out.

To date, the district has spent \$6.2 million paying salaries to suspended educators, a \$600,000-a-month expense. Legal fees have topped \$700,000.

But lawyers have said the targeted educators had little incentive to resign. As of late Friday, nine of the 60 had resigned or retired, Bromery said.

He said the superintendent's decision to issue the letters should not be a surprise.

Davis "has said all along that he intends to move this process forward as quickly as possible," Bromery said.