

Bombshell reports show at least 100 cases of teachers cheating on standardized tests in public schools since 2006

By [Ben Chapman](#) and [Corinne Lestch](#)

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS |
Jan 28, 2013 at 11:31 PM



Cheating teachers gave students answers to standardized tests, documents obtained by the Daily News show.
(Aflo/Getty Images)

Nearly 100 public school teachers or principals have been caught cheating or lying to artificially boost student test scores since 2006, bombshell documents reveal.

Some educators gave answers to students. Others allowed them extra time. Still others doctored answer sheets before turning them over to be graded.

The shocking behavior inflated student scores on high-stakes tests like the Regents exams, and state math and reading tests that are used to promote students and award diplomas.

The tests are also used to make decisions about which schools to shut down, and some staffers can also earn bonuses when students do well.

Parents were appalled to hear of the acts of academic dishonesty taking place in city schools.

"Helping students cheat certainly isn't preparing them for their future," said Mona Davids, president of the New York City Parents Union. "It's terrible. The educators involved should be held accountable."

The principals and teachers who were busted in the cases received a variety of punishments, ranging from disciplinary letters to being yanked from the classroom.

Records shed light on the school shenanigans:

- One principal instructed a math teacher to wander into classrooms during an exam, where the teacher gave kids the answers to the tests.
- One teacher wrote the answer to a question on the blackboard while others gave a thumbs-up or thumbs-down signal depending on whether students answered correctly.
- Several school staffers changed student answer sheets, potentially increasing the scores of dozens of students.
- Several principals and teachers gave students extra time to complete exams or allowed them to "make up" portions of exams that they failed to complete.

School officials said the reports do not indicate a systemic problem. They point out that the cases of cheating affect just a tiny fraction of standardized tests that are taken by nearly every student in grades 3 to 12 every year.

But anti-testing activists believe the city's emphasis on achieving higher scores could prompt teachers and principals to fudge students' scores.

"It's almost understandable and predictable, though unfortunate," said Fred Smith, an advocate for the anti-testing group Change the Stakes. "The pressure that teachers feel is real, and unfortunately we are seeing its effects."

City schools spokeswoman Connie Pankratz also said the city's testing protocols exceed state guidelines.

"We have zero tolerance for cheating and all violators are disciplined," Pankratz said.

bchapman@nydailynews.com

DISHONOR ROLL

While fifth-graders at Public School 247 in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, were taking their state math exam in April 2011, Corrine Demolli stood behind them and told them to "check" their answers.

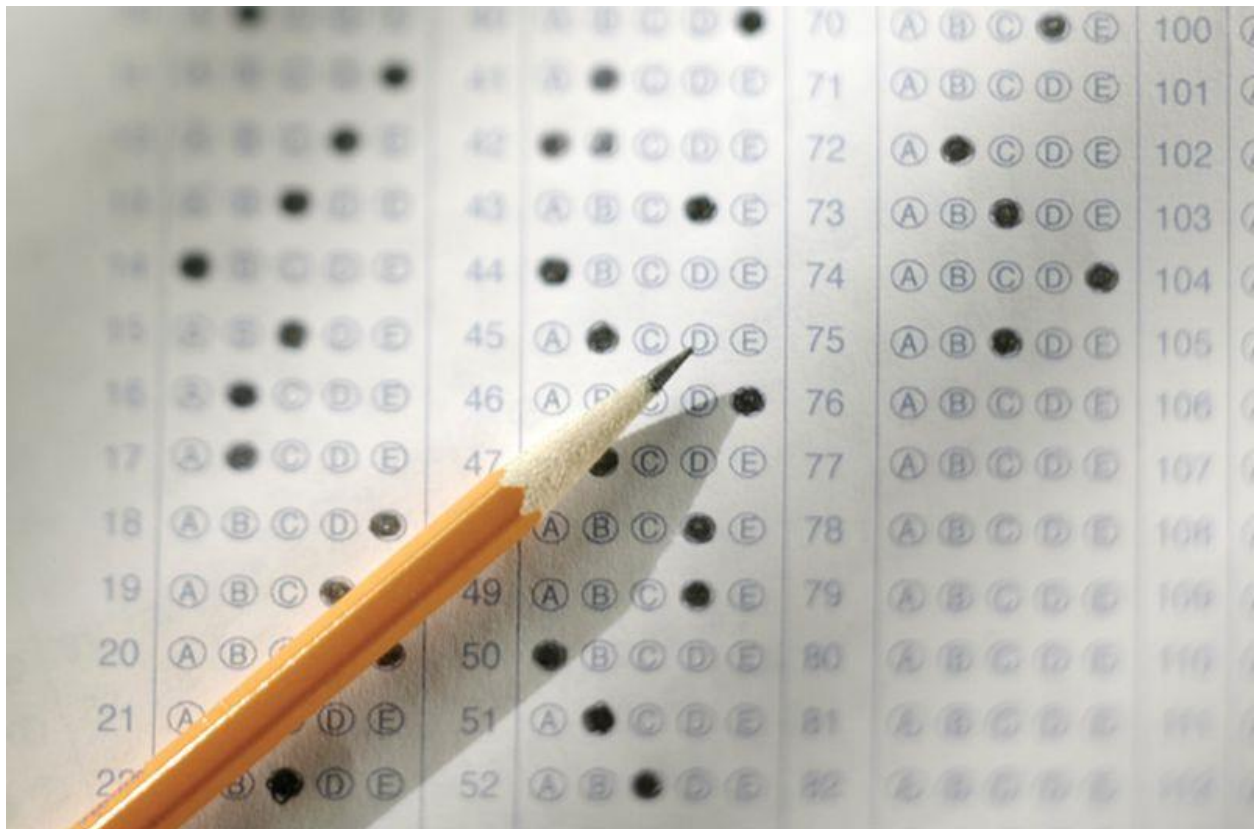
The teacher told others to "re-check" some questions, causing the stressed students to quickly erase and change their answers.

When she walked around the room a bit later, she either nodded to students or said nothing if she saw the answer was correct.

"That is not true," Demolli told the Daily News. "I'm not telling students to cheat. It's not under investigation.

"(The accusations) came from a few students," she continued. "There were a lot of students that said there was nothing (improper) done."

Six students told investigators that Demolli helped them and others on the test. She received a letter in her file.



Teachers gave answers to students, allowed them extra time, and falsified answer sheets on state Regents exams as well as math and reading tests, according to the reports. (Comstock/Getty Images)

Joel Rauch, a teacher at PS 19 in Corona, Queens, carried around the multiple-choice answer key to the reading state exam in a black folder and told his fourth-grade students which questions they got wrong.

The May 2011 incident involved two testing sessions, one with 24 English-language learners and the other with general education students.

When a teacher told him this was unethical, Rauch shrugged his shoulders and said he wanted to know "how (his) kids were doing."

Rauch faced possible termination, but resigned in the midst of his hearing. The News was unable to reach him for comment.

Jodie Ruck, former assistant principal at Validus Preparatory Academy in Claremont, the Bronx, encouraged teachers to change failing Regents scores so that 43 students could pass and graduate in January 2010.

Administrators had to re-score – and, in turn, flunk students on – 29 global history exams, seven U.S. history exams and seven English exams. After tests were administered, they were dumped into three different piles: failing, passing and borderline.

It was widely known among teachers that they were expected to "find points" on the borderline exams, the documents show.

Ruck denied to investigators that she reviewed or inflated scores, and education officials referred the matter to her principal for disciplinary action.

She voluntarily resigned in December.

"The report shows that there are very different viewpoints, and not all teachers believe that that happened," Ruck told The News.

While fifth-graders at P.S. 247 in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, were taking their state math exam in April 2011, teacher Corrine Demolli stood behind them and told them to "check" their answers.

She told others to "re-check" some questions, causing the stressed students to quickly erase and change their answers. When she walked around the room a bit later, she either nodded to students or said nothing if she saw the answer was correct.

"That is not true," Demolli told the Daily News. "I'm not telling students to cheat. It's not under investigation."

"(The accusations) came from a few students," she continued. "There were a lot of students that said there was nothing (wrong) done."

Six students told investigators that Demolli helped them and others on the test. She received a letter in her file for the incident.

Jodie Ruck, former assistant principal at Validus Preparatory Academy in Claremont, the Bronx, encouraged teachers to change failing Regents scores so that 43 students could pass and graduate in January 2010.

Administrators had to re-score - and, in turn, flunk - 29 Global History exams, 7 U.S. History exams and 7 English exams.

After tests were administered, they were dumped into three different piles: "failing," "passing" and "borderline." It was widely known among teachers that they were expected to "find points" on the borderline exams, the documents reveal.

Ruck denied to investigators that she reviewed or inflated scores, and Education officials referred the matter to her principal for disciplinary action. She resigned from the department of her own accord in December.

"The report shows that there are very different viewpoints, and not all teachers believe that that happened," Ruck told the Daily News. "Some teachers involved in those allegations had faced disciplinary charges while I was an administrator."

Joel Rauch, a teacher at P.S. 19 in Corona, Queens, carried around the multiple-choice answer key to the reading state exam in a black folder and told his fourth-grade students which questions they got wrong.

The May 2011 incident involved two testing sessions, one of 24 English Language Learners and the other with general education students.

When a teacher told him this was unethical, Rauch shrugged his shoulders and said he wanted to know "how (his) kids were doing."

Rauch was brought up on firing charges over the flap and resigned in the midst of his hearing. The News was unable to reach him for comment.

Ben Chapman

Education Reporter
Contact

Ben Chapman is an award-winning reporter who covers education for the New York Daily News. A graduate of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, Chapman has written more than 2,000 articles about New York City schools for the Daily News since joining the paper in 2009.