

December 8, 2008

Memo to: Gloria Talley
Deputy Superintendent Curriculum & Instruction

From: Tony Eitel
Executive Director, Assessment & Accountability

Re: Report on Atherton Elementary Interviews Conducted 12/8/08

As directed by the Superintendent, I conducted interviews of five employees of Atherton Elementary School on Mon. December 8, 2008. I was accompanied in these interviews by Dr. Lenisera Bodison, Math Coordinator from the Department of Elementary Instruction.

These interviews were conducted to gain information relative to questions raised by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and the Georgia Department of Education regarding Grade Five CRCT Math results from the June 2008 CRCT Re-Test Administration. Specifically in question, are the results of thirty-two Grade Five Atherton students who scored in Performance Level I in April 2008. Each of these thirty-two students scored in Performance Levels II or III in June 2008. The Mean Scale Score for this group of students increased approximately 75 points from April to June.

Below is a summary of responses from each Atherton employee interviewed on 12/8/08:

Teacher – Sheila Clark

Ms. Clark stated that she implemented the district's summer curriculum and did not deviate from that prescribed program. She detailed a typical day which included the "Problem of the Day", pre-testing, mini-lessons from "Ladders to Success", and post-testing. She stated that her class was essentially two groups of students. One group of five that should have passed the test in April and a second group of four who did require greater attention and remediation. She stated that her small summer class size enabled her to efficiently tend to the needs of all students. Ms. Clark stated that she believed that this small class size was the single most important factor that could account for the progress of these students this summer. In addition, she stated that the attendance of the students this summer was excellent – only one student was absent according to her due to a doctor's appointment. Ms. Clark taught Grade 5 math this summer and administered the test during the testing window – with the aid of a proctor from another DeKalb school. Ms. Clark did not teach or test students who she had taught during the 2007 – 2008 academic year. She indicated that a testing in-service was conducted prior to testing, that the School Test Coordinator had a very clear process for securing and checking-out materials, and that she has no knowledge of any irregular activity during the CRCT Summer Re-Test at Atherton.

Teacher – Kendra Gullstone

Ms. Gullstone served as a test examiner for Grade 5 Mathematics. She did not teach the course this summer – instead serving as a Grade 3 Reading teacher. Ms. Gullstone stated that the Grade Five students she interacted with were highly motivated for the test session and seemed to have "enjoyed summer school". She stated that, prior to testing, a testing in-service was conducted that addressed both logistical matters and the things that one "can do and cannot do" and "can say and cannot say" during testing. She described the school's method on controlling test materials through a "bucket" and check-out system that included the counting of materials at least twice. Ms. Gullstone stated that she has no knowledge of any irregular activity during the CRCT Summer Re-Test at Atherton.

Teacher – Pamela Hanley

Ms. Hanley taught, at some point during the 2007 – 2008 school year, each of the thirty-two students in the sample in question. Ms. Hanley taught these students during the school year; however, she taught Grade 5 Reading during summer school. Ms. Hanley was adamant that the vast majority of the thirty two students who failed in April 2008 should not have failed. In her view, they were students who were proficient in mathematics and should have been successful during the Main Administration. She stated that she believed they did not take the first test seriously. Furthermore, she stated that those students who she believed were non-proficient participated frequently in tutorials and other remedial opportunities. She said that it was those that she expected to struggle during the April administration that actually passed on their first attempt. Ms. Hanley did assist her colleagues (Ms. Clark and Ms. Parker) who were teaching math during the summer. In fact, she stated that they debriefed each day. I asked Ms. Hanley whether or not, with her knowledge of these thirty-two students, she believed a large improvement in their scale score performance was plausible. She stated that she believed that it was. Ms. Hanley stated that she has no knowledge of any irregular activity during the CRCT Summer Re-Test at Atherton.

Teacher – Shameka Parker

Ms. Parker taught two periods of Grade Five Math during summer school. Her 1st period had eleven students while her 2nd period had nine. She did have two non-Atherton students in this class (test data for these students were reported to their home school). Ms. Parker described her daily routine in very similar terms to those of Ms. Clark. She did elaborate more than Ms. Clark on her use of centers during the instructional period and she indicated that the small class size and “more focused” attitude of the students enabled her to conduct an efficient classroom each day. Ms. Parker taught Grade Three during 2007 – 2008 and did not teach any Grade Five students until summer school. She stated having more time to go in “depth” with students coupled with the small class size could, in her opinion, have resulted in the significant improvement in this student sample from April to June. She, like Ms. Hanley, stated that the vast majority of the students she taught should have passed (based upon their abilities) in April on the first test administration. Attendance among her students was excellent during the summer – with only one student being absent due to a car accident. Ms. Parker was assisted, on test day, by a proctor who was employed at a school other than Atherton during 2007 – 2008. She stated that there was a testing in-service conducted, that there was a clear system for materials control, and that she had no knowledge of any irregular activity during the CRCT Summer Re-Test at Atherton.

Assistant Principal – Doretha Alexander

Ms. Alexander described, at our request, the test security provisions in place at Atherton Elementary School. Test materials are locked in her office and she is the only person with key access. She described the method of signing materials out to teachers and then back in following testing. Ms. Alexander confirmed that Ms. Hanley, although not teaching Grade Five math in the summer, did assist with knowledge on the students that could help Ms. Clark and Ms. Parker during instruction. She also confirmed that she, very intentionally, did not allow teachers to instruct or test students who had been assigned to them during the 2007 – 2008 academic year.

April 2008 Main Administration

Grade 5 Total Tested = 64

Grade 5 Total Level I (Failed) Math = 32 (50%)

June 2008 Re-Test Administration

Grade 5 Total Tested = 32

Grade 5 Total Level I (Failed) Math = 0 (0%)

The thirty-two April Level I students are the same students, according to the June Re-Test file, who are contained in the June 2008 data. In other words, the April 2008 and June 2008 samples are exactly the same set of students. The sample of thirty-two was 97% regular education students.

The Department of Assessment and Accountability received no reports of irregular testing activities or events at Atherton during or after the local testing window.

Below is a chart containing a comparison of the Scale Score performance of this student sample from April 2008 to June 2008.

Lname	Fname	MATss Apr	MATss June	Diff
		781	855	74
		763	855	92
		775	851	76
		797	834	37
		766	834	68
		789	851	62
		786	840	54
		794	863	69
		756	855	99
		786	851	65
		781	863	82
		766	855	89
		789	859	70
		778	863	85
		760	859	99
		792	867	75
		797	850	53
		789	855	66
		789	837	48
		794	863	69
		775	859	84
		783	859	76
		792	859	67
		775	872	97
		792	851	59
		786	863	77
		792	863	71
		775	844	69
		742	850	108
		781	850	69
		769	855	86
		753	867	114