

# The Washington Post



## The Answer Sheet

A School Survival Guide for Parents (And Everyone Else)

### The most sickening part of Atlanta's cheating scandal

Monday, July 11, 2011

by Valerie Strauss

What does it matter to kids if adults change some answers on a standardized test?

Too much.

In fact, the most sickening part of the standardized test scandal in Atlanta Public Schools is not how some teachers, principals and administrators cheated to make sure that students got scores that would reflect well on the adults.

The ultimate tragedy of the shocking episode is the effects on students who wound up with passing scores on exams that they would have flunked without an assistance from adults who cheated.

The range of ways that cheating was carried out was detailed [in a report](#) released [last week](#) by Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal, who had ordered a broad investigation that confirmed widespread cheating over years on the state's [Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests](#).

Less has been written about the effects on the students.

[Tim Elmore](#), the founder and president of [Growing Leaders](#), an Atlanta-based non-profit organization created to develop emerging leaders, said there are short- and long-term impacts on students inadvertently caught up on the scandal, including:

\*Students lost a chance to get tutoring that might have helped them make progress because they were marked as successful on a test that they didn't really pass

\*Students may feel victimized, hurting their self esteem and confidence.

"These adults set a horrible example, sending a message to the kids that the way you make it is to do whatever you have to do, right or not," he said. "I'm afraid these kids are learning that. Some of them knew they hadn't passed the tests, yet their scores said they did. They learned you can succeed without working at it."

*Follow my blog every day by bookmarking [washingtonpost.com/answersheet](http://www.washingtonpost.com/answersheet). And for admissions advice, college news and links to campus papers, please check out our **Higher Education** page at [washingtonpost.com/higher-ed](http://www.washingtonpost.com/higher-ed). Bookmark it!*

Article can be found at: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/the-most-sickening-part-of-atlantas-cheating-scandal/2011/07/10/gIQAbgA27H\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/the-most-sickening-part-of-atlantas-cheating-scandal/2011/07/10/gIQAbgA27H_blog.html)