

Lesson Study 2: Lesson Plan

Rebecca Robinson

Course: FED 241 Educational Psychology

Instructional Location: William R. Harvey Art Museum **Date:** Sunday, February 21, 2021

Time: 9:00-12:00

Lesson Goals: The class will engage in active learning and use reading, writing, speaking, viewing, listening, and thinking skills (language arts) as adult learners to explore a topic of ethics* as it pertains to the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics.

CIEP Standard 2 Curriculum, 3 Instruction, 5 Professional Growth ACTS 2a, Learning Differences. **3I** Learning Environments, **4b** Content Knowledge, **(9)** Professional Learning and Ethical Practice.

*Ethics are *moral principles that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity*

Central Focus of Lesson: The class will begin to answer the inquiry question:

What are some ethical dilemmas that teachers face?

CIEP Standards: 2 Curriculum, 3 Instruction, 5 Professional growth, reflection, and evaluation.

Focus on standards ACTS 2a, 3I, 4b, 9 as listed below:

ACTS (2) Learning Differences. The candidate uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards. (a) The candidate designs, adapts, and delivers instruction to address each student's diverse learning strengths and needs and creates opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in different ways.

(3) Learning Environments. The candidate works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation. (I) The candidate understands how learner diversity can affect communication and knows how to communicate effectively in differing environments.

(4) Content Knowledge. The candidate understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.(b) The candidate engages students in learning experiences in the discipline(s) that encourage learners to understand, question, and analyze ideas from diverse perspectives so that they master the content.

(9) Professional Learning and Ethical Practice. The candidate engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community) and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.

Content Objectives: CIEP 5.1: Professional growth, reflection, and evaluation. Candidates are aware of and reflect on their practice in light of

research on teaching, professional ethics, and resources available for professional learning; they continually evaluate the effects of their professional decisions and actions on students, families, and other professionals in the learning community and actively seek out opportunities to grow professionally.

Language Objectives: The candidates will be expected to use the skills of reading comprehension and summarizing when working in their home groups.

Key Vocabulary in the Lesson and Upcoming Lessons: instructional opportunities, bias, developmentally and emotionally appropriate, diverse perspectives, ethics, professional dispositions.

Lesson Considerations CIEP Standard 2 Curriculum, 3 Instruction ACTS 2a, Learning Differences, 4b Content Knowledge, 9 Professional Learning and Ethical Practice

Materials: Anchor charts, Chromebooks, clipboards, easels, chart tablets, markers, Expert Group Guiding Question document

Misconceptions: Common misconceptions regarding the topics addressed in this lesson are: Students may believe that ethics and laws are synonyms. The learning theory guiding the lesson is Vygotsky's zone of proximal development and his explanation of the use of language to think and to process information and remember.¹ The lesson's integration of Chromebook technology² into the students' written responses to the lesson's content enables the collection of written reflections as data to be studied by the Lesson Study participants.

Lesson Plan Details

Lesson Introduction -Before: Setting the stage

The purpose of this lesson and upcoming lessons is for teacher candidates to commit to building the social, emotional, and intellectual growth of learners/teacher candidates through the study of the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics.

The prior knowledge students will need to use and build upon to be successful in this lesson include their own experiences as readers and their ability to manipulate content for a better understanding of ethical behavior required for teachers. In the lesson the candidates will reread the first four standards from the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics which are as follows: 1. Professional Conduct, Standard 2. Trustworthiness, 3. Unlawful Acts, 4. Teacher/Student Relationship, 8. Maintenance of Confidentiality
ACTS 9

- This beginning lesson is designed to pique interest in the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics.
- The plan allows the instructor to activate and build on teacher candidates' prior knowledge of their own moral compass.

¹ Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Rothenberg, C. (2008). *Content-Area Conversations: How to Plan Discussion-Based Lessons for Diverse Language Learners*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

² Weise M. R., Hanson, A. R., Sentz, R., & Saleh, Y. (2019). *Robot-ready: Human+ skills for the future of work*. Washington DC: Strada Institute for the Future of Work, Strada Education Network, p. 5. Retrieved from: <https://www.economicmodeling.com/robot-ready-reports/>

Learning Activities - “During”:

Candidates will participate in active engagement in meaning making through cooperative learning groups to connect and understand the three ethics standards. The cooperative learning strategy will be Jigsaw. Candidates will participate in one of three groups. The groups will have three members in the base group and the base group will move to home groups and back to base group to conclude the activity.

Home Group Guiding Questions

1. Summarize your reading/video.
2. What standard does your reading address?
3. Discuss opinions on the reading/video. (Try to reach consensus.)

- Group One will view the video cited below:
<https://assets.alsde.edu/sites/videos/ALSDE%20Video%20Storage/Ethics%20-%20Educator-Student%20Interaction%20Including%20the%20use%20of%20Social%20Media.mp4>
- Group Two will read the portion of an e-book entitled, *Dilemmas of Educational Ethics Cases and Commentaries*.⁴
- Group Three will read the article entitled *Atlanta Educators Convicted in School Cheating Scandal*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/02/us/verdict-reached-in-atlanta-school-testing-trial.html> ⁵
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Closure - “After”: Teacher asks one candidate from each base group to share some important information discussed during the base group meetings.

Assessment: Assessment promotes continuous intellectual, social, and emotional development of teacher candidates and increases their understanding of the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics.

Evidence and Formative Assessment of Student Learning: The instructor will know whether students are making progress toward the learning goal of **engaging in active learning during the Jigsaw and their use of** reading, writing, speaking, viewing, listening, and thinking skills as adult learners explore the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics.

I am looking for:

- Active engagement in meaning making, and connecting the selections to the inquiry question. Amount of talk is measured by decibel analysis³, a recorded measure of sound during the lesson that measures more sound as an indicator of active learning.
- Synthesis and oral presentation of summarizing and connecting the selections to the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics. Careful observation and evidence

³ Decibel Analysis for Research in Teaching: DART. (2016-2018). *What can DART do?* San Francisco State University. Retrieved from: <https://sepaldart.herokuapp.com/>

⁴ Levinson, M & Fay, J. *Dilemmas of Educational Ethics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

⁵ Blinder, A. (2015, April 1). Atlanta educators convicted in school cheating scandal. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/02/us/verdict-reached-in-atlanta-school-testing-trial.html>

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| <p>gathering by lesson study participants to determine the use of academic language is necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Exit tickets submitted</i> answering the reflection question- 1. What are some ethical dilemmas that teachers face? 2. Choose one of the scenarios discussed today and tell how you, as the teacher, would have conducted yourself. | |
| <p>Assessment Strategy #1: Evaluation of home groups reports to discern the use of teacher candidates' academic language during the reports back to the base group. Teacher will rotate to each group to listen.</p> | <p>Alignment with Objectives: This assessment is aligned to active engaged with the concept and each other. The active engagement objective(s) is being assessed through the amount of talk and decibel analysis using recordings from each of the four tables as well as lesson study participants' notes.</p> |
| <p>Assessment: Assessment promotes continuous intellectual, social, and emotional development of teacher candidates and increases their understanding of the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics.</p> | |

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| | <p>Evidence of Student Understanding: <i>The scrutiny of the Exit Tickets for academic language that teacher candidates use when illustrating their understanding is evidence.</i></p> |
| | <p>Student Feedback: Feedback to students on this assessment will be provided on notes on the anchor charts and from observation notes gathered by Lesson Study participants.</p> |
| <p>Assessment Strategy #2: Students respond to the question on the Exit Ticket- 1. What are some ethical dilemmas that teachers face? 2. Choose one of the scenarios discussed today and tell how you, as the teacher, would have conducted yourself.</p> | <p>Alignment with Objectives: <i>This assessment is aligned to the</i></p> |
| | <p>Evidence of Student Understanding: <i>This assessment strategy provides evidence of student understanding of the concepts being taught.</i></p> <p>Student Feedback: Student feedback on the exit tickets provide guidance for increasing the depth and amount of writing. Feedback will be provided on the students' exit tickets in a written note to the teacher candidates.</p> |
| <p>Assessment Strategy #3: Using looking at student work (LASW) protocols (Appendix C), examination of quick writes shows teacher candidates' knowledge in this beginning phase of answering the question: What are some ethical dilemmas that teachers face?</p> | <p>Alignment with Objectives: This assessment is aligned with this objective: Candidates demonstrate a high level of competence in the use of English language arts and they know, understand, and use concepts from reading, language and child and human development, to teach reading, writing, speaking, viewing, listening, and thinking skills and to help students</p> |

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| | successfully apply their developing skills to many different situations, materials, and ideas. |
| | Evidence of Student Understanding: Students use of academic language and specific references to the ethics standards and writers' excerpts in their exit ticket indicates beginning understanding of the inquiry question. |
| | Student Feedback: Comments placed on sticky notes for teacher candidates to use as feedback. |

Utilizing Knowledge about Students to Plan and Implement Effective Instruction

Building on Personal/Cultural/Community Assets: Teacher candidate's prior academic learning and personal/cultural/community assets support the connection to new learning regarding the **ethics standards**. Assets in the community include the culture of the class, the Education Department, and the professors who guide the Talladega College Education Department. Teacher candidates are highly engaged in the Education Department lessons and the activities of the Education Department and they value each other, the college and the Department. The esprit de corps of the group demonstrates that classroom community can be built at the college level. This is a primary tool for retention of teacher candidates.

Grouping Strategies: The candidates will be randomly grouped for the base group and from the base groups, the home groups will be formed by numbering off-1, 2,3.

Planned Supports: The instructional supports during the lesson that address diverse learning needs in order for all teacher candidates to successfully meet lesson objectives include the teacher's accessibility and input.

Supporting Literacy Development

Essential Literacy Strategies: Students are making progress toward the learning goal of engaging in active discussions of the Jigsaw Activity and their use of reading, writing, speaking, viewing, listening, and thinking skills as adult learners as they explore the topic of the **Alabama Educator Code of Ethics**. *A strategy used to help students comprehend is the conversation and the Home Group Guiding Questions. Students compose text or an exit ticket within this lesson.* Requisite Skills are the ability to interact in groups and to have fun with each other as a community of leaders.

Supporting Literacy Development through Language

Identify a Language Function:

One language function essential for students to learn the literacy strategy within the central focus is to **analyze** the video/reading from their home group and support the connections to the ethics question.

Language Supports: CIEP 3.1 ACTS 1 g

The instructional supports during and prior to the lesson task that helps teacher candidates understand and successfully use the language function of analysis of the excerpts, vocabulary, and discourse demands are a repetition of active learning strategies..

Acknowledge Sources: See footnotes.

APPENDIX A

JIGSAW

How to Use

1. Prepare

Divide the reading selection into four segments, or prepare four separate reading selections on the content you are teaching. Put students into groups of four. These groups will be the “home groups” of the jigsaw. Prepare a direction sheet to help students to answer questions and gather information on each segment or selection .

2. Introduce to Home Groups

Divide the class into their home groups. Explain the strategy and the topic of study. Tell students that they are going to be responsible for teaching one segment or selection to the group they are sitting with now.

3. Break into Home Groups

Now students will leave their home group to sit with a group of students assigned to the same reading segment or selection, their “home group.” Ask students to begin reading to themselves, or have them take turns reading aloud. When students are finished reading, the group should discuss their segment, fill out their direction sheet, and decide what and how they should present to their home groups.

4. Regroup with "Home Groups"

Students regroup with their home groups. Each student is responsible for teaching their reading segment or selection to their home group. All students are responsible for learning all material. Determine how you’d like students to organize and summarize all the information they’ve learned. For example, you can provide a graphic organizer or ask them to make a poster to share with the class.

When to Use

Use Jigsaw at any point in the lesson to structure meaningful conversation across a wide range of material. Use it when you are:

- Building background knowledge on a unit of study
- Conducting an author study before beginning a new novel
- Learning about different viewpoints on a historical event or discovery
- Focusing on complementary – or divergent – concepts in a unit of study
- Reviewing different aspects of a unit of study to prepare for an assessment

To work on students’ discussion and presentation techniques in a larger group setting, have the home groups present to the class. In turn, the whole class is responsible for asking questions and learning about each topic.

Appendix B Looking at Student Work

National School Reform Faculty
Learning from Student Work: An Overview

“To be a teacher in the right sense is to be a learner. Instruction begins when you, the teacher, learn from the learner, put yourself in his place so that you may understand what he understands and in the way he understands it.” — Soren Kierkegaard

Principles of Looking at Student Work

- Students' work in schools is serious
- Students' work is key data about the life of the school
- Must be connected to serious changes in curriculum, instruction and professional development

Purposes of Looking at Student Work

- Professional Development
- Accountability (determining effectiveness of curriculum and instruction) • Setting standards
- Reflecting on student learning and development

Protocols What?

- Guidelines for conversation
- Vehicle for building collaborative work

Why?

- Creates a structured environment for: speaking, listening, questioning • Makes the most of limited time
- Promotes deep, meaningful conversation about teaching and learning

How?

- Incorporate into your study group meetings/grade level meetings/staff meetings
- Connect it to crucial teaching and learning issues in your study group/grade level/school • Practice it regularly

Results

Teachers who present work typically find:

- Some of their own impressions about student work are confirmed
- They are likely to gain new insights into the thinking of their students • The strengths and weaknesses of their assignments

Other teachers who participate

- Develop a sense of the kind and quality of the work going on inside their school • Learn about students they will teach in future years
- See how students they taught in previous years have developed
- Gain new ideas for their own classrooms Begin to develop a shared understanding of standards in different domains and the steps students go through to meet them Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community such as a Critical Friends Group® and facilitated by a skilled coach

National School Reform Faculty
Looking at Student Work Team Report



Developed by Ruth Mitchell, The Education Trust.

Team Date:

Who was present?

We looked at these pieces of work:

We used these standards:

What we discovered about the quality of student LEARNING:

What we discovered about the quality of INSTRUCTION:

What are the implications for change in the CLASSROOM and SCHOOL?

What is our action plan to make these changes?

Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community such as a Critical Friends Group® and facilitated by a skilled coach. To learn more about professional learning communities and seminars for new or experienced coaches, please visit the National School Reform Faculty website at www.nsrffharmony.org.

Appendix C

Looking at Student Work

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Alabama Educator Code of Ethics

Introduction

The primary goal of every educator in the state of Alabama must, at all times, be to provide an environment in which all students can learn. In order to accomplish that goal, educators must value the worth and dignity of every person, must have a devotion to excellence in all matters, must actively support the pursuit of knowledge, and must fully participate in the nurturance of a democratic citizenry. To do so requires an adherence to a high ethical standard.

The Alabama Educator Code of Ethics defines the professional behavior of educators in Alabama and serves as a guide to ethical conduct. The code protects the health, safety and general welfare of students and educators; outlines objective standards of conduct for professional educators; and clearly defines actions of an unethical nature for which disciplinary sanctions are justified.

Code of Ethics Standards

Standard 1: Professional Conduct

An educator should demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Encouraging and supporting colleagues in the development and maintenance of high standards.
- Respecting fellow educators and participating in the development of a professional and supportive teaching environment.
- Engaging in a variety of individual and collaborative learning experiences essential to developing professionally in order to promote student learning.

Unethical conduct is any conduct that impairs the certificate holder's ability to function in his or her employment position or a pattern of behavior that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of students. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Harassment of colleagues.
- Misuse or mismanagement of tests or test materials.
- Inappropriate language on school grounds.
- Physical altercations.
- Failure to provide appropriate supervision of students.

Standard 2: Trustworthiness

An educator should exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Properly representing facts concerning an educational matter in direct or indirect public expression.
- Advocating for fair and equitable opportunities for all children.
- Embodying for students the characteristics of intellectual honesty, diplomacy, tact, and fairness.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting professional qualifications, criminal record, or employment history when applying for employment or certification.
- Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting information submitted to federal, state, and/or other governmental agencies.
- Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting information regarding the evaluation of students and/or personnel.
- Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting reasons for absences or leaves.
- Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting information submitted in the course of an official inquiry or investigation.

Standard 3: Unlawful Acts

An educator should abide by federal, state, and local laws and statutes.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the commission or conviction of a felony or of any crime involving moral turpitude. As used herein, conviction includes a finding or verdict of guilty, or a plea of *nolo contendere*, regardless of whether an appeal of the conviction has been sought or a situation where first offender treatment without adjudication of guilt pursuant to the charge was granted.

Standard 4: Teacher/Student Relationship

An educator should always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Fulfilling the roles of trusted confidante, mentor, and advocate for students' growth.
- Nurturing the intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and civic potential of all students.
- Providing an environment that does not needlessly expose students to unnecessary embarrassment or disparagement.
- Creating, supporting, and maintaining a challenging learning environment for all students.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Committing any act of child abuse, including physical or verbal abuse.
- Committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment.
- Committing or soliciting any unlawful sexual act.

- Engaging in harassing behavior on the basis of race, gender, national origin, religion, or disability.
- Soliciting, encouraging, or consummating an inappropriate written, verbal, or physical relationship with a student.
- Furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student or allowing a student to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs.

Standard 5: Alcohol, Drug and Tobacco Use or Possession

An educator should refrain from the use of alcohol and/or tobacco during the course of professional practice and should never use illegal or unauthorized drugs.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Factually representing the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drug use and abuse to students during the course of professional practice.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Being under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs.
- Being on school premises or at a school-related activity involving students while documented as being under the influence of, possessing, or consuming alcoholic beverages or using tobacco. A school-related activity includes, but is not limited to, any activity that is sponsored by a school or a school system or any activity designed to enhance the school curriculum such as club trips, etc., where students are involved.

Standard 6: Public Funds and Property

An educator entrusted with public funds and property should honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy, and responsibility.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Maximizing the positive effect of school funds through judicious use of said funds.
- Modeling for students and colleagues the responsible use of public property.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Misusing public or school-related funds.
- Failing to account for funds collected from students or parents.
- Submitting fraudulent requests for reimbursement of expenses or for pay.
- Co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds or checking accounts.
- Using school property without the approval of the local board of education/governing body.

Standard 7: Remunerative Conduct

An educator should maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities, favors, and additional compensation.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Insuring that institutional privileges are not used for personal gain.
- Insuring that school policies or procedures are not impacted by gifts or gratuities from any person or organization.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Soliciting students or parents of students to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from the educator or to participate in activities that financially benefit the educator unless approved by the local governing body.
- Accepting gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there appears to be a conflict of interest.
- Tutoring students assigned to the educator for remuneration unless approved by the local board of education.

Standard 8: Maintenance of Confidentiality

An educator should comply with state and federal laws and local school board policies relating to confidentiality of student and personnel records, standardized test material, and other information covered by confidentiality agreements.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Keeping in confidence information about students that has been obtained in the course of professional service unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.
- Maintaining diligently the security of standardized test supplies and resources.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Sharing confidential information concerning student academic and disciplinary records, health and medical information, family status/income, and assessment/testing results unless disclosure is required or permitted by law.
- Violating confidentiality agreements related to standardized testing including copying or teaching identified test items, publishing or distributing test items or answers, discussing test items, and violating local school system or state directions for the use of tests or test items.
- Violating other confidentiality agreements required by state or local policy.

Standard 9: Abandonment of Contract

An educator should fulfill all of the terms and obligations detailed in the contract with the local board of education or educational agency for the duration of the contract.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Abandoning the contract for professional services without prior release from the contract by the employer;
- Refusing to perform services required by the contract.

Reporting

Educators are required to report a breach of one or more of the Standards in the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics as soon as possible, but no later than sixty(60) days from the date the educator became aware of the alleged breach, unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. Educators should be aware of their local school board policies and procedures and/or chain of command for reporting unethical conduct. Complaints filed with the local or state school boards, or with the State Department of Education Teacher Certification Section, must be filed in writing and must include the original signature of the complainant.

Alabama Administrative Code 290-3-2-.05

(1)-5-c Each Superintendent shall submit to the State Superintendent of Education within ten calendar days of the decision, the name and social security number of each employee holding an Alabama certificate or license who is terminated, or nonrenewed, resigns, or is placed on administrative leave for cause, and shall indicate the reason for such action.

Disciplinary Action

Disciplinary action shall be defined as the issuance of a reprimand or warning, or the suspension, revocation, or denial of certificates. "Certificate" refers to any teaching, service, or leadership certificate issued by the authority of the Alabama State Department of Education.

Alabama Administrative Code 290-3-2-.05

(1) Authority of the State Superintendent of Education

(a) The Superintendent shall have the authority under existing legal standards to:

1. Revoke any certificate held by a person who has been proven guilty of immoral conduct or unbecoming or indecent behavior in Alabama or any other state or nation in accordance with Ala. Code §16-23-5 (1975).
2. Refuse to issue a certificate to an applicant whose certificate has been subject to adverse action by another state until after the adverse action has been resolved by that state.
3. Suspend or revoke an individual's certificate issued by the Superintendent when a certificate or license issued by another state is subject to adverse action.
4. Refuse to issue, suspend, or recall a certificate for just cause.

Any of the following grounds shall also be considered cause for disciplinary action:

- Unethical conduct as outlined in the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics, Standards 1-9.
- Order from a court of competent jurisdiction.
- Violation of any other laws or rules applicable to the profession.
- Any other good and sufficient cause.

An individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended may not be employed as an educator, paraprofessional, aide, or substitute teacher during the period of his or her revocation, suspension, or denial.

Atlanta Educators Convicted in School Cheating Scandal



Donald Bullock, a former Atlanta testing coordinator, was led to a holding cell after his conviction. A judge ordered most of the educators jailed immediately. Credit...Pool photo by Kent D. Johnson

By Alan Blinder

ATLANTA — In a dramatic conclusion to what has been described as the largest cheating scandal in the nation's history, a jury here on Wednesday convicted 11 educators for their roles in a standardized test cheating scandal that tarnished a major school district's reputation and raised broader questions about the role of high-stakes testing in American schools.

On their eighth day of deliberations, the jurors convicted 11 of the 12 defendants of racketeering, a felony that carries up to 20 years in prison. Many of the defendants — a mixture of Atlanta public school teachers, testing coordinators and administrators — were also convicted of other charges, such as making false statements, that could add years to their sentences.

Judge Jerry W. Baxter of Fulton County Superior Court ordered most of the educators jailed immediately, and they were led from the courtroom in handcuffs. Judge Baxter, who presided over a trial that began with opening statements more than six months ago, will begin sentencing hearings next week.

“Our entire effort in this case was simply to get our community to stop and take a look at our educational system,” District Attorney Paul L. Howard Jr. said, adding, “I think because of the decision of this jury today that people will stop. I think people will stop, and they will make an assessment of our educational system.”

The dozen educators who stood trial, including five teachers and a principal, were indicted in 2013 after years of questions about how Atlanta students had substantially improved their scores on the [Criterion-Referenced Competency Test](#), a standardized examination given throughout Georgia.

In 2009, [The Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#) started publishing a series of articles that sowed suspicion about the veracity of the test scores, and Gov. Sonny Perdue ultimately ordered an investigation.

The inquiry, which was completed in 2011, led to findings that were startling and unsparing: Investigators concluded that cheating had occurred in at least 44 schools and that the district had been troubled by “organized and systemic misconduct.” Nearly 180 employees, including 38 principals, were accused of wrongdoing as part of an effort to inflate test scores and misrepresent the achievement of Atlanta’s students and schools.

The investigators wrote that cheating was particularly ingrained in individual schools — at one, for instance, a principal wore gloves while she altered answer sheets — but they also said that the district’s top officials, including Superintendent Beverly L. Hall, bore some responsibility.



Sharon Davis Williams, a former research team director, after being found guilty by a Fulton County Superior Court jury. Sentencing begins next week. Credit... Pool photo by Kent D. Johnson

Investigators wrote in the report that Dr. Hall and her aides had “created a culture of fear, intimidation and retaliation” that had permitted “cheating — at all levels — to go unchecked for years.”

Officials said the cheating allowed employees to collect bonuses and helped improve the reputations of both Dr. Hall and the perpetually troubled school district she had led since 1999.

Dr. Hall, who died on March 2, insisted that she had done nothing wrong and that her approach to education, which emphasized data, was not to blame. “I can’t accept that there’s a culture of cheating,” Dr. Hall [said in an interview](#) in 2011. “What these 178 are accused of is horrific, but we have over 3,000 teachers.”

But a Fulton County grand jury later [accused her and 34 other district employees](#) of being complicit in the cheating. Twenty-one of the educators reached plea agreements; two defendants, including Dr. Hall, died before they could stand trial.

But 12 defendants chose to go before a jury. Testimony did not conclude until the end of February, and jurors began their deliberations on March 19.

It was a gamble. Judge Baxter warned during a plea hearing in 2014 that there would be “severe consequences” for any defendant who was convicted at trial. The gamble paid off for a single defendant, Dessa Curb, a former elementary school teacher who was acquitted on Wednesday.

“I’m thankful to God that it turned out well for me, but I’m very upset about the others,” Ms. Curb said outside the courtroom.

Defense lawyers, some of whom were clearly angered by Judge Baxter’s decision to jail the educators on Wednesday, immediately began planning appeals and said they were stunned by the verdicts.

“I respect the jury, but I believe they got it wrong,” said Robert G. Rubin, who represented Dana Evans, a former principal. He described Ms. Evans as “shocked and devastated.”

“We certainly talked about the possibility that this would happen,” he said. “I don’t think either one of us believed it would actually happen.”



Image

Beverly L. Hall, the former superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools. Investigators said Dr. Hall, who died on March 2, “created a culture of fear, intimidation and retaliation.” Credit...Kendrick Brinson for The New York Times

Just as the defendants took a risk by standing trial, Mr. Howard had made a bet of his own when he decided to prosecute educators under a law more frequently used against organized crime figures. During three days of closing arguments last month, defense lawyers often said that Mr. Howard’s office had overreached.

And on Wednesday, even as Mr. Howard received some vindication, questions persisted about whether he should have devoted such extraordinary attention to the case.

“The jury has made a determination, and in some respects, that affirms what the prosecution has done in this case,” said William H. Thomas, a former federal prosecutor here. “For me, the real question is: Was the victory worth the candle? Have they killed a fly with the proverbial sledgehammer?”

The trial riveted Atlantans — television and radio stations interrupted programming on Wednesday afternoon to broadcast the courtroom scene — and the city’s school board said in a statement that the verdict capped “a sad and tragic chapter for Atlanta Public Schools.”

The district, which has more than 50,000 students, has in recent years created a hotline for ethics complaints to be made anonymously, ended bonuses connected to test scores and replaced employees throughout the system. A new superintendent was installed last summer.

“Challenges remain, for sure, but we are making progress every day, and there is great reason to be optimistic,” the board’s statement said.

The case unfolded at a time of pushback against what some see as the excesses of standardized testing. While the Atlanta scandal fueled some criticism, those who oppose testing also argue that the exams force teachers to narrow their lessons and may not represent what students learn. Coming amid a political groundswell against academic standards known as the Common Core, the scandal was just one factor in an increasing debate over testing and its role in education.

“People know that the test scores are flawed for a variety of reasons and that they cannot be relied on as the sole or primary factor to make high-stakes decisions,” said Robert A. Schaeffer, the public education director of the National Center for Fair & Open Testing.

But inside the Fulton County Courthouse on Wednesday afternoon, the issues of testing were decidedly more local and immediate.

“I don’t like to send anybody to jail,” Judge Baxter said after he ordered that the educators be detained until sentencing. “It’s not one of the things I get a kick out of. But they have made their bed, and they’re going to have to lie in it, and it starts today.”

Richard Pérez-Peña and Motoko Rich contributed reporting from New York.

Exit Ticket for Lesson Study 2

1. What are some ethical dilemmas that teachers face?

2. Choose one of the scenarios discussed today and tell how you, as the teacher, would have conducted yourself.