

**TESTIMONY OF CHARLES J. WILLOUGHBY, INSPECTOR GENERAL**

**BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**PUBLIC HEARING ON BILL 20-109:**

**THE TESTING INTEGRITY ACT OF 2013**

**APRIL 18, 2013**

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GOOD MORNING CHAIRPERSON CATANIA AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE. I AM CHARLES J. WILLOUGHBY, INSPECTOR GENERAL, AND I AM PLEASED TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TODAY TO PROVIDE TESTIMONY AT THIS PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE CONCERNING TESTING INTEGRITY FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS (DCPS).

BASED ON OUR JOINT INVESTIGATION WITH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL (ED OIG) CONCERNING CHEATING ON THE DC COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM (DC-CAS) STANDARDIZED EXAMINATIONS ADMINISTERED BY DCPS, THE REPORTS OF WHICH ARE ON OUR WEBSITE AND ED OIG'S WEBSITE, WHILE WE DID NOT FIND EVIDENCE OF WIDESPREAD CHEATING, THE D.C. OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GERNERL (OIG) DID FIND EVIDENCE OF LAX AND/OR DEFICIENT SECURITY WITH RESPECT TO MAINTAINING THE INTEGRITY OF THE TESTING PROCESS AND THE TEST RESULTS.

OUR INVESTIGATION RESULTED IN THE FOLLOWING:

## ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

THE INVESTIGATION REVEALED A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS WITH OVERALL EXAM SECURITY, WHICH MAY HAVE COMPROMISED THE INTEGRITY OF DC CAS EXAMS ADMINISTERED AT NOYES EDUCATION CAMPUS (NOYES). THE INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM THE INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED SHOWS THAT THERE WERE SECURITY FLAWS AT NOYES IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE DC CAS EXAMS FOR AT LEAST 3 SCHOOL YEARS, 2008-2009, 2009-2010, AND 2010-2011. MANY OF THE SECURITY ISSUES NOTED MAY BE APPLICABLE TO OTHER SCHOOLS AS WELL.

THE INVESTIGATION REVEALED THAT THE OFFICIAL EXAM BOOKLETS WERE DELIVERED TO NOYES PRIOR TO THE FIRST DAY OF THE EXAM AND STORED IN A LOCKED OFFICE TO WHICH AT LEAST THREE PEOPLE HAD THE KEY. HAVING THE EXAM BOOKLETS ON-SITE PRIOR TO THE FIRST DAY OF THE EXAM ALLOWS FOR MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE EXAM TO BE COMPROMISED OR AN EXAM BOOKLET TO BE STOLEN OR COPIED. STORING THEM IN AN OFFICE TO WHICH AT LEAST THREE PEOPLE HAD THE KEY ALLOWS FOR OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEFT, REVIEW, OR COPYING.

WITH RESPECT TO THE ANSWER SHEETS, INVESTIGATORS WERE TOLD THAT STUDENTS STARTED ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE EXAM WITH AN ANSWER SHEET CONTAINING A PRE-PRINTED, BAR-CODED LABEL, WHICH THEY TURNED IN AT

THE COMPLETION OF THE EXAM ON EACH DAY. THE NEXT DAY, THE STUDENTS RECEIVED THE SAME ANSWER SHEET, CONTAINING THEIR ANSWERS FROM ALL OF THE PREVIOUS DAYS, AND WERE EXPECTED TO ADD THE ANSWERS FROM THAT DAY'S SECTION OF THE EXAM TO THE SAME ANSWER SHEET. THIS ALLOWS STUDENTS OPPORTUNITIES TO CHANGE THEIR ANSWERS ON SECTIONS OF THE EXAM ADMINISTERED IN PREVIOUS DAYS. ALSO, AS NOTED ABOVE, THE ANSWER SHEETS WERE STORED EACH DAY IN A LOCKED OFFICE TO WHICH AT LEAST THREE PEOPLE HAD THE KEY, WITH NO ADDITIONAL SECURITY. THIS PRACTICE AFFORDS OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ANSWER SHEETS TO BE LOST, STOLEN, MISFILED, OR TAMPERED WITH, SUCH AS HAVING ANSWERS ERASED AND CHANGED.

WITH RESPECT TO ALLEGATIONS THAT NOYES PERSONNEL ERASED AND CHANGED STUDENT ANSWERS ON THEIR ANSWER SHEETS, INVESTIGATORS FOUND NO EVIDENCE TO CORROBORATE THESE ALLEGATIONS. IN ADDITION, INVESTIGATORS WERE UNABLE CONCLUSIVELY TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE OFFICIAL EXAM BOOKLETS HAD BEEN DISTRIBUTED AS DESCRIBED. THE INVESTIGATION, HOWEVER, REVEALED SOME ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE THAT THE OFFICIAL EXAM BOOKLETS, WHICH WERE ON-SITE PRIOR TO THE BEGINNING OF THE EXAM, HAD BEEN DISTRIBUTED TO TEACHERS FOR USE IN CREATING PRACTICE QUESTIONS AND/OR PROVIDING INSTRUCTIONS TO THE STUDENTS, IN PREPARATION FOR THE ACTUAL EXAM, WHICH RAISES ANOTHER SECURITY CONCERN – WHY SHOULD TEACHERS HAVE ACCESS TO OFFICIAL EXAM BOOKLETS PRIOR TO THE OFFICIAL START OF THE EXAM?

THE INVESTIGATION ALSO REVEALED ONE SPECIFIC INSTANCE WHERE IT APPEARS THAT A TEACHER ASSISTED STUDENTS WITH IDENTIFYING WRONG ANSWERS DURING THE EXAM.

AFTER COMPLETING THE REVIEW OF DC CAS EXAMS ADMINISTERED AT NOYES, THE OIG ASSESSED WHETHER EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF THE INVESTIGATION TO OTHER SCHOOLS WAS WARRANTED, NOTING THAT ONCE IT BECAME KNOWN THAT DCPS REQUESTED AN INVESTIGATION INTO ALLEGATIONS ABOUT TEST ERASURES IT IS LOGICAL TO CONCLUDE THAT ANY IMPROPER PRACTICES THAT MAY HAVE OCCURRED IN THE PAST WOULD DIMINISH. BASED ON THIS ASSESSMENT, WHICH ALSO INCLUDED WEIGHING FACTORS SUCH AS THE EXISTENCE OF SPECIFIC ALLEGATIONS AND THE NATURE OF THE ALLEGATIONS, THE FACTS UNCOVERED DURING THE INVESTIGATION RELATED TO NOYES, AND THE RESULTS OF CAVEON'S INVESTIGATION, THE OIG FOUND AN INSUFFICIENT BASIS TO WARRANT EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF THE INVESTIGATION TO OTHER DCPS SCHOOLS. SPECIFICALLY:

- THE OIG NOTED THE DISPARITY IN THE (UNUSUALLY HIGH) NUMBER OF ERASURES. THE MERE DISPARITY, AS NOTED AND/OR INFERRED FROM THE CAVEON REPORT, WITHOUT MORE (SUCH AS SPECIFIC EVIDENCE OF IMPROPRIETY), WAS NOT A SUFFICIENT BASIS TO CONCLUDE THE ERASURES RESULTED FROM CHEATING;
- A REVIEW OF CAVEON'S REPORT OF INVESTIGATION REVEALED NO CORROBORATED EVIDENCE OF CHEATING OR INDICATORS OF

WIDESPREAD CHEATING TO PROVIDE INVESTIGATIVE LEADS FOR OIG INVESTIGATORS TO PURSUE;

- SEVERAL OF THOSE INTERVIEWED DURING THE INVESTIGATION HAD WORKED AT OTHER SCHOOLS, EITHER BEFORE OR AFTER WORKING AT NOYES. NONE OF THOSE INTERVIEWED INFORMED INVESTIGATORS OF CHEATING AT ANY OF THOSE OTHER SCHOOLS; AND
- ALTHOUGH THE OIG INVESTIGATION AS TO NOYES REVEALED AREAS WHERE TEST SECURITY SHOULD BE IMPROVED, IT DID NOT REVEAL ANY EVIDENCE OF WIDESPREAD CHEATING OR INDICATORS OF WIDESPREAD CHEATING.

THE LAX SECURITY EMPLOYED AT NOYES DURING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE DC CAS EXAMS, AS EXHIBITED BY EACH OF THE SPECIFIC DETAILS NOTED ABOVE, CONTRIBUTED TO CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE WHERE CHEATING ON THE EXAM AND/OR OTHER ACTIONS THAT COULD COMPROMISE EXAM INTEGRITY COULD HAVE OCCURRED.

WHILE THE INVESTIGATION DID NOT REVEAL EVIDENCE OF CRIMINAL ACTIVITY OR WIDESPREAD CHEATING ON THE DC CAS EXAMS, THE INVESTIGATION DID REVEAL DEFICIENCIES AND PROBLEM AREAS, WARRANTING RECOMMENDATIONS TO DCPS FOR ACTION.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

BASED ON THE INVESTIGATION, THE OIG RECOMMENDS THAT DCPS REVIEW THE FACTUAL FINDINGS OF THIS INVESTIGATION, DETERMINE THEIR APPLICABILITY TO ALL DCPS SCHOOLS, AND IMPLEMENT SUFFICIENT PROCEDURES, AS NEEDED, TO ENSURE THE INTEGRITY OF DC CAS EXAMS ADMINISTERED TO ITS STUDENTS. SUCH SECURITY AND NON-SECURITY RELATED PROCEDURES SHOULD INCLUDE:

- TAKE DELIVERY OF THE OFFICIAL EXAM BOOKLETS ON THE DAY THAT SECTION OF THE EXAM IS TO BE ADMINISTERED TO MITIGATE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHEATING;
- PROVIDE ADDITIONAL ON-SITE SECURITY TO ENSURE THAT THE EXAM BOOKLETS ARE SECURED WITH LIMITED ACCESS, UNTIL THEY ARE DISTRIBUTED TO THE CLASSROOMS AND DISTRIBUTED PROPERLY;
- TRANSPORT THE OFFICIAL EXAM BOOKLETS USED EACH DAY AND THE STUDENT ANSWER SHEETS USED EACH DAY TO A SECURE, OFF-SITE LOCATION TO MITIGATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALTERATION;
- IF HAVING THE OFFICIAL EXAM BOOKLETS DELIVERED TO THE TEST SITES EACH DAY OF THE EXAM IS NOT POSSIBLE, THEN THE OFFICIAL EXAM BOOKLETS MUST BE STORED IN A SECURE LOCATION, TO WHICH ONLY SELECT PERSONNEL HAVE ACCESS, AND PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SECURITY TO GUARD THE EXAMS OVERNIGHT;

- TAKE ALL STEPS POSSIBLE TO ENSURE THAT THE OFFICIAL EXAM IS NOT DISTRIBUTED IN ADVANCE OF EXAM ADMINISTRATION AND NOT USED FOR IMPROPER PURPOSES SUCH AS THE CREATION OF PRACTICE QUESTIONS;
- HAVE STUDENTS START EACH TEST DAY WITH A BLANK ANSWER SHEET, WHICH WILL CONTAIN ONLY THE ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ADMINISTERED ON THAT TEST DAY;
- CONSIDER HAVING ALL EXAMS AND ANSWER SHEETS PLACED INTO SEALED BOXES, BY CLASSROOM, AT THE CONCLUSION OF TESTING EACH DAY. ALL SEALS SHOULD BE EXAMINED WHEN THE BOXES ARE DISTRIBUTED TO THE CLASSROOMS THE NEXT DAY, TO ENSURE THAT NO TAMPERING/OPENING TOOK PLACE OVERNIGHT;
- HAVE A MONITOR ON-SITE EACH DAY TO COUNT ALL TEST BOOKLETS AND ENSURE THAT EACH TEST BOOKLET IS SEALED BEFORE IT IS DISTRIBUTED FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE EXAM. THAT MONITOR ALSO SHOULD COUNT AND VERIFY THAT ALL TEST BOOKLETS AND ANSWER SHEETS ARE TURNED IN AT THE COMPLETION OF THE EXAM EACH DAY. THIS MONITOR SHOULD BE SOMEONE WHO IS NOT AN EMPLOYEE OF THAT PARTICULAR SCHOOL;
- INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PROCTORS SO THAT THERE ARE AT LEAST TWO PEOPLE, IN ADDITION TO THE TEACHER, PRESENT IN THE CLASSROOM DURING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE EXAM;

- ROTATE THE TEACHERS AND PROCTORS SO THAT TEACHERS AND PROCTORS DO NOT ADMINISTER THE EXAM TO THEIR OWN STUDENTS AND SO THAT THE TEACHERS AND PROCTORS ARE NOT IN THE SAME CLASSROOM EACH DAY OF THE EXAM;
- INCREASE THE NUMBER OF MONITORS SO THAT MONITORS CAN REGULARLY VIEW THE CLASSROOMS DURING THE EXAM AND ENSURE THAT THE MONITORS CAN VIEW ALL PARTS OF THE CLASSROOM;
- PROVIDE MORE SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS TO THE MONITORS AS TO WHAT THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO LOOK FOR AND HOW AND WHEN THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO REPORT ANOMALIES AND/OR IRREGULARITIES;
- ESTABLISH A WRITTEN POLICY CLARIFYING WHETHER MONITORS SHOULD ENTER CLASSROOMS DURING TESTING;
- PROVIDE TEACHERS, PROCTORS, AND MONITORS WITH A FORM ON WHICH THEY ARE REQUIRED TO REPORT ANY ANOMALIES THAT OCCUR DURING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE EXAM. TRAIN ALL APPROPRIATE PERSONNEL ON THE USE OF SUCH FORMS. ASSIGN APPROPRIATE PERSONNEL TO REVIEW ALL SUCH FORMS AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE DC CAS EXAMS ON EACH DAY;
- CONDUCT TRAINING REGARDING EXAM SECURITY FOR ALL TEACHERS, PROCTORS, MONITORS, AND OTHER SCHOOL PERSONNEL TO ENSURE THAT ALL STAFF MEMBERS UNDERSTAND THE NEED TO PROTECT EXAM INTEGRITY AT ALL TIMES; AND

- CONDUCT APPROPRIATE TRAINING TO REMIND ALL PERSONNEL OF THEIR OBLIGATIONS TO REPORT MATTERS OF WASTE, FRAUD, AND ABUSE TO THE OIG.

THIS CONCLUDES MY TESTIMONY AND I WILL BE HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS THAT YOU MAY HAVE.