



The Buckhead Council of Neighborhoods

Board Meeting

August 12, 2010

Peachtree Presbyterian Church

6:30 – 8:30 PM

Meeting Minutes Attachment

Nancy Meister, Post 4, Board of Education and Ponder Harrison, Member, APS Blue Ribbon Commission of CRCT Test Investigation

Nancy Meister: Nancy reviewed the chronology of the CRCT testing investigation. In February the Governor's Office of Student Achievement identified 191 public schools in 13 school districts that had high levels of wrong-to-right erasures on the 2009 CRCT test. All districts were required to conduct an independent investigation to determine the cause. The Atlanta Board of Education and the Atlanta Education Fund responded by forming a Blue Ribbon Commission which included 14 members including Ponder to investigate the 58 Atlanta schools involved. The Blue Ribbon Commission worked with Caveon Testing Securities of Utah and KPMG. Caveon did the analysis. KPMG did the investigative reviews.

The Commission's mission was three-fold:

1. To review the current security process and protocols so changes could be made for the 2010 testing to ensure high standards,
2. To investigate all 58 schools, and
3. To recommend further action to the district.

On August 2, The Board of Education received the report. The report is available on-line on the APS web site. The findings aren't intended to be the sole basis of future action by the BOE; further investigation is required for all 58 schools. Dr. Hall has targeted 12 schools that the Commission found to be of severe concern.

Ponder Harrison: Ponder then described the investigation. The Commission was not part of the BOE or APS – it was independent and did not have subpoena power and “did not have the ability, really, to dig deep at legal level”. The Commission and Caveon were limited in their ability to dig deep and based their conclusions only from what they could get from the state. They went to testing facilities in another state (Indianapolis, Indiana) and dug through 18-wheel trailers full of test score results. They took pictures of the documents in their efforts to understand patterns at the different schools. The state had identified patterns of wrong-to-right erasures. However, such patterns can mean different things – some students are taught the “pirate technique”, a tactic of marking questions where test takers put a little scratch by answers they don't know, so they can come back later to try to answer them. Caveon was not able to do more refined analyses such as how many times a wrong-to-right correction occurred on questions that were statistically harder versus those which were statistically easier. Exploring the data that way could make the conclusions even clearer than what the Commission was able to do. Caveon recommended that APS strengthen the internal audit function within the school system. The APS and the state need to be doing analyses themselves.

A second aspect was looking at “chain of command custody” of test materials. Caveon felt like Atlanta looked “pretty good, but there were a number of critical junctures along the testing path that [Caveon] wanted to change. They wrote out a pretty complex blueprint, published it throughout APS, and that was instituted for the 2010 CRCT testing period.” He said when the new protocols were instituted, the “most egregious schools ... fell off a cliff” and “really performed poorly” with improved chain of command changes. He said the trend for the 58 schools from 2007 to 2010 the results were essentially flat. The 12 egregious schools fell during that same period.

The third aspect was investigating individuals or administrators or even the central office. “KPMG has a fraud group, a forensics group, a group that works with money laundering, white collar crime, and lots of deception within that practice – and they asked very good questions. They have ways of observing body language. They have ways of observing your answers and they have ways of corroborating the same answer from multiple people who theoretically shouldn't have had the same answer. So, all of us, as parents, probably have experienced that with our kids when we compare notes and swap stories. So, it is not rocket science but it is a very specific procedure that they follow so we felt very good about their ability to do that all the way to the central office level. And I think the

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report does indicate there were certain qualified matters, qualified assessment issues that did occur. And there have been a number of unsubstantiated or unqualified individuals who have also been referred by the APS central office for further review. I think we have all read some of the measures that APS has taken.

“I would personally summarize the board’s efforts as very good; certainly the board took a lot of time. But the board, because the 2010 CRCT test results occurred, felt obligated to have some kind of analysis that incorporated those. We could have let this be a 12-month process or an on-going process but you had to call an end to it some point. Many would say, boy, I sure am glad it is over. My comment was, hopefully, this is just the beginning and that this is the type of audit analysis that will take place on a consistent basis. Standardized testing: we have the data, we have the ability to review it, it can be automated, and it can be statistically, using probability, very accurate in terms of monitoring and auditing behavior. It is something I believe in very firmly.”

Glenn Delk: “Nancy. Before we get any further, perhaps you can explain to everybody just what is the status of the report, because I think y’all voted not to accept it? Is that correct?” “Some did.”

Nancy: “We received the report on August 2nd right before our special called meeting and I was one who voted not to accept it. There were five of us who voted not to accept it. I’ll leave you a letter I actually wrote to the Blue Ribbon Commission and the Board right after. On Saturday, July 31, we received a draft. Every board member received a confidential draft, so we could start to become familiar with this very extensive report. At the meeting we were handed 95 additional pages which was a supplement to what we had received on Saturday and at that point I was not comfortable saying I accept this because I hadn’t read it. And there were some questions that I had of KPMG that weren’t answered; I’m supposed to be getting an answer tomorrow. They really looked at principals’ to bus drivers’ compensation packages and I am very curious to know, principals and above, how the compensation related when you look at adequate yearly progress and targets. So at that point that day I was not entirely comfortable so I said I needed 48 hours to look at it. So, 48 hours later I had gone through it and sent this letter out expressing now, I can. [The report] went to the state, it had to go to the state by 5 o’clock on the 2nd. So we were really between a rock and a hard spot on what to do. So we sent the report to the state. The state will be meeting with the state’s Kathleen Mathers of the Governor’s office. They’ll be presenting to the Georgia Board of Education next Wednesday their findings and recommendations that they are coming back to us with. I am fully prepared now to accept the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission. I think we have a lot more work to do to supplement what they did as far as really digging deeper and having subpoena power and looking at all 58 schools, not just those 12 schools.

Glenn: “On that issue, subpoena power is a big issue. Why not throw the entire matter to the Fulton County District Attorney and let the Grand Jury investigate it? They do have subpoena powers.”

Nancy: “And I can’t speak for the Board. That may be something that comes up on Monday at our board meeting.” **Glenn:** “As far as I understand it, these allegations do involve potential criminal violations.” **Nancy:** “A point well taken and I’ll take that back.”

Other male voice: “I would agree with that. These people were paid bonuses, based on fraud.”

Glenn: “One of the concerns that all of us have is that, at least as I read in the newspapers, the Commission only interviewed 12 parents and students. I don’t know how you could come to some conclusion if you only interviewed 12 and the Commission was not given the opportunity to review the academic history of the students at issue to determine whether they could have even [done so well], based on their academic performance. So if those are weaknesses in the report, my suggestion is get someone with subpoena power, the US Attorney or the District Attorney.” **Ponder:** “I think there are a number of avenues in the report that are more directional, that because of the constraint to time or resources, because there was a deadline. Those are reasonable assumptions, I think.”

Mary Louise Floyd: “I campaigned for Nancy and I voted for her, but Nancy, I’d like to ask you these questions: As Ponder has pointed out and you have too, on August 2nd the Atlanta Public School Board voted five to four not to accept the CRCT report. And you were among the five that did not vote for it. And from what I read, again quoting from the AJC, for weeks there were briefing sessions about the investigative report before August 2 and the newspaper says specifically that you and the other four who voted against it did not attend. In the meantime, within those 48 hours that you mentioned after you decided to vote for it, Beverly Hall, herself, the very next day said she had accepted it. So, why didn’t you attend the briefings sessions?” **Nancy:** “I did not attend and there’s

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another one on Monday that I will not attend because those are private, behind closed doors sessions with other board members when I advocated from the beginning that this needs to be open, transparent to the public. I will listen – I went to many of the Blue Ribbon Commission meetings, probably three-quarters of them and to listen to what happened there. I have asked my questions and am waiting for answers to my questions but I will not, and I won't in the future, sit behind a closed door in a briefing session. **Glenn:** "I applaud you for that but the question is, how is it that the superintendent has the power to conduct these behind closed doors sessions with board members?" **Nancy:** "As long as you don't have a quorum. You can have small groups. I don't agree with that philosophy and I won't do it."

Mary Louise: "On Monday, there's an Atlanta Public School Board [meeting] to which we are all invited which I intend to be attending. **Nancy:** It is all open to the public. So it starts at 2 o'clock and runs to about 8:30." **Mary Louise:** "You mean we, little old me, can attend these meetings?" **Nancy:** "Everything we do falls under the Sunshine Law. Everything we do has to be open and transparent." **Glenn:** "Except for these non-quorum meetings." **Nancy:** "I don't know if non-quorum is the way to..." **Nancy:** "So, at 1 o'clock we can go to a board briefing." **Mary Louise:** "Who is 'we'?" **Nancy:** "Board members." **Mary Louise:** "Are you going?" **Nancy:** "No."

Craig Perry: "I break it down to two issues: one is testing which the Blue Ribbon Committee has commented on and the other is the results themselves, which have set us back by five or ten years. So, we've got two issues. One is the testing – something happened there, and we've got to find that out. The second one is, whatever we have been doing, it ain't been working. That's probably the biggest issue. You can correct the testing by doing all kinds of stuff but you still have these kids who ..." **Glenn:** "That is the biggest issue. That's also the issue that the board should not be focusing on, in my opinion. This is all about the CRCT – well, this is the national report that says the CRCT is a joke. This is the report that has the national standards, and just to give you some indication, 85% of 4th graders in Georgia met proficiency standards for reading on the CRCT. 28% met it on NATE. At the 8th grade level, the gap is 89% to 26%. In math, it is 82% to 25%. In Atlanta, I think the gap is actually 82% to 12%. And so my point is, all of this fuss about the CRCT, it should be investigated, but that's not the real issue. The real issue is that this is the real standard and we haven't been holding Dr. Hall and the system to these standards." **Craig:** "Well, that's what I am saying. The kids aren't being taught. Whatever method you want to test them with, you've got that issue, which to me is the most important issue, we'll find out who the crooks are and then we've got to get the thing on track."

Mary Louise: "Today, my understanding is that Beverly Hall has reassigned 12 principals, those implicated in this egregious cheating in at-fault schools and she has referred 108 staffers to the state's standards commission. As a board member can you tell me where these 12 principals have been reassigned?" **Nancy:** "To the central office." **Mary Louise:** "What are they doing there?" **Nancy:** "I'll be happy to send you a list. They are in different departments working under different executive staff people." Voice: "You get the picture." **Mary Louise:** "That's what I thought, Nancy, but what further action will you recommend that the Atlanta Public Schools and Beverly Hall will take *a propos* this issue?" **Nancy:** "Well I think that in order to answer that I would like to hear what happens on Wednesday and what the state does. I have my ideas – but, it's got to come from the board of the whole. But I'd like to hear what the state has to say. They initiated the ... I would like to see all 58 schools ..." **Glenn:** "Well, to that end, that's one of the reasons I asked Lonnie and Mamie to be here, because you all know 90 to 95% of kids are African American and they are the ones who are being impacted and we have a proposal we'd like you to consider, not vote on right now, but the issue shouldn't be whether Dr. Hall gets fired. The fact is, I think the community has lost confidence in the APS board, so to reinstall that confidence, what I am suggesting that you do what Los Angeles did a year ago, and that is, put up all 100+ schools for competitive bid, Let Dr. Hall bid. Let the charter school operators bid. Let anyone, let the colleges and universities bid. And you guys decide who operates the schools beginning in 2011. Because, and that's why Marcelite Harris is here, we're opening a school on Monday. \$8900 per pupil – which is far less than you are spending. We're paying for the facility, which you already paid for and the contract we signed with the state is that 95% of them will graduate and 100% percent will go to college. And they are all African American, low income. We're opening with 625 students. So it can be done."

Mary Louise: "It's my money – I'm a taxpayer. I am just curious why Beverly Hall was awarded a \$78,000 bonus in 2009." **Nancy:** "And I wasn't there then and to answer that ..." **Glenn:** "Perfect answer!" [laughter] **Mary Louise:** "And \$489,000 over her 11 years of tenure. Since 1999. Bonuses!" **Craig:** "The \$650 million – what did that do?"

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Lonnie King: “Let me just break into this conversation. I’ve come here to represent the Political Action Committee of the NAACP and I want to commend Nancy for taking a stand over this issue here. I would say that 95% of you in this room are somewhat shy about calling this thing what it is because it is a black administration down there. And you don’t want to be called racist. The problem that we have here is that we’ve allowed people to use that feeling and they have feathered their nest. You and four other people that formed a coalition can change this thing. Because what Beverly Hall has done with, with the consent of my good friend Sam Williams and many others at the Chamber of Commerce, is to set up a dictatorship where it takes seven out of the nine school board members to overrule her on substantive matters. That was done in 2004, behind... And I talked to the legislators and I said did you know you signed this? And they haven’t even seen the bill. When I saw the people who were on your panel, with all due respect to you sir, I told some people, ‘that’s a fix’. There’s too many people who have conflicted interests there. That’s like asking the fox to investigate why the chickens are missing. [laughter] So the result is predictable.

I teach at Georgia State University. There’s an anecdote I want to tell you about. I teach history down there. In my class I received one semester or a couple of semesters ago about 20 students from Carver, the new Carver. I didn’t know that they were high school kids. No one told me until a week or two into the classroom. But I noticed a decided difference in the response that I was getting from this group of students. So when I gave the first quiz, every one of those young folks flunked the exam except one. The rest of the kids did OK. By this time in comes in one of the counselors from the school to tell me that in your class are these kids from the new Carver. I said I think I can tell you who they are, too. Flashing forward, only one of those students actually made a B in that class. Half of them, they had to take them out at mid-term, because they couldn’t cut it. However, I got a telephone call from a couple of the young ladies, because they were all seniors, inviting me to their graduation. And I said, how could that be when they flunked my class? And I told some folks at Good Government Atlanta what I am just telling you. I said, somebody is cooking the books at the Atlanta Board of Education. Another member of Good Government Atlanta said, No, Lonnie (it was a Beverly Hall supporter) they’re not doing anything like that. But, a gentleman who had been the former head of the Southern Regional Education Board said, Lonnie is right. They may not be cooking the books, but they’re at least microwaving them. [laughter] We need to stop allowing this lady and her supporters to take a scintilla until everybody who is [unintelligible] her using Madison Avenue techniques and your money.

I also want to suggest very subtly to you that we need to form a Northside coalition with the Southside, because we all are taxpayers and we need to exercise our rights as taxpayers. We’re going to be there Monday, to talk. And hoping on Saturday we are going to have a resolution where the Atlanta NAACP is going to come out against everything that they are talking about doing. You all are not going to be alone. OK?

This is not going to be easy. And some of your [Hall’s?] best friends are going to have to fess up. You have a million and a half dollars but you’ve got to step aside and let an independent investigation go on. Glenn, I agree with you. This is really more than just Beverly Hall. But it is hard for me to overlook Beverly Hall. Because her contract ends in June – we need to make sure that she not go any further. Because she has gotten performance... I don’t know how much money you people make but you could go *drive* for Beverly Hall and make \$100,000+ a year. No teachers make that kind of money in the regular classrooms. And so there is something wrong with this picture. And I’m here to plead with you to join us in a coalition to bring about change because until we educate these young folks we’re going to constantly have all these break-ins, going to prison. There’s something wrong with this picture. And that’s when Glenn Delk and these two ladies and several others of us have decided to put together charter schools that we’re going to run and see if we can get a different result with the same population. So I’m here to appeal to you on this matter to get involved. This is a billion dollar corporation. It is not 640 [\$million]. They tell you it is 640 but when you add up all the rest of the money it exceeds a billion dollars. And we have people who have EDD degrees run it, a major corporation.

The other thing I want to say is that I am also of the opinion that we need to not hire someone to run the Atlanta Public School System just because they are black. Now, that shocked some folks when I said that earlier because I am the one who created the opportunity for blacks to run the school system. But Dr. Benjamin E. Mays said to me, and so did Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, Lonnie, it isn’t written that because a person is a Negro that they are going to do the right thing about these inner-city kids. And I said, you know Dr. Mays and Mr. Wilkins, I agree that that’s true, your statement --

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potentially, *but they never had a chance*, so give them a chance. We gave them a chance and they are flunking. They are flunking these children. And it is costing you \$50,000 per year per inmate when you could be paying \$9,000 year for them to go to school. That's what I am concerned about. And I am going to try to spend the rest of my life trying to kick butt – an equal opportunity butt kicker – If you are white and ruining these children, I am going to kick your butt. If you are black, I am going to do the same thing. You need to also join us in that movement. Forget whether or not you are called a racist, it's bigger than that. It's bigger than that. So let's go down there – I'll be there. I am dark enough to cover all of you all. [laughter] So come on. Let's go down there and make this thing happen.

We are going out from the NAACP beginning in January. We are running this lady here [King turns to Gen. Marcelite Harris, retired on his left] she's a retired major general in the United States Air Force. [Applause] She is currently the treasurer. [Before] she retired, she was the first woman to ever become a major general in the Air Force. And we have had a president of the Atlanta NAACP for the last fourteen years that's about like Beverly Hall – all PR and no substance.

This is Dr. Mamie Darlington [King looks to his left], who is the chairperson of our education committee. She and I have agreed to form a coalition to go around and begin to get the African American community aware of what's going on. A lot of folks really want to do something but they don't know how. So what we've got to do is put a mechanism together.

Ms. Meister, I want to say one more thing and then I will sit down: please don't vote for Hall to stay any longer. There needs to be a committee, a community committee that sits down and begin to look at candidates. Let's move away from saying that this is guaranteed for someone black.

My final comment: Harvard University had a dean of education several years ago and he was [a proponent], he believed in Martin King. So he going around and he brought a lot of African American people from around the country to Harvard to get an EDD. I had a chance to look at those people who came through there. Dr. Crim was one of them, by the way, and they spread out all over the country running school systems in the inner cities and if they lost a job for incompetence in Atlanta, their buddy who went to Harvard with them would get them a job in Los Angeles. So, you have a little clique of people who know one another from graduate school who are ruining us. We have to expose some of this stuff. So I'm going to stop right there. If Dr. Darlington or the Major General want to say something, I think I have said most of it but I am sure from these two ladies that I haven't said it all. Do you all want to say something?

Dr. Darlington: Reading the papers, I read it every day, and I was a researcher in my other life, I have a notebook just filled with a lot of information, it is extremely disturbing to me when I looked at the amount of money that some of the members who are on the Blue Ribbon Commission got -- \$1.9, \$1.5 [million] – and I am saying this is a joke. How are you going to going to engage people to evaluate something when it is obvious that they are getting money from the very people that asked them to evaluate? It is a sham. It is the worst sham in the world.

I grew up in North Carolina. I went to school during the days of segregation. And 85% of my graduating class, I graduated from high school in 1953, went to college. We are trying to get our kids, primarily, to finish high school. This makes me extremely angry. Extremely angry because the teachers in my segregated school said to us, the only way out of segregation is education. So what are we doing to these children? *What about the children?* That's going to be my message on the 16th. I'm angry because I know that education is the only way out, especially if you are African American, a kid of color, or a poor white person. So we've got to acknowledge that people are telling lies. They are emphasizing the wrong thing. All I see is the business community, the Chamber of Commerce, what about the children? We cannot afford to wait to 2011, 2012. These children don't have a way of catching up when they are already forced to be behind because the people are not teaching them.

I came to Atlanta in 1953. I graduated from Spelman. 1957, I went to Atlanta University. Graduated from there and went to Georgia State and got PhD in educational administration and leadership with a cognate in management. I know the lies that are being told. And it makes me sick. It really does. I am passionate about this because I know all of these little children whose parents are sending them to school – I think about it when I go to the store and I see the parents getting their children ready for school, I said, oh my God, what's going to happen to them? When you are not educated, you lose a sense that you can accomplish anything. It's one thing not to be able to cognitively learn 1 + 1 is 2 or

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correct English. But when your spirit is broken, and you believe you cannot learn, you are destined to a life of failure. And that's what I see Atlanta Public Schools doing. And I think every member on that board should be ashamed that they are allowing this to happen. The Blue Ribbon Commission should be ashamed. There are 58 schools that are designated and you only looked at 12. Give me a break. We're not stupid. That's my message.

Jim King: Ponder, you're on the Commission, why? Is that accurate? [unintelligible – many people talking at once] Why were there only 12 if there were 58?

Ponder Harrison: Because, the data suggest that we look at the statistical test scores, which was the only data that anyone had – wrong-to-right erasures. Those that were way out of statistical limits were the 25 schools, the 12 and the 13 and the others were within a reasonable bound. It doesn't mean that there were not issues with the other ones and those other ones were referred very strongly to the Board to be investigated further. But there wasn't time or resource to go into all the 58 to do that, but again, that wasn't the role of the Commission. And, hear me out. The Commission wasn't there to play judge and jury. The Commission report uncovered a lot of what you're saying and it refers it to APS. We were actually commissioned by the APS and the Board to give them a document to allow them to further, and I mean really, by the Board of Education. And my hope would be that the Board will take that, me personally not as a Board member or Blue Ribbon but me as an individual and a parent to two APS students, that those investigations will have teeth and that they will be taken very seriously.

Jim King: And who's doing the investigation?

Ponder: Well, the report has been turned over now to the Board of Education...

Jim: But, you're saying will have teeth and who will be doing the investigation?

Ponder: Well, that's up to APS and that's up to the Board.

Jim: And we get right back to independence. And then you go back to Glenn's issues.

Nancy Meister: I was very happy to be able to suggest that Ponder sit on the Blue Ribbon Commission as an independent person that was not associated with any other people that may have been on the board. And so, ...

Ponder: I'm not part of the corporate Atlanta culture... [laughter] I was one of the few *independent* people. [unintelligible – many people talking at once] Let me say this, too. Nancy took a lot of heat and a lot of criticism that day, on the second, by voting against the report. And maybe to answer your question, too, attempts were made to offer kind of cameo briefings or private briefings of the report and I think in a way – in full disclosure – to make sure that people have the whole knowledge but the report was a work in progress all the way up to the final hour and, it's like any contract, if you were selling your house or buying a large asset and someone handed that document thirty seconds before you were to sign it, you would say. *I'm not going to sign this.* And that's what Nancy really did, I think. I'm putting words in your mouth, but she really took a lot of heat for that as did the others and quite frankly, even being a member of the Commission that had submitted the report would have said, I need 48 hours, too. As long as you are not stonewalling and saying indefinitely I won't look at it and I think Nancy within 48 hours, reviewed it and came back and had some very good follow-up questions.

Jim: You were on a deadline that they had already set at the state, right?

Nancy: Well, I imposed that 48 hours. I basically asked the group if we could all agree that we could have 48 hours to read it. We had to send it on. If we didn't send it on, we wouldn't have met the state's deadline.

Ponder: The state had a deadline of 5PM on the 2nd and that is really where the lines began to form.

Craig: As it stands right now, what test monitoring will take place in 2011 and later. Or have you decided on any different guidelines for test monitoring?

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Nancy: The System did, based on what Caveon came back with prior to the 2010, and they implemented it. And I believe that's on-line on the APS web site. I couldn't tell you the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 without having it in front of me. But, there were different protocols as far as: after the test was given, it goes in an envelope, sealed, two signatures, it was put away until the next day, who has the keys – all of that was looked at.

Craig: But you think that will be implemented in 2011?

Nancy: Oh, that and probably more.

Mary Louise: Well, it already has, actually. And that showed the very dramatic difference between this year's scores and last year's scores. Very dramatic.

Craig: And I'd like to say thank you, Nancy. Because without mentioning names, your two predecessors, I just felt absolutely didn't do anything. Also, I think things are different now, and I'm like you, I have been disgusted by this whole thing. I was assuming what I was reading in the paper was accurate. What's kind of sad is that I think that 19% of the people voted in the primary. The problem is, so many people just don't want to get involved. I'm startled with the people who actually have children. I don't have children now but I still pay taxes.

But I think, Jim, that we do have an opportunity. Our area, you guys have put together the Buckhead Council, we can get the word out. We can get people. I have been down to the School Board meetings and there are five or six people sitting there in the audience. And I think, my God, there are parents with kids that are not being educated, why aren't they down here?

Glenn: Well, I'm permanently barred, so. [laughter]

Craig: With our association, we have a pretty good community. Our neighborhood, and we have 40 of us or something like that [in Buckhead], this is an opportunity for us to stir up some things.

Gen. Marcelite Harris: And I would like to add some comments from my perspective as a general, primarily. It's a leadership thing. You have to have people educated in order to lead them. Otherwise, you are going to have your jails filled. Leadership at the top sets the tone. I had the opportunity to be the chief of staff of the Chancellor of the New York City Schools. He was new. His name is Joel Kline. He was out of the legal profession. Education, school business, that's a business. We are not tackling it as a business. We heard last night from Mark Peevy [Executive Director, Georgia Charter Schools Commission] with that same statement, you got to be able to run it with the product being an educated child.

I was the first woman to be the director of maintenance for the whole Air Force airplane fleet, out of the Pentagon. What I said or what my people said determined how many units of war potential we could produce. And I ran that from a non-emotional standard but I ran it as a business. A lot of people think that there's a lot of waste in government. Well, it wasn't in my section. The money spent was going to produce the product. What we have here is money being spent throughout the state of Georgia but in the City of Atlanta, \$5 to \$7 billion over the past ten years and look at what they produced. They produced your problems. They produced your children's problems.

Glenn: Marcelite and maybe Lonnie have personal experience with the school we are opening. We had 1300 applicants for 650 slots. It's only K through 5. The company we hired to run the school doesn't accept these kind of low standards; they set pretty high standards. But they have done diagnostic testing on the 650 who are going to start. This is about the fifth grade. They start kindergarten: on grade level; first grade: they're sliding back; second grade: they're sliding; fifth grade: they're two years behind. And I guarantee you, the same thing is happening in APS. And the only difference is we are spending 40% more money in APS to get the same result. And if you think about it, by the fifth grade, these kids are two years behind.

Lonnie: I have a question to ask of Nancy and Ponder. Did the board ever consider the question of whether or not the cheating scandal of 2008 was an aberration? Did you consider whether it happened in 2007, 2006, 2005? Just asking that question, because normally when you see something this big, it didn't just start. It started somewhere. I asked a statistician friend of mine, what's the probability of 256,000 wrong answers being [changed to] right through erasures? He said, I have to use my formulas to work it out, but it is probably a trillion to one, that there would not be

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some kind of organized wrong-to-right kind of situation. It seems to me we have enough evidence that this ship is broken and that the captain needs to be relieved of her duty and I think that if we allow the school board to reappoint this lady that we are all shirking our duty. And we are going to lead the effort on our side of town to make sure that this school system becomes more accountable. And I again want to commend you for joining and let me speak a little out of school to tell you a little about the problem that you are dealing with. I can imagine, and Nancy would probably not own up to this, but she is probably under enormous pressure to change her mind. Brenda Mohammad, who's a school board member, called me and told me that when she voted with you and the others, a guy named Jim Bostic [apparently James E. Bostic Jr., a state Board of Education member according to the AJC] got in her face, and pointed a finger and said you are going to pay for this. I don't know if you witnessed that or not. Maybe you did. A young man named Courtney English, a 25-year-old kid who just joined the Board, I guess nobody ever told him that he had to be a junior person and watch your manners because he's been asking some questions and he's been getting a pushback. And you may have read in the paper, where they accused him of using his credit card [for] \$855. Well, two days before he got accused of that, he was called into the Superintendent's office along with the Board Chair to be scolded for being a part of the notorious five. When he wouldn't back out, then the superintendent's lawyer, *the superintendent's lawyer* filed an ethics charge against this young man. Here's a staff member filing an ethics charge against a board member. Did you hear me? There's something wrong with that picture. Now, that's not all. And what you don't know, Ms. Meister, is that the tall gentleman who is on that board, ran unopposed, what's his name McDaniels?.... Other voice: Ruben McDaniels.

Lonnie: Ruben McDaniels had the nerve to call the president of Morehouse College to ask him to fire Mr. English from his job. This is Gestapo tactics that are going on and I am just not going to be a part of this.

Jim: I have a couple of comments. I feel that I am not as caught up as I should be. I was out of town. But I've been reading the articles and hearing what friends and neighbors were saying. But, there's something rotten, here. That's the gist of it. The kids are the victims. And we are the indirect victims because if they go wrong, it affects us. You went directly to it earlier, General. I think Craig talked about testing results and Ponder, I am glad to hear that you were an independent person on that Commission because when I read what was put together, the way I read it is like Lonnie read it. This is people who are too close in affiliation. That doesn't mean they have done anything wrong. But they are too close to the problem, to the people making decisions. That means that whatever judgment they made good or bad, could be questioned from the beginning. It didn't matter. There were going to be questions. Because there's not enough trust in the community, obviously to honor whatever their judgment is. Glenn was nice enough to suggest an independent group, which we got. And Lonnie touches on another thing. I got sent how many articles today, Gordon?

Gordon: Five.

Jim: Five to get caught up before I got here tonight. And I think what Lonnie was not saying, which is kind of scary, is what I read between the lines. He's asking how many years do they go back? Because one of the articles said the graduation rate went from this percent to this percent, like double. It did, in fact, but it sounds like, if Lonnie's suspicions are right, that education did not increase, therefore, most of those kids shouldn't have graduated. And probably would have dropped out since they weren't going to graduate.

Glenn: Jim, the federal government has a report on the issue every year and they have true numbers on the graduation rate at APs. It's 41%. It's been 41% for ten years.

Jim: Well, that's even scarier. Because, if that's the true graduation rate, and they're saying graduation is a 69%, I think I read in the paper today. But what Lonnie's is saying they're not being educated and they wouldn't have graduated had the testing... This goes back further. And Ms. Hall, whom I do not personally know, has been rewarded and she has stayed on because of all these statistical improvements. It may warrant that those things need to be gone back [and reviewed] or you need a change in leadership. Because, she's not going to be vindicated unless you can go back and prove that there actually has been an improvement in the education. To me, I'm sitting here and I have a few degrees, that's in question. That's completely in question. It's an unknown that these kids have really been educated.

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Different male voice?: On that, and to back up what you are saying, the daughter of a good friend of ours who was educated at some big name private school in New York is down here teaching. She graduated from college, taught for a couple of years and when the stuff came out earlier in the year and we mentioned it to her, the Atlanta Public Schools, and she laughed and said it's a problem; it's endemic. It's throughout the entire system and you can't say anything about it. [Unintelligible – many people asking if this was in APS] In Atlanta. She's still teaching, so I'm not...

Jim: Lonnie has a lot of courage, actually, to be here. And the ladies, as well. **Lonnie:** I told them you don't bite. [laughter] **Jim:** We do hit. [laughter]

But what I have noticed in a lot of different venues is that people don't like to face up to the facts. And they try to put the best face on things. You know, I had a complaint because a local newspaper said there was crime in Chastain Park – God forbid. Certain realtors are worried about prices of houses in the neighborhood. We deal with facts. And that's the only way you can correct problems. And what they're trying to do here is shine a light on it. I know the business community wants us to have an education system. They are committed to that. But in *their way*. And I think throwing money at it or saying you're getting good results is different from actually getting good results and educating our children and that gets back to Craig when you said: it's the results that matter, nothing else. These kids are educated. Can they think, are they going to stay out of trouble? Is our community going to be built up?

Another disturbing thing is there does not seem to be any immediate accountability in the system. If you have 12 principals who were reassigned and 108 staff referred to the state's standards commission, what message does that send? Throughout the entire system that these tactics that you were referring to, there were several mentions in the paper where other people were told be quiet like, like it was an edict. If it is so hush-hush and go-along-get-along, I thought that went out in the 80s and early 90s at the Georgia State Capitol. This go-along-get-along nonsense and protect your job, in a down economy, everybody who has a job is thankful they have it, so there's something with the culture that allowed this to happen and leadership is accountable. And they are not making the decisions that I would expect of a leader to take decisive action. Right now.

Glenn: That's why I don't think we as taxpayers can spend the time to fully investigate and I thank Nancy and Ponder for doing that. And that's why I suggest the solution is, make Dr. Hall prove it, by competing. Because I can tell you, that if she is forced to compete with the folks sitting at the other end of the table who have hired a management company that has proven that these kids can get educated and go to college, then what's going to happen is out of 50,000 students that are currently in APS, 50,000 of them are going to choose to go someplace other than a school run by Dr. Hall.

Jim: You said Mr. Bostic went after the new school board member? What is up with that? A public servant is being attacked by someone who is used to be affiliated with the Chamber, right? **Lonnie:** Yes, he did. **Jim:** and he might still be. I don't get it. Aren't we all supposed to be on the same team educating these children? Failure is not necessarily a bad thing. It's addressing the failure and learning from the failure and achieving after the failure, that is what we all need to do. If you won't acknowledge we have a failure, in a real sense, we can never make progress.

Lonnie: What bothered me is that I was brought up to respect women, and from what I was told by Mrs. Mohammad, it was a total disrespect of her. And I asked the question, there were some *men* who voted against this also, did he go into their face? And the reality of it was, no he did not. Something wrong, here.

Jim: I know Brenda and she must have really held her temper.

Lonnie: She said she was going to take some actions. I don't what that's going to be.

Kim Kahwach: So, Lonnie, what do you think this body can do to help in this effort?

Lonnie: I think this body ought to join with us from the Southside and help us deal with this education system. First, Dr. Darlington is going to head the education initiative for the NAACP. She's doing research now and we are going to be going out to communities all over Atlanta beginning in January to try and build a groundswell for a change. If you have two people together, we're going to talk to them. Because a lot of what we are talking about, people, they suspect it, they kind of believe it but

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you have got to present it to them. And we have to create a critical mass for change. Right now we don't have a critical mass.

Lonnie: We met briefly last year; somebody introduced us. **Lonnie:** Was that Ms. Fowler? **Jim:** That's right. I said this in this forum before and I don't know if it is appropriate for what you want to do. This idea of the council of neighborhoods, people ask why is it not an Atlanta council of neighborhoods. As Glenn said, we are all volunteers. We are not trying to do everything. On many occasions I have said that we could have a Buckhead council of neighborhoods, a Southwest council of neighborhoods, an East Atlanta council of neighborhoods, and maybe a Downtown/Midtown council of neighborhoods. We're willing to help other parts of the city organize like we did. We just have a pretty defined community here in Buckhead with real common issues. But the issues here go city-wide. The other thing is, we are paying all the tax dollars. We're paying for the whole dang school system, just about. ("Dang", hear that?) [laughter] Most of our tax dollars are going into this and it sounds like a lot is going down the drain.

Lonnie: I am heading political action and if this lady wins, I will be heading it again. One of the things I want to do is to put together a speakers bureau to actually organize around the southside of town to organize into some kind of coalition around the issue of education. And I want to use a historical perspective on it. These ladies have heard me say this many times, in 1865 when the four million slaves were freed, an ex-slave in Kentucky said, when freedom was coming, he said, freedom without education is not freedom at all. And if you look around at what's going on right now, we have kids who are being born, and there's a wrong thing being painted on their slate. And by the time they get to us, in pre-K or K, they have all these wrong things on their slate and it takes a hell of a lot of work to begin to wipe that off. Now, this is nothing new. You know, John Locke talked about the same thing in the 17th century, that what you paint on that child's slate between birth and six years of age, will determine where that child is going. So we know what's going on.

A final comment, sir, and then I'll be quiet. We have about 60-some percent of the prison population in this state that is African American. 97% of them are African American men. A lot of them need to be there, I'm sure, but a lot of them probably don't need to be there. If we don't watch out, we are going to have a situation wherein we are going to keep increasing, sending more and more people to jail – that's not the answer. It may be part of the answer for the crooks and the murderers yes, but for some other people, if we can catch them early enough, and we become long-distance runners, and not sprinters, I think we can make a change.

Craig: You made me think. We have some elections coming up in November. I think we have an opportunity with some politicians to make our positions known and get them behind this thing? Every time I have said something about this I am told that my numbers are wrong. There are so many numbers floating around, I don't care if it is 650 or a billion dollars, it is a lot of money that's going down the toilet. Somehow, we've got to get the word out and the people stirred up. With all deference to the Northside Neighbor, I read this singly in the AJC. We have got to get everybody talking about this thing and create a groundswell, that's my thought.

Lonnie: You asked what can you do. If the [Buckhead] council of neighborhoods would pass a resolution calling for this whole thing to be sent to the district attorney's office for possible prosecution; trust me, that will be headlines. [laughter] That will begin to create the conversation that we need.

Walda Lavroff: In the Reporter newsletter.

Lonnie: The point is, you cannot whisper these people out of power. You cannot negotiate them out of power. You have to vote them out and take them out.

Craig: What's the problem? If they are innocent, they're innocent.

Lonnie: That's right.

George Mirgorod: One thing, in all these discussions, I haven't heard is parents. Parents, they think their kids are studying enough and getting passing grades. Now that all of this has been exposed, parents are going to have to change, because all of these kids haven't been studying enough. They haven't been taught. Do you know how involved these parents are for each of these 58 schools? Can the parents in the 58 schools form some kind of watchdog group to keep pressure on.

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Glenn: Let me respond by saying there was a board meeting up at the charter school a month ago and a group of parents came. Now remember, we did very little advertising and somehow 1300 parents decided to send their kids to apply. But this is the first meeting, the question came up to the director: why is it that kids are not testing well? And that's when I had to tell them that the state and DeKalb county system had been lied to. In fact, one woman said, her child was on the honor roll and the company was saying, I'm sorry but he was two years behind. The point is, these people have been lied to. They don't know the truth. But when they find out the truth, they are not very happy.

Dr. Darlington: Years ago during my studies, the professor shared with us a book entitled Lying with Statistics. **Walda:** I still have it. **Dr. Darlington:** When you read in the AJC that Atlanta Public Schools says that the test scores have improved, they're making progress, if you have a standard that says an A is 40 points, and you put that A on and say that is improvement, that doesn't make sense. If you are below basic [by] five points, and you improve one point, you are still below basic. So I think what's been reported to parents, and I am a parent advocate, parents only see honor roll, As, Bs, Cs, whatever. They have been lied to. And you also understand that we have a lot of grandparents in their 30s and 40s who are rearing kids. We have parents who are not formally educated. They trust the system. So, they are clapping at graduation not knowing that that child is only getting a certificate of attendance. They think they are graduating because they have a robe. In my view when you said you have something smells, something is rotten, it is very rotten because you are misleading people who love and care about their children. And the next thing you know is their children are out of control because they can't compute, they can't read, and then they get angry and that's where you see the violence. So what are we doing other than creating generations of children for the prison system?

Lonnie: I just need to add to that, Mr. Delk mentioned to you that the school that we formed, it's called Peachtree Hope. And I am going to invite all of you to come out if you don't mind, on the 16th, next Monday. You're going to 625 young kids coming in K through 5 with their grandmamas and their mamas and their guardians, by the hand. There'll be cameras there. What I have been doing is taking to about 400 of these parents and when I talk to them, of course only about 10% of these parents are black men, the rest of them are women. Now, women do not desert their children. What I've been saying to these ladies, you are in the vanguard of a movement to create a parent revolution in education in Georgia. We are going to start with you 400. In every school we start we are going to organize a parent revolution in that particular school. And they we are going to go to other charter schools. To make a long story short, we have to start with one and then you build. But this is not going to be a sprint. This is going to be a long distance run to get these parents to understand that maybe there is hope. We had to delay the opening by one week and the director was very upset. She said, oh my Lord, we are going to lose a lot of our students because we are having to delay the opening by one week. And I said, no, we are not going to lose a single person. She said, why? I said we have sold these people that this time it is going to be different. I am happy to tell you that we didn't lose a single student by pushing it back one week because these folks have believed the message that we have been carrying forward. I think they think that we are real. And we are going to be working with them every month trying to be sure. Keep your eye on the mark. Glenn Delk is the one who gave us the name Peachtree Hope. And we are going to go and give some hope to these young folks. And you'll see it in the newspapers and I hope some of you will get involved as volunteers at the school or whatever. We don't want all of you to come but many of you could come. Recognize that we are going to start with this one and if all goes well we will have two more in December. We are going to try to put together over the next five years, about 15 to 20 schools. And we are going to go to the inner city of Georgia, where the worst children are and see if we can get a different result. And if we don't do it, who's going to do it? We've been waiting 50 years. *Brown vs. Board of Education* didn't do it. So somebody has got to do it.

Jim: We wish you luck on that. We know that parents are the key to good education. In this cluster that Nancy represents, a lot of schools have incredible parent teacher associations. It does work.

Gordon: Where is your school?

Lonnie: 1807 Memorial Drive SE, Atlanta, 30317. Let me also tell you that we have 48 portables out front. But behind the portables you will see the outline of a brand new school that we are refurbishing back there. We will be in those portables approximately 60 days. But it will probably be 90 days based on the way things happen. The point is, it is a beautiful school, but the parents had no problem coming, on a temporary basis, to these portables, because they could see out of the corner of their

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eyes how the skyline was being changed with this school being built. So we encourage you to come out there and see it.

Gordon: Did you pick your students or was there a lottery?

Lonnie: It was open. It was a lottery. As we recruited and began to sell this program, more and more people said, let's try it. So, once we moved beyond 654, in terms of our numbers, we had to go into a lottery. We ended up with 1309 applications from people who wanted put their school children there.

Jim: I just had a thought. Nancy, does your cluster get enough money for what you are trying to do?

Nancy: I think we have been well supported. There are always things that we could do. I know there are some things that could be supported better. But I think when we look at the facilities and the growth we are experiencing here, I really believe we have gotten the attention of the Board.

[The announcement of the location of the new high school was alluded to.] No, I'm not going to tell you.

Kim: When will the high school be announced?

Nancy: They have narrowed it down to two sites and they are doing their due diligence on both sites. I would think [the announcement will be made in] 45 to 60 days.

Male voice: Will you make sure that they take into consideration traffic? We had this whole thing between Morris Brandon and nobody looked at the traffic and it is absolutely kind of crazy. Just make sure that they look at traffic when they look at the sites.

Nancy: We'll talk to Yolanda and Howard and we'll mention it.