

<http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2011/09/27/7-arrested-for-alleged-sat-cheating-ring-at-great-neck-north-high-school/>

# 7 Arrested For Alleged SAT Cheating Ring At Great Neck North High School

**Educator: Pressure On Kids Massive; Attorney: District, Not Courts, Should Rule**

September 27, 2011 11:58 PM

**MINEOLA, N.Y. (CBSNewYork)** – Seven former and current students of a prestigious Long Island high school were arrested Tuesday in an [alleged SAT cheating ring](#).

[Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice](#) announced that six Great Neck North High School students had paid 19-year-old Samuel Eshaghoff thousands of dollars to take the SAT for them.

Eshaghoff, who graduated from the high school in 2010 and is currently enrolled at Emory University in Atlanta, was paid between \$1,500 and \$2,500 per student. He has been arrested and charged with scheme to defraud, falsifying business records and criminal impersonation.

Eshaghoff faces up to four years in prison if convicted, but his attorney said there's no way this alleged scam should end up in a court room. Bail was set at \$1,000 for Eshaghoff.

“Even if something happened it happened within school grounds, under age, should be handled administratively within school. Across the U.S. no one has ever had a case go to criminal court due to cheating or alleged cheating in an exam,” Matin Emouna told CBS 2's Jennifer McLogan.

**Photo Gallery:** [Suspects Arrested In SAT Scam](#)

Rice said the six students accused of hiring Eshaghoff have also been arrested and face misdemeanor charges. They have not been identified because of their ages and all six of them were arraigned and released on their own recognizance.

“Colleges look for the best and brightest students, yet these six defendants tried to cheat the system and may have kept honest and qualified students from getting into their dream school,” Rice said.

Rice said the students registered to take the test at a different school so they would not be known by the proctors and then Eshaghoff would present unofficial identification with his photo and the paying student's name on it.

Rice said the students got caught because their SAT scores were so much higher than their school grades, some with as high as 2200 out of a perfect 2400, reports CBS 2's McLogan. Rice is recommending that all schools who know a student who has cheated on the SAT notify the college the student has applied to.

“The goal here is not only to hold those accountable for their wrongdoing, but to level the playing field for all of the students who play by the rules,” Rice said.

Eshaghoff apparently also took the test at no charge for a female student.

An investigation is currently underway into whether similar scams occurred in at least two other Nassau County high schools, as well as allegations that Eshaghoff took the SAT exam for students of other high schools. Rice would not name those schools.

The Great Neck School District released a statement saying it “does not tolerate cheating” and remains “committed to cooperating with law enforcement in the matter.”

“It is our hope that the actions currently being taken by the DA’s Office will serve to bring an end to any dishonest practices which may have placed students at an unfair disadvantage and will also bring to light any shortcomings in the security of the SAT testing system,” district officials said in the statement.

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“There is a tremendous amount of pressure on these students in a town like Great Neck,” Rothman told McLogan. Many students were defensive.

“I don’t think they should be arrested. I think the school should be taking care of it, not the court,” Nicole Nicholis said.

Rice demanded Education Testing Service, the non-profit that administers the test, make other immediate security changes like matching photos and handwriting. Late Tuesday night the ETS said it will comply immediately.

***If convicted, what do you think is the appropriate punishment in this case? Let us know below...***

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# Cheating controversy grows into angry, national dialogue about ethical breakdown

[snoguchi@mercurynews.com](mailto:snoguchi@mercurynews.com)

Posted: 04/28/2012 08:08:57 PM PDT

Updated: 04/28/2012 10:10:04 PM PDT

They're outraged, furious, incredulous and deeply worried.

The case of the Redwood City father who's suing because his son was dropped from a class for cheating has struck a nerve with readers, who have emailed, phoned and posted their discontent online.

Jack Berghouse's lawsuit against the Sequoia Union High School District has disturbed people's sense of fairness and decency as well as their belief in the importance of teaching character and ethics in young people who will inherit the nation's leadership.

"We should be able to take the consequences for our choices," said Annalys Berraje, of Soquel. "I think it's terrible that people wink at things that ultimately destroy the value of the character of the nation."

Berghouse's son and three other students were dropped from a sophomore honors English class at Sequoia High School in Redwood City for copying and sharing homework. The four students were transferred to a lower-level but still college-preparatory class. Berghouse filed a suit earlier this month, and called the news media to say his son's due process rights were violated. He seeks to have his son readmitted to the honors class.

Berghouse said that not taking the class, which leads to a rigorous curriculum known as the International Baccalaureate, would harm his son's future, including the possibility of the youth not getting admitted to Ivy League schools.

Besides the cheating, which is widespread among the

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highest-achieving students in the Bay Area, people worry about the lesson they see Berghouse transmitting to his son, who is not being named because he is a minor.

"The question might be what is more important: learning to do right or getting into the best school so they can get ahead?" wrote Pat Martin, of Pacifica.

The issue of cheating in school has become an explosive one nationally. Society seems to have arrived at a difficult crossroads: School kids -- including those with top grades -- not only cheat with great regularity, but they express trouble understanding what's the big fuss? Why are adults so upset? Meanwhile, older generations are stunned and frightened by the apparent lack of ethics built into today's young people.

This worry is especially present in those who have navigated the minefields of parenting and teaching -- the ones who have to deal with kids' transgressions, even when it's difficult.

"A lot of us have raised children, and when they do something like that, they deserve to be punished," said Terry Jordan, of Portola Valley. "They don't deserve to have their parent stick up for them."

Wasting resources

Susan Keely, who runs child care programs in Redwood City -- and has many former students attending Sequoia's International Baccalaureate program -- echoed that. "We teach our kids not to cheat or lie or steal or bully. We teach kids to be good community members and good citizens."

What's more, Keely wrote, she's upset that Berghouse "is forcing the district to use precious resources which should be used in the classroom, to defend a policy that should not have to be defended."

One Redwood City mother contrasted Berghouse's reaction to her own experience. After her son got caught cheating on a test in December, he was given a zero on the exam, a D-minus in the class and prohibited from continuing the second semester. He also had to inform all the colleges to which he'd applied.

"His wonderful teacher called me a couple of days later to discuss the situation, clearly very uncomfortable and painful for him. My reply was a very genuine, 'THANK YOU,' " wrote the mother, whom the Mercury News is not naming in order to protect her son's identity.

"In my opinion, the very worst thing that could have happened would be for my son not to get caught. I far prefer that he learn this extremely valuable life lesson now, and not later."

Among teachers and parents, the Berghouse case illustrates what they see as overprotective, intrusive and just plain wrong parenting, which they partly blame for the rise in dishonesty.

"Cheating has become the norm," said Darrell Linthacum, 82, who teaches chemistry at West Valley College in Saratoga. Now in his 59th year of teaching, Linthacum said cheating increased exponentially after 1990. He blames parents who do their children's schoolwork, imported cultural values that permit cheating, the proliferation of technology, the press for A's and inaction on cheating by schools.

"These young people are so insistent on getting into what they call prestigious schools, they'll do anything to get in," said Linthacum, who taught many years in high school. "I feel sorry for the kids. In many cases, it's parents pushing kids."

And, he said, because many selective universities have no-fail policies, students who may have cheated their way in will stay in, unless they're caught doing something outrageous.

## **Cheating controversy grows into angry, national dialogue about ethical breakdowns**

[By Sharon Noguchi](#)

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No tolerance

In contrast, any West Valley chemistry student caught cheating gets an F -- as one did just three weeks ago. "I never fail a student for poor work, if they've worked. The only time I've failed a student is if they've cheated," said Linthacum.

Students taking tests must use numbered department-issue calculators and may bring only pencils into the room. In the community college's chemistry department, he thinks cheating is rare.

"We get one instance of cheating," the student gets caught, he said, and "word gets out very, very rapidly."

Linthacum concedes that in many schools, teachers who want to discipline for dishonesty don't get backing from administrators, who may be pressured by parents.

Clearly, schools relying on students' honesty may not realize the depth of a problem. Helen Harmon, of Atherton, recalled that "schools often find that the problem with their honor system is that the teachers have the honor and the students have the system."

The suit against Sequoia opens up endless possibilities for parents, Rachel Mercer, of Marin County, wrote. "Jack Berghouse's efforts have spurred us to consider suing our school district for

not providing clear guidance and motivation for our son, a senior, to become valedictorian of his class."

But seriously, "my view of success may be skewed," she wrote. "I do not think it is about being wealthy nor do I think it is being poor. It is defined by who you are as a person, how you choose to live your life and contribute to the world. Using those standards, I am confident my son will be a success. I hope that one day Mr. Berghouse will be able to say the same about his son."

Contact Sharon Noguchi at 408-271-3775. Follow her at [Twitter.com/NoguchiOnK12](https://twitter.com/NoguchiOnK12).

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