



# Fulton County Taxpayers Foundation

*Non-Profit Advocate Of Lower Property Taxes In Atlanta/Fulton County*

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A stylized, grayscale illustration of a city skyline with various skyscrapers and buildings. In the foreground, there are curved lines representing roads or highways, with small circles indicating streetlights or traffic. The overall style is modern and graphic.

# **Reform Initiatives: A New Future for Atlanta Public Schools**

On February 10, 2010, the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement announced that 256,799 wrong-to-right erasures took place in 58 Atlanta schools in the 2009 CRCT state achievement tests. The magnitude of the number confirms the fact that the quality of public schooling is far worse today than at any previous time. The reason is partly the obsession with testing by the Superintendent and her senior staff to qualify for the federal funding under the “No Child Left Behind”, and partly, the deterioration of our central cities, and the huge percentage of APS students living in a single-parent household. Whatever the reasons, the fact of deterioration of the Atlanta Public Schools (APS) is “crying-out” for reform initiatives.

## **What Are the Reform Initiatives Needed for APS?**

1. **A Forensic Audit of the 256,779 wrong-to-right Erasures:** A forensic audit of the 256,779 wrong-to-right erasures by the State Auditor must be authorized without delay by the Governor. The circumstances in the case of APS are different than the other 33 school districts cited by the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, i.e., 256,779 is the largest – by far – test cheating of any school district. After five months, neither the Superintendent nor the Atlanta School Board has admitted that APS has a serious problem.
2. **A New, Governor-Appointed Superintendent of APS:** With a pattern of past erasures, and the constant denial of systemic cheating, the Superintendent should be replaced by the Governor.
3. **The APS School Board Should Be Replaced by the Governor:** The APS School Board should be replaced by the Governor with paid professionals of the highest caliber. The Board bears the responsibility of the cheating in the same way as the Superintendent. Their lack of shame, embarrassment and denial in the cheating of such magnitude should be adequate reason for the Governor to replace the Atlanta School Board immediately.

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4. **More Frequent Testing of Students, With Tests Better Monitored:** In the light of the 256,779 wrong-to-right erasures, it is obvious that the APS students need CRCT state achievement tests at least twice annually, with the tests monitored to the standards of the Governor's Office of Student Achievement.
5. **73% of APS Students Have No Live-In Father:** The development of the neighborhood school as the center or "the hub" for after-school supervised activities, including professional counseling. With 73% of APS students living in a single-parent household, there is an urgent need for professional counseling to encourage the live-in presence of the father, the critical element missing in the lives APS student.
6. **Improving the Quality of APS Teachers:** After interviewing a group of teachers from both APS and other counties, they all agree that the following initiatives would help 'weed out' those who lack initiative, have low expectations of their students and identify what schools lack a motivational administration:
  - \*Further study is needed of the individual child's improvement gains
  - \*Teacher to Teacher surveys should be conducted.
  - \*A mandate of expectations that all administrators must adhere to, with quarterly reviews of those administrators.
  - \*The same mandate should be applied to teachers regarding their students. "My kids won't do that; my kids can't do that," This mindset is unacceptable.
  - \*Teachers that are displaced face being put in positions that are not the right 'fit'.
  - \*Student interviews or surveys should be conducted.

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# CONCLUSION

**Under the leadership of the Governor's Office of Student Achievement and with a new APS Superintendent of Schools appointed by the Governor, new reform efforts must involve all participants, i.e., parents, teachers, administrators, students and the community in partnerships geared toward fundamentally changing the ways in which the Atlanta Public Schools have previously operated.**

**John S. Sherman**



**President**

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