

SAT Cheating Scandal

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by Janet Rosier, IECA Member (Connecticut)

As an Independent Educational Consultant, I was both disheartened and unsurprised at the SAT cheating scandal that came to light in September of this year. A college student was employed to take the SAT for six current high school students. According to reports in *The New York Times*, he was paid between \$1,500 and \$2,500 by each student. Having someone take a test for you is not new (see Ted Kennedy and Harvard) but it is still very wrong and the college student faces stiff charges. From what I have read, the high school students may not. That is a pity. I am not acting as a scold here, but I do think that if the only penalty these kids face is to have the scores invalidated, society is doing them a disservice and we practically invite more cheating.

When listening to some news accounts I heard some people mention the intense competition for college as the reason students are driven to do this and how Great Neck is an uber competitive town. Competition for college is big news and often in the news. *The New York Times* has “The Choice” blog and *The Washington Post* has “College, Inc.” blog devoted to all things college. (Full disclosure—I have my own blog in the *Connecticut Post* online, “Next Stop: College”) We all talk about the ins and outs of college admissions, the trends, the myths, the stress and the advice.

Then there are the stories in every national newspaper every year, as sure and predictable as the seasons. In the fall, we have the news stories about Early Decision, complete with the staggering differences in the admissions rates at some colleges and the requisite hand wringing over how this robs seniors of time to make a choice. This is usually followed by the news, as soon as the numbers are in, about how the number of students who applied early went up. In January, the

stories are similar—the highest number of college applications submitted. In April, we read how it was the most competitive year. Ever. Until next year.

But in the news or not, competition is no excuse for cheating. Competition, especially for the “name” schools is tremendous and will remain so. As IECs, we need to be a voice of reason, to assuage fears and to emphasize fit. And part of finding the right fit is understanding that if a college is accepting fewer than 10% of their applications, it is a reach for every student and we need appropriate alternative choices. No cheating necessary.