

Police Weigh Charges for Student Cheating

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Cheating during exams can lead to a reprimand, bad grades or expulsion. But after this month's high school finals, some of those involved in cheating may face criminal charges.

A group of college students has been busted trying to take math tests for high school students during this month's Unified State Exams, a standardized type of school testing.

"According to a preliminary inquiry, the students were hired by the parents of soon-to-be-graduates," Moscow police said in a statement, without specifying how many college students were suspects or how much they were paid.

The police said the perpetrators may face criminal charges, but did not elaborate. The incident took place last week but was only reported Wednesday.

This is not the first finals-related scandal this year. Earlier this week, the Federal Inspection

Service for Education and Science said it would sue a user group on the Vkontakte.ru social network for posting answers to the tests.

Students in the Far East posted photographs of test questions taken with their mobile phones, allowing students in other time zones to solve the questions before the exams, *Rossia-24* television reported Wednesday.

Those who did not wish to solve the questions themselves could pay to get the answers from the administration of the Vkontakte group, with prices ranging from 290 rubles to 990 rubles (\$10 to \$35), the report said.

Media learned about the group, which comprised about 300,000 users, including some teachers, from St. Petersburg educator Dmitry Gushchin, who was selected the Best Teacher of Russia in 2007.

The group's leader, who identified himself as Slava Borisov, said in an open letter to *Uchitelskaya Gazeta*, a newspaper for the teacher community, that the goal was to simply allow students with limited budgets to practice for the finals.

"Thanks to our group, many graduates who didn't have the opportunity to hire a tutor and are limited in financial resources found mutual support and assistance," Borisov said in the letter published last week.

His argument, however, did not convince the education watchdog, whose spokesman Sergei Shatunov dismissed it as "nonsense" and accused Borisov of encouraging thousands of cheaters nationwide, *Kommersant* reported.

The user group has remained active this week, including on Tuesday, when students took national history and physics exams, Gushchin said.

The Unified State Exam was introduced in 2009 to curb rampant corruption and cheating. But its success has remained elusive, with dozens of teachers last year detained across the country, including 40 in the Rostov region, for taking the exams instead of the students.

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