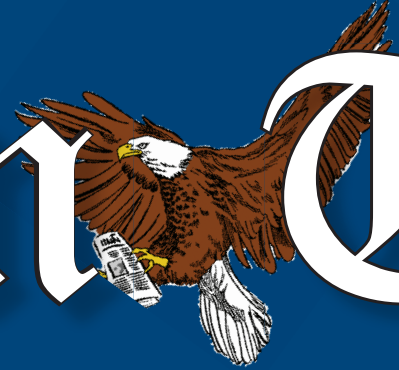


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Tampering takes toll

ACHS teacher allegedly tampers with grades of 66 students, faces charges

By Erin Kelly
Editor-in-Chief

Anger, betrayal, and disappointment. These are just a few emotions that have been expressed by the District 117 community. However, confusion seems to dominate discussion as everyone searches for a reason why this happened in the first place.

"Honestly, I still do not believe it," said Brian Glashagel, Sara Glashagel's husband. "I am still waiting to wake up from this bad dream."

On five days in the middle of September, Sara Glashagel, an Antioch Community High School special education teacher, allegedly changed the grades of 66 students, 39 who played football for Brian, who also works at the school as a social studies teacher.

"Sara said she changed these grades because she 'didn't want Brian to have to deal with all the kids failing on his team,'" according to the police report.

Brian continually pleaded his own innocence and ignorance of the situation and even offered to take a polygraph test, according to the police report. He was released with no charges pending.

The school also is "comfortable knowing that [Sara] is responsible,"

Superintendent Mike Nekritz said, and even held a meeting with Brian's football team, their parents, and the Booster Club on Saturday, Nov. 19 to explain that this had not affected them.

"We answered their questions and gave our support to Mr. Glashagel," Antioch Principal John Whitehurst said.

Sara allegedly increased the grades by using an administrative password that had been told to her by an administrator in the past to log in to several teachers' accounts, according to the police report.

"The person who gave out her password was perhaps careless but did nothing wrong," said Whitehurst, who did not name the administrator. "We have asked the entire staff to avoid handing passwords out in the future."

However, asking teachers not to share passwords, except perhaps in extreme situations such as co-teaching, is not the only precaution the district has taken. Locking down the system and having teachers change their passwords to access the district's network as well as SchoolMaster, the information system that holds District 117's grades, are some of those changes to make the system "more secure than it has ever been," Nekritz said. Teachers also changed their email passwords. Student information was never compromised, nor were any transcripts sent out incorrectly, Lakes administrative assistant Kitty Wiegelsaid.

"ACHS was aware of the problem immediately, and took measures to ensure grade integrity," she said.

Though 39 of the students whose grades were changed played football, the school assured the surrounding communities and the Illinois High School Association that no ineligible athletes ever took the field.

"The school investigated this matter, reached a conclusion on it, and shared with us their findings," Associate Executive Director of the IHSA. "At that point, we felt there was no need for any additional investigation on our part so we closed the matter."

Official matters are closed for District 117, the Antioch Police Department, and IHSA regarding this case. But, with Sara facing a charge of computer tampering, a Class A misdemeanor, and up to a year in jail with a \$2,500 fine, this makes many administrators wonder how long it will take for the Lake County area to once again trust District 117.

"Any school works really, really hard in displaying an image that is positive...this diminishes what we have been doing and puts everything under a microscope," Lakes Principal Steve Plank said.

Teachers, just like police officers and firefighters, are often held to a higher standard, Plank said, and it only takes one person to be a complete failure to the system to make everyone look bad.

Sara, who also served as Antioch's National Honor Society and Student Council sponsor, resigned on Nov. 23 - five days after she was charged - and, with the possibility of the revocation of her teaching license, she might never teach again. But, how will Brian continue on at Antioch?

"The faculty support I received from, not only the Antioch staff, but even some of the Lakes staff was really amazing," Brian said in an email interview with the *Talon Times*. "Then there are the students. All I can say is that many adults underestimate the understanding and maturity of high school students. The students here understood and were absolutely great. Mature. They genuinely cared."

"So many people can get caught up in the story, not knowing all of the details, speculating and assuming," he said. "As ugly as this story got in the newspapers, it brought out some of the best here at Antioch. When time passes and I look back upon this that is what I will remember."

Not only did the staff and students come out to help Brian, but many seem to unconditionally support Sara, as well.

"I know [Sara] didn't mean any harm to the students or [herself], and strong people recover from their mistakes," said Cameron Slate, a student from Antioch who had his grades changed. "I know [Sara] will because [Sara] is a strong person and many of the students and staff are backing [her] up 100 percent."

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"I was so shocked because she really was loved."
-Antioch student Dana Kozenski

"Everybody makes mistakes. This was a colossal one."
-Mike Nekritz

"All I can say is my wife is not a bad person. In fact, she is an absolute sweetheart."
-Brian Glashagel

Administrators discover new strengths in themselves

By Jessica Sherwin
News Editor

To say the least, it has been a long month for District 117—especially the administrators.

They have learned things about themselves that otherwise might have remained hidden to them, all as a result of the recent charges brought against Sara Glashagel.

"Things like this happen in the best of schools, in the best of institutions," said Antioch Principal John Whitehurst.

Glashagel's computer tampering charge stems from her alleged hacking into the district's information system in mid-September to change grades of 66 students, 39 who played on her husband Brian Glashagel's football team.

And although administrators agree that this one person's actions shouldn't reflect negatively on the district as a whole, it did lead to hours of work for them in terms of damage control.

Superintendent Mike Nekritz spent roughly a week and a half solely focusing on communicating with the press, staff, Board of Education, and trying to work through the situation.

"It has been a difficult time. Certainly I'm conflicted in my roles as someone who knows Sara," Nekritz said. "It's been hectic, frustrating; I didn't sleep a lot. It demonstrated that I really cared about the district."

However, Antioch High School seems to be settling back into the natural routine of the school promptly.

"The day-to-day stuff returns things to normal. The staff continues to focus on the positives. And there are tons of positives," Nekritz said.

Many members of the school community made it clear that they felt angry and resentful about the situation. They communicated their opinions within private conversations and even in public venues, such as comments following online newspaper articles.

But, there seems to be an equal amount of compassion for her, despite the time, effort, and stress this has required from District 117 leaders.

"She has grown a whole lot. As a teacher, she had a really nice way of relating to the kids. She was an effective teacher.... I feel kind of sorry for Mrs. Glashagel. I think she was just confused," Whitehurst said.

Nekritz said the fact that Glashagel is married to the football coach perhaps over-dramatized the situation in the media, given the charge is a misdemeanor.

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