

Search for _____ in _____

Schoolhouse crock

Probe: Teach couldn't pass N.Y. exam so paid man \$2 to take it

BY LISA MUÑOZ, JONATHAN LEMIRE and JOE WILLIAMS
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITERS

A Bronx teacher who repeatedly flunked his state certification exam paid a formerly homeless man with a developmental disorder \$2 to take the test for him, authorities said yesterday.

The illegal stand-in - who looks nothing like teacher Wayne Brightly - not only passed the high-stakes test, he scored so much better than the teacher had previously that the state knew something was wrong, officials said.

"I was pressured into it. He threatened me," the bogus test-taker Rubin Leitner told the Daily News yesterday after Special Schools Investigator Richard Condon revealed the scam.

"I gave him my all," said Leitner, 58, who suffers from Asperger's syndrome, a disorder similar to autism. "He gave me what he thought I was worth."

Brightly, 38, a teacher at one of the city's worst schools, Middle School 142, allegedly concocted the plot to swap identities with Leitner last summer. If he failed the state exam again, Brightly risked losing his \$59,000-a-year job.

"I'm tired of taking this test and failing," Brightly told Leitner, according to Condon's probe. "I want you to help me."

Along with being much smarter than Brightly, Leitner is 20 years older. He also is white and overweight while Brightly is black and thin. Yet none of those glaring differences apparently worried Brightly.

"He said no one would ever know," Leitner said outside the Brownsville, Brooklyn, building he has called home since briefly living on the streets.

The two men met years ago at Brooklyn College where Leitner earned bachelor's and master's degrees in history in the late 1970s, and Brightly got a bachelor's degree in 1992. After meeting in the alumni office, Leitner began tutoring the teacher as he struggled to pass the state exam, officials said.

But the relationship took a bizarre turn just weeks before the test last July, authorities said.

"He got tired of flunking it," said Leitner. "That was the thing that sparked this desperate act."

Brightly allegedly helped Leitner obtain a counterfeit state identification card that showed Leitner's photo with Brightly's name. Using the bogus ID, the pair conned city educrats into issuing Leitner a school ID card to use on test day, authorities said.

On July 17, Brightly allegedly picked up Leitner at his home and drove him to Edward R. Murrow High School in Brooklyn, where the test was given. The teacher allegedly came back after the test was over and drove Leitner back home, officials said.

After the exam, the state began investigating Brightly's passing score. He sent Leitner to meet with officials, and Leitner claimed to be Brightly - but the ruse failed, authorities said.

When The News went to Brightly's Mount Vernon home yesterday, a man who strongly resembled him insisted Leitner took the test on his own. The man, who appeared to be in his late 30s, denied being Brightly - saying he was the teacher's son.

Brightly has been charged with coercion, falsifying business records and other crimes. He has been taken out of his Baychester classroom pending the outcome of the case.

About 19,000 teachers across the state take the certification exam each year and roughly 95% pass. Teachers are required to be certified - but the city has a temporary waiver from the state because the Education Department has not been able to find enough qualified instructors.

With Bethany Jenkins

Wayne Brightly's city schools career:

- 1992 - Began working as a substitute teacher at IS 171 in Brooklyn.
- 1994 - Became a substitute teacher at PS 7 in Brooklyn.
- 1995 - Became a substitute teacher at PS 65 in Brooklyn.
- 1998 - Became a teacher at IS 171.
- 2004 - Became a teacher at MS 142 in the Bronx.
- 2005 - Reassigned to a regional office job after he was charged.

Originally published on March 22, 2005

 [Have stories like this emailed to you FREE every day!](#)

 [Email this story](#)

 [Printer-friendly version](#)



Tracy for NEWS

Rubin Leitner, who is developmentally disabled, sits outside his Brooklyn home, saying Bronx teacher Wayne Brightly (below) paid him to take state exam.

