

# Chinese students and their parents fight for the right to cheat

everyone's a winner



Now I wished I'd studied. *Reuters / Sheng Li*

Earlier this month, ahead of notoriously difficult college entrance exams, an angry crowd of 2,000 parents and students descended on a high school in Hubei province to protest a new education policy that banned cheating. They smashed cars and chanted outside. According to the [Telegraph's report](#) of the riot, one educator inside the school posted on a messaging service, "We are trapped in the exam hall. Students are smashing things and trying to break in." At least one teacher [was punched in the face](#) (paywall).



Parents and local residents around No. 3 high school in Zhongxiang, Hubei province. *Sina Weibo*

The rift amounted to this: Metal detectors had been installed in schools to route out students carrying hearing or transmitting devices. More invigilators were hired to monitor the college entrance exam and patrol campus for people transmitting answers to students. Female students were patted down. In response, angry parents and students championed their right to cheat. Not cheating, they said, would put them at a disadvantage in a country where student cheating **has become standard practice**. “We want fairness. There is no fairness if you do not let us cheat,” they chanted.

The day’s protests sparked a broader debate about entrenched corruption in Chinese society. On the social media site Sina Weibo, a Chinese broadcaster, the **Voice of China** commented:

“Cheating isn’t what’s wrong. What’s wrong is when cheating be-

comes the standard. When people stop being ashamed of breaking the rules, and cheating becomes the unspoken rule and abiding by law becomes an alternative. What this society lacks isn't just rules; society is an exam hall. Dreams depend on fairness and rules."

Nepotism and elitism among high-level officials and business heads has also served as justification for cheating. [One blogger said](#), "Why can the leadership's children cheat but the common people can't?" Another [blogger wrote](#) (registration required), "When committing evil becomes a habit, of course it should become a right."

The official stance appeared to soften following the protests. The [local government said](#) that "exam supervision had been too strict and some students did not take it well."