Figure: 19 TAC §101.3031(b)(2)

Test Security Supplement

2015



STAAR®
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness

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Purpose of Supplement

Maintaining the security and confidentiality of the Texas student assessment program is critical for ensuring valid test scores and providing standard and equal testing opportunities for all students. Given the high stakes associated with student performance and the multifaceted nature of the assessment program, test administration personnel face challenges in managing the program's requirements at the local level. The Texas Education Agency's (TEA's) Student Assessment Division developed the *Test Security Supplement* to help districts implement the requirements for the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®), the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), and the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) and to promote a secure testing program. This document is not intended to replace any procedures or instructions contained in the current *District and Campus Coordinator Manual* or test administrator manuals. It is provided to testing personnel as a supplement to further support incident-free test administrations.

Penalties for Violation of Security and Confidentiality of Assessments

Violation of security or confidentiality of any test required by the Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 39, Subchapter B, shall be prohibited. A person who engages in conduct prohibited by the *Test Security Supplement* may be subject to sanction of credentials. Charter school test administrators are not required to be certified; however, any irregularity in the administration of any test required by the TEC, Chapter 39, Subchapter B, would cause the charter itself to come under review by the commissioner of education for possible sanctions or revocation, as provided under the TEC, §12.115(a)(4).

Procedures for maintaining the security and confidentiality of state assessments are specified in the *Test Security Supplement* and in the appropriate test administration materials. Conduct that violates the security and confidentiality of a test is defined as any departure from the test administration procedures established in this supplement and other test administration materials. Conduct of this nature may include, but is not limited to, the following acts and omissions:

- changing or altering a response or answer of an examinee to a secure test item
- providing, suggesting, or indicating a test question response to an examinee;
- aiding or assisting an examinee with a response or answer to a secure test item;
- identifying incorrect responses for students;
- solving questions in the test or scoring a student's test either formally or informally;
- duplicating secure examination materials; viewing a test before, during, or after an assessment unless specifically authorized to do so;
- disclosing the contents of any portion of a secure test;
- failing to report to an appropriate authority that an individual has engaged in conduct outlined in the items listed above;
- fraudulently exempting or preventing a student from participating in the administration of a required state assessment; or
- encouraging or assisting an individual to engage in the conduct described in the items listed above.

Any person who violates, assists in the violation of, or solicits another to violate or assist in the violation of test security or confidentiality, as well as any person who fails to report such a violation is subject to the following penalties:

- placement of restrictions on the issuance, renewal, or holding of a Texas educator certificate, either indefinitely or for a set term;
- issuance of an inscribed or non-inscribed reprimand;
- suspension of a Texas educator certificate for a set term; or
- revocation or cancellation of a Texas educator certificate without opportunity for reapplication either for a set term or permanently.

Release or disclosure of confidential test content is a Class C misdemeanor and could result in criminal prosecution under TEC §39.0303, Section 552.352 of the Texas Government Code, and Section 37.10 of the Texas Penal Code. Further, 19 TAC §249.15 stipulates that the State Board for Educator Certification may take any of the above actions based on satisfactory evidence that an educator has failed to cooperate with TEA in an investigation.

In addition, any irregularities in test security or confidentiality may result in the invalidation of students' assessments.

The superintendent and campus principal of each school district and chief administrative officer of each charter school and any private school administering the tests as allowed under TEC §39.033, must develop procedures to ensure the security and confidentiality of the tests specified in the TEC, Chapter 39, Subchapter B. These administrators will be responsible for notifying TEA in writing of conduct that violates the security or confidentiality of a test administered under the TEC, Chapter 39, Subchapter B. Failure to report can subject the person responsible to the applicable penalties. Principals and campus test coordinators are responsible for security and confidentiality of test materials on their campus.

Policy and Procedure Highlights

The content in this supplement reflects TEA's ongoing efforts to improve the security of the assessment program and information collected from districts. Several of the policies referenced throughout the document were originally implemented in response to a comprehensive 14-point plan designed to assure parents, students, and the public that test results are meaningful and valid. The supplement has been organized to address tasks and issues testing personnel may encounter before, during, and after a typical test administration. It focuses on the steps district testing coordinators (DTCs) and campus testing coordinators (CTCs) should take to ensure that the required procedures are implemented as directed. Below are some key policy and procedural highlights for administrations of state assessments in the 2015 calendar year. More information about the recommendations for implementation of the 14-point Test Security Plan can be found in Appendix B.

Training Requirements

All district and campus personnel who participate in state-mandated testing or handle secure test materials must meet the eligibility requirements detailed in this supplement and the appropriate test administration materials, be trained, and sign a security oath. Testing personnel are required to receive annual training in test security and administration procedures and are responsible for complying with state assessment requirements. By signing the *Oath of Test Security and Confidentiality*, participants affirm that they have been trained, understand their obligation to properly implement the program, acknowledge their responsibility to report any suspected testing irregularity to the campus or district testing coordinator, principal, or TEA, and are aware of the range of penalties that may result from a violation of test security and confidentiality.

Districts allowing certified or noncertified paraprofessionals (e.g., teacher aides) to access secure materials or to administer tests must identify a certified staff member who will be responsible for supervising these

individuals. If a violation of test security or confidentiality occurs under these circumstances, the supervising certified professional is subject to the penalties above.

Overview of Materials Security

All secure test materials must be handled in strict accordance with the instructions contained in this supplement, the current *District and Campus Coordinator Manual,* and the test administrator manuals. Districts are required to implement the controls necessary to ensure the proper storage and accurate tracking of secure materials throughout each stage of all test administrations. Documents used to account for secure materials, such as inventory pages that arrive with the shipments of materials from the contractor and the Materials Control Form, should be accurately completed and carefully maintained in a location that would prevent them from being compromised. Other steps districts and campuses must take to maintain proper security include but are not limited to:

- verifying, upon receipt from the state's testing contractor, that all materials boxes have been accounted for and match the proof of delivery on the shipper's bill of lading and the district packing list contained in Box 1 (white box) of the shipment
- ensuring that all campuses immediately inventory all materials received from the district testing coordinator;
- immediately notifying the state's testing contractor of any discrepancies identified between the materials received and the district and campus packing lists included in Box 1 of the district and campus shipments;
- placing test booklets and answer documents in secure, limited-access, locked storage when not in use;
- collecting and destroying immediately after each test administration any state-supplied reference materials, recordings, graph paper, or scratch paper that students have written on during a test;
- ensuring when testing has concluded that all secure materials assigned to individual campuses have been inventoried and packaged in accordance with the procedures detailed in the manuals; and
- maintaining inventory and shipping records (bills of lading, pallet detail reports, district and campus packing lists, documents used to track the delivery of materials to and between campuses, Materials Control Forms) for at least five years in the event that a discrepancy arises or the receipt of the district's materials cannot be confirmed.

District testing coordinators are ultimately responsible for ensuring that all secure test materials have been accounted for prior to shipping the materials back to the testing contractor.

Secure Storage Areas

Finding a suitable location to store secure assessment materials can present certain logistical issues; however, it is required that these items be kept in a secure locked storage area when not in use. Districts and campuses must ensure that access to secure storage is limited to one person or very few individuals and that these individuals are the only people who possess keys to the locked storage area. District coordinators are encouraged to affirm that all campuses are following these storage requirements.

STAAR Test Session Time Limits

STAAR and STAAR A English I and English II assessments have a five-hour time limit. All other subject-area assessments (STAAR, STAAR Spanish, STAAR L, STAAR A) have a four-hour time limit. Students must complete the test within the same school day. Test administrators should use a clock or a timer to monitor test time. The time period starts after the test administrator has read and answered any questions regarding the test directions and tells students to begin working on their tests. Once the test has begun, the test administrator must communicate (orally or in writing) the amount of time left to test in one-hour intervals and, if desired, in shorter intervals during the last hour. Students who do not complete their tests within the time limit must submit what they have completed. Students will be informed in the test administrator directions that materials will be collected at the end of the time period and that they must record all responses before this period ends. Students will not be allowed to record responses onto their answer documents or into TestNav (for online tests) after the time period has ended.

Campuses may offer multiple test sessions per day as long as the time limit is maintained for each session. Sessions can start before the regularly scheduled school day and can extend beyond the regularly scheduled school day. Start and stop times for each session must be recorded on the seating chart. If a student or group of students takes an allowable break that requires the time clock to be stopped, the stop and restart times for that individual or group of students must be recorded on the seating chart. For more information, please refer to the STAAR Time Limits Policies and Procedures document located in the current *District and Campus Coordinator Manual*, the corresponding test administrator manuals, and on the Coordinator Manual Resources webpage.

Test Administration Windows, Flexible Scheduling, and Make-up Testing

In an effort to accommodate local needs, districts have been provided the latitude to adjust test dates, if necessary, for certain STAAR assessments within the scheduled administration windows. This flexibility applies to all STAAR grades 3-8 and end-of-course (EOC) assessments with the exception of the STAAR and STAAR A grades 4 and 7 writing and English I and English II assessments.

Districts are not required to notify TEA of any local decisions to adjust test dates within the test administration windows for assessments permitted flexible scheduling. A district or campus that chooses to modify the recommended STAAR grades 3-8 schedule or administer any of the same assessments over multiple days must consider the potential risk that students or adults could disseminate confidential test content and jeopardize the validity of assessments administered to students later within the assessment window. Districts and campuses must consider, and mitigate if necessary, this potential risk and take steps to ensure the confidentiality of the assessments. TEA is exploring measures to track student performance throughout each testing window and will use these data to help evaluate the continued use of flexible scheduling.

The STAAR program allows districts to offer make-up testing opportunities for all grades and subjects to students who are absent on regularly scheduled assessment days. Make-up testing is optional, at the discretion of the district, and must be completed by the end of the testing window as specified on the Calendar of Events. Make-up testing for writing and English I and English II tests must be completed by the end of the week of testing. Districts and campuses should be aware that make-up testing opportunities present a risk that students or adults who participated in the regularly scheduled administration could disseminate confidential test content to students that will be participating in make-up testing jeopardizing the validity of assessments administered to them. Districts and campuses must consider this potential risk and take steps to mitigate the potential for breaches in the confidentiality of the assessments.

Reference Materials, Scratch Paper, Graph Paper, and Charts

Reference materials (e.g., formula charts) for STAAR mathematics and science assessments and graph paper for STAAR mathematics assessments will be included in the test booklets issued to students. These materials will be printed on perforated pages so that students can remove them for use during the test administration. During online testing, these materials are available as online tools, but they may also be printed and distributed. Scratch paper may also be provided. Districts must ensure that any reference materials and graph paper that have been written upon AND removed from the test booklet and any scratch paper used and written upon are destroyed immediately after the test session is complete. All charts written on by students during TAKS administrations must be collected and destroyed after testing.

All personnel who handle these materials should be aware that the materials may contain secure test content and that any viewing or recording of this confidential information is strictly prohibited.

Student Cheating on State Assessments

The monitoring procedures outlined in this supplement, the current *District and Campus Coordinator Manual*, and the corresponding test administrator manuals require districts and campuses to implement any necessary measures to prevent student cheating. **If a district determines that a student has cheated or been involved in an attempt to cheat on a state assessment – either by providing or receiving assistance – the district is required to invalidate the student's test.** The test invalidation and any additional disciplinary actions taken by the district must be reported to TEA via the online Locally Determined Disciplinary Action (LDDA) form that can be found on the Test Security page of the TEA website at:

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/security

Submission of a separate online incident report form will be necessary ONLY IF the district determines that adult testing personnel contributed to, caused, or did not detect the cheating due to inadequate monitoring.

Investigating and Reporting Testing Irregularities

Incidents resulting in a deviation from documented testing procedures are defined as testing irregularities. They are viewed by TEA as falling into one of two categories – serious or procedural. Serious irregularities constitute severe violations of test security or confidentiality and can result in the individual(s) responsible being referred to the TEA Educator Standards and Certification Legal Division for consideration of disciplinary action (including suspension or revocation of educator certification credentials). Procedural irregularities are less severe, more common, and are typically the result of minor deviations from testing procedures.

Each person participating in the Texas student assessment program is responsible for reporting any violation or suspected violation of test security or confidentiality. Campus staff must notify their campus or district testing coordinator if they witness an irregularity or suspect that one has occurred, and district coordinators must in turn notify TEA. The district testing coordinator must contact the TEA Student Assessment Division immediately to report incidents involving alleged or suspected violations that fall under the category of a serious irregularity **as soon as the district testing coordinator is made aware of the situation.** Testing personnel should contact TEA if they are unsure about whether an irregularity has occurred or if they are unclear regarding what constitutes a serious violation.

Reporting requirements differ based on the severity of the confirmed or alleged violation(s). District coordinators must determine whether the incident is a serious or procedural irregularity and report the incident using the Online Incident Report form. The contents of the report submitted to TEA must clearly lay out the sequence of events of the testing irregularity and include the district's determination regarding the irregularity. District officials must additionally complete the Plan of Action section in the Online Incident Report and specify the steps they will take to prevent a reoccurrence of the irregularity. Information provided in district reports, particularly in the Plan of Action, will be used by TEA in an audit of selected districts to verify that they have implemented corrective actions in response to reported irregularities.

Districts are required to investigate and report serious irregularities immediately. The nature of a serious allegation requires a speedy investigation by the district so that all necessary evidence is gathered when individuals involved in the irregularity are still available to interview and are still able to recall specific details. Districts must contact TEA by phone or email as soon as they become aware of the serious testing irregularity. Additionally, an Online Incident Report and submission of any other required information to TEA Student Assessment must be received within ten working days of the initial communication. If the district does not submit all the required information within ten working days, TEA will contact the district coordinator to provide support or may contact the superintendent to seek assistance. More information about the specific reporting requirements associated with serious and procedural irregularities can be found in the Incident Reporting section of this supplement.

Making Your Program Secure

Things to Consider BEFORE an Administration

Planning for the Receipt, Storage, and Distribution of Materials

Sound planning plays a key role in ensuring the proper handling and successful return of all secure materials. Because test materials are stored at campuses for much of the time they are in the district, it is essential that campus coordinators also plan accordingly. District coordinators must verify that the campuses have sufficient measures in place and are implementing these measures for tracking secure materials. Listed below are steps coordinators should take into account when planning for an administration.

☑ **Prepare for the receipt and storage of test materials.**

- Identify how you will store, distribute, and track materials (including any additional materials ordered) after they are received.
- Identify all personnel who will be authorized to have access to materials and provide test security training to them.
- Ensure that campus coordinators identify and maintain locally a written record of all individuals who will have access to campus secure storage areas and are limiting the number of personnel who have a key to this area or who have knowledge of or access to where keys are kept.
- Carefully review the advance letter and materials list sent by the testing contractor so you will know exactly which and how many materials will be delivered. These documents will be available online approximately one month before each test administration.
- Using the materials list, verify that each campus will have sufficient quantities of test materials.
- Confirm that your district's secure area is large enough to store all materials that you will receive from the contractor, including shipments for administrations that overlap. It will be helpful to have room to sort the materials for each administration to ensure that they will remain organized and separate. Do not mix materials from different administrations when returning them to the testing contractor.
- Make certain that campuses are prepared to receive their materials shipment and have adequate secure storage space and room to inventory and sort materials. Notify all essential personnel of delivery dates and times and provide directions for them to contact the district or campus testing coordinator when the shipment arrives.

☑ **Prepare for the distribution of test materials.**

- Establish procedures for distributing and tracking overage materials. Use a tracking document or some other means to record the security numbers and destination of all secure overage materials.
- Establish a secure method for transferring materials to campuses and ensure that the individuals transporting them have been trained and are aware of their security and confidentiality requirements.
- Establish sign-off procedures to identify who is responsible for materials when they are not in your possession.
- Verify that each campus has established and documented check-in and check-out procedures.
- Make sure that campus coordinators are aware that they are required to verify and account for all secure test materials each day.
- Ensure that all campuses have procedures in place for the proper packing and return of materials to the district coordinator.
- Require that campus coordinators have procedures for verifying that all completed or voided answer documents are accounted for and correctly submitted for processing after testing.
- Establish a process for ensuring that overage is accounted for after the administration.

Receiving and Distributing Test Materials

Secure and nonsecure materials for each administration are combined into one shipment, which will arrive in the district approximately two to three weeks before testing. Shipments will include a WHITE district coordinator box (Box 1), district overage box(es), and campus box(es). Overage materials may be combined in Box 1 for smaller districts. It is imperative that all secure materials be physically inventoried upon receipt,

Test material overage is also assigned to the district by the testing contractor. Any additional materials that are delivered to a campus must be tracked to that campus. This also applies to secure materials that are transferred between campuses or between districts.

The district testing coordinator has the ultimate responsibility of accounting for test materials; however, campus coordinators play an integral role in supporting this task. Using some type of tracking process can greatly assist in your ability to locate all secure materials in your possession throughout a test administration.

☑ **Receive, inventory, and store test materials.**

- Verify the receipt of each shipment of test materials. Review the label on each box to confirm that boxes from each testing program are grouped together. Organize all boxes in sequential order according to the number assigned to each box. Account for all boxes by checking the box numbers and the amounts against the shipper's bill of lading and the contractor's pallet detail in Box 1.
- Verify the materials that are to be distributed to each campus using the pallet detail report. Campus materials will be packaged in separate boxes with brightly colored labels.
- Immediately notify the state's testing contractor of any discrepancies identified between the materials received and the information contained in the shipper's bill of lading or the pallet detail.
- Place all secure materials in locked storage when not in use. Keep materials for different administrations separate.

☑ **Distribute test materials to campuses.**

- Forward materials to the campuses as soon as possible. Document the distribution of materials to each campus.
- Verify that all campuses have received their shipments and have physically inventoried the shipment contents. Ensure that each campus uses the campus packing list included in the first box of the campus shipment to verify the receipt of all materials.
- Instruct each campus to notify you immediately of any discrepancies identified between the materials received and the information contained in the campus packing list. NOTE: the contractor must be notified of all missing materials prior to the assessment dates so that campuses and districts will not be held accountable for these materials.
- Ensure that all campuses provide you with their requests for additional materials, if needed. It will be more efficient to first collect this information from all campuses so a single order for additional materials can be placed with the state's testing contractor. Be aware of the deadlines for district coordinators to order additional materials as listed on the Calendar of Events.
- Retain all shipping records and materials tracking documentation (e.g., shipper's bill of lading, pallet detail reports, district and campus packing lists, documents used to track the delivery of materials).
- Advise campuses to retain the original boxes for returning materials to the testing contractor.

Planning for Possible Testing Disruptions

Disruptions in testing generally involve unplanned situations that can usually be resolved when properly handled. Having a plan in place to address unforeseen events can contribute to a successful resolution and can help to ensure minimal negative impact on students. District coordinators should contact the Student Assessment Division as soon as possible to seek guidance in handling any significant disruptions. To prepare for any unexpected disruptions, the district should consider the following:

- Ensure that all campuses are aware of what to do and who to contact if a disruption takes place during paper and online testing.
- Make certain that each campus has a plan in place for securing test materials and online tests to maintain confidentiality in the event of a disruption during testing. (Remember that the safety of students and staff is the first consideration in the event of a serious disruption during testing.)

When you phone TEA for guidance in handling a disruption, being prepared to answer the following questions will help Student Assessment staff make a determination about the situation.

- What happened and where did the disruption take place? What is the nature of the disruption?
- How many examinees are affected and are they being monitored while the situation is being assessed?
- How far have test sessions progressed? Can testing be resumed the same day? If so, will there be sufficient time for students to finish their assessments?
- What other options does the district suggest for continuing testing as soon as possible, considering the situation?
- If testing cannot resume the same day, what efforts can be made to maintain test security and confidentiality?

Training

The district testing coordinator must be well prepared and is responsible for providing clear and complete annual training on general test security and procedures to campus testing coordinators by the deadlines specified in the Calendar of Events located in the current *District and Campus Coordinator Manual*.

☑ **District testing coordinator preparation.**

- Attend district testing coordinator training.
- Review the training guidelines and read the current *District and Campus Coordinator Manual*.
- Sign your security oath.
- As appropriate, access and read the online resources on the Coordinator Manual Resources webpage.
- Schedule a sufficient number of training sessions (including make-up sessions) and allow enough time to adequately train campus coordinators.
- Give coordinators ample notice of the scheduled training dates.
- Make facility arrangements for holding training sessions.
- Develop training materials for the sessions.
- Assemble training materials or guidelines that campus coordinators should use for their test administrator training.

Refer to the Student Assessment Division website to access the annual Education Service Center training resources for material that can be used in your local training sessions.

☑ **Train campus coordinators to do the following <u>BEFORE</u> each test administration.**

- Read the current *District and Campus Coordinator Manual* and test administrator manuals. (Annually)
- Attend training for campus coordinators. (Annually)
- Sign a security oath after training. (Annually)
- As needed, access and read the online resources on the Coordinator Manual Resources webpage.
- Be knowledgeable of the secure materials topics that pertain to the proper procedures for storing, distributing, and tracking secure items.
- Know when shipments arrive and verify immediately that all materials have been received. Be sure to retain the test contractor boxes for return of materials.
- Ensure that your campus has sufficient quantities of materials. Be sure to take into account materials needed for special administrations (oral administrations, large-print, braille, etc.).
- Designate test administrators and monitors. (Remind coordinators about the qualification guidelines for participating in state assessments and training requirements.)
- Identify the certified professional who will be responsible for each (if any) paraprofessional participating in testing.
- Make sure to schedule a sufficient number of training sessions (including make-up sessions) and allow enough time to adequately train all personnel participating in testing, including online testing and testing with accommodations. (Annually)
- Make the necessary facility arrangements to hold training sessions. Give testing personnel ample notice of training dates.

- Designate a method by which test administrators may contact the campus coordinator or principal if they need assistance during testing.
- Conduct training sessions for campus personnel, verify attendance, and retain attendance sign-in sheets. Encourage coordinators to retain copies of training materials and agendas in case questions arise or testing irregularities occur. (Annually)
- Group training must include only the non-secure front matter from the STAAR Alternate 2 test administrator manual located on the Coordinator Manual Resources webpage. The test instructions located in the back of each test administrator manual are secure and may be viewed only by the test administrator during the test preview period and the testing session with the student.
- Arrange for testing rooms and prepare for paper and online test sessions. Be sure to consider testing opportunities for students absent for regularly scheduled testing.
- Ensure that procedures are in place for transferring examinees and testing materials from one area to another and that testing personnel are aware of monitoring requirements when doing so. (Remind coordinators that examinees are not permitted to transport testing materials outside the testing environment.)
- Ensure that test administrators have all the necessary materials to administer a test: test administrator manuals; seating charts; test session rosters (online and paper); student authorization letters for online test takers; headphones if needed for online test takers; accommodations lists and materials; student attendance sheets; pencils and erasers; and when required, calculators and dictionaries.
- Verify that all calculator memories have been cleared.
- Verify that there are sufficient numbers of allowable reference materials for all testing areas.
- Ensure that campus personnel are familiar with the policies and procedures associated with test session time limits and that each test administrator has a clock or timer to monitor testing time.
- Prepare a sufficient number of blank seating charts. (Be sure to account for areas used for overflow or for consolidating late testers.) Ensure that seating charts have space on which to record the required information (including the test session start and stop times and the test administrator's name) and are appropriate for the layout of each room and computer lab.
- For each day of testing, confirm that you have received the correct and most current information regarding committee decisions about testing requirements and accommodations for students receiving special education and Section 504 services and that all testing requirements and accommodations are in place.
- Supervise the verification of precoded materials and answer documents.
- Directly supervise the hand-gridding of blank answer documents.

Many district and campus staff elect to write students' names or place labels on students' test booklets in an effort to reduce or eliminate distribution errors. TEA does not discourage districts from implementing local policies to help ensure that materials are issued correctly; however, such practices must not conflict with stipulated testing procedures. Procedures for administering state assessments are clearly outlined in the test administration manuals where scripted instructions specifically direct test administrators to tell students to write their names on their booklets and their booklet numbers on their answer documents. **Assessment staff, therefore, should not write or place labels on areas of the test booklet or answer document that are reserved for student use**. Staff **may** write or place labels in the upper right portion on the front cover of students' test booklets as long as these actions do not result in test administrators deviating from scripted directions. If space permits, staff **may** also write test booklet numbers in the upper right portion on the front of students' answer documents. No label other than the precoded label should ever be placed on an answer document.

- Confirm that all eligible examinees have been accounted for and have been assigned the correct test.
- Ensure that arrangements have been made to assess students identified as eligible testers that are attending alternative campuses.
- Ensure that arrangements have been made to assess homebound students who have been identified as eligible testers.
- Walk through each testing room prior to testing and verify that no visible instructional aids are present and that the environment is appropriate for testing. (Keep in mind that many errors involving a failure to conceal instructional aids result from transferring examinees to rooms that the campus did not originally intend to use as testing areas.)

☑ **Train campus coordinators to do the following <u>DURING</u> each test administration.**

- Verify and account for all secure test materials before and after testing each day.
- Properly complete Materials Control Forms when distributing secure test materials to test administrators.
- Test administrators are responsible for student booklets and STAAR Alternate 2 test administrator manuals until they are returned to you. All secure test materials assigned must be returned after each test session each day. When the materials are returned, you must initial the "In" box. Your initials indicate that the test administrators have returned all secure test materials checked out to them as listed on the STAAR Alternate 2 Materials Control Forms.
- Verify that all test administrators have been issued the correct test administrator manuals, assessments, answer documents, student authorization letters for online testers; and when applicable, accommodations lists and materials, calculators, and dictionaries.
- Confirm that all students have been directed to and are present in their designated testing areas.
- Monitor testing (i.e., visit or assign staff to visit each testing area to ensure test administrators are actively monitoring as directed in the test administrator manuals and are periodically reminding students to record their responses on the answer document).
- Confirm that a seating chart has been completed for each test session. Remind test administrators to record test session start and stop times. Make sure seating charts are also completed for test sessions involving students who have been moved or transferred as well as seating information for any late-arriving students.
- Ensure that students are issued the appropriate tests and have the correct corresponding answer document, or that students taking online tests receive the correct student authorization letter and are in the correct test session.
- Ensure that all test administrators verify and personally distribute test materials to examinees. To avoid switching answer documents for paper administrations and student authorization letters for online administrations, test administrators should be especially careful when issuing materials to students with the same or similar names.
- Be aware of any appearance of impropriety (i.e., make sure coordinators and test administrators know how to avoid situations that might lead to allegations of viewing, discussing, or scoring test materials).
- Ensure that test administrators verify that students mark their responses on their STAAR answer documents and that they remind online testers to answer all items before the end of the time period.
- Be accessible in case problems arise.

☑ **Train campus coordinators to do the following <u>AFTER</u> each test administration.**

- Direct the collection of materials from the test administrators. Ensure that the return of materials is verified and noted on the Materials Control Form.
- Account for every answer document.
- Account for every test booklet (this includes any overage or transferred materials).
- Verify that the correct score code, test taken information, and accommodations have been marked on each answer document and that all hand gridding and transcribing have been properly completed. (Remind coordinators that testing personnel may **not** erase stray marks or darken answer choice circles on students' answer documents.)
- Confirm that each examinee has recorded responses on his or her answer document. If a blank answer document is discovered during this process, the district should contact the TEA Student Assessment Division for further directions.
- Confirm that all seating charts have been accurately completed and contain the required information, including the tests administrator(s) names and test session start and stop times. Make sure that all students who tested are accounted for on a seating chart, including any students who moved, transferred, or arrived late to a test session.
- Follow procedures for properly boxing and labeling materials for return to the district coordinator. Do not mix materials from one administration with any other.
- Recheck the secure storage area, as well as all areas that may have been used to process test materials, for stray items (such as overage or unused materials) before returning materials to the district coordinator.
- Maintain all inventory records and packaging information in the event a problem arises and materials need to be accounted for.

Things to Consider DURING an Administration

Monitoring and Oversight

During testing, district coordinators must be available to answer questions and resolve issues. Monitoring campuses during an administration can help ensure that procedures are being followed and can minimize errors. Principals and campus coordinators play a critical role in this effort, ensuring that each test administrator is actively monitoring and that all testing personnel are adhering to the proper assessment procedures.

☑ **Verify that campuses are properly monitoring test sessions.**

- Testing coordinators must check to see if test administrators have all necessary materials (e.g., test administrator manuals, test booklets, and answer documents).
- Principals and campus testing coordinators must verify that test administrators are actively monitoring students.
- Testing personnel should verify that all testing areas are free from instructional displays. (In situations where the campus must relocate examinees, the area to which the students will be moved should also be checked.)
- Campus personnel should be available to properly monitor students during planned and unplanned breaks in testing.
- Principals and campus testing coordinators must verify that test administrators are properly completing a seating chart for each test session. Make sure seating charts include any students who moved, transferred, or arrived late to a test session.
- Test administrators must monitor the testing time and announce the time-left-to-test in one-hour intervals (more during the last hour, if desired).
- For breaks in testing that require the time clock to be stopped, ensure that test administrators record the stop and restart times on the seating chart.
- Testing personnel must ensure that students are administered the appropriate test (including online tests) and have been issued the correct corresponding answer documents or the correct student authorization letters for online testing.
- All test administrators are required to verify that students have marked their responses on their answer documents or have completed all items during online testing before the end of the testing time period
- The principal and the campus testing coordinator (or their designees) must be available to support test administrators as needed during testing

☑ **Verify that campuses are following procedures for secure materials handling.**

- Ensure that campus coordinators correctly use the Materials Control Form when distributing test materials to test administrators each day.
- Require the use of a tracking document to record overage, additional materials received, or booklets transferred between campuses.
- Check to verify that campuses document security numbers for overage materials and booklets transferred to other districts or alternative education facilities.
- Ensure that campuses properly transport test materials to and from the testing areas.
- Confirm that campus coordinators and test administrators properly secure or monitor secure test materials, including online tests, while students are taking breaks from testing.
- Confirm that campus coordinators verify that all booklets and answer documents are being returned and accounted for each day.
- Ensure that campuses lock and restrict access to the secure storage area.

Things to Consider AFTER an Administration

Accounting for All Secure Materials

The district's secure materials must be returned in accordance with the procedures and timelines outlined in the current *District and Campus Coordinator Manual*. Maintaining adequate oversight and reinforcing the use of proper handling and packing guidelines will help ensure the accurate and complete return of all secure items. Below are steps that district coordinators should use to account for all materials.

☑ **Monitor campuses and oversee the proper collection of and accounting for secure materials.**

- Once test sessions have been completed, ensure that campuses immediately destroy any formula charts or graph paper that have been written upon AND have been removed from the test booklet. In addition, ensure that campuses destroy any used scratch paper.
- Confirm that campuses account for every answer document for each enrolled, eligible student taking a paper administration and that campusesensure proper marking of the SCORE CODE, TEST TAKEN, ACCOMMODATIONS, and any other applicable fields.
- Ensure that campus coordinators account for students who tested online, out-of-district and out-of-school examinees (when applicable) as well as for homebound students and students at alternative campuses.
- Verify that the campuses account for all test booklets and secure STAAR Alternate 2 test administrator manuals, including overage materials that have been issued, and that all secure materials are reconciled with the original packing list and materials control documents.
- Ensure that campuses follow the proper packing procedures and that they label boxes correctly.
- Confirm that campuses have rechecked their secure storage areas and any areas used for processing materials for overage, unused secure materials, and other materials for return, especially completed or voided answer documents and test booklets.
- Verify that all boxes for return have been checked to ensure that no completed or voided answer documents were inadvertently returned with nonscorable materials.

☑ **Receive and inventory materials from the campuses.**

- Verify receipt of the complete return shipment of test materials from each campus.
- If your district uses a centralized campus check-in process, verify that all materials are accounted for before campus personnel leave the check-in area.
- Make certain that materials for different administrations are kept separate.
- Keep a list of the contents of each box of scorable and nonscorable materials returned to the state's testing contractor.

☑ **Return materials to the testing contractor.**

- Verify that all boxes have the appropriate colored label (scorable vs. nonscorable) for the correct administration and are numbered in sequential order (e.g., Box 5 of 10, Box 6 of 10, etc.).
- Verify that the contents of each box match the return shipping label, and check to make sure that no bar codes are taped over or covered with other labels.
- Ensure that all extraneous items (e.g., rulers, charts, nonsecure manuals, etc.) are either disposed of locally or returned separately with nonscorable materials.
- Ensure that all secure materials remain monitored by certified personnel or in locked storage until the boxes are picked up by the carrier.
- Make sure that you detach and retain the shipping label receipt(s) for all the boxes returned to the testing contractor.

Retention of Test Administration Documentation

Districts are required to retain signed security oaths and seating charts for **five years** following a test administration. Inventory and shipping records must also be maintained in the event that a discrepancy arises or the receipt of materials cannot be confirmed.

☑ **Monitor the retention of test administration documentation.**

- Verify that campuses collected signed security oaths for all personnel who participated in testing.
- Confirm that campuses collected seating charts for each test session, that they are accurately completed, and that coordinators have verified that the charts contain the required information, including the tests administrator(s) names and test session start and stop times.
- Confirm that campuses properly completed and collected all inventory and shipping records (including Materials Control Forms, campus packing lists, and documents used to track the transfer of secure materials within and outside the district).
- Ensure that the designated test administration documentation storage location is secure and that the documentation cannot be subsequently altered.

Testing Irregularities

This section describes the different types of irregularities that can occur before, during, and after testing, along with steps coordinators can take to avoid such mistakes. Testing violations are categorized as serious or procedural. The following pages include examples of both types of irregularities and how to address them if they arise.

Serious Violations

Examples:

- Directly or indirectly assisting students with responses by identifying answers to test questions or directing students to rework or change answers
- Tampering with student responses
- Falsifying TELPAS holistic ratings or STAAR Alternate 2 student performance data
- Using answer sheets or notes that contain answers to complete TELPAS calibration activities
- Viewing secure test content before, during, or after an administration without permission
- Discussing secure test content, student responses, or student performance
- Duplicating, recording, or capturing electronically secure test content without permission from TEA
- Scoring student tests, either formally or informally
- Fraudulently exempting or preventing a student from participating in the administration of a required state assessment

How to avoid:

- Ensure that test administrators understand how to address students who might request assistance or drift off task during an assessment. Make sure that testing personnel have a reliable means to request assistance if they encounter an issue they are uncertain how to handle.
- Stress that test content should not be viewed or discussed even AFTER the test administration has been completed (e.g., in the classroom with students or in a faculty or team meeting). This applies to discussions regarding the specific content of tests. It is not considered inappropriate for teachers to talk with their students about their testing experience or the test in general as long as the conversation does not become specific.
- Reinforce to all testing personnel the proper procedures for conducting an oral administration (including level of reading assistance, test booklet form, etc.), particularly those that prohibit test administrators from solving test items or discussing secure content or student performance.
- Discuss with test administrators the proper way in which students should be prompted to bubble in answer documents. Remind all campus personnel that erasing stray marks or darkening response ovals by someone other than the examinee is strictly prohibited.
- Verify that all formula charts or graph paper that have been written upon and removed from the test booklet and any scratch paper used and written upon are destroyed immediately after test sessions are completed.
- Verify that campuses have designated and are using a sufficient number of testing personnel to adequately monitor the test administration.

Any incidents involving alleged or suspected violations that fall under the category of a **serious irregularity must be reported to the TEA Student Assessment Division as soon as the district coordinator is made aware of the situation**. Testing personnel should contact TEA if they are unsure whether an irregularity has occurred or if they are unclear regarding what constitutes a serious violation.

Procedural Violations

Eligibility Errors

Examples:

- An English language learner (ELL) whose parents had waived district ESL services was not administered the TELPAS assessment.
- A grade 9 student who is new to the district, is currently enrolled in English I, and eligible to participate in EOC assessments, was not administered the STAAR English I assessment.

How to avoid:

- Ensure that you have identified and accounted for all eligible testers, including newly enrolled students or students whose assessment requirements might have changed just prior to an administration.
- Verify the grade level and testing status of all newly enrolled students.
- Confirm with the appropriate campus personnel (or by referring to students' paperwork such as language proficiency assessment committee (LPAC) documentation) that you are using the most up-to-date information regarding students' testing eligibility.
- Verify your roster(s) to confirm where students are supposed to be testing.
- Establish procedures for ensuring that all students are present in or directed to the correct testing location.
- Consider putting a process in place to confirm after testing that all students were administered the correct assessments.

Many eligibility errors, when identified in a timely manner, can be resolved with minimal impact to students. Testing personnel should be instructed to immediately notify their campus or district coordinator if they suspect a student is being or has been tested incorrectly. Contact TEA if guidance is needed.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Implementation Issues

Examples:

- A student was administered a STAAR assessment when he or she should have taken a STAAR A assessment.
- A student was provided an unapproved accommodation or did not receive an accommodation that was documented in his or her IEP.

How to avoid:

- Periodically before the test administration, verify with the appropriate campus personnel that you are using the most up-to-date information regarding the testing requirements and accommodations for

students receiving special education and Section 504 services. Confirm that this information is also correct for any newly enrolled students.

- Verify with coordinators and test administrators the accommodations and resources to be provided to each student.
- Ensure that campus coordinators are cognizant of recent changes in testing requirements for students receiving special education services.
- Establish procedures for communicating to the appropriate admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee and Section 504 committee campus personnel those testing decisions that are in conflict with state assessment requirements or procedures.
- Account for appropriate test materials – booklets and answer documents – for each student with an IEP.

Examples of how to address:

- *A student assigned to take the STAAR A test was administered a STAAR assessment (or vice versa).*

  Upon discovering the error, the district should contact TEA for further guidance. If time allows, the student could be administered the correct test.

- *A student was not provided a documented accommodation.*

  If this kind of mistake is discovered while the student is testing, districts can, in most cases, still provide the accommodation. If the error is not detected until after the assessment is complete, the district must consult with the parents/guardians to determine if the assessment should be invalidated or submitted for scoring.

Improper Accounting for Secure Materials

Examples:

- Testing personnel lost or misplaced completed answer document(s), test booklet(s), or other secure materials.
- A test administrator did not return testing materials following each day's administration.
- Secure materials were not returned to the testing contractor by the published dates.

How to avoid:

- Verify that all test booklets and answer documents are accounted for daily by using the Materials Control Form appropriately.
- Ensure that no answer documents were left inside test booklets and keep completed answer documents separate from other materials such as scratch paper, etc.
- Keep test materials from the same test administration together – do not mix them with any other test administration.
- Properly label boxes prepared for return to the test contractor (e.g., 1 of 5, 2 of 5, etc.) and identify and track for your records which boxes contain which materials in case boxes are lost in transit or questions arise regarding the return of these materials.

A majority of the situations that involve the loss or late return of secure materials result from not establishing or implementing basic inventory procedures (e.g., not using materials control documents, not following check-in/check-out procedures, not accounting for the items that were issued to test administrators at the end of each day).

If testing personnel locate any secure materials that were not returned following an administration, contact TEA immediately. District coordinators should always question why materials were returned late or how these materials were discovered in order to determine whether the items were kept secure or if there was a breach in confidentiality.

Monitoring Errors

Examples:

- A test administrator left a room unmonitored while students were testing, secure materials were present, or when secure online assessments were open and visible.
- A test administrator did not verify that a student recorded his or her responses and accepted a blank answer document from the examinee.
- Students who had not finished testing were not properly monitored during a break.
- A test administrator did not actively monitor students and did not detect the improper use of a dictionary or calculator.
- A test administrator did not ensure that students worked independently during testing.
- Students were not prevented from using cell phones or any other electronic device to take pictures, share postings, or send messages.

Students are **NOT** permitted to have cell phones or personal electronic devices that allow Internet access or have photographic capabilities during testing as the devices can disrupt the testing environment and be used to compromise the security and confidentiality of the test. These devices cannot be used to fulfill the requirements of the STAAR Dictionary Policy or the STAAR Calculator Policy. Districts are required to have procedures in place to prevent the use of these devices during test administrations.

How to avoid:

- Emphasize that test administrators are not allowed to leave examinees, open online tests, or materials unattended.
- Instruct test administrators to immediately notify the appropriate testing personnel when improper student behavior has been detected.
- Clearly establish which test administrators will be relieved during breaks and by whom (all individuals who work as test administrators or as relief test administrators must be trained and sign an oath of test security).
- Periodically check test sessions to ensure that test administrators are actively monitoring.

Monitoring-related errors are some of the most common types of incidents. Regardless of whether these mistakes directly or indirectly contribute to testing irregularities, they are one of the more problematic assessment issues that districts must address. Such errors can also be detrimental to students. Accepting a blank answer document, for example, will result in a student not receiving credit for a test that he or she took. Other monitoring-related errors might lead to breaches in confidentiality that could place students' test scores in question.

For ALL incidents where examinees were left unmonitored or secure materials were left unattended, **districts are required to provide a determination** on the online incident form of whether confidentiality was breached or if the irregularity compromised the validity of a student's assessment.

Examples of how to address:

- *While packing scorable materials, the campus coordinator discovered that a test administrator had accepted a blank answer document.*

  The campus coordinator should first notify the district coordinator. The district coordinator should inform TEA. **Campus testing personnel should be reminded in training and during testing that they are NOT permitted to view or transcribe the contents of a student's test booklet without PRIOR authorization from TEA.**

- *A test administrator left students unmonitored or secure materials unattended.*

  Any time students are left unmonitored or secure materials are unattended during testing, the campus or district coordinator must assess the situation to determine whether a breach in confidentiality has occurred. If the district concludes that there was no breach, students may resume testing. If cheating occurred or secure content was compromised, the district must invalidate the test. Remember that breaches in confidentiality can occur even during a brief lapse in monitoring.

- *A test administrator was not actively monitoring and did not detect that a student had broken the seal to and completed a portion of another subject-area test.*

  If this type of error is detected before the student leaves the testing area, immediately contact TEA for guidance. If the student has been dismissed from a monitored environment, he or she will not be permitted to complete the test on the regularly scheduled day, and the district will need to determine whether the subject-area section should be invalidated or submitted to be scored.

> Coordinators should always evaluate incidents involving improper student behavior and make a determination regarding whether testing personnel were or were not actively monitoring. If a monitoring error occurred, this determination should be clearly communicated to TEA in the online incident report.

Other Procedural Errors

Examples:

- A test administrator was not actively monitoring when an examinee went back to the previous day's test and bubbled in answers he had left blank on his answer document.
- Testing personnel did not use the test administrator manual or failed to read the test administration script verbatim as outlined in the manual.
- A student was permitted to test beyond the allowed time limit on a STAAR assessment or was not provided the full time allotment to complete an assessment.
- Personnel were permitted to administer tests, monitor test sessions, relieve a test administrator during a break, or handle secure materials even though they had not been properly trained or did not sign the appropriate oath(s).
- A TELPAS writing collection was not submitted in accordance with required assembly criteria.
- A test administrator failed to remove or cover all instructional displays.
- Scorable materials were found in a closet after testing materials had been returned to the testing contractor.

How to avoid:

- Notify campus coordinators and test administrators which personnel are authorized to transport secure test materials or to monitor or relieve test administrators.
- Make sure that campus coordinators verify with test administrators which supplemental materials are allowed or required for each subject and for each test.
- Confirm that a sufficient number of staff have been properly trained in test administration procedures.
- Make certain that coordinators have verified that all test administrators are in possession of the appropriate manual(s) and directions on the days of testing.
- Verify that testing personnel were issued the correct manuals in advance of training so they could read them thoroughly.
- Monitor test session start times to anticipate when they should be concluding. Coordinators might consider checking on test administrators during the final hour of testing to remind them that limited time remains so they can remind students to record all of their responses on their answer documents.
- Confirm that the contents of each box match the return shipping label and are not mixed between administrations.
- Check boxes to make sure that no voided or completed answer documents are returned with nonscorable materials.

Example of how to address:

- *A student was permitted to test beyond the required time limit.*

  If students do not have an accommodation of extended time and are permitted to test longer than the maximum time limit, **districts must contact TEA for guidance**.

Investigating and Reporting Incidents

IMPORTANT NOTE

Regarding the District's Obligation to Investigate and Report Testing Violations

The superintendent in each school district, the chief administrative officer of each charter school, and any private school administering tests as allowed under TEC, §39.033, must ensure that TEA is notified of any conduct that violates the security or confidential integrity of a test.

Failure to cooperate with TEA in an investigation or to properly report that an individual has engaged in conduct that violates the security and/or confidentiality of a test is itself a violation of 19 TAC §249.15(b)(6) and (b)(8) and could result in sanctions.

Despite how well prepared testing personnel may be, the possibility still exists that a mistake will be made. When incidents occur, it is important to have procedures in place to help ensure that all the necessary information is gathered and evaluated so the district can make a clear determination about the occurrence. Each person participating in the Texas student assessment program is responsible for reporting any violation or suspected violation of test security or confidentiality. Campus staff should notify their campus or district testing coordinator if they witness an irregularity or suspect that one has occurred. Districts must ensure that all testing personnel are aware of their obligation to report testing irregularities and can easily access local reporting procedures.

The district coordinator (or his or her designee) is responsible for investigating all testing violations, whether confirmed or alleged. All confirmed testing irregularities must be reported to the TEA Student Assessment Division via the Online Incident Report Form, and the contents of all reports submitted to TEA must clearly lay out the sequence of events.

Reporting requirements differ based on the severity of the confirmed or alleged violation; therefore, district coordinators must assess whether the incident is a serious or procedural irregularity. For both serious and procedural irregularities, follow the instructions on the Online Incident Report Form and be prepared to:

- explain what happened and how it occurred,
- clearly outline the sequence of events,
- include information about how the problem was resolved or remedied,
- include a district determination regarding the irregularity,
- provide a Plan of Action that the district will put into effect to prevent the incident from reoccurring, and
- include the name of the individual who assisted you if TEA was contacted.

Districts must submit the required information and documentation for irregularities within ten working days of becoming aware of the violation. If more time is needed, coordinators can contact the Student Assessment Division's security team by phone at 512-463-9536 or via email at testsecurity@tea.state.tx.us to request an extension of the deadline.

Please DON'T ASSUME!!!

Student Assessment staff are experienced in assisting districts with handling and reporting testing irregularities and are available to provide guidance for district personnel. Do not hesitate to contact staff at 512-463-9536 if you have questions about an incident that occurred in your district, its severity, or the correct way to report it.

Additional resources, including information regarding how to conduct thorough investigations, can be found on the Student Assessment Division's test security webpage located at:

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/security/

Investigating and Reporting Serious Irregularities

The nature of serious allegations requires an immediate investigation by the district in order to gather all necessary information while the involved individuals are still available and able to recall details. **District coordinators must notify TEA as soon as they are made aware of any alleged or suspected violations that fall under the category of a serious irregularity.**

Depending on the nature and severity of the issue, TEA may request that the district take certain actions, such as interviewing students or reviewing test materials. At a minimum, each of the following items must be completed and submitted by the district to fulfill the state's requirements for reporting serious testing violations:

- an Online Incident Report
- typed, dated, and signed statement(s) from the individual(s) involved
- a summary that includes a description of the incident and how the incident was resolved and the district's determination regarding the irregularity
- the Plan of Action section of the Online Incident Report (describes the steps that a district will take to ensure that the irregularity does not reoccur)

Additional information regarding the investigation, documentation, and reporting of serious testing irregularities is described below.

☑ **Assess what occurred.**

- Determine whether state-mandated testing procedures were violated.
- Determine exactly what happened, why it happened, and how it was discovered.
- Prepare a timeline, if necessary, to establish when events occurred.
- Ensure that all individuals who were involved in or may have information about the incident have been interviewed.
- Address and resolve all discrepancies (if any) in the information provided by the individuals involved.
- Determine who is responsible for the irregularity.

☑ **Properly document the incident.**

- Note at what campus the incident occurred and during which administration (month, assessment – e.g., STAAR, STAAR A, etc.; grade level, subject area, etc.)
- Obtain separate typed, signed, and dated statements from all individuals who were involved in or may have information about the incident.
- Verify that each statement includes the printed full name of the person submitting the statement, that person's role or title, and his or her signature. Statements should provide details about how the individual was involved with the reported irregularity. Individuals implicated in an irregularity report should respond to all allegations.
- If TEA was contacted for guidance, document when the contact was made and with whom you spoke. If the district was granted permission to take a certain action or instructed on how to remedy an error, include that information in your report.
- Make certain that the incident documentation includes the district's summation of its investigation of what happened, why it happened, how the incident was addressed, remedied, or resolved, and a determination of who was responsible for the irregularity.
- If the irregularity involved any examinees potentially gaining an unfair advantage on an assessment, include the rationale regarding whether the district decided to invalidate the assessment(s) or submit them to be scored.
- Submit to TEA the Corrective Action Plan template located on the Student Assessment Test Security webpage, to document district disciplinary actions taken locally against educators.
- Submit to TEA the Locally Determined Disciplinary Action (LDAA) form located on the Student Assessment Test Security webpage to document district disciplinary actions taken against students for cheating. The LDAA form is.

☑ **Review the documentation.**

- Review all statements submitted by the involved parties in an irregularity to ensure that the minimum required information has been gathered.
- Statements from individuals responsible for or involved in a serious testing irregularity should be typed and submitted on district or campus letterhead and include at least the following information:
    - name, title, and role during testing
    - how the individual was responsible for or involved in the incident
    - a description of the incident from the individual's perspective (an individual educator implicated in the report of having committed a serious testing irregularity should include a response to each specific allegation)
    - the individual's signature
    - the date the statement was signed
- If a discrepancy is noted in the statements provided, address the individuals involved and resolve the inconsistencies.

Investigating and Reporting Procedural Irregularities

Because procedural irregularities are often the result of minor errors that do not generally represent severe breaches in test security or confidentiality, they require only the submission of an Online Incident Report. Districts must also complete the Plan of Action as part of the procedural incident report, describing the district's plan to prevent the reoccurrence of the incident. For these types of irregularities, the district's reporting obligation is fulfilled once the online submission has been completed. Documentation collected by the district during the investigation of a procedural irregularity should be kept locally. If more information is needed, TEA will notify the district coordinator.

Below are some guidelines to help assess an incident and ensure proper reporting.

☑ **Properly describe the incident.**

- Note at what campus the incident occurred and during which administration (month, assessment – e.g., STAAR, STAAR A, etc.; grade level, subject area, etc.)
- If TEA was contacted for guidance, document when the contact was made and with whom you spoke. If the district was granted permission to take a certain action or instructed on how to remedy an error, include that information in your report.
- Make certain that the incident documentation includes the district's summation of its investigation, of what happened, why it happened, how the error was addressed, remedied, or resolved and a determination of who was responsible for the error.
- If the irregularity involved any students potentially gaining an unfair advantage on an assessment, include the rationale regarding whether the district decided to invalidate the assessment(s) or submit the test(s) to be scored.
- If a student who receives special education or Section 504 services was given the wrong assessment, include information about whether the student's parents were informed and whether permission was obtained to administer the correct test (if possible).
- Submit to TEA the Corrective Action Plan template, located on the Student Assessment Test Security webpage, to document district disciplinary actions taken locally against educators.
- Submit to TEA the Locally Determined Disciplinary Action (LDAA) form, located on the Student Assessment Test Security webpage, to document district disciplinary actions taken against students for cheating.

Investigating and Reporting Other Irregularities

Most of the irregularities district coordinators will address involve occurrences in which adult testing personnel bear responsibility for what happened. In some cases, however, students may be involved in incidents that constitute serious violations.

Students Using Electronic Devices to Capture or Transmit Secure Test Content

TEA considers it a serious violation if a student photographs or duplicates secure test content or disseminates this information using an electronic device. It is considered a serious testing irregularity if a student takes pictures or transmits any test information using electronic devices, and TEA must be contacted immediately. A district may be asked to submit an online incident report and student test results may be invalidated.

Student Cheating on State Assessments

Student cheating on state assessments requires action by the campus or the district coordinator. If the district determines that a student has been involved in cheating on a state assessment, the district is required to complete the following steps:

- invalidate the student's test by marking the score code "O" for "Other" on the student answer document on in the online form for the corresponding test;
- submit a separate serious online incident report form if the district determines that testing personnel contributed to the cheating, and submit a procedural irregularity report if the cheating occurred due to inadequate monitoring;
- complete the LDDA form to report any disciplinary action taken against students who participated in the cheating incident (See Appendix B for more information).

Incidents that Do Not Constitute Testing Irregularities

The following events may not be considered testing irregularities and may not need to be reported on the Online Incident Report form.

- Broken seals - Test booklet seals can occasionally be defective or might be inadvertently broken during handling. If a seal was purposefully broken, districts should investigate to determine whether an irregularity occurred and report accordingly.
- Student moving into another section of the test – If a student is observed working in a subject-area assessment other than the scheduled assessment for that day, districts or campuses should investigate to ascertain the circumstances surrounding the event and should call TEA for guidance. If it is determined that the student was cheating, districts should follow the above procedures concerning students cheating on state assessments.
- Unexpected disruptions in testing – Disruptions in testing generally involve unplanned situations that are not the result of an error on the part of adult testing personnel. Districts should refer to the previous section on "Planning for Possible Testing Disruptions" and contact TEA for additional guidance.
- Violation of district cell phone policy – Districts are not required to report events involving the use of cell phones or other electronic devices unless student cheating or a security breach occurred. Call TEA if further guidance is needed.

District coordinators should evaluate the circumstances when notified of these types of occurrences and determine whether any adults bear the responsibility for what happened. If the district determines that no error was committed district personnel or any other adult, the district may wish to keep local documentation of what occurred. Districts should contact TEA if additional guidance is needed.

Submitting Incident Documentation to TEA

To complete the process of submitting an online incident report, district coordinators or their designees must provide all of the required information. The person who submitted the incident report will receive an email confirmation that their report was received, and an incident identification number will be issued for tracking purposes. Regardless of having submitted the incident report, district testing coordinators will be notified via email when an incident has been submitted for their district provided that a valid email address is on file in the Texas Education Directory (AskTED). For more information about this directory, refer to the following link:

http://mansfield.tea.state.tx.us/tea.askted.web/Forms/Home.aspx.

The online submission tool does not permit users to correct or update report information once it has been submitted and an incident identification number has been issued. Submitters are strongly encouraged to have all information available regarding the incident **BEFORE** starting the reporting process. If information needs to updated or changed once a report has been submitted, the submitter can contact the Student Assessment Division's security team by phone at 512-463-9536 or via email at testsecurity@tea.state.tx.us and reference the incident identification number.

In an effort to minimize the burden on districts, supporting documentation is only required for the serious category violations. When necessary, users can upload supporting documentation so that all submission requirements can be fulfilled in one step. Statements from individuals involved require a signature, therefore, the physical documentation will need to be converted into an electronic format and sent to TEA. Original documents with signatures may be sent later through the mail. Scanned files can be easily attached during the submission process and then stored locally to meet retention requirements. Although the system accepts up to three attachments, it is preferred that the documentation be combined into just one scanned file. If the district chooses not to use the system's attachment feature, all supporting documentation can be scanned and submitted by email to testsecurity@tea.state.tx.us. If your district does not have scanning capability, please contact the TEA Student Assessment Division at 512-463-9536 for assistance.

Instructions for Completing the Online Incident Reporting Process

Below are step-by-step instructions for using the online submission process to submit an Online Incident Report form and supporting documentation.

1. Access the Online Incident Reporting Process page located on the TEA Student Assessment Division website at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/security/incidents/
2. Review the procedures for reporting an irregularity online and then click the link titled "Online Incident Report Form."
3. Select your district and campus from the drop-down menus; choose "Yes" or "No" to identify you as the district coordinator and to identify the report you are making as either a serious or procedural irregularity. Complete the required information in the report form. Do not include confidential student information in your submission.
4. If you are submitting the documentation required for a serious violation, use the attachment feature in the form to attach the electronic supporting documentation.
5. If you choose not to use the online attachment option, all supporting documentation may be submitted by email to testsecurity@tea.state.tx.us. With each set of documentation attached to an email, be sure to include in the subject line the incident identification number provided to you upon completion of the online submission.

If you encounter difficulty using the online incident reporting system, please contact a member of TEA's Student Assessment Division security team at 512-463-9536 for assistance.

What to Expect Following the Submission of an Incident Report

To ensure that state investigations, sanctions, and corrective actions are conducted in a fair, expeditious, and equitable manner, the TEA's Student Assessment Division's security team has implemented a standardized set of procedures for processing testing violations. All incident reports, attachments, supporting documentation, and the district determination for serious irregularities are assessed for completeness to make certain that the required information has been submitted for each irregularity and that the district has made its determination regarding the occurrence. Reports are then carefully reviewed and a determination is made by test security staff regarding the disposition of each incident. Correspondence is subsequently generated to notify the superintendent and district coordinator of the Student Assessment Division's findings. Information provided in district reports, particularly in the Plan of Action field of the Online Incident Report form, may be used by TEA in an audit to verify that districts have implemented corrective actions in response to reported irregularities.

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Appendix A

Appendix A: Best Practices and Tips from the Field

Districts from across Texas have employed innovative tools and techniques to help ensure error-free test administrations and for accurately tracking and successfully returning all secure materials. Below are some helpful hints gathered from the field that illustrate effective practices recommended for use in your district.

Successful Practices Used in Districts BEFORE a Test Administration Begins

- Campus coordinators are provided with detailed checklists of all duties and reminders of tasks to be performed before testing. Principals verify that the checklists are used.
- Only the officially designated campus coordinator is allowed to sign for and receive boxes of testing materials.
- Boxes of testing materials are signed for and placed directly in secure storage.
- When campuses receive boxes, two individuals count and verify the contents of all boxes. These individuals provide their signatures to indicate they have followed all appropriate procedures and that all materials have been accounted for.
- Some districts have indicated that they have purchased or are interested in purchasing hand-held scanners that enable them to inventory and track all secure materials electronically.
- The contents of boxes are verified against the packing list.
- All campus and district storage areas for testing materials have a sufficient number of shelves, rolling carts, and tables for materials to be sorted and tracked. Any hiding places that would allow secure materials to be misplaced or left behind are identified.
- Principals are asked to designate in writing all individuals who will have access to the secure storage area.
- Districts provide appropriate training for non-certified personnel who will have access to secure test materials (e.g., drivers, warehouse staff). Some districts require these individual to sign locally-developed security oaths.
- Certified professionals sign a form acknowledging their supervisory role when assigned a paraprofessional who will be serving as a test administrator.
- Districts/campuses reduce the amount of storage space required for maintaining documentation for five years by scanning documents and storing them electronically.
- For any district office personnel who will be assigned to campuses to monitor testing, provide the same level of training that was given to the individuals they will be monitoring. Monitors should know testing procedures well enough to be able to recognize possible irregularities.

Successful Practices Used in Districts DURING a Test Administration

- Campus personnel verify that they have used their detailed checklists of duties and responsibilities during testing.
- Requests for extra materials are made in writing, and it is recorded in writing that the materials are picked up by the campus coordinator in person. Signatures and detailed paperwork are always used when materials from district overage are distributed to campus coordinators.
- The campus coordinator makes a “first hour” check of all test sessions to ensure that all students are in the correct location and have been issued the correct assessments.

Successful Practices Used in Districts AFTER a Test Administration

- Campus personnel verify that they are using their detailed checklists when assembling materials for return.
- At district check-in, personnel inspect, physically count, and verify the contents of all campus boxes before the boxes are sealed for shipping. (Some districts require all boxes to be counted and verified by at least two persons, whose signatures indicate the shipment is complete.)
- The materials returned are always verified against the packing list.
- A detailed list of the contents of each box is generated before the box is returned to the contractor. Personnel keep these lists on file in case questions arise or discrepancies are reported.
- Only campus coordinators return testing materials to the district coordinator.
- Some districts complete a secure storage area cleaning checklist to ensure no secure materials have been left in the storage area.
- If a testing irregularity has occurred, all involved individuals write a statement on the day the incident was detected or as soon as possible thereafter.

Appendix B

Appendix B: Information Relating to the Implementation of the 14-Point Test Security Plan

In response to recommendations made by TEA's Task Force on Test Integrity and to further ongoing efforts to improve security measures in the state's assessment program, TEA introduced in June 2007 a comprehensive 14-point plan designed to assure parents, students, and the public that test results are meaningful and valid. The Student Assessment Division began introducing portions of the plan starting in spring 2008. The 14-point plan can be accessed on the Student Assessment Division website at the following address:

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/security/

Beginning with the 2008 administrations, TEA introduced the following 14-point plan measures in accordance to the recommendations made by the Task Force on Test Integrity:

Seating Charts

Seating charts must be completed for each test session conducted by the district, including sessions that result from students being moved or relocated for any reason (overflow or consolidation of students, original testing areas becoming unsuitable, etc.). Electronic copies of seating chart examples can be accessed on the Student Assessment Division website at the following address:

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/security/

Districts may create seating chart templates that best suit their needs; however, the following minimal information must be collected for each test session:

1. The location of the test session must be recorded, including the district and campus names and the room designation. Provide a brief description of the testing area (e.g., classroom, library, cafeteria).
2. The assessment that is being administered at this location must be indicated, including the specific test administered, the subject area (e.g., reading, writing), and the grade level.
3. The first and last name(s) of the test administrator(s)/monitor(s) conducting or involved in the test session must be recorded.
4. The first and last name of each student participating in the assessment must be indicated on the chart at the location where the student was seated for testing. Districts and campuses may include additional information if they choose to do so.

Beginning in 2012 and to support the implementation of time limits for testing, districts are required to indicate the start and stop times for each test session on all seating charts.

Honor Statements

Beginning in spring 2008, students in grades 9 and above were asked to sign an honor statement immediately prior to taking a state assessment. The following language is what appears on their answer documents:

> By signing my name, I agree that I will not give or receive unauthorized assistance during the test. I understand that giving or receiving unauthorized assistance during the test is cheating and may result in the invalidation of my test results.

This measure has been extended to include all students taking STAAR EOC assessments. Test administrators for STAAR and STAAR Modified are provided instructions for prompting students to complete the honor statement but are not required to verify that examinees have signed the statement.

Local Investigations and Disciplinary Actions Taken Against Educators and Students

There are two additional procedures for reporting disciplinary action taken by districts in response to a serious testing irregularity. The first of these requires districts to report any disciplinary action taken locally against an educator as the result of a district investigation of a serious testing irregularity. Whereas this information may be included in a district's incident report documentation, the district is also required to submit a separate Corrective Action Plan that details the disciplinary action taken by the district. A Corrective Action Plan template for the collection of this information can be found on the TEA website at: http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/security/

The second procedure put into place in accordance with the security plan required districts to report any disciplinary action taken, such as invalidation of the student's test or suspension against a student for cheating on a state assessment, through an online Locally Determined Disciplinary Action Form. This form can be accessed and completed via the Student Assessment Division website at: http://www.txetests.com/DAF/index.asp

Document Retention

At a minimum, districts are required to maintain the following four types of documents for a period of five years following a test administration:

1. Testing irregularity and investigation documentation

   Examples:

   - Statements from individuals involved
   - Verification of training
   - District investigative reports
   - Plan of Action included in the Online Incident Report

2. Inventory and shipping records

   Examples:

   - Packing lists
   - Documentation of any materials loaned to other districts
   - District inventory records
   - Carrier's tracking numbers/freight bill numbers
   - Records of contact with TEA and/or Pearson

3. Signed security oaths for all testing personnel (with the exception of the district testing coordinator and superintendent/chief administrative officer oaths, which are mailed to the state's testing contractor)
4. Seating charts

Districts may decide how this documentation is to be stored (e.g., scanned and kept in an electronic format, hard copy) as long as the information is secure and can be retrieved. Districts may also choose to establish local policies requiring the retention of additional documents.

On-Site Monitoring

TEA used independent test monitors to conduct visits to districts and campuses throughout the 2008, 2009, and 2010 testing years. The Student Assessment Division will continue to coordinate with other TEA divisions to identify campuses where testing may be monitored and where visits may occur.

Model Policy on Test Integrity and Test Security Procedures

Recommendation 12 from the 14-point test security plan was for TEA to develop a model policy on test integrity and test security procedures for possible adoption by local school boards. The rationale proposed for the implementation of this recommendation was as follows:

> *Procedures to help ensure test security and confidentiality are spelled out in the current* District and Campus Coordinator Manual *that is produced annually for the Texas student assessment program. All individuals involved in the administrations of the state assessments are required to sign oaths indicating they understand test security and confidentiality requirements. By providing a model policy to local school boards for their review and consideration, there is an expectation that districts would be more cognizant of state test security requirements for district personnel.*

District coordinators from across the state were contacted and asked to submit any locally-developed materials that had proven to be helpful in ensuring compliance with state-mandated test security and confidentiality requirements. A focus group consisting of district coordinators was then formed to review the materials submitted, assist in the development of a "best practices" implementation plan, and discuss possible content for the model policy. It was the opinion of the focus group that the *Test Security Supplement* already serves as a "best practices" document and should be used for the implementation of the model policy. The following model policy was developed based on focus group input and is recommended for consideration of local adoption.

Model Policy

The (Name of District/Charter) shall comply with all procedures established by TEA in its annual test administration manuals with regard to test security and confidentiality. The superintendent shall be responsible for ensuring that:

- procedures are developed to assure the security and confidentiality of state assessments are in compliance with all requirements established by TEA
- district and campus testing personnel are trained in test security and confidentiality, as well as test administration procedures, in accordance with TEA's published requirements
- any violation of the state's security or confidentiality procedures is reported to TEA in accordance with established procedures

TEA's *Test Security Supplement* shall serve as the "best practices" document to guide the district in the implementation of this policy.

Optional Web-based Test Administrator Training Modules

In response to recommendation 14, TEA developed web-based training modules for test administrators to help ensure that test results are meaningful and valid. The modules are updated annually and are provided to districts to supplement the mandatory training required of all personnel involved in testing. This online training is optional, but recommended, and is designed to be conducted in either a group or individual setting.

The modules address the following topics:

- Active Monitoring: Module 1 explains the expectations for active monitoring and demonstrates how to correctly implement this requirement.
- Distribution of Test Materials: Module 2 familiarizes personnel with common errors made when materials are distributed and offers strategies for preventing these mistakes.
- Proper Handling of Secure Materials: Module 3 addresses the expectations for protecting the contents of secure test materials and presents examples of the risks and consequences of common errors that could result in breaches of security and confidentiality.