

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

Student Assessment Division

Secure Materials Supplement

2006-2007

Purpose of this Supplement

Maintaining the security and integrity of the Texas student assessment program is critical for ensuring valid test scores and providing an equal testing opportunity for all students. To help promote increased security of the state's testing program, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Student Assessment Division has developed the *Secure Materials Supplement* to provide districts with guidance and tips from the field relating to the proper accounting of secure test materials. Because the loss or late return of secure materials has the potential to compromise confidential test content, additional measures have been implemented to work collaboratively to ensure the successful return of all secure materials distributed to school districts.

The contents of this supplement are organized in a way that offers additional information to test coordinators and explains the steps TEA is now taking to increase communication with districts. Also included are tips about what to consider before, during, and after a test administration, as well as common errors to avoid. **This document is not intended to replace any procedures or instructions contained in the *District and Campus Coordinator Manual* or test administrator manuals.** It is provided to testing personnel in an effort to achieve a 100% return rate for secure test materials.

Overview of Materials Security

According to 19 TAC §101.61 (see Appendix C of the *District and Campus Coordinator Manual*), all test materials must be handled in strict accordance with the instructions contained in the *District and Campus Coordinator Manual* and in the test administrator manuals. Trained, certified personnel and/or their trained designees are the only individuals authorized to have access to test materials. In addition, all secure items must be properly monitored and accounted for during testing and kept in locked storage when not in use.

District test coordinators are responsible for ensuring that all secure materials have been accounted for both upon receipt in the district and prior to returning the materials to the testing contractor. Every test booklet, secure State-Developed Alternative Assessment II (SDAA II) test administrator manual, and Linguistically Accommodated Testing (LAT) linguistic simplification guide has a unique security number that is used for tracking purposes. Districts are required to implement any controls necessary to ensure accurate and reliable tracking of all secure items. Districts are strongly encouraged to maintain inventory and shipping records for at least one year in the event that a discrepancy arises or the receipt of the district's materials cannot be confirmed.

Why Accounting for Secure Materials is Important

Because the Texas assessment program is a secure program, the contents of test booklets and answer documents with student information or test responses must be protected. Failure to do so can compromise the confidentiality of test content and/or student information. The loss of test booklets can lead to students or other individuals gaining access to test items that will appear on future tests. This will be of particular concern during 2007 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) testing because the 2007 test items will not be released to the public.

Additionally, many test booklets contain field-test items on which examinees are not scored. TEA collects data from these field-test items, many of which are then placed, after review, into the test item bank for use on future tests. If field-test items are divulged or their content compromised, they may become ineligible for the bank. In such cases, the test development process is impeded and the number of test items in the bank can be severely depleted.

Differentiating Between Secure vs. Nonsecure Items

The following table summarizes the types of secure and nonsecure testing materials that are sent to districts and identifies which items must be returned in the scorable shipment and the nonscorable shipment. All bar-coded, secure materials must be shipped back to the testing contractor at the end of each test administration; however, only a portion of the nonsecure materials must be returned. Districts should note that some nonsecure items may contain student information that must be kept confidential.

SECURE	NONSECURE
Items That MUST Be Returned in SCORABLE Shipment	Items That MUST Be Returned in SCORABLE Shipment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used or voided scorable test booklets for TAKS grade 3, SDAA II instructional levels K through 3, RPTE grade 3, and RPTE II grade 2 field test booklets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used and voided answer documents[†] Voided precoded answer documents[†] Answer Document Packing List Optional Reports Order Form
Items That MUST Be Returned in NONSCORABLE Shipment	Items That MUST Be Returned in NONSCORABLE Shipment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used and unused nonscorable TAKS, TAKS-I, SDAA II, LAT, RPTE, and TAAS test booklets, grouped by grade for grades 4-10 and exit level Used and unused nonscorable field test booklets <u>Unused</u> scorable test booklets for TAKS grade 3, SDAA II instructional levels K through 3, and RPTE grade 3 <u>Unused</u> scorable RPTE II grade 2 field test booklets LAT linguistic simplification guides Braille and large-print materials Secure SDAA II test administrator manuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dyslexia proper-nouns lists[†] Unused or voided precoded labels[†] Typed or tape-recorded materials[†] Unused or voided ID sheets Unused answer documents
	Items That DO NOT Need To Be Returned
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unused paper bands Science rulers Mathematics or science charts (Remember that charts that have been written upon should be destroyed.) Coordinator manuals Coordinator packets Test administrator manuals Packing lists or packing cover sheets Locally developed LAT bilingual glossaries

[†]Items that do not have a security barcode, but may contain confidential student or testing information

Accounting for Secure Materials

Things to Consider BEFORE a Test Administration



Planning for the Receipt and Storage of Materials

Sound planning plays a key role in ensuring the proper handling and complete return of all secure material. Listed below are some of the things coordinators should consider when planning for an administration.

Prepare for the receipt and transfer of testing materials.

- ___ Do you always carefully review the advance letter and materials list so you will know exactly which and how many materials will arrive from the testing contractor? (These documents should be available online approximately one month before each test administration.)
- ___ Is your secure area large enough to store all materials you will receive from the contractor, including shipments for administrations that overlap?
- ___ Do you have enough room to sort all the materials you'll receive for each administration?
- ___ Do you have a plan in place for keeping each administration organized and separate? (It is very important that you do not mix administrations when you return materials. Materials returned in boxes labeled incorrectly take longer to resolve.)
- ___ Have you established procedures for distributing and tracking overage materials? Do you have a tracking document or some other means you can use to record the security numbers and destination of all booklets and secure manuals?
- ___ If additional materials are ordered, have you identified how you will store, distribute, and track these items after they are received?
- ___ Have you identified all personnel who will be authorized to have access to materials?
- ___ Have you established a secure method for transferring materials to campuses?
- ___ Are the individuals transporting the materials authorized to handle secure materials?
- ___ Have you established sign-off procedures to identify who is responsible for materials when they are not in your possession?

Train personnel who will handle testing materials.

As part of your overall test administration training, thoroughly instructing all authorized personnel in the proper receipt, handling, tracking, and return of test materials is likely to be one of the best means of avoiding the loss or late return of secure items. Below are some important topics to address in campus coordinator and test administrator training:

- ___ Read and be familiar with the coordinator and test administrator manuals' procedures for handling and tracking secure materials.
- ___ Make sure campuses have a secure area that is large enough to store all materials. Is there enough room to inventory and sort all the materials?
- ___ Ensure campuses have a plan in place for keeping each administration organized and separate.
- ___ Make sure that coordinators understand that they should physically count all materials and verify the completeness of all test booklet packets that have been received.
- ___ Ensure campuses have procedures for tracking overage or additional materials they receive. (This includes any materials transferred between campuses.)
- ___ Make sure campuses identify all personnel who will be authorized to have access to secure materials.

- ___ Make sure campuses understand how to use the Materials Control Form and understand why the form is important.
- ___ Reinforce to coordinators the importance of verifying and accounting for all materials before and after testing each day. Does each campus have check-out/check-in procedures established and documented?
- ___ Have campuses make arrangements to ensure that secure materials will not be accidentally discarded by custodial personnel.
- ___ Remind coordinators and test administrators that students are not permitted to transport secure materials.



Verifying Campus Procedures

Because testing materials are stored at campuses for much of the time they are in the district, campus coordinators play a critical role in the handling of secure items. It's important to verify they have sufficient measures in place and are implementing these procedures for tracking secure materials.

Ensure that campus coordinators have developed and implemented procedures to track secure materials at the campus.

- ___ Are campuses prepared to receive their shipment? Do they have adequate secure storage space and room to inventory and sort materials?
- ___ Have campuses identified all individuals who will have access to the secure storage area?
- ___ Do campus coordinators have Materials Control Forms ready to use when distributing test materials to test administrators each day? Do they have a tracking document for recording booklets that may be transferred between campuses?
- ___ Do campus coordinators have procedures in place to ensure the proper packing and return of materials to the district?



Receipt and Distribution of Materials

For most administrations, you will receive secure and nonsecure materials in separate shipments. The nonsecure materials typically arrive three weeks in advance of the secure shipment and will be separated by administration into a WHITE district coordinator box(es), district overage box(es), and campus box(es). The secure materials will typically arrive two to three weeks before testing

Receive, inventory, store, and distribute test materials.

- ___ Have you verified the shipment of test materials? (For all shipments, check that all boxes are accounted for by verifying the testing program noted on the box and label and the sequence of numbers displayed on the boxes – e.g., Box 35 of 55.)
- ___ Have all secure materials been placed in locked storage when not in use? Have materials for different administrations been kept separate?
- ___ Are you documenting the distribution of materials to the campuses?
- ___ Have materials been successfully transferred to the campuses? (Campus materials will be packaged in separate boxes with brightly colored labels.) **DO NOT DELAY** in forwarding them to the campuses.
- ___ Have you verified that all campuses have physically inventoried their shipments before testing begins?

Things to Consider DURING an Administration



Monitoring the Handling of Secure Materials

When the testing week has commenced, district coordinators should make themselves available to answer questions and resolve issues. Monitoring campuses during an administration can help ensure that procedures are being followed that will minimize the risk of lost or misplaced materials.

- Verify that campuses are following procedures for secure materials handling.**
 - Have you verified that campuses are following proper check-in/check-out procedures? Are campus coordinators verifying that all booklets are being returned and accounted for each day?
 - Are campus coordinators and test administrators ensuring that test booklets are properly secured or monitored while students are taking breaks?
 - Are campuses locking and restricting access to the secure storage area?
 - Are campuses ensuring that test materials are being properly transported to and from the testing areas?
- Track the distribution of overage and transferred booklets.**
 - Are you recording booklet security numbers and the destination of overage materials that have been distributed to campuses?
 - Are you documenting the transfer of materials to other districts or alternative education facilities?

Things to Consider AFTER an Administration



Accounting for All Secure Materials

District test coordinators are responsible for the return of all of the district's secure materials in accordance with the procedures and timelines outlined in the *District and Campus Coordinator Manual*. Maintaining adequate oversight and reinforcing the use of proper handling and packing guidelines will be a very effective approach for ensuring the complete return of all materials. Below are some tips that can help district coordinators manage the effort of accounting for all materials.

- Monitor the collection and inventory of materials at campuses.**
 - Are you verifying that the campuses are counting all test booklets?
 - Are campuses accounting for every answer document for every enrolled student and for all out-of-district and out-of school examinees if applicable?
 - Are campuses reconciling all secure materials to the original packing list and all overage received to the corresponding materials control documents?
 - Are campus coordinators able to account for every test booklet and secure manual (including any overage or transferred materials)?
 - Have the campuses double-checked their secure storage areas for overage and unused secure materials?
 - Are the campuses using the correct packing procedures? Are they properly boxing and labeling materials?

Receive and inventory materials from the campuses.

- Have you verified receipt of the shipment from each campus?
- If you use a centralized campus check-in approach, do you verify that all materials are accounted for before campus personnel leave the check-in area?
- Do you keep a list of the contents of each box of scorable and non-scorable materials returned to Pearson?

Return materials to the testing contractor.

- Have you verified that all boxes have the properly colored label (scorable vs. non-scorable) for the correct administration and are numbered in sequential order – e.g., Box 5 of 10?
- Have you ensured that all secure materials remain monitored by certified personnel or in locked storage until the boxes are picked up by the shipper?
- Have you detached and retained the shipping label receipt(s) for all the box(es) returned?

Tips from the Field

Districts from all over Texas have employed innovative tools and techniques for accurately tracking and successfully returning all secure materials. Below are some helpful hints gathered from the field that illustrate effective practices you can consider for use in your district.

Successful Practices Used in Districts Before a Test Administration Begins



Provide campus coordinators with detailed checklists of all duties and reminders of tasks to be performed before testing. Have principals verify that the checklists are used.



Allow only the officially designated campus coordinator to sign for and receive boxes of testing materials.



Require that boxes of testing materials are never placed on the school office's counters or floors, but are signed for and placed directly in secure storage.



When campuses receive boxes, have two individuals count and verify the contents of all boxes. Require that they provide their signatures to indicate that they have followed all appropriate procedures and that all materials have been accounted for.



Always verify the contents of boxes against the packing list.



Make sure that 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. Storage areas should not contain hiding places that would allow secure materials to be misplaced or accidentally left behind.

Successful Practices Used in Districts During a Test Administration



Verify that campus personnel use their detailed checklists of duties and responsibilities during testing.



Require that requests for extra materials be made in writing and that the materials are picked up by the campus coordinator in person. Always use signatures and detailed paperwork when materials from district coverage are distributed to campus coordinators.

Successful Practices Used in Districts After a Test Administration



Verify again that campus personnel are using their detailed checklists when assembling materials for return.



At district check-in, inspect, physically count, and verify the contents of all campus boxes before they are sealed for return to the contractor. (Some districts require all boxes to be counted and verified by at least two persons, whose signatures indicate the shipment is complete.)



Always verify the materials returned against the packing list.



Generate a detailed list of the contents of each box before the box is returned to the contractor. Keep these lists on file in case questions arise or discrepancies are reported.



Require that only the campus coordinator returns testing materials to the district coordinator.



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.

Common Errors and How to Avoid Them

Due to the number of individuals involved in the handling of test materials, even the most rigorous procedures may not prevent a situation from arising. With this in mind, test coordinators should implement measures to help prevent the most common types of errors from occurring. TEA continues to augment its procedures as well, and additional steps have been taken to assist districts in identifying outstanding materials.

The situations described below represent some of the more common mistakes made, and are followed by suggestions to prevent them from occurring.

✘ Procedural Errors

Examples:

- An unauthorized individual – e.g., a student or untrained personnel – was permitted to handle or transport secure test material.

How to avoid:

- ___ Have you notified coordinators and test administrators which personnel are authorized and delegated to transport secure test materials or monitor or relieve test administrators?
- ___ Have you properly trained sufficient staff in the procedures for handling secure materials?

✘ Monitoring Errors

Examples:

- A test administrator left a room unmonitored when secure materials and examinees were present.
- Materials were left unsecured or unmonitored during a break.
- Materials were not accounted for during or following a test session, and an examinee was allowed to remove secure item(s) from the testing area.

How to avoid:

- ___ Have you trained campus personnel to secure materials during breaks and not to leave them unattended at any other time?
- ___ Have you ensured that test administrators are aware of their responsibilities regarding receiving completed test materials from examinees and accounting for all materials before examinees are dismissed from the test session?

✘ Improper Accounting for Secure Materials

Examples:

- A student's completed answer document was lost or misplaced.
- A test administrator, campus coordinator, or district test coordinator lost or misplaced a test booklet, secure manual, or other non-scorable secure materials.
- A test administrator, campus coordinator, or district test coordinator did not return secure material by the published date.

How to avoid:

- ___ Have you verified that all test booklets and answer documents are accounted for?
- ___ Were all test booklets checked to make sure that no answer documents were left inside accidentally?
- ___ Have you ensured that all secure storage areas have been carefully searched for testing materials?
- ___ Have you verified that all boxes were properly labeled – e.g., 1 of 5, 2 of 5, etc.?
- ___ Have you identified and tracked for your records which boxes contain exactly which materials?.

✘ Packing Errors

Examples:

- Materials from different administrations were packed in the same box.
- Voided answer documents and scorable test booklets were returned with nonscorable materials.
- Extraneous, nonsecure materials were mixed in with scorable materials.

How to avoid:

- ___ Have you verified that the contents of each box match the return shipping label and are not mixed between administrations?
- ___ Were all boxes checked to make sure that no voided answer documents or scorable booklets were returned with nonscorable materials?
- ___ Have you ensured that all extraneous items – e.g., rulers, charts, nonsecure manuals, etc. – are either disposed of locally or returned separately with nonscorable materials?

✘ Shipping Errors

Examples:

- Boxes are returned without the appropriate shipping labels.
- Return shipping labels on boxes do not represent the administration of the materials in the boxes.
- Boxes are not labeled sequentially on the return shipping label – 1 of 5, 2 of 5, etc.
- Barcodes on labels are covered with tape or other labels.

How to avoid:

- ___ Have you verified that a shipping label is applied to each box?
- ___ Were all boxes checked to make sure that the contents match the administration shown on the labels?
- ___ Have you ensured that all boxes are labeled sequentially so that the contractor will know if the shipment is complete and potential missing boxes can be identified?
- ___ Have all labels been inspected to ensure that no barcodes are taped over or covered with other labels?

Resolving Outstanding Secure Materials

The Secure Materials Resolution Process

TEA and the state's testing contractor, Pearson Educational Measurement (PEM), have implemented procedures that provide detailed information to testing coordinators to assist in the resolution and location of outstanding secure materials. The secure materials resolution process has been refined over the past year based on feedback from districts. As a reminder, district test coordinators should carefully note the administration(s) referenced in any correspondence they receive as communications will likely overlap – i.e., a district may receive a notification for outstanding January and February materials and another notification shortly thereafter regarding April materials. If it becomes necessary to contact PEM or TEA, please refer to the identification number in the bottom left corner of the correspondence. An explanation of the process, including what to expect at each stage, is summarized below.

Step 1

When PEM receives nonscorable shipments following a test administration, boxes are sorted and grouped by district. This allows PEM to identify any districts from which they have not received any shipment.



Notification Sent – No Shipment Received

If PEM does not receive any shipment from a district, correspondence is sent to the test coordinator stating that no materials were received. The letter requests that the district's materials be returned or PEM be contacted so they can track shipping records. This notification can result when a district incorrectly labels its boxes.

Step 2

Following the receipt of districts' shipments, PEM next begins the process of scanning the unique security number printed on every test booklet, secure SDAA II test administrator manual, and LAT linguistic simplification guide. Each box from a district is opened, the contents are scanned, and the materials are carefully placed back into the original box(es). After all the returned materials have been scanned in, PEM compares these items to those that were shipped. A list is then generated for each district of all the secure items that were not scanned in for that administration.



Notification Sent – All Materials Accounted For

If all the materials shipped to a district are accounted for during scanning, notification is sent to the testing coordinator confirming that all items have been received.



Notification Sent – Scanning Complete

If all the materials shipped to a district are not accounted for during scanning, notification is sent to the testing coordinator along with a list of the missing items. This notification is sent to districts missing at least 15 books or 15 percent of the original shipment, and is intended to alert districts of potentially missing items so collaborative efforts can begin to locate the outstanding materials. Test coordinators are asked to check their records in case the materials referenced were inadvertently left out of the district's shipment. If they believe the materials were returned, coordinators are asked to contact PEM with any information that might assist in narrowing the search – e.g., box numbers in which the materials were packed.

Step 3

Using the list of materials not located during scanning, PEM undertakes a focused, physical search of all of the boxes returned by a district.



Notification Sent – All Materials Accounted For

If all the materials shipped to a district are accounted for during the physical search, notification is sent to the test coordinator confirming that all items have been received.



Notification Sent – Physical Search Complete

If all materials are not accounted for during the physical search, notification is sent to the test coordinator along with a list of the missing items. After a district's shipment is examined, it can be reasonably assumed that any items that remain unaccounted for are not likely to have been included with the materials that were returned for that administration. Because some administrations overlap – i.e., one administration's materials are received when another administration's materials are still present in the district – the potential exists for items to be returned in the wrong shipment. When possible, the notification to district coordinators listing items that remain outstanding following the physical inspection of the district's boxes is sent after all potentially overlapping administrations are physically examined as well. Coordinators are again asked to check their tracking records and return any materials found or to contact PEM for further assistance.

Step 4

If a district coordinator does not respond to any of the previously referenced correspondence – i.e., does not return the materials listed as outstanding **OR** contact PEM to provide additional information – one final notification is sent to the coordinator requesting action.



Notification Sent – Non-response to Notifications of Outstanding Secure Materials

This letter explains that a response from the district test coordinator has not been received for the indicated administration, and that not making contact by the due date will result in a letter to the district's superintendent.



It is very important to the joint resolution effort that district coordinators respond to the prior notifications. Failure to take action can result in delays that may increase the risk of secure test content being compromised.

Step 5

The next step in the state's procedures for resolving outstanding materials is to notify the district superintendent that some or all of the district's secure testing materials cannot be accounted for by the contractor and there has been no communication received from the district test coordinator.



Notification Sent – Non-response Notification to the Superintendent

This letter is sent by certified mail and requires the district to ensure that the missing test materials are located and returned to PEM **OR** submit documentation to TEA indicating that the materials cannot be located.

Step 6

The last stage of the process is to send notification to districts that it is necessary to submit specific documentation to close out the secure materials resolution effort.



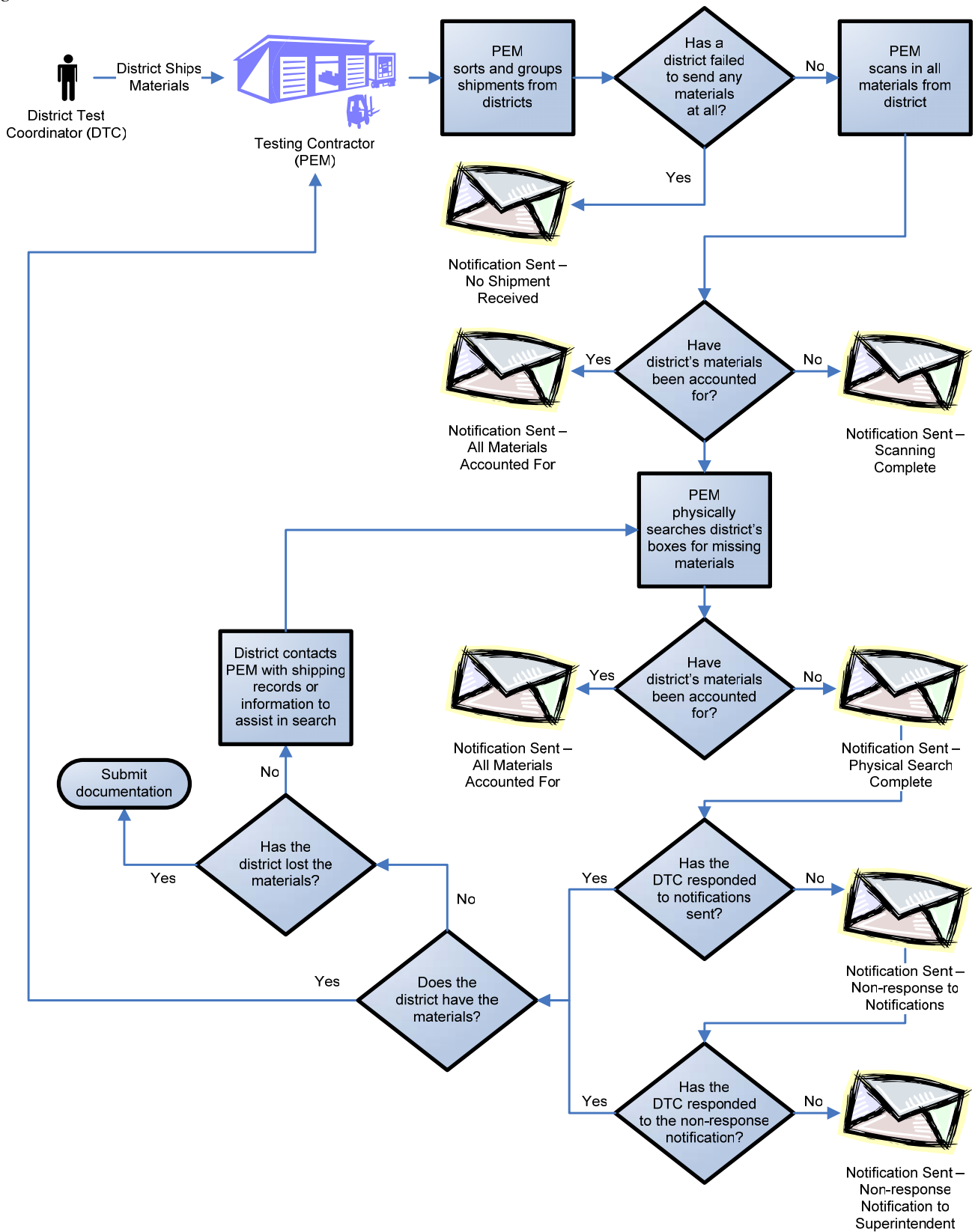
Notification Sent – Request for Documentation

Districts are required to submit an incident report and the proper supporting documentation for the late return or loss of secure materials. If documentation is not received, this correspondence is sent to the test coordinator. Details about the submission process, including the information a district must submit, can be found in the Test Security and Confidential Integrity section of the *District and Campus Coordinator Manual*, as well as the *Test Security Supplement* located on the Student Assessment Division website.

Districts indicating that all identified outstanding materials have been returned to the testing contractor are also required to submit an incident report and documentation describing the actions taken by the district to search for the outstanding item(s) and the district's procedures for ensuring that all secure materials were returned to the testing contractor.

The figure on the following page (Figure 1) summarizes the resolution process through a flowchart representation.

Figure 1: Secure Materials Resolution Process



Please DON'T ASSUME!!!



TEA Student Assessment and Pearson Educational Measurement staff are experienced in assisting districts with secure materials issues and are available to provide guidance for district personnel. Do not hesitate to contact the Austin Operations Center at 800-252-9186 or TEA staff at (512) 463-9536 if you have questions about this process or notifications you may receive.