Test Security Policies and Procedures

32nd Annual Texas Assessment Conference
November 2017
Texas Education Code (TEC)

Sec. 39.0301. SECURITY IN ADMINISTRATION OF ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS.

“The commissioner shall establish procedures... designed to ensure the security of the assessment instruments...”

Texas Administrative Code (TAC)


19 TAC §101.3031(b)(2). Test Security Supplement

(Anticipated effective date for the 2018 Test Security Supplement – January 22, 2018. The 2017 Test Security Supplement will remain in effect until replaced.)
New for 2018 Administrations

- **Contaminated Materials**
  - No longer required to return test materials (test booklets or answer documents) that have been exposed to human contaminants (e.g., vomit, blood, etc.).
  - Contaminated documents should be disposed of locally in accordance with the district's procedures for handling potentially biohazardous material.
  - Districts must record the security barcode number of any test booklet destroyed locally and report this information to the contractor(s).

- **Booklet Seals**
  - Test booklets will no longer include seals.
  - Additional indicators (e.g., large stop signs) will be included in multi-subject test booklets so that the students do not continue into the next subject-area test.
Changes for 2018 Administrations

- Dictionary and Calculator Policies
  - Dictionary policy extended to grades 3–5. Districts must ensure that dictionaries are available for 3–8 reading, 4 and 7 writing, English I, II, and III.
  - Calculator policy extended to grade 8 science. Students must have access to four-function, scientific, or graphing calculator capability when taking the grade 8 science assessment.

- Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)
  - Grades 2-12 listening and speaking assessments to be administered online.
  - A new security oath will also be made available to districts for individuals proctoring the TELPAS Rater Training Calibration Activity.
Changes for 2018 Administrations

- Technology Guidelines
  - Districts are required to have procedures in place to prevent the use of personal electronic devices during test administrations.
  - Any allowed or approved technology, including technology-based accommodations (i.e., accessibility features, designated supports), must be reviewed prior to its use in an assessment.
  - Review requires knowledge of:
    - both state curriculum (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) for the specific grade level and subject
    - device or software capabilities and functions
  - More information is available in the DCCM and via a training presentation on the 2018 Accommodation Resources webpage.
Important 2018 Administration Policies

- Handling of Reference Materials, Scratch Paper, Graph Paper, & Duplicated or Recorded Secure Test Content
  - Districts must ensure the collection and destruction of any scratch paper, graph paper, or reference materials that students wrote on, as well as any recordings.
  - Verify that campuses are destroying these materials promptly after the test administration.
  - Exception: Photocopies or reproductions of secure STAAR Alternate 2 test materials or test materials for an approved accommodation must be collected and returned to the state’s testing contractor with the other nonscorable materials.
Material Security & Secure Storage

- Districts are required to implement the controls necessary to ensure the proper handling, storage and accurate tracking of secure materials throughout each stage of all test administrations.

- 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.

- Verify that all campuses are following these storage requirements.
Important 2018 Administration Policies

- **Participation in Testing**
  - Districts are required to provide all eligible students who are in attendance during the administration of an assessment with an opportunity to participate in the test.
  - Students who are in attendance on the day of testing and choose not to participate or refuse to mark their answers on the answer document or in the online form, and who are in grades 3-8 or are taking an EOC for the first time, will have their tests submitted for scoring as is.
Procedures for maintaining the security and confidentiality of assessments are specified in the:

- District and Campus Coordinator Manual
- Test Security Supplement
- Test administrator manuals

Conduct that departs from the test administration procedures as established in these resources is considered a testing irregularity and must be reported to the Student Assessment Division.
What is a Testing Irregularity?

- Incidents resulting in a deviation from documented testing procedures are defined as testing irregularities.

- 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 typically the result of minor deviations in testing procedures.
What are Serious Irregularities?

- Constitute severe violations of test security or confidentiality
- Require a prompt investigation by the district
- Require a call to TEA test security as soon as the district coordinator is made aware of the incident
- Can result in the individual(s) responsible being referred to the TEA Educator Standards and Certification Legal Division for consideration of disciplinary action
Examples of Serious Irregularities

- Directly OR indirectly assisting students with responses to test questions
- Tampering with student responses
- Scoring student tests, either formally or informally
- Solving secure test questions
- Falsifying TELPAS holistic ratings or STAAR Alt 2 student responses
- Viewing secure test content before, during, or after an administration unless specifically authorized by TEA or by the procedures outlined in the test administration manuals
- Duplicating, recording, or electronically capturing confidential test content unless specifically authorized to do so
Examples of Serious Irregularities

- Discussing or disclosing secure test content or student responses
- Fraudulently exempting or preventing a student from participating in the administration of a required state assessment
- Receiving or providing unallowable assistance during the TELPAS calibration activities (e.g., taking notes, providing answer sheets, or verbally sharing answers)
- Encouraging or assisting an individual to engage in the conduct described in the items listed above or in any other serious violation of security and confidentiality
- Failing to report to an appropriate authority that an individual has engaged in conduct outlined in the items listed above or in any other serious violation of security and confidentiality
What are Procedural Irregularities?

- Reflect minor errors or deviations in testing procedures
- Do not represent severe breaches in security or confidentiality
- Do not require a call to TEA unless guidance is needed by the district
- Do not require the submission of supporting documentation
Examples of Procedural Irregularities

- Failing to actively monitor
- Failing to provide an accommodation or providing an unallowable accommodation
- Administering the incorrect test
- Failing to test an eligible student
- Failing to provide the full time allotment to complete a test
What Did We See Last Year (2016-2017)?

- Irregularity counts thus far:
  - 119 serious incidents
  - 3916 procedural incidents

- Most frequently seen serious irregularities:
  - Assistance
  - Scoring/working tests
  - Tampering
What Did We See Last Year (2016-2017)?

- Most frequently seen procedural irregularities:
  - Accommodation not provided
  - Unallowable accommodation provided
  - Unmonitored/improperly secured test material
  - Failed to detect/prevent improper student behavior (mostly students proceeding into another test subject)
  - Exempt or ineligible student tested
  - Issued incorrect test form

- Not as frequent, but noticeable increase observed – missing student scores
Participant Reporting Responsibilities

- Each person participating in the assessment program is responsible for reporting any violation or suspected violation of test security or confidentiality. District coordinators are responsible for notifying TEA.

- 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.

- Reporting requirements differ based on the severity of the confirmed or alleged violation(s); however all irregularities require:
  - the submission of an Online Incident Report;
  - a district determination; and
  - a Plan of Action.
Penalties

A person who engages in conduct prohibited by the *Test Security Supplement* and in other test administration materials may be subject to the following penalties:

- placement of restrictions on the issuance, renewal, or holding of a Texas teacher certificate;
- issuance of an inscribed or non-inscribed reprimand;
- suspension of a Texas teacher certificate for a set term; or
- revocation or cancellation of a Texas teacher certificate.
Investigating Testing Irregularities
First Steps

- Act quickly and encourage campus personnel to promptly report any testing issues. Addressing a situation immediately helps to:
  - ensure that all necessary information can be obtained while the individuals involved are still available and able to recall details;
  - minimize the possibility of testimony being influenced;
  - allow coordinators to spot potentially serious issues and quickly obtain TEA guidance;
  - prevent minor issues from becoming more problematic; and
  - increase the possibility that a remedy can be applied.

- Be careful not to underestimate the scope of a situation. Avoid the assumption that a potential error or allegation will be limited to one individual or just the situation at hand.
First Steps

- If the situation involves secure test materials, ensure that a proper chain of custody is maintained to avoid any appearance of impropriety.

- Ascertain to the degree possible whether the situation likely involves a serious or procedural irregularity. Notify TEA immediately if it appears a serious irregularity occurred. If procedural, contact TEA if guidance is needed.

- Remain objective while gathering information.
Addressing Procedural Irregularities

- Gather the necessary information to determine:
  - exactly what happened;
  - who was involved; and
  - how or why the error occurred.

- Determine whether additional action is needed (contact TEA for guidance, notify parents, etc.)

- Evaluate the information collected in order to report the following to TEA via the Online Incident Report:
  - An explanation of what happened and how the event occurred
  - The sequence of events - clearly laid out
  - Who was involved and the individual(s) responsible for the error(s)
Addressing Procedural Irregularities

- Administration details
  - Testing year (2018, 2017, etc.)
  - Program (STAAR, STAAR Alternate 2, TELPAS)
  - Administration month (March, April, May, etc.)
  - Grade/assessment level (grade 5, EOC, etc.)
  - Subject (mathematics, reading, English I EOC, etc.)

- How the problem was resolved or remedied

- The name of the TEA staff member contacted, if applicable

- The district determination in the matter

- A Plan of Action that:
  - lists the individual steps involved and specifically addresses the irregularity type;
  - contains a timeline describing how and when the plan will be implemented;
  - describes how the district will evaluate the effectiveness of the plan; and
  - provides specific corrective actions for the district, campus, or individual(s) involved.
Addressing Serious Irregularities

Depending on the nature of a serious violation, the following are investigative steps that should be taken in most situations:

- **Gather test administration information.**
  - Assemble seating chart(s), roster(s), and Materials Control Forms.
  - Identify all of the involved and potentially involved individuals.
  - Identify whether any involved students had accommodations.

- **Prepare a timeline of events.**
  - Identify who had materials and at what times throughout the day.
  - Determine when events transpired.

REMEMBER that you must notify TEA as soon as you are made aware of any alleged or suspected violations that fall under the category of a serious irregularity.
Addressing Serious Irregularities

- **Conduct interviews.**
  - Identify who will be interviewed and in what order.
  - Generate a list of questions for the interviews.
  - Document interviews (collect signed statements and transcribe interviews).
  - Review interview statements, reconcile disparities, and conduct follow-up interviews if necessary.

- **Assemble and evaluate student performance data.**
  - Collect historical performance data for students involved.
  - Compare performance data between comparable groups.
Addressing Serious Irregularities

- Reporting requirements for serious violations include the submission of:
  - an Online Incident Report;
  - a detailed summary of the investigation (including a timeline of events);
  - typed, signed, and dated statements from the individuals involved;
  - the district’s findings;
  - a district determination in the matter (including the disposition of any involved students’ tests/scores); and
  - a Plan of Action.
Addressing Serious Irregularities

The following information must be provided if collected or evaluated in the course of the district’s investigation:

- interview questions, notes, and transcriptions;
- any physical evidence collected;
- any student performance data that was evaluated;
- seating charts; and
- any documentation, including Materials Control Forms, used to record the chain of custody for secure test materials.

PLEASE REMEMBER that TEA has to have documentation in order to move forward with appropriate action steps. Districts are required to submit its investigative findings within 10 days of becoming aware of a serious irregularity.
Thank You
Contact Information

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https://tea.texas.gov/Student_Testing_and_Accountability

https://www.texasgateway.org

http://texasassessment.com
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