



# TESTING SECURITY

Protocol and Procedures for School Personnel

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## **Purpose**

General Statute §115C-174.10 states that the North Carolina Testing Program has three purposes: “(i) to assure that all high school graduates possess those minimum skills and that knowledge thought necessary to function as a member of society; (ii) to provide a means of identifying strengths and weaknesses in

the education process in order to improve instructional delivery; and (iii) to establish additional means for making the education system at the State, local, and school levels accountable to the public for results.” In order to maintain the integrity of the North Carolina Testing Program, it is essential for school personnel to develop awareness of proper testing protocol and procedures. Knowledge of testing policies and procedures helps ensure the North Carolina Testing Program is conducted in a manner that is fair, consistent, and equitable for all students.

The purpose of this publication is to provide principals, teachers, and other school personnel with a reference for implementing secure, uniform test administrations for the North Carolina Testing Program. This testing security guide may be kept in the schools. Additional copies may be downloaded from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) website at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/policies/shared/testingsecurity>.

## **Test Security**

Secure test materials include, but are not limited to, test blueprints; test layout forms; item pools; operational and field test books, test questions, or test book sections; and answer documents. Secure test materials may be in electronic or paper format. Because test materials in North Carolina are often reused and are costly to generate, every precaution must be taken to ensure all test materials remain secure at all times.

Secure state tests, including all field tests and special studies, must **not** be copied, reproduced, paraphrased, filed, or used directly in instructional activities. School personnel and proctors must not disclose the contents of secure tests, nor discuss with each other or with students specific test items or information contained within the tests, or write about the items on the Internet or on social media sites. This prohibition includes teachers who serve on item writer or test reviewer committees. Discussing information related to the content of specific test items or test forms is prohibited and a direct violation of the *Testing Code of Ethics*. In abiding by this guideline, educators ensure that the integrity of the tests is maintained, which helps minimize the use of costly resources when test security has been compromised.

Excerpts from secure assessments must **not** be used at any time during classroom instruction or in resource materials such as study guides. Access to the tests shall be limited to school personnel who have a legitimate need. Persons who have access to secure test materials must not use their access to those materials for personal gain.

## **Testing Code of Ethics**

The North Carolina *Testing Code of Ethics* State Board of Education (SBE) policy (TEST-010) stresses the importance of maintaining test security at all times and addresses appropriate professional practices for central office and school administrators, test coordinators, teachers (test administrators), and proctors in the areas of securing tests; administering tests; and scoring, reporting, and interpreting test results. The sanctions for violations are also included in the *Testing Code of Ethics* and are applicable to the administration of all secure, state-mandated tests.

Ethical testing practices include but are not limited to

- informing students about the tests and why the tests are important;
- informing students and parents about how the tests and test results will be used;
- preparing students to take the tests;
- ensuring all eligible students take the tests;
- encouraging students to attempt to respond to all test items and do their best; and
- sharing the results of the tests along with any available interpretation of the scores with students and parents within the allotted timelines.

A copy of the *Testing Code of Ethics* (Appendix A) is included in this publication and is also printed in all North Carolina *Assessment Guides*. Before each test administration, test administrators and proctors must read and review thoroughly the North Carolina *Testing Code of Ethics* and its sanctions, paying careful attention to section (k)—the unethical testing practices cited in the *Code*—and section (l)—the sanctions for violations of the Code. This document has the effect of law in North Carolina. Following the *Testing Code of Ethics* helps ensure testing is conducted in a fair and ethical manner in every classroom across the state. The *Testing Code of Ethics* is part of Title 16 of the Administrative Code and must not be removed from this document. (A copy may be requested from the school system test coordinator for reference.)

### **State Board of Education Policy for Use of Secure State Tests**

According to SBE policy TEST-004, “secure tests developed by the State of North Carolina may not be used for purposes other than those approved by the Division of Accountability Services and the State Board of Education” unless written permission is granted prior to use.

### **General Statute §14-118.2: Assisting, etc., in Obtaining Academic Credit by Fraudulent Means**

“It shall be unlawful for any person, firm, corporation or association to assist any student, or advertise, offer or attempt to assist any student, in obtaining or in attempting to obtain, by fraudulent means, any academic credit, grade or test score, or any diploma, certificate or other instrument purporting to confer any literary, scientific, professional, technical or other degree in any course of study in any university, college, academy or other educational institution. The activity prohibited by this subsection includes, but is not limited to, preparing or advertising, offering, or attempting to prepare a term paper, thesis, or dissertation for another; impersonating or advertising, offering or attempting to impersonate another in taking or attempting to take an examination; and the giving or changing of a grade or test score or offering to give or change a grade or test score in exchange for an article of value or money.”

### **Confidentiality of Student Scores When Publicizing Test Results**

The confidentiality of students must be protected at all times when publicizing/reporting test results to the public. Practices that violate confidentiality rights are not permissible under the provisions of the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) of 1974, 20 U.S.C. §1232g. Unethical practices include, but are not limited to

- publicly posting student names and test results and
- publicly announcing student names and test results over the intercom.

Additionally, the North Carolina *Testing Code of Ethics* states, “Educators shall maintain the confidentiality of individual students. Publicizing test scores or any written material containing personally identifiable information from the student’s educational records shall not be disseminated or otherwise made available to the public by any member of the State Board of Education, any employee of the State Board of Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, any employee of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, any member of a local board of education, any employee of a local board of education, or any other person, except as permitted under the provisions of the *Family Education Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) of 1974, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g. In the event of a violation of this Rule, the State Board of Education may, in accordance with the contested case provisions of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes, impose any one or more of the following sanctions:

1. withhold any applicable monetary incentive awards;
2. file a civil action against the person or persons responsible for the violation for copyright infringement or for any other available cause of action;
3. seek criminal prosecution of the person or persons responsible for the violation; and
4. in accordance with the provisions of 16 NCAC 6C .0312, suspend or revoke the professional license of the person or persons responsible for the violation.”

Educators must be mindful of student confidentiality and adhere to appropriate policies and procedures when publicizing/reporting test results.

### **Electronic Transmission of Data**

Among several purposes, the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) was enacted to protect the privacy of students’ educational records. To protect the confidentiality of individuals from those who do not have access to individual-level data, personally identifiable information (PII) should be transmitted using one of the following methods:

- Encrypted Files
- Password Protected Files (as long as the password is not contained within the e-mail, file, or on the electronic device containing the data)
- Secure FTP Servers
- E-mailed Files (only if encrypted and/or password protected using strong passwords)

For those local education agencies (LEAs) and schools with full encryption capabilities, transported data and other electronic transporting devices containing NCDPI data should be encrypted. This requires the recipient of the data to have corresponding decryption capabilities. If compatible encryption is not available to both parties, data should be password protected. The password should be given to the recipient through a different medium, such as a separate e-mail or a phone call, never in notes or documents accompanying the actual data file. In addition, the password should not be transferred via voicemail.

When sending e-mail, ensure it contains the least amount of FERPA-protected information as possible. The subject line of an e-mail should not include FERPA-

protected information; the body of an e-mail should not contain highly sensitive FERPA-protected information, such as a student's Social Security Number.

Personal e-mail or personal sharing service accounts should never be used to transfer student data/PII.

Secure test questions, answer choices, or portions of secure test questions or answer choices must not be sent via e-mail (use e-mail only if encrypted and/or password protected).

### **Sample Test Items**

Instructional materials, such as study guides, that contain sample test questions (whether generated locally or obtained from another school system) **must** be shared with the principal before use in the school. The principal must report to the school system test coordinator that such instructional materials exist. The school system test coordinator must review all such documents and report to the regional accountability coordinator (RAC) that such documents exist. Copies of any documents suspected to contain secure test items or information from secure tests must be submitted to the NCDPI through the RAC for clearance before use in the school or district.

To clarify, such instructional materials do not include ancillary materials provided by textbook publishers, vendors' test item banks, or test items released by the NCDPI. The intent of this policy is to facilitate a review of sample test questions that may actually contain secure test items. Appropriate items for review would be any material of which the origin is not known (for example, a photocopied collection of sample test questions found in a file cabinet); however, the NCDPI will review any materials a school system/charter school submits. School systems/charter schools and the North Carolina Testing Program must work together to maintain the security of the testing program because the cost of replacing compromised test items is prohibitive and affects the delivery of multiple forms of the tests.

The NCDPI Division of Accountability Services/North Carolina Testing Program has released test forms available for all state-mandated assessments. Released test forms can be found at the following website: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/releasedforms>.

### **Testing Notification**

According to State Board policy TEST-001, LEAs shall, "at the beginning of each school year, provide information to students and parents or guardians advising them of the districtwide and state-mandated tests that students will be required to take during that school year. In addition, LEAs shall provide information to the students and parents or guardians to advise them of the dates the tests will be administered and how the results from the tests will be used and the consequences thereof. Also, information provided to parents about the tests shall include whether the SBE or local board of education requires the test."

### **Testing Window**

All state-mandated tests have a designated test date or testing window. The testing window is outlined in each North Carolina *Assessment Guide*. Failing to administer the secure tests on the test date or during the testing window designated by the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services/North Carolina Testing Program will result in a testing irregularity.

Under certain circumstances, exceptions may be permitted to test a student outside the state-designated testing window, including makeup dates. The annual testing calendar and information on testing outside of the window is available on the Accountability Services home page at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/>.



## **Eligible Students**

State Board policy ACCT-021 states that all eligible students in membership (including students identified with disabilities and students identified as English Learners [ELs]) at grades 3 through 8 and 10 and in high school courses in which an end-of-course (EOC) assessment is administered must participate in the testing program either through the standard test administration with or without accommodations or an alternate assessment with or without accommodations. Testing accommodations must be provided to eligible students on test day as documented in the students' current Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Section 504 Plans, EL plans, or transitory impairment documentation.

## **Internet Security, Security of Test Materials, and Online Content**

In order to access online, state-mandated assessments, LEAs and schools are required to use a secure platform. It is imperative the LEA/charter school testing and technology staff work closely together to prepare devices appropriately for online assessments.

Online tests contain secure test data, copyrighted content, and confidential student records. Therefore, test administrators, proctors, technology staff, and students must follow rules and procedures that ensure online content is not made available to anyone for any other purpose than to conduct the assessments. Users must not access the assessment and then leave the computer or tablet unsupervised. Locally stored off-line content (e.g., cookies, cache) must be cleared or secured after accessing the test so malicious applications or users cannot gain access to secure test materials.

Schools permitting the use of devices NOT owned or leased by the LEA/school for state online assessments must have a plan in place that addresses security concerns, including ability and permission to 1) monitor device use, 2) install and uninstall programs or apps for testing and security monitoring/enforcement, and 3) secure the device before and after testing as needed to install or uninstall programs or for close inspection. Additionally, LEAs/schools must have acceptable use policies that include detailed provisions addressing state online testing security and student/parent consequences for tampering and violation.

Best practices for password protection include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Never share passwords with anyone. User accounts are confidential.
- If passwords must be written down on a piece of paper, store the paper in a secure place and destroy it when it is no longer needed.
- Change passwords immediately if they have been compromised.
- Be careful where passwords are saved on computers and tablets. Some dialog boxes, such as those for remote access, present an option to save or remember a password. Selecting this option poses a potential security threat.

## **Test Materials**

The *Assessment Guide* must be provided to test administrators on days before the test administration. The test administrator must read the guide thoroughly before attending the training session so the school test coordinator can answer any questions the test administrator may have. All other test materials must be distributed immediately before each test administration and returned to the principal or school test coordinator at the end of each test administration. Test administrators are responsible for all materials in their care.



In order to administer statewide tests to North Carolina students in a fair and equitable manner, only the testing materials that are specified in the appropriate North Carolina *Assessment Guide* or are part of an approved accommodation are allowed during the test administration.

At no time shall proctors be alone with secure test materials, including computers with loaded, active assessments (e.g., Start screen, Pause screen, items displayed). Proctors must not pick up test materials from or return test materials to the school test coordinator at the beginning or the end of testing unless accompanied by the appropriate school personnel. Every effort must be made to minimize public access to secure state tests before and after each test administration.

The local school system provides each school with the test materials specified in the appropriate *Assessment Guide* or directs schools on how to obtain the test materials (e.g., blank paper, calculators). In turn, school test coordinators provide directions to test administrators for distributing the test materials.

Placing the test materials on students' desks before the beginning of the test administration is a violation of the procedures outlined in the *Assessment Guides* and the *Testing Code of Ethics*. The test administrator is not to give students additional materials during the test administration (with the exception of providing additional blank paper or graph paper or replacing broken pencils as specified in the appropriate *Assessment Guide*) without the prior written consent of the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services/North Carolina Testing Program through the school system test coordinator. Only approved supplemental materials specified in the appropriate *Assessment Guide* (or published supplements or updates) may be used during the test administration.

### **Accounting For and Storing Test Materials**

According to TEST-001, "LEAs shall: (1) account to the department for all tests received; (2) provide a locked storage area for all tests received; (3) prohibit the reproduction of all or any part of the test; and (4) prohibit their employees from disclosing the general content of, or specific items contained in, the tests to persons other than authorized employees of the LEA." Secure test materials may be stored at the school only for a short period before and after the test administration. Every effort must be made to minimize school personnel access to secure state tests before and after each test administration.

The principal must

- account for all test materials received;
- ensure test security within the school building;
- store test materials in a secure, locked facility except when in use, as established by (TEST-010); and
- establish procedures to have test materials distributed immediately before each test administration and to return test materials to the school test coordinator at the end of each test administration.

The school-level test coordinator must

- maintain test security and accountability of test materials;
- accurately count test materials when the materials are first received and immediately report any discrepancies in the count to the school system test coordinator;

- accurately count and distribute test materials to each test administrator before each test administration;
- collect, count, and return all test materials to the secure, locked storage facility immediately after each test administration; and
- immediately report any discrepancies in the counts to the school system test coordinator.

Test administrators must

- accurately count and record the number of secure test materials and supplemental materials when the materials are first received, when they are distributed to students, when the test administration is completed, and when the materials are returned to the school-level test coordinator;
- immediately report any discrepancies in the counts to the school test coordinator; and
- count and verify with the school test coordinator that the number of secure materials (including supplemental materials) returned matches the count taken when the materials were first received.

It is imperative that secure test materials be tracked and accounted for at each level of distribution. The procedure for accounting for secure test materials must ensure that missing materials can be identified at the classroom level. The procedure established by the school for tracking and accounting for secure test materials must be provided to the school system test coordinator or the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services/North Carolina Testing Program upon request. A testing irregularity report must be submitted for any missing secure test materials (*North Carolina Assessment Guides are not secure*) using the Online Testing Irregularity Submission System (OTISS), and a school-level investigation must be completed.

### **Prohibited Items in the Testing Room**

The presence of prohibited items in the testing room may constitute a misadministration or violation of the *Testing Code of Ethics*. Students are not allowed to bring any prohibited items into the testing room and may be removed from testing if they fail to heed to this requirement. Therefore, on days before testing, teachers must announce to students which items are prohibited in the testing room.

Prohibited items include:

- Electronic devices. Other than permitted calculators, students are not allowed to use or have in their possession cell phones or any other electronic recording, listening, scanning, communication, or photographic devices at any time during testing, including breaks. **Any student found or observed with a cell phone/electronic device during testing time must be dismissed from testing and a misadministration declared for that student.**
  - If the test administrator or proctor believes a cell phone/electronic device was used during the test administration to store or exchange information or to make an image of the test, the device must be collected from the student and the school test coordinator contacted immediately.
  - If a student must be removed from testing because he/she has a cell phone/electronic device during testing, the test administrator must not leave the testing room unattended. The test administrator must remain in the room, and the school test coordinator must be notified and the student removed.

- Before testing begins, test administrators and proctors must turn off their personal cell phones/electronic devices and ensure these devices are neither used nor visible during testing, including breaks.
- Personal belongings. Students' personal belongings must be placed under their seats, and students must not be permitted to access them at any time during testing, including breaks.
  - Students who complete the test before the scheduled time is over must be provided the opportunity to read novels or other nontextbooks (e.g., magazines) while waiting for other students to finish the test. For paper-and-pencil administrations, test administrators must collect student answer sheets, test books, and all other ancillary materials (e.g., calculators, used papers) before students are allowed to take out their reading materials. For online assessments, test administrators must ensure students have clicked the End Test button to close the test and must collect all ancillary materials (e.g., calculators, used papers) before students are allowed to take out their reading materials.
- Testing aids. Textbooks, reference books, thesauruses, wearable activity trackers, smartwatches, smartpens, music, notes, bookmarks, personal learning devices, or any unapproved testing aids are prohibited during the administration of any test in the North Carolina Testing Program.

### **Testing Environment**

The principal must designate an area for the test administration that provides an environment that minimizes distractions and disruptions for students. All rooms used for test administrations (including any rooms to which students may be relocated for testing) must be quiet, orderly, comfortable, and have adequate seating, lighting, and heating/cooling. Seating must be arranged to discourage students from sharing responses.

The North Carolina Testing Program strongly discourages large-scale administrations (e.g., those that occur in a library or cafeteria) that include large groups (multiple classes) of students. Test administrations that occur under these conditions may result in misadministrations. If testing is to take place in a facility other than a classroom, special effort may be required to establish and maintain a proper testing atmosphere. Visitors to the classroom are prohibited during the test administration except when required for state or local monitoring of test administrations or under extreme circumstances (i.e., emergency situations).

For all administrations of North Carolina tests, any information regarding the content being measured or any test-taking strategies displayed in the room in any manner or form (e.g., printed or attached to student desks, bulletin boards, or instructional displays) during a test administration is considered a violation of the *Testing Code of Ethics* and results in a misadministration. These displays must be covered or removed on a day before the test administration. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- “Tips for Taking Tests”
- word lists or word walls
- definitions
- writing formulas
- multiplication tables or mathematical formulas/theorems



Test administrators must contact the school system test coordinator before the test administration if they have questions related to the testing environment.

### **Monitoring Students during the Assessment**

To avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest and allegations of impropriety, a test administrator or proctor should not be assigned to administer or proctor a testing session where his or her relative or ward is to be tested. Relatives and wards include children, stepchildren, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, siblings, in-laws, and persons under the test administrator's or proctor's guardianship. Additionally, test administrators should not administer tests with a proctor who is a personal family member or a close acquaintance.

The test administrator and proctor must not leave students unattended at any time during the test administration. They must remain in the room throughout the entire test administration session unless an emergency arises (e.g., illness, necessary restroom break). If an emergency arises and the test administrator or proctor must leave the room, the school test coordinator must be notified.

Test administrators and proctors must remain attentive to their testing responsibilities throughout the entire test administration. Personal cell phones/electronic devices must not be used during the test administration, including breaks. Before testing begins, test administrators and proctors must turn off their personal cell phones/electronic devices and ensure these devices are not visible during testing, including breaks.

Reading (except for the *Assessment Guide* or supplemental testing policy information); grading papers; using a computer, cell phone, or other electronic device; talking casually with each other or other staff; or engaging in any activity in the room not directly related to the administration is not allowed.

Test administrators and proctors must avoid creating distractions and causing testing irregularities while monitoring students during the assessment. During training, test administrators and proctors must be made aware of what they can and cannot do to assist students.

The test administrator and proctor must monitor the test administration by walking frequently and quietly throughout the room and scanning the students' work areas to ensure students follow the test directions, perform the required tasks, do not share responses, and those eligible have access to required accommodations.

- When the test administrator or proctor needs to sit during the test administration, he/she should maintain an unobstructed view of and easy access to students.
- Test administrators and proctors are not to read test questions from students' test books or from computer monitors used for online assessments (except for students with documented special needs requiring accommodations, such as the *Test Administrator Reads Test Aloud [in English]*).
- Test administrators and proctors **cannot indicate answers** to students. Some examples include but are not limited to
  - telling students to "look at the question again" or offering similar advice;

- making a facial expression, hand gesture, voice inflection, or an utterance (e.g., coughing, clearing throat) to indicate approval or disapproval of the student's response; and
- standing beside the desk, reading a question, looking at the student's response, and then pointing to the correct answer or pointing to the question as if to indicate, "read the question again because you have the wrong answer."
- Test administrators and proctors **cannot help** students by
  - explaining the directions in their own words;
  - explaining the meaning of any word in the directions, test questions, or answer choices;
  - rephrasing test questions;
  - translating a word or phrase into another language; or
  - providing synonyms for unknown words.

### **Follow a Uniform Process of Administration**

All tests that are part of the North Carolina Testing Program require a standardized process of administration. In order for test results to be valid, all procedures included in the North Carolina *Assessment Guides* must be followed. Test administrators must follow and present the directions as written in the *Assessment Guides*. It is a violation of the *Testing Code of Ethics* to omit, rewrite, or paraphrase orally or in writing the instructions presented in the *Assessment Guides* without the prior written consent of the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services/North Carolina Testing Program.

Unethical testing practices include, but are not limited to, interpreting, explaining, or paraphrasing the test directions, reading selections, or test items. Test administrators may repeat test directions as many times as necessary for the student(s) to understand, but are not permitted to provide any specific assistance with answering test questions. For example, test administrators and proctors are not permitted to clarify test directions, provide synonyms for unknown words, or rephrase questions. Each student must complete his or her own work without assistance in order for the scores to reflect the student's ability.

All students must complete the test under the same conditions, unless a student has a current IEP, Section 504 Plan, EL plan, or transitory impairment documentation (in accordance with state policies) that allows testing accommodations. All documented accommodations must be approved for use by the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services/North Carolina Testing Program. The test administrator must ensure the appropriate students receive their accommodations and must follow all appropriate procedures for providing accommodations to these students. For additional information on testing students with disabilities, refer to the *Testing Students with Disabilities* publication and any published supplements or updates. These publications are available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/policies/tswd/>. Additional information on testing students identified as ELs may be found in the latest publication of the *Guidelines for Testing Students Identified as English Learners* document and any published supplements or updates. These publications are available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/policies/slep/>.

While most test administrators and proctors may have conducted or proctored similar testing sessions previously, they must receive training each testing cycle before administering or

proctoring any secure state test. Absences from training must be reported to the principal and will require makeup training sessions.

### **Recognize and Report Testing Violations or Irregularities**

Test administrators and proctors must report any alleged testing violation or testing irregularity to the school test coordinator on the day of the occurrence. The school test coordinator must contact the school system test coordinator immediately with any allegation of a testing violation. The school test coordinator must then conduct a thorough investigation and complete the Report of Testing Irregularity provided through the Online Testing Irregularity Submission System (OTISS). The OTISS irregularity report must be submitted to the school system test coordinator within five days of the test administration. Different incidents must be documented on separate reports of testing irregularities even when the incidents occur during the same test administration in the same room. For example, if one student is disruptive during testing and another student becomes ill during the administration of the test, two separate reports of testing irregularity must be filed on OTISS. If the superintendent or school system test coordinator declares a misadministration, the misadministration must be documented and reported using the appropriate procedures outlined on OTISS.

Examples of testing irregularities include, but are not limited to:

#### *Eligibility Issues*

- Eligible students were not tested
- Ineligible students were tested

#### *Accommodation Issues*

- Approved accommodation not provided
- Approved accommodation not provided appropriately
- Accommodation provided but not approved/documented
- Accommodation *Test Administrator Reads Test Aloud (in English)*, or *Computer Reads Test Aloud—Student Controlled*, or *Interpreter/Transliterators Signs/Cues Test* provided during an assessment that measures reading skills (e.g., end-of-course (EOC) English II or end-of-grade (EOG) English Language Arts/Reading)

#### *Security Issues*

- Allowing access to the tests to school or district personnel who do not have a legitimate need
- Allowing students to review secure test materials before the test administration
- Leaving students unsupervised with access to secure test materials
- Missing test materials
- Secure test materials not properly returned
- Test materials not stored in a secure, locked facility
- Items from secure test(s) used for instruction
- Reproduction of a secure test in any manner or form

- Failure to cover or remove in the testing room bulletin board materials, classroom displays, or reference materials that provide information regarding test-taking strategies or the content being measured by the test
- Failure to return the originally distributed number of test materials to designated school personnel
- Discussing with others any of the test items or information contained in the tests or writing about them on the Internet or on social media sites
- Copies of the test made available to others
- Not maintaining security of NC Education username or password

#### *Monitoring Issues*

- Test administrator left the room unmonitored when students or secure materials were present
- Secure materials were left unattended during a restroom break or lunch break
- Testing personnel did not monitor students during break
- Test administrator did not ensure students worked independently during testing (e.g., students were not prevented from gaining an unfair advantage through the use of cell phones, text messages, or other means)
- Student(s) allowed to remove secure materials from the testing area
- Student(s) cheated by copying, using a cheat sheet, or asking for information

#### *Procedural Issues*

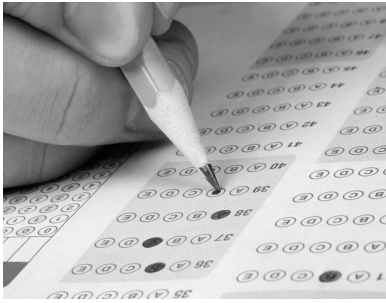
- Test administrator/proctor altered student responses
- Test administrator/proctor gave improper assistance or provided instruction related to the concepts measured by the test before the test administration or during the test administration session
- Reading or tampering with (e.g., altering, changing, modifying, erasing, or scoring) student responses to the test questions by school/district personnel
- Test administrator omitted, revised, interpreted, explained, or paraphrased test directions, test items, and/or answer choices
- Test not administered on the test date or during the testing window
- Providing students with additional time beyond the designated maximum time specified in the assessment guide (except for students with documented special needs requiring accommodations, such as *Scheduled Extended Time*)

#### *Technical Issues*

- Online test connectivity/technical problems
- Online test item(s) not displaying properly

### **Misadministrations**

School systems must monitor test administration procedures. According to SBE policy TEST-001, if school officials discover any instance of improper administration and determine the validity of the test results has been affected, they must notify the local board of education, order



the affected students to be retested, and declare a misadministration. Only the superintendent and the school system test coordinator have the authority to declare a misadministration at the local level.

When a misadministration is declared, the affected student(s) must be administered another secure form of the test (i.e., a different letter). The LEA/charter school test coordinator will specify how misadministrations are to be handled at the school and will

schedule dates and times for readministering the test in each school so that all misadministration retesting is completed within the testing window.

Only scores resulting from a valid test administration should be included in students' permanent records, used for placement decisions, or used for accountability purposes. All misadministrations must be documented and reported using the appropriate procedures outlined in the OTISS.

### **Makeup Testing**

Any student absent (i.e., not present) from the test administration must make up the test. The LEA/charter school test coordinator will specify how makeup tests will be handled at the school and will schedule dates and times for completing the makeup tests in each school so that all makeups are completed within the state-designated testing windows. There is no makeup testing for field tests.

### **Processing Test Materials**

#### *Paper-and-Pencil Administrations*

The test administrator is responsible for all test materials until they are returned to the school test coordinator after each testing session. Following testing, test administrators or other designated school personnel are required to review each answer sheet and header sheet to ensure the materials are ready to be machine scored. This includes the special codes section of each student's answer sheet.

Secure test books are **not** to be available during the reviewing process. The review must occur under secure conditions in a group setting (i.e., three or more designated school personnel). Students are **not** permitted to edit other students' answer sheets. Tampering with student responses to test questions on an answer sheet constitutes a serious breach in test security. After completing the header sheets and coding and checking each answer sheet, the test administrator is required to package and return the test materials in a secure manner for scoring as outlined in the appropriate *North Carolina Assessment Guide*. The school system test coordinator may provide separate instructions for processing the answer sheets of high school seniors preparing to graduate. *Secure test materials must not be copied or used in instruction at any time.*

The *North Carolina Assessment Guides* describe which tests are processed (scanned, scored, and reported) under the direction of the local test coordinator. The school system test coordinator establishes the schedule for scanning and scoring North Carolina multiple-choice tests at the local level. Scanning, scoring, and initial school district-level reporting occur locally, with the exception of tests that are scored by a designated NCDPI contractor. The school system test coordinator (1) provides the results (reports) from the test administrations soon after scanning/scoring is completed and (2) stores all used multiple-choice answer sheets in a secure, locked facility for six months following the return of test scores. After six months, the



used answer sheets are destroyed or recycled in a secure manner according to NCDPI policies and procedures.

### *Online Administrations*

Online tests contain secure test data, copyrighted content, and confidential student records. Therefore, test administrators, proctors, technology staff, and students must follow rules and procedures that ensure online content is not made available to anyone for any other purpose than to conduct the tests. Locally stored off-line content (e.g., cookies, cache) must be cleared or secured after accessing the test so malicious applications or users cannot gain access to secure test materials.

In addition, schools must meet specific technical requirements. Schools must review these technical requirements on days before an online assessment and must make any necessary adjustments before administering the assessment. Schools that administer an online assessment, but do not meet the technical requirements are at risk of providing students items that cannot be manipulated (e.g., technology-enhanced items), items without associated artwork (e.g., tables, graphs, symbols), and items that do not fit properly on the screen. Many technical issues can be resolved locally by ensuring that acceptable hardware is being used by the students, making adjustments to the local network, ensuring all required applications are loaded and meet necessary version requirements, and setting a minimum screen resolution.

After students complete an online test administration, required codes must be completed in the online testing system by the test administrator or other designated school personnel. In some instances, test records for students will not be submitted for scoring until the test administrator completes the codes/screens for the student.

The online tests are scored electronically on a centrally hosted server. A program that defines technical parameters scores the responses. Once scores for each item have been assigned by the program, data are then merged with student-level records for distribution to school system test coordinators. School system test coordinators are then able to generate school rosters, class rosters, and individual student reports. Initially, school district-level reporting occurs at the LEA level.

### **Requirement to Report Student Scores**

According to SBE policy TEST-001, "LEAs shall report scores resulting from the administration of districtwide and state-mandated tests to students and parents or guardians along with available score interpretation information within thirty (30) days from the generation of the score at the LEA level or from the receipt of the score and interpretive documentation from the department" (NCDPI).

### **Maintaining the Confidentiality and Security of Testing and Accountability**

#### **Data**

District test coordinators are responsible for handling confidential North Carolina Testing and Accountability Program data. Extreme caution and care must be taken to maintain the confidentiality and security of these data. Access and use of these data must comply with the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) of 1988 and its 1996 amendments, as well as all portions of North Carolina G.S. §115C that pertain to the use of educational data. Violations may result in the withdrawal of U.S. Department of Education funds and constitute misdemeanors under North Carolina law.

Confidential data must be transferred using secure methods (e.g., Secure File Transfer Protocol [SFTP], or receipted parcel delivery services, such as the U.S. Postal Service, United Parcel

Service (UPS), or Federal Express. When placing confidential data on portable devices (e.g., laptops, thumb drives), the portable device must be protected by encryption or password protection. These data are not for personal use and should not be distributed in such a way that it is possible to identify individual student scores. When producing summaries of student performance, any group with less than ten individuals must not be reported because it might be possible to identify the individual students that make up that group.

In certain limited situations, confidential student, school, or district data may be used in presentations related to school or district improvement. However, this is permissible only when such presentations are made to the leadership or instructional personnel in the school or district who would normally have access to the confidential data of the students for the purpose of improving instruction. Even in such situations, caution must be taken to ensure the data remain secure at all times.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

All individuals in the testing community play a vital role in maintaining a secure testing environment at every level—from test development to scoring and reporting. The following section outlines the roles and responsibilities of key individuals in the North Carolina Testing Program.

#### **Duties of the School System/Charter School Test Coordinator**

The local superintendent/charter school director or his or her designee shall serve as the school system/charter school test coordinator and shall oversee the following procedures:

- Annually sign a confidentiality and test security agreement that must be kept on file with the RAC.
- Ensure a written testing plan for the school system is developed and disseminated to each school before the beginning of the school year. The overall testing plan must include, but it is not limited to, rules for test administrator training, test security, proper testing environment, administering the secure tests, auditing test administrations, and preparing and returning secure test materials.
- Ensure a schedule of the state test administration dates for the school year, including field tests and special studies, is shared with teachers, students, and parents.
- Develop local policies and procedures to ensure maximum test security in accordance with the policies and procedures developed by the test publisher.
- Provide information about test security and inform staff of sanctions, penalties, or other possible consequences for test security violations.
- Designate the personnel who are authorized to have access to secure test materials. “Access” to test materials by school personnel means handling the materials but does not include reviewing tests or analyzing test items (SBE policy TEST-010).
- Assist the principal at each school in understanding his/her duties and responsibilities relative to the state testing program and the implementation of state tests.
- Ensure that all school principals read and sign annually the North Carolina *Testing Code of Ethics* and a test security agreement. The original signed copies must be kept on file with the LEA test coordinator/charter school director.
- Ensure that student placement decisions are not solely based on test scores (SBE policy SCOS-016).

- Ensure the school test coordinator and the test administrators at each school are school district or school personnel who have professional training in education and the North Carolina Testing Program (SBE policy TEST-010).
- Ensure all school test coordinators read and sign annually the North Carolina *Testing Code of Ethics* and a school test security agreement. The original signed copies must be kept on file with the LEA test coordinator/charter school director.
- Ensure all test administrators sign a test security agreement at every test administration training session and the signed forms are kept on file at the school.
- Oversee the planning and implementation of training for school test coordinators, test administrators, and proctors.
- Maintain accurate attendance records for all training sessions.
- Ensure each school establishes procedures to ensure all test administrators comply with the test publisher's guidelines.
- Ensure all appropriate staff receive training in procedures for providing approved accommodations for state-mandated tests to students with disabilities and EL students.
- Ensure each school has a secure, locked facility in which test materials will be stored and clearly understands test material handling and storage procedures. Access to the storage area must be limited to one or two authorized school personnel when secure materials are being stored. Unauthorized personnel (e.g., cleaning staff) must not have access to the storage area where secure materials are stored.
- Monitor to ensure the system and school-by-school plans for administering tests under secure conditions are implemented appropriately.
- Prohibit LEA/school employees from disclosing the general content of the tests or specific items contained in the tests to persons other than authorized employees of the school system.
- Maintain accurate records of student membership and assist in identifying students who are eligible to take the test in order to secure the appropriate quantity of materials.
- Order sufficient copies of test materials.
- Account to the NCDPI for all test materials received, and house all test materials in a secure, locked facility.
- Develop a system of checkout and check-in of test materials to ensure at each level of distribution and collection (LEA, school, classroom) all secure materials are tracked, returned, and accounted for.
- Ensure each school test coordinator develops and documents in writing a schoolwide testing plan for administering tests under secure conditions.
- Ensure each school test coordinator receives and stores test books, *Assessment Guides*, and other testing materials in a secure manner.
- Ensure each school test coordinator has a system of checkout and check-in of test materials to ensure all materials are returned and accounted for.
- Prohibit the reproduction of any or all parts of the tests. No person may copy, reproduce, or paraphrase in any manner or for any reason the test materials without the express

written consent of the test publisher.

- Ensure all eligible students are assessed.
- In conjunction with program administrators, ensure the need for test accommodations is documented and the accommodations are limited to the specific need.
- In conjunction with program administrators, monitor to ensure all documented accommodations are actually provided to students and to what extent the accommodations are used by the students during the test administrations.
- Ensure the security of test materials and the integrity of the North Carolina Testing Program are maintained at all times.
- Make a determination about the seriousness of reports of test security breaches, loss of test materials, failure to account for test materials, unauthorized reproduction or retention of test materials, or any other deviation from required security procedures.
- Declare a misadministration, when applicable, using the appropriate procedures and documentation, and ensure students are administered a different secure form of the test, if available. All misadministrations must be reported to the local board of education and the RAC, using the appropriate documentation and notification procedures.
- Investigate all reports of testing irregularities and/or violations of ethical testing practices and immediately report them to the superintendent and local school board of education.
- Use and follow all procedures in the OTISS to document and report all testing irregularities.

### **Duties of the School Test Coordinator**

The principal or principal's designee (i.e., an employee of the school/school system who has professional training in education [preferably a North Carolina educator's license] and the state testing program) shall serve as school test coordinator. The school test coordinator is responsible for monitoring test administrations within the building and responding to situations that may arise during test administrations. The school test coordinator must be accessible to test administrators and proctors during the administration of secure state tests. Because of this accessibility requirement, the school test coordinator must not be given the responsibility of administering and/or proctoring a test. The school test coordinator shall perform the following activities:

- Adhere to the district testing plan and test administration schedules established by the NCDPI and the school system test coordinator.
- Develop and document in writing a schoolwide plan for administering tests under secure conditions. For each testing session, the plan must include documentation of the accommodations and the nature of the accommodations each eligible student will receive.
- Cooperate with district or state officials in the event of an audit or monitoring visit so as to ensure the testing plans are implemented appropriately.
- Attend training sessions sponsored by the school system test coordinator on the policies and procedures for conducting a proper test administration and for reviewing and processing test materials.
- Read and sign annually the North Carolina *Testing Code of Ethics* and a school test coordinator's test security agreement. The original signed copies must be kept on file with



the LEA test coordinator/charter school director.

- Count and record the number of secure test materials, including supplemental materials, when the materials are first received from the LEA test coordinator. Report immediately to the LEA test coordinator any discrepancies in the count.
- Store test materials in a secure, locked facility. Access to the storage area must be limited to one or two authorized school personnel while secure materials are being stored. Unauthorized personnel (e.g., cleaning staff) must not have access to the facility where secure materials are stored.
- Allow test materials to be distributed immediately before the test administration (SBE policy TEST-010) unless otherwise authorized by the NCDPI.
- Accurately count and verify with each test administrator before the test administration the number of secure test materials received, including supplemental materials. Immediately report any discrepancies in the count to the LEA test coordinator.
- Immediately after each test administration, accurately count and verify with each test administrator the number of secure test materials, including supplemental materials, that are returned to the secure storage facility. Immediately report any discrepancies in the count to the LEA test coordinator.
- Return all test materials to the LEA test coordinator, as directed, immediately following the completion of the test administration.
  - Count and verify with the LEA test coordinator that the number of secure materials, including supplemental materials returned by the school, matches the count taken when the materials were first received.
- Select test administrators who are either school system or school personnel who have professional training in education (preferably a North Carolina educator's license) and the state testing program.
  - To avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest and to protect test administrators from allegations of impropriety, a test administrator should not be assigned to administer a test in a room where his or her relative or ward is tested.
    - Relatives and wards include children, stepchildren, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, siblings, in-laws, and persons under the test administrator's guardianship.
- Train all school personnel on the appropriate use of test materials; test security; the North Carolina *Testing Code of Ethics*; the *Testing Students with Disabilities* publication and published supplements (as appropriate); and the *Guidelines for Testing Students Identified as English Learners* document and published supplements (as appropriate).
- Emphasize to all school personnel that no person may copy, reproduce, or paraphrase the test materials in any manner or for any reason without the written permission of the NCDPI.
- Inform personnel that any person who learns of any breach of security, loss of test materials, failure to account for test materials, or any other deviation from required security procedures shall immediately report that information to the principal/school test coordinator and school system test coordinator.

- Implement the school system’s testing policies and procedures and initiate any additional school policies and procedures needed to ensure all eligible students are tested.
- Encourage a positive atmosphere for the test administrations.
- Assign to test administrations trained proctors who are responsible adult community volunteers (i.e., age 18 or older and not enrolled as a student in the K–12 public school system), school staff, or school system staff.
  - A proctor should not be assigned to proctor in a room where a relative or ward is to be tested. Relatives and wards include children, stepchildren, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, siblings, in-laws, and persons under the proctor’s guardianship.
  - Test administrators should not administer tests with a proctor who is a personal family member or a close acquaintance.
- Maintain the confidentiality of individual student scores when reporting test results to the public and the media.
- Prohibit the reclassification of students or the assignment of a grade of “F” or “I” for the sole purpose of not having students participate in any state assessment. (Within the first ten [10] days of a block schedule or within the first twenty [20] days of a traditional schedule, students may drop a course that has an EOC test, according to SBE policy TEST-C-003 [i].)
- Ensure student placement decisions are not solely based on test scores (SBE policy SCOS-016).
- Use and follow all procedures in the OTISS to document and report all testing irregularities.

**Duties of the Test Administrator**

Only persons who are employed by the school system, either permanently or contractually, and have professional training in education (preferably a North Carolina educator’s license) and the state testing program (SBE policy TEST-010) are permitted to administer secure state tests.

If a school contracts with a third party for the provision of instructional services (e.g., special education teachers/tutors for blind or hearing impaired students), the contracted employee can administer secure state tests only if the employee meets the following criteria:

- holds a valid North Carolina educator’s license,
- passes a criminal history check as defined in G.S.§115C-332(a)(1) that is performed at the school,
- is trained on test administration in accordance with the North Carolina Testing Program, and
- signs a test security agreement and understands the sanctions for testing violations. The signed test security agreement must be kept on file at the school.

Retired teachers, if employed by the school district as substitute teachers or members of the staff in any capacity, may administer North Carolina tests.

While the North Carolina *Assessment Guides* outline the full test administrator responsibilities, those responsibilities specifically related to test security are provided below. The test administrator shall attend to the following:

- Attend a test administration training session conducted by the school system or school test coordinator before each test administration and, if applicable, a training session on the use of accommodations (training provided solely by electronic medium is discouraged at this time).
- Read and sign a Test Security Agreement (provided by the school test coordinator) at the conclusion of every test administration training. All signed Test Security Agreements must be kept on file with the school test coordinator and should be available during the assessment monitoring process.
- Read and study thoroughly the *Assessment Guides* before the actual test administration.
- Read and study thoroughly the codified North Carolina *Testing Code of Ethics* before the test administration.
- Attend training on the *Testing Students with Disabilities* and the *Guidelines for Testing Students Identified as English Learners* documents and published supplemental documents when accommodations will be provided to students, and follow the appropriate procedures for the use of accommodations during test administrations for students with disabilities and students identified as ELs.
- Prepare the physical conditions for the testing room, including rooms to which students may be relocated. Cover or remove bulletin boards and/or instructional displays that contain content being measured or test-taking strategies; cover or remove all reference materials that are printed or attached on student's desks.
- Maintain test security at all times during the handling of test materials.
- Ensure each student tested has access to the appropriate test materials as specified in the *Assessment Guides*.
- Follow procedures for the distribution and collection of any supplemental materials as specified in the *Assessment Guides*.
- Count and record the number of secure test materials, including supplemental materials, before and after the test administration. Notify the school test coordinator/principal immediately of any discrepancies in the count.
- Ensure students' personal belongings are placed under their seats and not accessed during testing.
- Ensure *all* cell phones (i.e., cell phones belonging to students, the test administrator, and the proctor) are turned off, and they, or any other electronic devices, are not accessed at any time during the test administration, including during the break(s). *Personal cell phones/electronic devices must not be used during the test administration, including breaks.*
- Administer the test to all eligible students (SBE policy TEST-010).
- Conduct an unbiased administration of the test according to the policies, procedures, and directions in the *Assessment Guides* and any subsequent updates developed by the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services/North Carolina Testing Program.
- Read directions to the students as they are written in the *Assessment Guides*. It is a violation of the *Testing Code of Ethics* to omit, rewrite, or paraphrase orally or in writing the instructions presented in the *Assessment Guides*. Monitor the test administration by moving quietly throughout the room and scanning the students' work areas to ensure

students follow the test directions, perform the required tasks, do not share responses, and those eligible have access to required accommodations.

- Do not, at any time, modify, change, alter, or tamper with student responses on answer sheets or on computer monitors during or after the test administration.
- Assist students with emergencies (including restroom breaks) during the test administration.
- Remain in the room throughout the entire test administration unless there is an emergency (e.g., illness, necessary restroom break). In emergency situations, it is most appropriate to send the proctor for assistance. If an emergency arises and the test administrator must leave the room, the school test coordinator must be notified.
- Provide a positive test-taking environment (SBE policy TEST-010). Avoid distracting behaviors (e.g., holding extended conversations with the proctor, reading newspapers or novels, carrying out other personal or professional duties, talking/texting on cell phones, or working on a computer or any other electronic device). See *Prohibited Items in the Testing Room* for additional information.
- Follow the procedures established by the school system test coordinator for returning all used and unused testing materials and supplemental materials to the school test coordinator.
- Under the direction of the school test coordinator, review under secure conditions in a group setting (i.e., three or more designated school personnel) each student's answer sheet to ensure it is ready to be machine scored. Students' responses are not to be modified during the review process.
- On the day of the occurrence, immediately document and report testing irregularities to the school test coordinator, who will ensure the irregularities are submitted in the OTISS.

### **Duties of the Proctor**

According to SBE policy TEST-010, "proctors shall serve as additional monitors to help the test administrator assure that testing occurs fairly." A trained proctor should be assigned and present for each test administration regardless of the number of students tested. The principal shall select trained proctors who are responsible adult community volunteers (i.e., age 18 or older and not enrolled as a student in the K–12 public school system), school staff, or school system staff. A proctor should not be assigned to proctor in a room where his or her relative or ward is to be tested. Relatives and wards include children, stepchildren, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, siblings, in-laws, and persons under the proctor's guardianship. Additionally, a proctor should not be assigned to proctor with a test administrator who is a personal family member or a close acquaintance.

The proctor assigned can be either (1) a one-on-one, full-time proctor (i.e., one proctor assisting one test administrator in a single testing room) or (2) a roving proctor (e.g., one proctor assisting up to three test administrators in three testing rooms).

- For best practices, a roving proctor should be used to monitor only the following test administrations:
  - administrations in which the test administrator is not the teacher of record (i.e., not the teacher of the group tested)
  - administrations in which the test administrator is not a teacher of the subject matter being tested





- Roving proctors must be trained before each test administration.
- Roving proctors should not be responsible for more than three (3) centrally located classrooms.
- There should not be more than thirty (30) students in any testing class or group. Testing rooms with over thirty (30) students should have a one-on-one, full-time proctor.
- The makeup of test groups that will be monitored by a roving proctor must be considered. For example, a small group of students who are easily distracted might not be the best test group for a roving proctor.
- Students must be informed before the day of the test administration that a roving proctor will be coming into and out of the testing room to monitor their test administration.
- The LEA/charter school test coordinator must specify the logistics for roving, such as the room assignments, the time spent monitoring in each testing room, and whether the testing room door is to be left open or closed during the testing session.
  - When scheduling roving proctors' time, test coordinators must ensure that equal time is provided to all rooms being monitored. The last room monitored should not remain without a proctor for too long. For example, if the roving proctor is assigned to three rooms and is instructed to move every thirty minutes, the last room will not have a proctor until after an hour of testing has passed. A better scenario would be to have the roving proctor start with five minutes in room 1, go to room 2 for five minutes, move to room 3 for five minutes, and then repeat the process.

All proctors must attend a test administration training session before each test administration and understand and agree to carry out the duties described. Proctors are expected to work with the test administrator to minimize distractions and interruptions during the test administration.

- Proctors may **not** assist students in choosing responses to test questions and shall not, at any time, modify, change, alter, or tamper with student responses to test questions.
- At no time shall proctors be alone with secure test materials (e.g., student test books; answer sheets; computers with loaded, active assessments).
- At no time shall proctors be responsible for reading directions, test questions, or otherwise providing information for the test administration to students.
- Proctors must not pick up test materials from or return test materials to the school test coordinator at the beginning or the end of testing unless accompanied by the appropriate school personnel.
- Proctors must not distribute to or collect from students any test materials at the beginning of, during, or at the conclusion of testing.

Specifically, the proctor is to help the test administrator ensure the following:

- Physical conditions in the room are appropriate for testing (e.g., seating, lighting, temperature), and order is maintained during the test administration.
- Personal cell phones are turned off, and they, or any other electronic devices, are not accessed at any time during the test administration, including during the break(s).

- Materials are appropriately distributed to each student (e.g., answer sheet and test book match, test books are the correct grade level).
- Students with emergencies (including restroom emergencies) during the test administration are assisted.
- Distracting behaviors are avoided during testing, such as holding extended conversations with the test administrator, reading newspapers or novels, carrying out other personal or professional duties, or using electronic devices.
- All testing irregularities are reported to the school test coordinator and/or principal on the day of the occurrence.

# Appendix A

## Testing Code of Ethics

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### Introduction

In North Carolina, standardized testing is an integral part of the educational experience of all students. When properly administered and interpreted, test results provide an independent, uniform source of reliable and valid information, which enables

- *students* to know the extent to which they have mastered expected knowledge and skills and how they compare to others;
- *parents* to know if their children are acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in a highly competitive job market;
- *teachers* to know if their students have mastered grade-/course-level knowledge and skills in the curriculum and, if not, what weaknesses need to be addressed;
- *community leaders and lawmakers* to know if students in North Carolina schools are improving their performance over time and how the students compare with students from other states or the nation; and
- *citizens* to assess the performance of the public schools.

Testing should be conducted in a fair and ethical manner, which includes:

#### *Security*

- assuring adequate security of the testing materials before, during, and after testing and during scoring
- assuring student confidentiality

#### *Preparation*

- teaching the tested curriculum and test-preparation skills
- training staff in appropriate testing practices and procedures
- providing an appropriate atmosphere

#### *Administration*

- developing a local policy for the implementation of fair and ethical testing practices and for resolving questions concerning those practices
- assuring all students who should be tested are tested
- utilizing tests which are developmentally appropriate
- utilizing tests only for the purposes for which they were designed

#### *Scoring, Analysis, and Reporting*

- interpreting test results to the appropriate audience
- providing adequate data analyses to guide curriculum implementation and improvement

Standardized test scores are only one of the many indicators of how well the student is achieving. Such information should be used in conjunction with all other available information known about a student to assist in improving student learning. The administration of tests required by applicable statutes and the use of student data for personnel/program decisions shall comply with the *Testing Code of Ethics* (TEST-010), which is printed on the following pages.

## Testing Code of Ethics

- (a) This Rule sets out the administrative testing procedures and testing code of ethics and shall apply to all public school employees, including charter school and regional school employees, who are involved in the state testing program.
- (b) The superintendent/charter school director or superintendent's/charter school director's designee shall develop local policies and procedures to ensure maximum test security in coordination with the policies and procedures developed by the test publisher.
- (c) The superintendent/charter school director or superintendent's/charter school director's designee shall instruct personnel who are responsible for the testing program in testing administration procedures. This instruction shall include test administrations that require testing accommodations and shall emphasize the need to follow the directions outlined by the test publisher.
- (d) The superintendent/charter school director or superintendents/charter school director's designee shall designate the personnel who are authorized to have access to secure test materials. Access to test materials by school personnel means handling the materials but does not include reviewing tests or analyzing test items.
  - (1) Persons who have access to secure test materials shall not use those materials for personal gain.
  - (2) No person may copy, reproduce, or paraphrase in any manner or for any reason the test materials without the express written consent of the test publisher.
- (e) The principal shall ensure test security within the school building.
  - (1) The principal shall store test materials in a secure, locked facility. The principal shall allow test materials to be distributed immediately before the test administration.
- (f) Any breach of security, loss of materials, failure to account for materials, or any other deviation from required security procedures shall be reported immediately to the principal, school test coordinator, school system (LEA) test coordinator, superintendent/charter school director, and regional accountability coordinator.
- (g) Preparation for testing.
  - (1) The superintendent/charter school director shall ensure that school system (LEA) test coordinators:
    - (A) secure necessary materials;
    - (B) plan and implement training for school test coordinators, test administrators, and proctors;
    - (C) ensure each school test coordinator and test administrator is trained before each test administration on the policies and procedures for conducting a proper test administration and for processing and returning test materials; and
    - (D) in conjunction with program administrators, ensure the need for test accommodations is documented and that accommodations are limited to the specific need.
  - (2) The principal or the principal's designee shall serve as school test coordinator.
  - (3) The principal shall ensure the school test coordinator:
    - (A) maintains test security and accountability of test materials;
      - (1) Before each test administration, the school test coordinator shall accurately count and distribute test materials.
      - (2) Immediately after each test administration, the school test coordinator shall collect, count, and return all test materials to the secure, locked storage facility.
    - (B) establishes any needed school policies and procedures to assure all eligible students are tested fairly;
    - (C) identifies and trains personnel, proctors, and backup personnel for test administrations; and
    - (D) encourages a positive atmosphere for testing.
  - (4) Test administrators shall be school personnel who have professional training in education

and the state testing program.

- (5) Teachers shall provide instruction that meets or exceeds the state-adopted curriculum standards to meet the needs of the specific students in the class. Teachers may help students improve test-taking skills by:
  - (A) helping students become familiar with test formats using curricular content;
  - (B) teaching students test-taking strategies and providing practice sessions;
  - (C) helping students learn ways of preparing to take tests; and
  - (D) using resource materials such as test questions from test item banks and linking documents in instruction and test preparation.

(h) Test administration.

- (1) The superintendent/charter school director or superintendent's/charter school director's designee shall:
  - (A) assure each school establishes procedures to ensure all test administrators comply with test publisher guidelines;
  - (B) inform the local board of education of any breach of this code of ethics; and
  - (C) inform school system (LEA) test coordinators and principals of their responsibilities.
- (2) The school test coordinator shall:
  - (A) assure school personnel know the content of state and local testing policies;
  - (B) implement the school system and local testing policies and procedures to assure all eligible students are tested fairly;
  - (C) ensure trained proctors are assigned to test administrations by the principal; and
  - (D) ensure all testing irregularities are reported to the school system (LEA) test coordinator.
- (3) Test administrators shall:
  - (A) administer tests according to the directions in the assessment guide and any subsequent updates developed by the test publisher;
  - (B) administer tests to all eligible students;
  - (C) report all testing irregularities to the school test coordinator; and
  - (D) provide a positive test-taking environment.
- (4) Proctors shall serve as additional monitors to help the test administrator assure that testing occurs fairly.

(i) Scoring. The school system test coordinator shall:

- (1) ensure each test is scored according to the procedures and guidelines defined for the test by the test publisher;
- (2) maintain quality control during the entire scoring process, which consists of handling and editing documents, scanning answer documents, and producing electronic files and reports. Quality control shall address at a minimum accuracy and scoring consistency.
- (3) maintain security of tests and data files at all times, including:
  - (A) protecting the confidentiality of students at all times when publicizing test results; and
  - (B) maintaining test security of answer keys and item-specific scoring rubrics.

(j) Analysis and reporting. Educators shall use test scores appropriately. This means that the educator recognizes that a test score is only one piece of information and must be interpreted together with other scores and indicators. Test data help educators understand educational patterns and practices. The superintendent shall ensure that school personnel analyze and report test data ethically and within the limitations described in this paragraph.

- (1) Educators shall maintain the confidentiality of individual students. Publicizing test scores or any written material containing personally identifiable information from the student's educational records shall not be disseminated or otherwise made available to the public by any member of the State Board of Education, any employee of the State Board of Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, any employee of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, any member of a local board of education, any

employee of a local board of education, or any other person, except as permitted under the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. §1232g.

- (2) Educators shall release test scores to students, parents, legal guardians, teachers, and the media with interpretive materials as needed.
  - (3) Staff development relating to testing must enable school personnel to respond knowledgeably to questions related to testing, including the tests, scores, scoring procedures, and other interpretive materials.
  - (4) Items and associated materials on a secure test shall not be in the public domain. Only items that are within the public domain may be used for item analysis.
  - (5) Data analysis of test scores for decision-making purposes shall be based upon:
    - (A) disaggregation of data based upon student demographics and other collected variables;
    - (B) examination of grading practices in relation to test scores; and
    - (C) examination of growth trends and goal summary reports for state-mandated tests.
- (k) Unethical testing practices include, but are not limited to, the following practices:
- (1) encouraging students to be absent the day of testing;
  - (2) encouraging students not to do their best;
  - (3) using secure test items or modified secure test items for instruction;
  - (4) changing student responses at any time;
  - (5) interpreting, explaining, or paraphrasing the test directions or the test items;
  - (6) reclassifying students solely for the purpose of avoiding state testing;
  - (7) not testing all eligible students;
  - (8) failing to provide required accommodations during testing;
  - (9) modifying scoring programs including answer keys, equating files, and lookup tables;
  - (10) modifying student records solely for the purpose of raising test scores;
  - (11) using a single test score to make individual decisions; and
  - (12) misleading the public concerning the results and interpretations of test data.
- (l) In the event of a violation of this Rule, the State Board of Education may, in accordance with the contested case provisions of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes, impose any one or more of the following sanctions:
- (1) withhold any applicable monetary incentive awards;
  - (2) file a civil action against the person or persons responsible for the violation for copyright infringement or for any other available cause of action;
  - (3) seek criminal prosecution of the person or persons responsible for the violation; and
  - (4) in accordance with the provisions of 16 NCAC 6C .0312, suspend or revoke the professional license of the person or persons responsible for the violation.

History Note: Authority G.S. 115C-12(9)c.; 115C-81(b)(4);  
Eff. November 1, 1997;  
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