Test Security

Any action that compromises test security or leads to the invalidation of an individual student's or a group of students' test scores will be viewed by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) as inappropriate use or handling of tests and will be treated as such. Below are guidelines to assist system personnel in determining which activities might compromise test security or score validity. Please note that this list is not exhaustive. Any concern regarding test security must be reported to GaDOE immediately. Assessment Administration Division staff members are available to help system personnel develop and implement appropriate test security procedures.

It is a breach of test security if anyone performs any of the following:

- coaches examinees during testing, or alters or interferes with examinees' responses in any way;
- gives examinees access to test questions or prompts prior to testing;
- copies, reproduces, or uses in any manner inconsistent with test security regulations all or any portion of secure test booklets/online testing forms;
- makes answers available to examinees;
- reads or reviews test questions before, during (unless specified in the IEP, IAP, or EL/TPC), or after testing;
- questions students about test content after the test administration;
- fails to follow security regulations for distribution and return of secure test materials as directed, or fails to account for all secure test materials before, during, and after testing (NOTE: lost test booklets constitute a breach of test security and will result in a referral to PSC);
- uses or handles secure test booklets and answer documents for any purpose other than examination;
- fails to follow administration directions for the test;
- fails to properly secure and safeguard pass codes/usernames necessary for online test administration;
- participates in, directs, aids, counsels, assists, encourages, or fails to report any of these prohibited acts;
- erases, marks answers, or alters responses on an answer document.

Failure to safeguard test materials or to comply with test administration procedures could adversely affect an individual's certification status. Such must be reported to the GaDOE and may be referred to the Educators Ethics Division of the Professional Standards Commission as failure to adhere to established policies and procedures. Under no circumstances may any tests be reproduced or duplicated for individual or group use unless authorized by GaDOE. Failure to comply with the U.S. Copyright Laws protecting these materials could result in legal action. Any instance of violation of copyright laws must be reported immediately to the GaDOE.

It is the responsibility of all personnel to follow protocol as they become aware of testing irregularities. Security breaches and testing irregularities can have long-reaching impact on students, schools, and systems, as well as upon any personnel who might be responsible for causing or contributing to any circumstance leading to a testing irregularity. Examples of testing irregularities include, but are not limited to, missing test booklets; copying of (by machine or in handwriting) or verbal communication about test content; failure to create an appropriate test environment (e.g., relevant teaching aids visible by students during the test session); teachers assisting students with answers during the test session; actual or cloned test items presented to students before, during, or after the test session (except released test items or items in the OAS); testing session disruption for any reason; student cheating (i.e. sharing answers, using electronic devices to copy, send, share answers or test information, plagiarism).

Any signs of any testing irregularity must be dealt with immediately. The Examiner should contact the School Test Coordinator if any cheating or security violations are suspected. The School Test Coordinator, in turn, notifies the System Test Coordinator.

If any system personnel become aware of testing irregularities within the testing window, the GaDOE Assessment Administration Division Assessment Specialist should be called immediately to determine if the test session can/should continue or if student scores must be invalidated (incidences of cheating will result in invalid student scores). If the decision is made to discontinue the testing process, Assessment Administration Division staff will assist system personnel with re-scheduling and/or re-testing, if appropriate. If the irregularity is revealed following the scheduled testing window, Assessment Administration Division staff should be contacted to determine if the scores on the affected tests are valid. All reports to the GaDOE should be made by the System Test Coordinator.

Occasionally, persons from the general public will contact the Assessment Administration Division with allegations of classroom/school/system testing irregularities. In these cases, the Assessment Administration Division staff will generally contact the System Test Coordinator, asking that person to investigate, determine if possible unethical conduct is involved, make the appropriate report to Professional Standards Commission with a copy to the Assessment Administration Division, and report the incident on the GaDOE 0385 form which is signed by the system Superintendent.

The Assessment Administration Division of the GaDOE will review all reports of irregularities and may advise the local system as to whether a report of possible unethical conduct should be made to the PSC.

Irregularities in Security Procedures include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Examinee was given access to test questions or prompts prior to testing.
- Test Examiner or other personnel copied or reproduced and distributed secure test materials.
- Test Examiner or other personnel coached examinee(s) during testing.
- Test Examiner or other personnel altered or interfered with examinee's responses in some way.

- Test Examiner or other personnel made responses available to the examinee.
- Test Examiner or other personnel failed to follow regulations and/or procedures for test security.
- Test Examiner or other personnel used or handled the test materials for a purpose other than test administration (i.e. teacher takes a test home to review; teacher/administrator reads a test booklet after school, etc.)

Irregularities in Test Administration include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Test Examiner or other personnel failed to follow administration directions for the test.
- Examinee's test booklet, answer sheets, or portfolio entries (for GAA) became lost.
- Teaching aids are displayed in the testing environment (i.e. a bulletin board containing relevant instructional materials) during testing.
- Test Examiner fails to provide an examinee with a documented accommodation or provides examinee with an accommodation that is not documented and therefore is not appropriate.

Steps for Reporting a Testing Irregularity

School Test Coordinator:
- Communicate with the System Test Coordinator about a possible testing irregularity.
- System Test Coordinator will provide guidance to investigate the possible testing irregularity.
- Written narrative must be provided by all parties involved in the irregularity.
- Return all documentation to the System Test Coordinator.

System Test Coordinator:
- Collect Testing Irregularity Forms and documentation from School Test Coordinators
- Compile documentation for each incident reported.
- Call the assessment specialist in the Assessment Administration Division to determine appropriate coding for student answer documents. (Additional information about using the Portal to report irregularities will be shared during each pre-administration webinar.)
- Include appropriate information and documentation in the GaDOE 0385.
- The Assessment Administration Division will inform the local district if it is required to report the irregularity to the Professional Standards Commission.