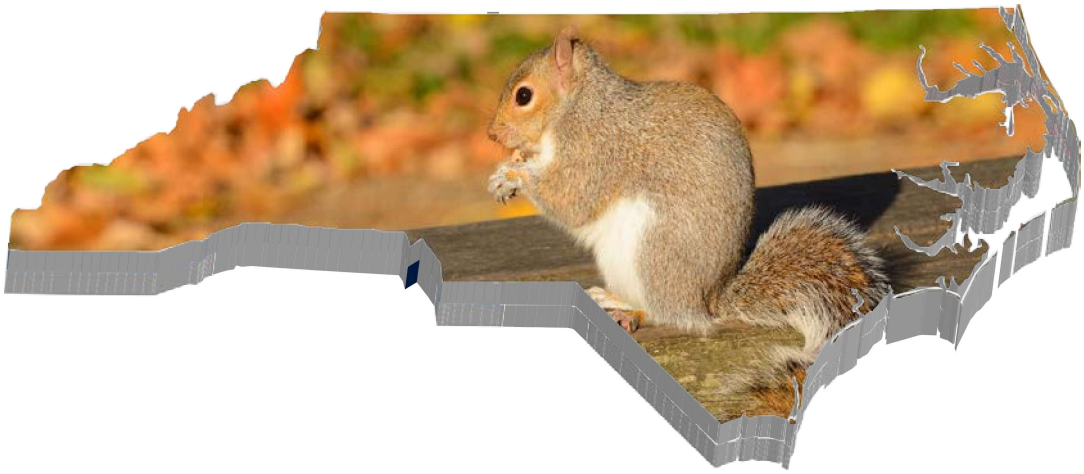
TESTING SECURITY Protocol and Procedures for School Personnel



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The Testing Security Protocol and Procedures for School Personnel Publication

General Statute §115C-174.10 states that the Annual 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 Annual 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 Annual Testing Program is conducted in a manner that is fair, consistent, and equitable for all students.

The *Testing Security Protocol and Procedures for School Personnel* publication is provided to principals, teachers, and other school personnel as a reference for implementing secure, uniform test administrations in North Carolina schools. This testing security publication should be kept in schools, and additional copies may be downloaded from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) website at https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/testing-and-school-accountability/testing-policy-and-operations/testing-security.

Secure Testing Practices

Test Security

Secure test materials include, but are not limited to, 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 either electronic or paper format. North Carolina test materials 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 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 any specific test questions or information contained in the tests or write about the questions on the internet or on social media sites. This prohibition includes teachers serving on item writer or test reviewer committees. Discussing information related to the content of specific test questions or test forms is prohibited and a direct violation of the *Testing Code of Ethics*. Anyone involved in the testing process is expected to adhere to this guideline. In doing so, the integrity of tests is maintained, which helps minimize the use of costly resources when test security has been compromised.

Excerpts from secure tests 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 for personal gain.

Testing Code of Ethics

The *Testing Code of Ethics* (16 N.C. Admin. Code 06D .0311) stresses the importance of maintaining test security at all times and addresses appropriate professional practices for central office staff, school administrators, test coordinators, teachers (test administrators), and proctors in the areas of securing tests; administering tests; and scoring, reporting, and interpreting test results.

Ethical testing practices include the following:

- 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 questions 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* is included in this publication (see Appendix A) and is also printed in all North Carolina test administration guides. Before each test administration, test administrators and proctors must read and review thoroughly the *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 public school unit test coordinator for reference.

Use of Secure State Tests

According to 16 N.C. Admin. Code 06D .0310, "Secure tests as defined in N.C. Admin. Code 06D .0307(b) of this Section developed by the State of North Carolina as part of the Annual Testing Program shall not be used for purposes other than to measure reading proficiency at the beginning of grade three, end-of-grade progress for grades three through eight, end-of-course competencies, and competencies in English, mathematics, reading, and science at the end of grade 11 as tested in the ACT, and competencies in mathematics, reading, and information location at the end grade 12 as tested in ACT WorkKeys."

Internet Security, Security of Test Materials, and Online Content

Public school units are required to use a secure platform to access online, state-mandated tests. It is imperative that public school unit testing and technology staff work closely together to prepare devices appropriately for online tests.

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 available to anyone for any other purpose than to conduct the test administrations. Users must not access a test and then leave the device 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 public school unit for state online tests must have a plan in place that addresses security concerns, including the ability and permission to (1) monitor device use, (2) install and uninstall programs or apps for testing and security monitoring, and (3) secure the devices for close inspection before and after testing, as needed. Additionally, public school units must have acceptable usage policies that include detailed provisions addressing state online testing security and student consequences for security violations.

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.
- Do not save or allow devices to autofill secure passwords. Selecting this option poses a security threat.

Test Preparation

Released Test Questions

The NCDPI Division of Accountability Services has released test forms available for all state-mandated tests. Released test forms reflect the currently adopted content standards. Released tests that are aligned to previously adopted standards are retired and no longer publicly available.

Released test forms are publicly available and can be found by searching for the type of test and resource (Released Forms) on the test document website: https://www.dpi.nc.gov/testing-documents.

Copies of any documents suspected of containing secure test questions or information from secure tests must be submitted to the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services through the regional accountability coordinator (RAC) for clearance before use in the public school unit. Appropriate items for review would be any material of which the origin is not known. Public school units and the Division of Accountability Services must work together to maintain the security of the testing program.

Testing Notification

According to 16 N.C. Admin. Code 06D .0307(g), "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 advise students and parents or guardians of the dates the tests will be administered and how the results from the tests will be used. Also, information provided to parents shall include whether the State Board of Education or the local board of education requires the test(s). (h) LEAs shall report scores resulting from the administration State-mandated tests from the Annual Testing Program to students and parents or guardians no later than 30 days after the test is administered and along with available score interpretation information within 30 days from receipt of the scores and interpretive documentation from the NCDPI. Selected LEAs and schools, determined through stratified random samples, shall participate in field testing and other sample testing."

Testing Window

All state-mandated tests have a designated test date or testing window. The testing window is outlined in the Annual Testing Program's operational testing calendar which is posted on the NCDPI website at Testing and School Accountability | NC DPI. Failing to administer the secure tests on the test date or during the testing window designated by the NCDPI Division of

Accountability Services results in a testing irregularity. For additional information refer to the *North Carolina Test Coordinators' Policies and Procedures Handbook*.

Eligible Students

Per 16 N.C. Admin. Code 06G .0315(a) "All students enrolled in a public school unit (PSU) in grades 3 through 8 or in high school courses in which an end-of-course (EOC) assessment is administered shall participate in the State Annual Testing Program. PSUs shall report to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) test results for:

(1) beginning of grade 3 reading proficiency
(2) grades 3 through 8 end-of-grade (EOG) English language arts/reading and mathematics;
(3) grades 5 and 8 EOG science;
(4) grade 10 EOC English II;
(5) grade 11 EOC assessments in NC Math 1, NC Math 3, and EOC Biology;
(6) grade 11 ACT; and
(7) grade 12 Career and Technical Education Concentrators and WorkKeys.

(b) PSUs shall administer the tests in the Annual Testing Program in accordance with the rules in this Subchapter and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), Pub. L. 89-10, 79 Stat. 27, amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Pub. L. No. 114–95, 129 Stat. 1802 (2015), and the regulations adopted thereunder.

(c) All students entitled to testing accommodations shall participate in the State Annual Testing Program using one of the following assessments as required by the student's accommodation:

(1) The standard test administration with or without accommodations, or
(2) An alternate assessment with or without accommodations.

(d) "Students entitled to testing accommodations" for purposes of this Chapter shall mean:

(1) students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) created under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 33 U.S.C. 1414, and regulations adopted pursuant to that Act:
(2) students with a plan created under 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. 794 as implemented through 34 C.F.R. 104.44, and other regulations adopted pursuant to that Act;
(3) students with documented transitory impairments with actual or expected duration of six months or less that affect their ability to demonstrate their knowledge on standard test administrations without accommodation as determined by the LEA; and
(4) students who score below Level 5.0 Bridging on the reading domain of

the WIDA Screener/ACCESS for ELLs®."

Test Materials

The appropriate test administration 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 test administration guide or are part of an approved accommodation are allowed during the test administration.

At no time are proctors to be alone with secure test materials, including devices with tests open on the screen (e.g., Start screen, Pause screen, questions 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. Every effort must be made to minimize unauthorized access to secure state tests before and after each test administration.

The public school unit test coordinator provides schools with the test materials specified in the appropriate test administration guide. School test coordinators also provide directions to test administrators for distributing the test materials.

Placing test materials on students' desks before the beginning of a test administration is a violation of the procedures outlined in the test administration 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 scratch paper or graph paper or replacing broken pencils as specified in the appropriate test administration guide) without the prior written consent of the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services through the public school unit test coordinator. Only approved supplemental materials specified in the appropriate test administration guide (or published supplements or updates) may be used during the test administration.

Accounting For and Storing Test Materials
According to 16 N.C. Admin Code 06D .0307(d) The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) shall supply the secure tests to LEAs. LEAs shall:

(1) account to the NCDPI for all secure tests received;
(2) provide a secure, locked storage facility for all secure tests received;
(3) prohibit the reproduction of any or all parts of a secure test; and
(4) prohibit their employees from disclosing the content of a secure test or specific items contained in a secure except as necessary to administer the test.

Secure test materials may be stored at the school for only a short period of time 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.

It is imperative that secure test materials be tracked and accounted for at each level of distribution. The procedure established by the school for tracking and accounting for secure test materials must be provided to the public school unit test coordinator or the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services upon request. A testing irregularity report must be submitted through the Online Testing Irregularity Submission System (OTISS) for any missing secure test materials (North Carolina test administration guides are not secure) and a school-level investigation must be completed.

Use of Prohibited Items in the Testing Room
The use of prohibited items in the testing room will constitute a misadministration or violation of the *Testing Code of Ethics.* On days before testing, teachers are expected to announce to students which items cannot be accessed in the testing room.

- **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 or electronic device during testing time must be dismissed from testing and a misadministration declared for that student.
    - If a student must be removed from testing because the student has a cell phone or electronic device during testing, the test administrator must not leave the testing room unattended. The test administrator must remain in the room, 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 or electronic devices and ensure these devices are neither used nor visible during testing, including breaks.
- **Personal belongings.** Personal belongings are allowed in the testing room. However, 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 with the opportunity to read novels or other nontextbooks (e.g., magazines) while waiting for other students to finish the test. For paper administrations, test administrators must collect student answer sheets, test books, and all ancillary materials (e.g., calculators, used papers) before students can take out their reading materials. For online tests, 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 can take out their reading materials.
- **Testing aids.** Textbooks, reference books, thesauruses, wearable activity trackers, number lines, multiplication tables, smartwatches, smartpens, music, notes, bookmarks, personal learning devices, or any unapproved testing aids are prohibited for use during testing.

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 or cooling. Seating must be arranged to discourage students from sharing responses.

The Annual Testing Program strongly discourages large-scale administrations (e.g., library, cafeteria, or multiple classrooms) that include large groups (multiple classes) of students. 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 testing room 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 on the test 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 may result 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 or theorems

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

Monitoring Students during the Test Administration

To avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest and allegations of impropriety, test administrators and proctors should not be assigned to administer or proctor test sessions where their relatives or wards are 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. The test administrator must remain in the room throughout the entire test administration session unless an emergency arises. If an emergency arises and the test administrator must leave the room, the school test coordinator must be notified to arrange for another trained test administrator to be present for the duration of testing.

Test administrators and proctors must remain attentive to their testing responsibilities throughout the entire test administration. Personal cell phones and electronic devices must not be used during the test administration, including breaks.

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

Test administrators and proctors must avoid creating distractions and

causing testing irregularities while monitoring students during the test. 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 either the test administrator or proctor needs to sit during the test administration, they 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 tests (except for students with documented special needs requiring accommodations, such as the *Test Read 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 Annual Testing Program require a standardized process of administration. For test results to be valid, all procedures included in the North Carolina test administration guides must be followed. Test administrators must follow and present the directions as written in the test administration guides. Unethical testing practices include, but are not limited to, interpreting, explaining, or paraphrasing the test directions, reading selections, or test questions. 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 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. Test administrators 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 Handbook* and any published supplements or updates.

Additional information on testing students identified as ELs may be found in the *Guidelines for Testing Students Identified as English Learners* publication.

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.

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 public school unit test coordinator immediately with any allegation of a testing violation. (Charter, lab, regional, and innovative school district [ISD] schools must contact the RAC.) The school test coordinator must then conduct a thorough investigation and complete the Report of Testing Irregularity provided through the OTISS. The OTISS irregularity report must be submitted to the public school unit test coordinator within five days of the occurrence. 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 in the same room becomes ill during the administration of the test, two separate reports of testing irregularity must be filed in OTISS. If the superintendent or public school unit test coordinator declares a misadministration, the misadministration must be documented

and reported using the appropriate procedures outlined in the OTISS.

Examples of testing irregularities include the following:

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 and/or documented
- Accommodation *Test Read Aloud* (*in English*) or *Interpreter/Transliterator Signs/Cues Test* provided during a test that measures reading skills (e.g., EOC English II or EOG reading)

Security Issues

- Allowing others access to the tests, including school or district personnel who do not have a legitimate need
- Allowing students to review secure test materials before the test administration
- Missing test materials
- Secure test materials not properly returned
- For online testing, failing to maintain security of NC Education username and password
- Failing to store secure test materials in a secure, locked facility
- Failure to cover or remove bulletin board materials, classroom displays, or reference materials (printed or attached) on students' desks that provide information regarding test-taking strategies or the content being measured by the test
- Reproducing items from secure test(s) in any manner or form
- Using items from secure test(s) for instruction
- Failing 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

Monitoring Issues

- Failing to prevent students from cheating by copying, using a cheat sheet, or asking for information
- Failing to prevent students from gaining an unfair advantage through the use of cell phones, text messages, or other means
- Allowing students to remove secure materials from the testing site
- Failing to monitor students and secure test materials during breaks
- For online testing, leaving devices unsupervised when secure online tests are open and visible

- Leaving the testing room unmonitored when students and secure materials are present

Procedural Issues

- Paraphrasing, omitting, revising, interpreting, explaining, or rewriting the script, directions, or test items, including answer choices
- Reading or tampering with (e.g., altering, changing, modifying, erasing, deleting, or scoring) student responses to the test items
- Failing to administer the secure tests on the test date or during the testing window designated by the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services
- Failing to follow the test schedule procedures or makeup test schedule designated by the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services
- Providing students with additional time beyond the designated maximum time specified in the test administration guide (except for students with documented special needs requiring accommodations, such as *Scheduled Extended Time*)
- Test administrator or proctor giving improper assistance during the test

Technical Issues (Online Testing)

- Online test connectivity or technical problems
    - Schools must report online test connectivity and technical problems that occur during the administration of online tests when a student(s) is not able to successfully complete the test. Reports do not need to be entered for students who successfully complete the test despite a technical issue.
- Online test questions not displaying properly

Misadministrations

Public school units must monitor test administration procedures. According to 16 N.C. Admin. Code 06D .0307, "(e) LEAs shall monitor test administration procedures. If a school employee discovers any violation of the rules in this Subchapter, he or she shall notify the principal, charter school director, or school test coordinator who shall notify the superintendent or the LEA test coordinator. If the superintendent or the LEA test coordinator determines that the violation affected the validity of the test for its intended purpose, he or she shall have the authority to order the affected students to be retested. (f) If NCDPI determines that the failure to administer a test in accordance with the rules in this Subchapter produced a result which is invalid for measuring student achievement, then NCDPI may remedy the error or order the LEA to remedy the error, including requiring retesting students."

When a misadministration is declared, the affected student(s) must be

administered another secure form of the test (i.e., a different letter or form number when available). The public school unit 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 ninety-five percent participation rule requirements remain in effect, and it is the expectation that all students be tested. There is no allowable appeal for exclusion from participation. The public school unit 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. There is no makeup testing for field tests or special studies.

Processing Test Materials

Paper 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 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 (when applicable) and coding and checking each answer sheet, the test administrator is required to package and return the test materials to the school test coordinator.

The public school unit test coordinator establishes the schedule for scanning and scoring multiple-choice tests at the local level. Scanning, scoring, and initial school-level reporting occur locally, except for tests that are scored by a designated NCDPI contractor. The public school unit test coordinator (1) provides the results (reports) from the test administrations soon after scanning and 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 the Annual Testing Program's 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 should review these technical requirements on days before an online test administration and must make any necessary adjustments before administering the test. Schools that administer an online test but do not meet the technical requirements are at risk of providing students questions that cannot be manipulated (e.g., technology-enhanced items), questions without associated artwork (e.g., tables, graphs, symbols), and questions that do not display 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 special codes must be completed in the online testing system by the test administrator or other designated school personnel by 7:00 p.m. on the testing day.

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

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."

Requirement to Report Student Scores
According to 16 N.C. Admin. Code 06D .0307, "(h) LEAs shall report scores resulting from the administration State-mandated tests from the Annual Testing Program to students and parents or guardians no later than 30 days after the test is administered and along with available score interpretation information within 30 days from receipt of the scores and interpretive documentation from the NCDPI."

Confidentiality of Student Scores When Publicizing Test Results
The confidentiality of students must always be protected when publicizing or 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

- publicly posting student names and test results and
- publicly announcing student names and test results in any way.

As stated in the *Testing Code of Ethics*, "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* (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 N.C. Admin. Code 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 or reporting test results.

Handling and Transmitting Personally Identifiable Information
Public school units and NCDPI staff frequently need to share information from individual student records to resolve data issues and answer program area questions. Employees of public school units, the NCDPI, or other education institutions are legally and ethically obliged to safeguard the confidentiality of any private information they access while performing official duties. Private information regarding students and staff should always be transmitted securely.

The FERPA (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a federal law that applies to all educational agencies and institutions (e.g., schools) that receive funding under any program administered by the U.S. Department of Education. Among several purposes, FERPA was enacted to protect the privacy of students' educational records.

For those public school units 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.

To protect the confidentiality of individuals from those who are not authorized to have access to individual-level data, Personally Identifiable Information (PII) should be encrypted during transmission using one of the following methods, in order of preference:

- **Secure FTP Server** based on SFTP or FTPS protocols.
    - Preferred method and most widely acceptable standard for transmitting encrypted data.
- **Encrypted Email**
    - If secure FTP capabilities do not exist, encrypted email can be used.
- **Password Protected Email**
    - 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 phone call, never in notes or documents accompanying the actual data file, or another email. In addition, the password should not be transferred via voicemail.

When sending email, either encrypted or password protected, ensure that it contains the least amount of FERPA-protected information as possible. The subject line of an email should not include FERPA-protected information; the body of an email should not contain highly sensitive FERPA-protected information, such as a student's Social Security Number or full name. FERPA-protected data should always be in an attached encrypted or password protected file, never in the body of an email.

Fax machines and printers used to send and receive secure data must be in areas that are secure.

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

Public school units should not use private or personal accounts to store students' personally identifiable information. Public school units who wish to use the G Suite for Education (previously called Google Apps for Education) should consult with their legal team to ensure compliance with FERPA and state security guidelines.

Furthermore, it is recommended to use the Data Leak Protection (DLP) feature of G Suite to protect data, even though FERPA compliance does not require DLP.

For additional information, see the publication *"Best Practices Guide: PII and Email."*

Maintaining the Confidentiality and Security of Testing and Accountability Data

Public school unit 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 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 public school unit data may be used in presentations related to school or public school unit improvement. However, this is permissible only when such presentations are made to the leadership or instructional personnel in the school or public school unit 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 always remain secure.

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 Annual Testing Program.

Duties of the District Test Coordinator

"The local superintendent in a local education agency (LEA) shall act as or appoint an LEA test coordinator to assist in the local administration, reporting, and interpretation of results of any "secure test," as defined in Rule .0307(b) of this Section, administered in the Annual Testing Program, as defined in Rule .0307(c) of this Section (b) LEA test coordinators shall attend required monthly test administration training sessions provided by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction on subjects including proper test administration, test security, appropriate use of accommodations, scanning and scoring answer sheets, and preparation of test materials for scoring at a central site. (c) LEA test coordinators shall in turn conduct training in the Annual Testing Program for any school test coordinators. (d) School test coordinators shall conduct training in the Annual Testing Program for any test administrators or proctors. (e) The LEA test coordinator shall arrange for the scanning, scoring, and reporting of results for any secure test administered in the Annual Testing Program from tests adopted by the State Board of Education." (16 N.C. Admin. Code 06D .0308)

The district test coordinator will train local personnel who are responsible for test administration procedures. This instruction shall include procedures for test administrations that require accommodations and shall emphasize the need to follow the directions outlined by the test publisher. Maintaining test security is a major responsibility of the district test coordinator.

District test coordinators shall perform or oversee the following procedures:

- Annually sign a *Confidentiality and Test Security Agreement* that must be kept on file with the RAC. The required *Confidentiality and Test Security Agreement* for public school unit test coordinators is included in the *North Carolina Test Coordinators' Policies and Procedures Handbook*.
- Ensure an annual written testing plan for the district is developed and disseminated to each school before the beginning of the school year. The overall testing plan must include, but 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. An electronic copy of the testing plan must be submitted annually to the RAC. A sample *Public School Unit Annual Testing Plan* is included in the *North Carolina Test Coordinators' Policies and Procedures Handbook* and can be edited to suit the needs of the public school unit.

- At the beginning of each school year, provide information to teachers, students, and parents or guardians advising them of the districtwide and state-mandated tests that students will be required to take during the school year (including field tests and special studies), the dates the tests will be administered, and how the results from the tests will be used. Also, the information provided to parents must include whether the SBE or local board of education requires the test(s).
- 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 test materials. "Access" to test materials by school personnel means handling the materials but does not include reviewing tests or analyzing test items.
- Assist the principal or director at each school in understanding the duties and responsibilities relative to the Annual Testing Program and the implementation of state tests.
- Ensure that all school principals and directors read and sign annually the *Testing Code of Ethics* and a test security agreement. The original signed copies must be kept on file with the district test coordinator. The required *Confidentiality and Test Security Agreement* Form for principals and directors can be found in the *North Carolina Test Coordinators' Policies and Procedures Handbook*.
- Ensure that all school test coordinators read and sign annually the *Testing Code of Ethics* and a school test coordinator test security agreement. The original signed copies must be kept on file with the district test coordinator. The required *Confidentiality and Test Security Agreement* for school test coordinators is included in the *North Carolina Test Coordinators' Policies and Procedures Handbook*.
- Make available to school test coordinators the test security agreement form for test administrators participating in training for the administration of North Carolina state-mandated tests. The required *Test Accountability and Security Form* for test administrators is included in the *North Carolina Test Coordinators' Policies and Procedures Handbook*.

- Ensure all test administrators sign the *Confidentiality and Test Security Agreement* Form at every test administration training session and the signed forms are kept on file at the school.
- Ensure that student placement decisions are not solely based on test scores.
- 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 Annual 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.
- Oversee the planning and implementation of training for school test coordinators, test administrators, and proctors.
  - It is a local decision to have proctors serve as additional monitors who help the test administrator assure testing occurs fairly.
- Maintain accurate attendance records for all training sessions and keep these records on file at the testing office.
- 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 students identified as ELs.
- Ensure each school has a secure, locked facility in which test materials will be stored and staff clearly understand 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 district and school plans for administering tests under secure conditions are implemented appropriately.
- Prohibit public school unit employees from disclosing the general content of the tests or specific items contained in the tests to persons other than authorized employees of the district.
- Ensure all eligible students are tested.
- 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 enough copies of test materials.
- Account to the NCDPI for all test materials received.

  - Count and record the number of secure test materials, including supplemental materials, when the materials are first received.
  - Report immediately to Technical Outreach for Public Schools (TOPS) any discrepancies in the count.
- Develop a system of checkout and check-in of test materials to ensure that at each level of distribution and collection all secure materials are tracked, returned, and accounted for.
- District test coordinators need to ensure each school test coordinator
  - develops and documents in writing a schoolwide testing plan for administering tests under secure conditions;
  - receives and stores test books and other testing materials in a secure manner; and
  - 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 the test materials in any manner or for any reason.
- Train all school personnel on the appropriate use of test materials, test security, the *Testing Code of Ethics*, the *Testing Students with Disabilities Handbook* and published supplements, and the *Guidelines for Testing Students Identified as English Learners* publication and published supplements.
- In conjunction with program administrators, ensure the need for test accommodations is documented and the accommodations are limited to specific needs.
- In conjunction with program administrators, monitor to ensure all documented accommodations are 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 Annual Testing Program are maintained at all times.
- Investigate all reports of testing irregularities and violations of ethical testing practices and immediately report them to the superintendent, local school board, principal or director, and RAC.
- 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 test misadministration when appropriate 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, principal or director, and the RAC, using the appropriate documentation and notification procedures.

- Use and follow all procedures in the OTISS to document and report all testing irregularities within five days of the occurrence.

Duties of the Charter, Residential, Renewal, ISD, and Regional Test Coordinator

Charter, residential, renewal, ISD, and regional school test coordinators are responsible for maintaining the responsibilities normally maintained by the LEA test coordinator, per 16 N.C. Admin. Code 06D .0308, "LEA test coordinators shall attend required monthly test administration training sessions provided by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction on subjects including proper test administration, test security, appropriate use of accommodations, scanning and scoring answer sheets, and preparation of test materials for scoring at a central site. (c) LEA test coordinators shall in turn conduct training in the Annual Testing Program for any school test coordinators. (d) School test coordinators shall conduct training in the Annual Testing Program for any test administrators or proctors. (e) The LEA test coordinator shall arrange for the scanning, scoring, and reporting of results for any secure test administered in the Annual Testing Program from tests adopted by the State Board of Education."

The principal, director, or a designee shall act as or appoint a school testing and accountability coordinator. The school test coordinator is to facilitate the local administration, reporting, and interpretation of test results and other accountability measures in the Annual Testing Program. The school test coordinator will train school test administrators on test administration procedures. This instruction shall include procedures for test administrations that require accommodations and shall emphasize the need to follow the directions outlined by the test publisher. Maintaining test security is a major responsibility of the 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 and all site coordinators must be accessible to test administrators during the administration of secure state tests. Because of this accessibility requirement, the school test coordinator and site coordinators must not be given the responsibility of administering and/or proctoring a test.

School test coordinators shall perform or oversee the following procedures and responsibilities:

- Annually sign the *Testing Code of Ethics* and a *Confidentiality and Test Security Agreement* that must be kept on file with the RAC. The public school unit *Confidentiality and Test Security Agreement* is required for

school test coordinators who report directly to their RAC and is included in the *North Carolina Test Coordinators' Policies and Procedures Handbook*.

- Ensure that the school principal or director reads and signs annually the *Testing Code of Ethics* and the *Confidentiality and Test Security Agreement*. The original signed copies must be kept on file with the school test coordinator. The required *Confidentiality and Test Security Agreement* form for principals or directors is included in the *North Carolina Test Coordinators' Policies and Procedures Handbook*.
- Ensure all test administrators attend training for the state-mandated tests and sign the required *Test Accountability and Security Form* at the end of every training session. The *Test Accountability and Security Forms* must be kept on file with the school test coordinator and should be available during the assessment monitoring process. The required *Test Administrator Test Accountability and Security Form* is included in the *North Carolina Test Coordinators' Policies and Procedures Handbook*.
- Ensure an annual written testing plan for the school is developed and disseminated to the school principal or director and appropriate staff before the beginning of the school year. The annual testing plan must include, but 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. A sample *School Annual Testing Plan* is included in the *North Carolina Test Coordinators' Policies and Procedures Handbook* and can be edited to fit the needs of the school. An electronic copy of the school testing plan must be submitted annually to the RAC.
- At the beginning of each school year, provide information to teachers, students, and parents or guardians advising them of the state-mandated tests that students will be required to take during that school year (including field tests and special studies), the dates the tests will be administered, and how the results from the tests will be used. Information provided to parents must include whether the SBE or the local board requires the test(s).
- Establish any needed school policies and procedures to assure 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 test materials. "Access" to test materials by school personnel means handling the materials but does not include reviewing tests or

analyzing test items.

- Assist the school principal or director in understanding their duties and responsibilities relative to the Annual Testing Program and the implementation of state tests.
- Establish procedures to ensure all test administrators comply with the test publisher's guidelines.
- Oversee the planning and implementation of training for test administrators and proctors.
  - It is a local decision to have proctors serve as additional monitors who help the test administrator assure testing occurs fairly.
- Ensure all appropriate staff receive training in procedures for providing approved accommodations for state-mandated tests to students with disabilities and students identified as ELs.
- Maintain accurate attendance records for all training sessions and keep these records on file at the school.
- If the school's testing occurs at the same time at one or more nonadjacent sites, ensure a trained test coordinator is assigned to each of these separate sites.
- Ensure all eligible students are tested.
- 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.
- Ensure the school has a secure, locked facility in which test materials will be stored and staff clearly understand 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.
- Order enough copies of test materials.
- Account to the NCDPI for all test materials received.
  - Count and record the number of secure test materials, including supplemental materials, when the materials are first received.
  - Report immediately to TOPS any discrepancies in the count.
- Develop a system of checkout and check-in of test materials to ensure all secure materials are tracked, returned, and accounted for at each level of distribution and collection.
  - Distribute test materials immediately before the test administration unless otherwise authorized by the NCDPI.
  - Accurately count and verify with each test administrator before the test administration the number of secure test materials and supplemental materials received.
  - 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, locked storage facility.
  - Verify with TOPS that the number of secure materials returned by the school matches the count taken when the materials were first received by the school.
- 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.
- Monitor to ensure plans for administering tests under secure conditions are implemented appropriately.
- Ensure the security of test materials and the integrity of the Annual Testing Program are maintained at all times.
- Prohibit 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.
- In conjunction with program administrators, ensure the need for test accommodations is documented, and the accommodations are limited to specific needs.
- In conjunction with program administrators, monitor to ensure all documented accommodations are provided to students and to what extent the accommodations are used by the students during the test administrations.
- Select test administrators who are school personnel that have professional training in education (preferably a North Carolina educator's license) and the Annual 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 *Testing Code of Ethics*; the *Testing Students with Disabilities Handbook* and published supplements (as appropriate); and the *Guidelines for Testing Students Identified as English Learners* publication 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 must immediately report that information to the school principal or director and the school test coordinator, who in turn will inform the RAC.
- Encourage a positive atmosphere for the test administrations.
- 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 test.
- Ensure that student placement decisions are not solely based on test scores.
- Use and follow all procedures in the OTISS to document and report all testing irregularities within five days of the occurrence.
- Follow the *Irregularity Investigation Checklists* on the OTISS for all serious security or procedural irregularities. Immediately report these irregularities to the school director or principal and to the RAC. Submit completed and signed *Irregularity Investigation Checklists*, investigation summaries, and all pertinent investigation documentation to the NCDPI within five business days of the occurrence (or date incident identified).
- Notify the school director and RAC for consensus before deciding whether to declare a misadministration.

Duties of the School Test Coordinator

The principal or principal's designee (i.e., an employee of the school who has professional training in education [preferably a North Carolina educator's license] and the Annual 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 during the administration of secure state tests. Because of this accessibility requirement, the school test coordinator must not be given the responsibility of administering or proctoring a test.

The school test coordinator performs the following:
- Adhere to the public school unit testing plan and test administration schedules established by the NCDPI and the public school unit 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 public school unit 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 *Testing Code of Ethics* and a *School Test Coordinator Confidentiality and Test Security Agreement*. The original signed copies must be kept on file with the public school unit test coordinator, principal or director. The *School Test Coordinator's Confidentiality and Test Security Agreement* is included in the *North Carolina Test Coordinators' Policies and Procedures Handbook*.
- Count and record the number of secure test materials, including supplemental materials, when the materials are first received from the public school unit test coordinator. Report immediately to the public school unit 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 unless otherwise authorized by the Annual Testing Program.
- Accurately count and verify with each test administrator before the test administration the number of secure test materials and supplemental materials received. Immediately report any discrepancies in the count to the public school unit 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, locked storage facility. Immediately report any discrepancies in the count to the public school unit test coordinator.
- Return all test materials to the public school unit test coordinator, as directed, immediately following the completion of the test administration.
    - Count and verify with the public school unit test coordinator that the number of secure test materials, including supplemental materials returned by the school, matches the count taken when the materials were first received.
- Select test administrators who are either public school unit or school personnel who have professional training in education (preferably a North Carolina educator's license) and the Annual 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 *Testing Code of Ethics*, the *Testing Students with Disabilities Handbook* and published supplements (as appropriate) and the *Guidelines for Testing Students Identified as English Learners* publication and published supplements (as appropriate).
- Ensure all test administrators attend training for the state-mandated tests and sign a test security agreement at the end of every training session. The test security agreements must be kept on file with the school test coordinator and should be available during the assessment monitoring process. The required *Test Administrator Test Accountability and Security Form* is included in the *North Carolina Test Coordinators' Policies and Procedures Handbook* and may be edited to suit the needs of the school.
- 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 must immediately report that information to the principal, school test coordinator, and the public school unit test coordinator.
- Implement the public school unit's testing policies and procedures and initiate any additional school policies and procedures to ensure all eligible students are tested.
- If administering tests online, complete the Online Assessment Tutorial for the associated test(s) and ensure every student participating in the online test(s) has completed the appropriate tutorial at least one time at the school before test day.
- Prepare the physical conditions for the testing room, including rooms to which students may be relocated.
  - Cover or remove bulletin boards and instructional displays that contain content being measured or test-taking strategies.
  - Cover or remove all reference materials on testing rooms' walls, students' desks, or workstations that might be a source of direct answers.
- Encourage a positive atmosphere for the test administrations.

- 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 the students participate in a state test.
- Ensure that student placement decisions are not solely based on test scores.
- Use and follow all procedures in the OTISS to document and report all testing irregularities.

Duties of the School Counselor

Per G.S. § 115C-316.1(a) counselors shall spend at least eighty percent of their work time providing direct services to students. Direct services do not include the coordination of standardized testing. During the remainder of their work time, counselors shall spend adequate time on school counseling program support activities that consist of professional development, consultation, collaboration, and training; and program management and operations. School counseling program support activities do not include the coordination of standardized testing. However, school counselors may assist other staff with the coordination of standardized testing (e.g., being trained as a test administrator or proctor). This policy does not apply to charter schools, regional schools, restart schools, or the ISD.

Duties of the Test Administrator

Only current or retired professional educators as defined in G.S. 115C-270.1.2 (an administrator, teacher, or student services personnel) or teachers who

(1) are employed by local education agencies (LEAs); and

(2) have training in the Annual Testing Program

May serve as test administrators as part of the Annual Testing Program.

While the North Carolina test administration 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:

- Prepare for and attend a test administrator training session(s) conducted by the public school unit test coordinator or school test coordinator before each test administration.
- Attend training on the *Testing Students with Disabilities Handbook* and the *Guidelines for Testing Students Identified as English Learners* publication 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.

- Read and sign the *Test Administrator Test Accountability and Security Form* (provided by the school test coordinator) at the end of every test administration training session. All signed test security agreements must be kept on file with the school test coordinator and should be available during the assessment monitoring process. The required *Test Administrator Test Accountability and Security Form* is included in the *North Carolina Test Coordinators' Policies and Procedures Handbook*.
- Read and study thoroughly the appropriate test administration guide before the actual test administration. Review the student directions (script) and be prepared for the variations required by the testing conditions.
- Read and study thoroughly the codified *Testing Code of Ethics* before the test administration.
- 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 test administration guide.
- Follow procedures for the distribution and collection of any supplemental materials as specified in the test administration guide.
- Count and record the number of secure test materials, including supplemental materials, before and after the test administration. Notify the school test coordinator or principal immediately of any discrepancies in the count.
- Ensure students' personal belongings are not accessed during testing.
- Ensure all cell phones (i.e., cell phones belonging to students, test administrators, and proctors) 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 and electronic devices must not be used during the test administration, including breaks.
- For online administrations, never share usernames or passwords. User accounts are confidential.
- Before beginning an online administration, confirm the student's name and the appropriate test's name are correctly identified on the student's device.
- Administer the test to all eligible students.
- Conduct an unbiased administration of the test according to the policies, procedures, and directions in the test administration guide and any subsequent updates developed by the NCDPI Division of Accountability Services.
- Read directions to the students as they are written in the test administration guide. It is a violation of the *Testing Code of Ethics* to omit, rewrite, or paraphrase orally or in writing the instructions presented in the test administration guide.

- 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.
- Do not, at any time, read test questions from student tests or take notes or photographs of secure items or post them on the internet or social media sites.
- 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. If an emergency arises and the test administrator must leave the room, the school test coordinator must be notified to arrange for another trained test administrator to be present for the duration of testing.
- Prohibit visitors from entering the classroom during the test administration, except when required for state or local monitoring of test administrations or under extreme circumstances (i.e., emergency situations).
- Provide a positive test-taking environment. Avoid distracting behaviors (e.g., reading newspapers or novels, carrying out other personal or professional duties, talking or texting on cell phones, or working on any other electronic device).
- Follow the procedures established by the public school unit 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, the test administrator must 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

It is a local decision whether to require proctors to "serve as additional monitors that help test administrators assure that testing occurs fairly" (16 N.C. Admin. Code 06D .0311). For vendor-made assessments test coordinators must ensure the proctor guidelines from the test publisher are followed.

For public school units that opt to assign proctors for state tests, the following best practices may be considered.

- The principal should be responsible for selecting proctors who are school staff or responsible adult community volunteers (i.e., age eighteen or older and not enrolled as a student in the K–12 public school unit).
- 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).
- 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.
- Students should be informed before the day of the test administration that a proctor will be assisting the test administrator in monitoring their test administration.
- Proctors must attend a proctor training session before the test administration and understand and agree to carry out the duties described.
    - The training session should thoroughly cover proctors' responsibilities as outlined in *The Proctor's Guide* (published by the Annual Testing Program).
    - Proctors should read or review thoroughly the *Testing Code of Ethics* and its sanctions.
    - Proctors should sign and date a copy of the *Testing Code of Ethics* to be kept on file at the school. School test coordinators should also review *The Proctor's Guide* when conducting proctor training.

Appendix A: *Testing Code of Ethics*

Introduction to the Testing Code of Ethics

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 or 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.

In order to achieve those objectives, teachers and administrators must conduct testing 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 learning. Test scores should be used in conjunction with all other available information about a student to understand student progress and improve student learning. When administering tests, school administrators and teachers must comply with applicable statutes, rules and policies. In particular, administrators and teachers must comply with the *Testing Code of Ethics* (16 N.C. Admin. Code 6D .0311), which is printed on the following page.

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 superintendent's/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) With respect to 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);
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