

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

Student Assessment Division

Test Security Supplement

December 2005

Purpose of this Supplement

Maintaining the security and integrity of the Texas student assessment program plays a crucial role in the effort to ensure valid test scores and to promote fairness at all levels. As the stakes associated with student performance rise and the complexity of the assessment program increases, test administration personnel face a more difficult challenge in managing the testing program.

In a review commissioned last January, it was affirmed that one of the most important components of the Texas Education Agency's security prevention and enforcement measures should be training enhancements. TEA has since focused more resources on expanding training and developing tools such as this supplement in an effort to assist coordinators with practices that promote a secure testing program. The information herein is organized from the perspective of issues a coordinator might encounter before, during, and after a test administration and is meant to provide guidance. **This document is not intended to replace any procedures or instructions contained in the *District and Campus Coordinator Manual* or test administrator manuals.** It is provided to testing personnel in hopes of encouraging successful and incident-free test administrations.

What Can You Do to Make Sure Your Program is Secure?

Things to Consider BEFORE a Test Administration



Plan Ahead

Planning plays a key role in ensuring a successful testing program. Listed below are some of the things coordinators should consider when planning for a test administration:

Storing test materials

All secure test material must be kept in locked storage when not in use.

- ___ Have you reviewed your advance letter and materials list to determine whether your secure area is large enough to store all secure materials you will receive from the contractor?
- ___ Has each campus established its own secure area?
- ___ Do you have enough room to sort all the materials you'll receive for each administration?
- ___ Have you identified the authorized personnel who will have access to the locked storage?

Transporting secure materials to and from campuses

The ultimate responsibility of accounting for test materials falls upon the district testing coordinator; however, the campus coordinators play an integral role in supporting this task. Using some type of tracking process or procedures such as the Materials Control Form can greatly assist in your ability to locate all secure materials in your possession throughout a test administration.

- ___ Have you established a secure method for transferring materials to the individual campuses?
- ___ Are the individuals transporting the materials authorized to handle secure materials?
- ___ Have you established sign-off procedures to identify who is responsible for materials when they are not in your possession?

Tracking coverage

Test material coverage is assigned to the district. Any additional materials that are required at a campus must be tracked to that campus. This also applies to secure materials that are transferred between campuses within a district or between districts.

- Do you have procedures for distributing coverage materials?
- Do you have a tracking document you can use to record booklet security numbers and destination?
- Do the campuses have a tracking document for recording transferred booklets?
- Do you have a process for ensuring that coverage is accounted for after the administration?

Ensuring that campus coordinators have procedures in place to track secure materials at the campus

Because campus coordinators play such a crucial role in the handling of secure materials, it's important that they have similar procedures in place for tracking secure materials.

- Do all campuses have procedures established for checking secure materials in and out to test administrators each day?
- Does each campus have check-in/check-out procedures established and documented?
- Do campus coordinators know that they should verify and account for all booklets each day?
- Do campus coordinators have procedures for properly packing and returning material to the district?



Training

Training is one of the most effective and crucial activities in which a district testing coordinator can invest time and resources. Preparing for and conducting as many training sessions as possible will be one of the district coordinator's best ways to avoid problems.

Develop a training plan

District coordinators should schedule as many training sessions as possible and train as many individuals as they can. All training sessions for campus coordinators should be held by the deadline(s) specified in the calendar of events contained in the *District and Campus Coordinator Manual*.

- Have you attended district coordinator training?
- Have you signed your security oath?
- Have you reviewed the training guidelines and familiarized yourself with the current *District and Campus Coordinator Manual*?
- Have you reviewed the calendar of events early enough to allow enough time to adequately train campus coordinators?
- Have you given coordinators ample notice of training dates?
- Have you made facility arrangements to hold training sessions?
- Have you developed training material for the sessions?
- Have you put together any training materials or guidelines that campus coordinators will use for their test administrator training?

Ensure that all pertinent topics are covered during campus coordinator training.

As previously stated, training is a key component of a successful testing program. It is necessary to ensure that adequate time is allocated for training sessions to ensure that all major topics are addressed. Important reminders to provide campus coordinators about what to do **BEFORE** each test administration include the following:

- ___ Read and be familiar with the coordinator and test administrator manuals.
- ___ Be knowledgeable of procedures for tracking secure materials.
- ___ Make arrangements to properly store secure test materials.
- ___ Sign a security oath.
- ___ Verify immediately that all materials have been received when shipments arrive (i.e., count the materials).
- ___ Ensure that your campus has sufficient quantities of materials.
- ___ Notify the district coordinator **IMMEDIATELY** of any shortages.
- ___ Review ID sheets and applicable answer documents.
- ___ Designate test administrators and monitors.
- ___ Schedule training sessions, verify attendance, and keep roster sheets. Remind test administrators that they must administer the tests with the appropriate manual and **READ THE TESTING SCRIPT VERBATIM**.
- ___ Arrange for make-up testing, if applicable.
- ___ Arrange testing rooms and organize test sessions.
- ___ Walk through each testing room prior to testing and verify that no visible aids are present and that the environment is conducive for testing.
- ___ Supervise the verification of precoded materials and answer documents.
- ___ Supervise the hand-gridding of scorable test booklets and blank answer documents.

Important reminders to provide campus coordinators about what to do **DURING** every test administration include the following:

- ___ Use a materials control form when distributing test materials to test administrators
- ___ Verify and account for all materials before and after testing each day.
- ___ Actively monitor testing (i.e., visit each testing area)
- ___ Be aware of any appearance of impropriety (i.e., make sure coordinators and test administrators know how to avoid situations that might lead to questions or accusations of viewing, discussing, or scoring test materials).
- ___ Ensure that students are being administered the appropriate tests and have the corresponding answer documents.
- ___ Ensure that students have marked their responses on their answer documents before they leave the testing room. (The *District and Campus Coordinator Manual* has outlined additional techniques that will be allowed to avoid the submission of blank answer documents.)

Important reminders to provide campus coordinators about what to do **AFTER** every test administration include the following:

- ___ Direct the collection of materials from the test administrators.
- ___ Account for every answer document for every enrolled student.
- ___ Verify that the correct score code is marked on each answer document.
- ___ Verify that all hand-gridding and transcribing has been done appropriately.

- ___ Account for every test booklet and secure manual (this includes any overage or transferred materials).
- ___ Double check the secure storage area for materials (especially overage or unused materials).
- ___ Follow procedures for properly boxing and labeling materials for return to the DTC.



Accounting for Secure Materials

District testing coordinators are responsible for accounting for all secure materials in the district. Proper and thorough training of all authorized personnel in the receipt, handling, tracking, and return of test materials is likely to be the best defense against the loss or late return of these items. Below are some tips that can help district coordinators account for all materials:

Prepare for the receipt of testing materials.

- ___ Did you review the advance letter and materials list? (These should arrive approximately one month prior to each test administration.)
- ___ Based on the materials list, did you verify that each campus will have sufficient test material? (If additional materials are needed, it is important to compile a list for all of your campuses and submit a single order prior to each test administration.)
- ___ Have you prepared an area to store secure and non-secure materials? (It is very important that you do not mix administrations when you return materials, so it is advised that you have a plan for keeping administrations organized in the area(s) you have identified for storage.)
- ___ Have you identified all personnel who will be authorized to have access to materials?

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

- ___ Have you verified the shipment of test materials? (For all shipments, be sure to check that all boxes are accounted for by verifying the testing program and the sequence of numbers displayed on the boxes, e.g., Box 35 of 55.)
- ___ Have you verified the contents of the non-secure test materials?

- ___ Have you verified the contents of the secure test materials?
- ___ Have you forwarded campus materials to the appropriate campuses? (Campus materials will be packaged in separate boxes with brightly colored labels.) **DO NOT DELAY** in forwarding them to the campuses.
- ___ Have you verified that all campuses have inventoried their shipments?
- ___ Have you verified that the overage material will cover the shortages?
- ___ Have you verified the tracking of overages and transferred test booklets by documenting the security numbers and the destination of the materials?
- ___ Have you distributed overage using the district's procedures for distributing secure material?

Things to Consider During an Administration



Monitoring and Oversight

Verify that campuses are following procedures for secure materials handling.

- Have you checked that campuses are using a materials control document?
- Have you checked to make sure campuses are documenting security numbers for overage materials and transferred booklets?
- Have you checked to see if campus coordinators are verifying that all booklets are being returned and are accounted for each day?

Make yourself available to answer questions and resolve issues.

- Have you set up a line of communication for campuses to contact you or district testing staff?
- Have you given campus coordinators instructions on how to contact you?
- Have you arranged for continual coverage for answering calls throughout the testing week?

Things to Consider After an Administration



Accounting for Secure Materials

District testing coordinators are responsible for the accounting and return of all the district's secure materials. These materials must be returned in accordance with the procedures and timelines outlined in the *District and Campus Coordinator Manual*. Reinforcing the use of proper procedures and guidelines to all personnel in the handling, tracking, and return of test materials is likely to be the best defense against the loss or late return of these items.

TEA is augmenting its own procedures for accounting for secure materials. Additional measures will be taken to notify districts that fail to return all secure testing materials by the designated deadlines. By increasing communication with districts, TEA hopes to provide more information to coordinators that can assist in the prompt resolution and location of missing secure materials.

Below are some tips that can help district coordinators manage the effort of accounting for all materials:

Monitor campuses and oversee the proper accounting for secure materials.



- Are you verifying that the campuses are counting all test booklets?
- Are campuses reconciling all secure materials to the original packing list?
- Have the campuses double checked their secure storage areas for overage and unused secure materials?
- Have campuses verified that all personnel have signed security oaths?
- Are the campuses using the correct packing procedures?
- Have you verified the shipment from each campus?
- Have you verified each sequence of numbers handwritten on the campus boxes?

Common Testing Irregularities and How to Avoid Them





The situations described below represent some of the more common mistakes that occur before, during, and after testing. Examples of each type of irregularity along with ways to avoid making such mistakes are provided.

✘ Eligibility Errors

Examples:




-  An eligible student was not identified to be tested or was identified but not tested.
-  A student was administered an incorrect assessment.

How to avoid:





- ___  Have you appropriately identified (at least a month in advance) which students are eligible for TAKS? TAKS-I? SDAA II? TELPAS?
- ___  Have you verified with coordinators, test administrators, and/or IEP documentation which students will take which assessments?
- ___  Have you checked your roster to confirm where students are supposed to be testing?
- ___  Have you identified all exempt students such as LEP and foreign exchange students?

✘ Individualized Education Program (IEP) Implementation Issues

Examples:







-  A student was administered the wrong instructional level of the SDAA II test.
-  A student was administered TAKS when he or she should have taken SDAA II, or vice versa.
-  A student was given an unapproved accommodation or did not receive an approved accommodation.

How to avoid:





- ___  Have you verified the appropriate instructional level for all SDAA II students?
- ___  Have you verified with coordinators and test administrators the accommodations, resources, and instructions outlined in each student's IEP?
- ___  Have you updated your roster of new incoming students with each student's IEP information?
- ___  Have you accounted for appropriate test materials – booklets and answer documents – for each examinee with an IEP?

✘ Procedural Errors

Examples:





-  An unauthorized individual (e.g., a student) was permitted to transport secure test material.
-  A test administrator failed to issue the correct manipulatives (i.e., charts, rulers, #2 pencils, dictionaries, calculators), or students were incorrectly allowed to use manipulatives.
-  A student was administered a test on the wrong day.
-  Testing personnel failed to use a test administration manual.
-  Testing personnel administered tests or handled secure materials even though they had not been properly trained.
-  A test administrator failed to read test administration scripts verbatim as outlined in the testing manuals.

How to avoid:

- ___  Have you notified coordinators and test administrators which personnel are authorized and delegated to transport secure test materials?
- ___  Have you verified with test administrators which supplemental materials are allowed for each subject and for each exam? (NOTE: Dictionaries or calculators are not permitted on TAAS.)
- ___  Have you properly trained sufficient staff in test administration procedures?
- ___  Have you verified that all test administrators have the appropriate manuals?

✘ Monitoring Errors





Examples:

-  A test administrator left a room unmonitored when secure materials or testers were present.
-  Students or secure material were left unmonitored during a break.
-  A student was improperly allowed to use a highlighter, dictionary, or calculator.
-  A student placed or received a cell phone call or text message during a test administration.

Special Note:




Students are NOT permitted to have cell phones turned on during testing. Districts are required to develop and implement procedures preventing the use of cell phones during test administrations. Additional information regarding cell phone use can be found in the monitoring sections of each test administrator manual.

How to avoid:





- ___  Have you clarified that test administrators are not to leave examinees or materials unattended?
- ___  Have you clarified with your test administrators which supplemental materials are allowed for each subject such as highlighters, charts, rulers, and/or dictionaries?
- ___  Have you checked to see which test administrators will be relieved during breaks and how?
- ___  Have you verified that all forms of visual aids have been removed from the testing rooms?

✘ Improper Accounting for Secure Materials

Examples:








-  A student's completed answer document was lost or misplaced.
-  A test administrator, campus coordinator, or district testing coordinator lost secure materials.
-  A test administrator, campus coordinator, or district testing coordinator failed to return secure material in the designated timeframe.

How to avoid:




- ___  Have you verified that all test booklets and answer documents are accounted for?
- ___  Have you checked all test booklets to make sure no answer sheets were left there accidentally?
- ___  Have you bundled test materials from the same test administration and not mixed them with any other test administration?
- ___  Have you properly labeled, identified, and tracked for your records which boxes contain what materials should any boxes be lost in transit?

✘ Incidents Resulting in a Referral to State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC)

Examples:

-  Testing personnel viewed a test before, during, or after an assessment.
-  Testing personnel discussed or revealed secure test content or student responses.
-  Testing personnel made a copy of secure materials without permission from TEA.
-  Testing personnel scored student tests.
-  Testing personnel directly or indirectly assisted students with responses to test questions.
-  Testing personnel tampered with student responses.
-  Testing personnel revealed confidential student information.

How to avoid:

-  Have you stressed that test content should not be viewed or discussed even AFTER the test administration has been completed?
-  Have you discussed with test administrators the revised policy in the *District and Campus Coordinator Manual* regarding prompting examinees to bubble in answer sheets?
-  Have you made arrangements or developed a backup plan in case a test administrator is ill, absent, or unavailable on the day of testing?

Incident Reporting



Tips for Investigating and Reporting Testing Irregularities

Despite how well prepared testing personnel may be, the possibility still exists that a mistake will be made. When incidents occur, it's important to have procedures in place to help ensure that all the necessary information is gathered to support a determination of what occurred.

TEA has also modified its processes and procedures to help simplify the gathering and reporting of testing irregularities. A new and simplified incident report form will be made available for 2006 testing, and less documentation will be required in some cases.

Here are a few guidelines to follow to help assess and report an incident:

Have you assessed what occurred?

- Have you determined that testing procedures were violated?
- Have you interviewed all individuals who were involved in or may have information about the irregularity?
- Have you determined exactly what happened and why?
- Did you prepare a timeline, if necessary, to establish when events occurred?

Have you appropriately documented the incident?

- Have you gathered statements from all individuals who were involved in or may have information about the irregularity?
- Do the statements include the name and role (title) of the individual?
- Do the statements include how the individual was involved in the incident?
- Do the statements include a description of the incident from the individual's perspective?
- Do the statements include the individual's signature?
- Do the statements include the date the statement was generated?
- Are all written statements dated and signed?

Has a corrective action plan been requested?

In an effort to simplify the reporting process, corrective action plans will not be required for the initial submission of documentation, but they may be requested based on TEA's review of the incident. When a corrective action plan is required, here are some tips to help formulate a response:

- Does the plan include a brief summary of the violation?
- Does the plan include a description of how the incident occurred?
- Does the plan include a description of why the incident occurred?
- Does the plan include a description of the specific procedure(s) that will be implemented to help prevent future occurrences of this type of violation?
- Does the plan include the name and role (title) of the person(s) responsible?
- Has the superintendent signed off on the corrective action plan?

Have you completed the reporting process?

___ Did you make sure to use the most current incident report form? (This can be downloaded from the TEA website at: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/admin/incidents/index.html>.)

___ Have you ensured that the statements and reports clearly lay out the sequence of events and explain exactly what happened?

___ Have you submitted a final, written determination about what happened and who is responsible?

Incident reporting forms can be processed more quickly if they are entered into the form provided on the Student Assessment website and are emailed to testsecurity@tea.state.tx.us. Supporting documentation that requires a signature can be faxed to (512) 463-9302 or (512) 463-8675, OR it can be scanned and submitted by e-mail as a PDF file if the district has this capability. All incidents should be reported immediately so the potential loss of accurate information is avoided.