

Guide to Test Security for the Iowa Assessments

Policy Guidelines and Best Practices

IOWA TESTING PROGRAMS

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Catherine Welch and Stephen Dunbar

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Purpose of this Guide

This guide outlines policies and best practices to ensure test security and data integrity for administrations of the *Iowa Assessments*. Ensuring test security begins with understanding the importance of valid information provided by assessments of student achievement. Test results from the *Iowa Assessments* are used for many purposes in local education agencies (LEAs) in Iowa. Critical to the validity of *any* use is the integrity of the procedures followed by school personnel in all aspects of test administration, before, during, and after testing.

Much of the content of this guide will seem like common sense to experienced teachers, test proctors and administrators. Highlighting security practices and procedures serves to better inform the public, the teachers, and the students so they collectively are best served when test results are used at the student, building, district and state levels.

This guide is a compilation of test security practices recommended by a variety of professional organizations and specialists in large-scale assessment. Source documents from the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME), the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the Association of Test Publishers (ATP), and the United States Department of Education (USDE) were consulted in preparing it. The guiding principles for best practice in test security are captured by the acronym PDIR, shorthand for Prevention, Detection, Investigation, and Remediation (Olson & Fremer, 2013). The components of PDIR represent the process for ensuring that test security is maintained at all times and that appropriate procedures are followed whenever irregularities in test administration might threaten the integrity of district test results.

Iowa Department of Education Assurances

Each year, every district superintendent and building principal in Iowa is required by the Iowa Department of Education (IDOE) to sign the document entitled “Test Administration Assurance.” (hereafter the IDOE Assurances) That document can be found at <https://www.educateiowa.gov/documents/no-child-left-behind/2016/10/2016-17-esea-update-letter>. It also is reproduced at the end of this guide. It stipulates the actions that constitute violations of test security in the administration of tests required by the IDOE as well as the consequences of test administration violations. All Iowa school administrators and teachers should read and understand the IDOE Assurances prior to testing.

Prevention

Test security and data integrity for administrations of the *Iowa Assessments* starts with prevention. Specialists agree that the old adage about an ounce of prevention applies to test security (Fremer & Ferrara, 2013). The IDOE Assurances are intended to prevent irregularities before, during, and after testing by assigning responsibility for security breaches to the LEA. Understanding the importance of information provided by assessments of student achievement is also critical in prevention. All school personnel involved in the administration of the *Iowa Assessments* need to understand the fundamental purposes of assessment as well as the range of decisions made by the LEA that rest on assessment results. This understanding is prerequisite to school personnel valuing test security procedures. These procedures are critical to the validity of test scores and the decisions they are used to support.

For administrations of the *Iowa Assessments*, the following guidelines should be followed to aid in the prevention of testing irregularities at the LEA level.

Prior to Testing -- Maintaining the Security of Test Materials

- Keep test booklets and Directions for Administration secure and accounted for at all times (before, during, and after testing)
- Have a dedicated, secure place for storage that prevents non-authorized access to test materials

- Determine which staff members have legitimate access to the storage area and keep track of who goes in and out
- Determine which staff members are responsible for maintaining the chain of custody over test materials (this applies to all administrative staff who handle test and proctoring materials)
- Schedule the times that materials will be distributed and collected
- Specify and document check in/check out procedures for test materials
- Maintain a count of the number of test booklets issued to each testing location (e.g. classroom) in the building
- Circulate a list of detailed procedures for reporting missing and damaged test materials
- Establish common scheduling time and calendar for testing
- Establish qualifications (i.e., education/credentials) for proctors and test administrators as needed
- Be sure test proctors have reviewed the Directions for Administration for the *Iowa Assessments* prior to testing

During Testing – Following Standard Conditions of Administration

- Test all students as required by the IDOE
- Follow common scheduling time and calendar for testing
- Test all examinees in a defined testing window, scheduling each subject matter test on the same date and time throughout the district
- Use seating charts and assign seating, as appropriate
- Require identification or recognition of each student as appropriate; ensure that barcode information on answer documents is matched to students
- Seat students an appropriate distance apart or use other available procedures to discourage copying
- Prohibit mobile cameras, cell phones, and other similar devices
- Have rooms proctored during the entire administration; proctors should move about the room in a way to observe, though not disrupt, students during testing
- Document proctor names and locations used for testing
- Independently monitor test administrations on a random basis
- Maintain established security procedures throughout make-up testing and special accommodations sessions
- Have materials returned to a designated location for check-in immediately after testing

After Testing – Returning Secure Test Materials to Iowa Testing Programs

- Check in all test materials following procedure established prior to testing
- Count all test booklets as they are checked in and match to counts issued to each testing location (e.g. classroom) in the building; identify and record mismatches and proctors responsible; report the number of missing test booklets to building administrator
- Count all answer documents and match those counts to the counts of test booklets

- Prepare return shipment of all answer documents and all test booklets not needed for make-ups in sealed boxes as soon as possible after testing
- Prepare return shipment of all make-up test booklets in sealed boxes as soon as possible after make-ups are completed

Detection

Although data forensics and analytics have greatly advanced in recent years (Cizek & Wollack, 2017), test security breaches and other testing irregularities are best detected *the moment they occur*. When any specific safeguard in the category of prevention fails, it is critical that procedures are in place to observe and document the irregularity. School administrators, teachers and test proctors should make clear in their communications with students and staff that the test administration and test taking process will be monitored carefully and that irregularities will be recorded and reported. Administrators should also understand that their agreeing to the IDOE Assurances comes with it the responsibility to report any irregularities they observe during testing.

Beyond direct observation as a method of detection, Iowa Testing Programs uses a variety of data forensics and analytics to screen student responses for unusual patterns of responses when possible breaches in test security are reported. In addition, test booklets and answer documents are spot checked for excessive erasures and patterns of erasures that may indicate student copying or tampering with materials after testing.

The IDOE Assurances require that direct observation of any factors listed below should be reported to the building administrator.

During Testing

- Students copying answers from other students
- Students providing assistance to or accepting assistance from other students
- Inappropriate accommodation practices or accommodations not specified in a student's IEP
- Students or teachers using prearranged signals (e.g., tapping, signing, voice inflection, facial expression) to provide correct answers to students
- Failing to follow prescribed test administration procedures leading to administration irregularities (e.g., incomplete student responses, or providing too much information so as to assist the students in correctly answering questions)

- Inappropriate proctoring by coaching or signaling students (e.g., hints, rephrasing questions, voice or facial inflection during tests read aloud), pointing out errors, or otherwise identifying correct answers during the exam
- Displaying improper information in student assessment rooms
- Referring to the specifics of any test content in, for example, the “Question of the Day,” or other approach that clues students about questions on the test
- Putting up posters or other materials that provide or clue test answers
- Failing to cover existing information boards, posters
- Giving unauthorized students extended time, prohibited materials, or other non-standard conditions.
- Allowing unauthorized people in the testing area (e.g., media, other students, teachers, or parents)

After Testing

- Altering student answer documents, changing answers, or filling in omitted items
- Falsifying identification or demographic information for students
- Exposing or releasing items that may appear on future test forms
- Divulging details about test items to others who have yet to test (note: school staff should explicitly instruct students not to do this)
- Not returning all secure testing material
- Photocopying, reproducing, disclosing, or disseminating testing materials in any way
- Failing to submit answer sheets for students expected to do poorly
- Any other action resulting in data that misrepresents the achievement levels of students within classes, schools, districts, and the State

Investigation

The authority for investigating possible breaches of test security begins at the LEA level in Iowa. By signing the IDOE Assurances, the district superintendent and building administrators agree to investigate and report security breaches regardless of source, that is, whether they arise from student, teacher/proctor, or administrator actions. In particular, the superintendent “shall determine whether the integrity of the testing program has been jeopardized, whether some or all of the test results are invalidated, and *whether a teacher or administrator has violated the Code of Ethics of the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners as found at 282—Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 25.*” The IDOE has procedures in place to support the LEA superintendent and building administrators in the investigation of testing irregularities and test security breaches, and the IDOE takes responsibility for any determination that the conditions outlined in the Assurances have been violated to an extent that the test results are invalidated.

Investigations of suspected irregularities and test security breaches involving school personnel should be confidential and undertaken with full understanding of Iowa open records law and due consideration of the potential consequences of violations. In addition, relevant LEA and IDOE policy should be taken into account.

Remediation

Just as the LEA takes the lead in preventing, detecting, and investigating breaches of test security, so too it is in the best position to determine appropriate steps to remediate. Clear communication with relevant staff and review of the principles and practices presented in this guide is one place to start. That approach places emphasis on a key tenet of all research on test security: Prevention.

When an LEA has experienced accusations or incidents related to test security, those events should be addressed appropriately with staff during future in-service activities and with students as part of preparation for future testing. To capture a teachable moment with a view toward prevention is a positive response. It offers the opportunity to reiterate to staff and students the value of reliable and valid information from student assessment, not to mention its use in informing instruction and enhancing learning. These are among the most important purposes of student assessment, and a proper focus on test security helps make them a reality.

Resource Documents

American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), and National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) Joint Committee on Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (2014). *Standards for educational and psychological testing*. Washington, DC: AERA.

Cizek, G.J. and Wollack, J.A. (Eds.) (2017). *Handbook of quantitative methods for detecting cheating on tests*. New York: Routledge.

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and Association of Test Publishers (ATP). (2013). *Operational best practices for statewide large-scale assessment programs*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.ccsso.org/resources/publications/operational_best_practices_for_statewide_large-scale_assessment_programs.html.

Fremer, J. and Ferrara, S. (2013). Security in large-scale paper-and-pencil testing. In Wollack, J.A. & Fremer, J. (Eds.), *Handbook of test security* (pp.17-38). New York: Routledge.

National Council on Measurement in Education (2012). *Testing and data integrity in the administration of statewide assessment programs*. Retrieved November 2, 2016, from http://www.ncme.org/ncme/NCME/Publication/Other_NCME_Documents/NCME/Publication/Other_NCME_Documents.aspx?hkey=e3c60ca3-18fa-43cb-a1a0-943a12f57825.

Olson, J.F. and Fremer, J. (2013). *TILSA test security guidebook: Preventing, detecting and investigating test security irregularities*. Washington, DC: Council of chief state school officers. Retrieved November 2, 2016, from http://ccsso.org/Resources/Publications/TILSA_Test_Security_Guidebook.html.

U.S. Department of Education, Institute for Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (2013). *Testing integrity symposium: Issues and recommendations for best practice*. Retrieved November 2, 2016 from <http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/index.asp?PubSectionID=1&HasSearched=0&pubspagenum=1&sort=3&order=0&L1=&L2=&searchstring=testing+integrity+symposium&searchtype=OR&searchcat2=&searchcat=title&pagesize=15&searchmonth=11&searchyear=2012&datetype=%3E%3D&pubtype=¢ername=¢er=>.

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TERRY BRANSTAD, GOVERNOR
KIM REYNOLDS, LT. GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
RYAN M. WISE, DIRECTOR

Test Administration Assurance for 2016-2017 – PUBLIC LEA
Assurance for Proper and Ethical Test Administration

ADMINISTRATION OF TESTS

In the administration of standardized tests, it is a violation of test security to do any of the following:

- 1. Provide inappropriate test preparation such as any of the following:
a. Copy, reproduce, or use in any manner any portion of any secure materials, for any reason.
b. Share an actual test instrument in any form. This includes using old copies of the Iowa Assessments (including the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills or Iowa Tests of Educational Development) and the I-ELDA (Iowa English Language Development Assessment).
c. Use test preparation materials or strategies developed specifically for annual progress reporting.
2. Deviate from the test administration procedures specified in the test examiner's manual.
3. Provide inappropriate assistance to students during the test administration.
4. Make test answers available to students.
5. Change, suggest, or fill in answers on student answer documents.
6. Provide inaccurate data on student answer documents.
7. Engage in any practice to artificially raise student scores without actually improving underlying student achievement.
8. Participate in, direct aid, counsel, assist, encourage, or fail to report any of the acts prohibited in this policy.

School administrators should ensure that school teaching staff have received professional learning regarding appropriate test administration procedures.

After testing is completed, test materials are to be returned or destroyed according to procedures outlined by individual testing programs. Districts should retain "Chain of Custody" documentation as evidence.

If test booklets are needed to carry out study of item analyses by staff, separate requests must be made to the individual testing programs, and proper procedures for custody and security must be adhered to.

CONSEQUENCES OF TEST ADMINISTRATION VIOLATIONS

If a violation of test administration protocol occurs, as determined by the superintendent following an investigation of allegations of irregularities, the superintendent shall determine whether the integrity of the testing program has been jeopardized, whether some or all of the test results are invalidated, and whether a teacher or administrator has violated the Code of Ethics of the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners as found at 282—Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 25.

Reports of students cheating on assessments shall be submitted to the building principal for investigation and disciplinary procedures.

A staff member found to have committed testing irregularities shall be subject to discipline in accordance with law and Board policy. If the staff member is a licensee of the Board of Educational Examiners, the superintendent shall make a timely report to that Board.

If the superintendent believes that assessment results are invalid, the superintendent shall make a timely report to the Iowa Department of Education.

I, _____, Superintendent of _____ School District,
(Superintendent's Name) (Name of School District)

assure that proper testing procedures and administration for assessments used to meet the reporting requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act are followed in my school district. I will take appropriate steps outlined above if district staff does not adhere to these guidelines and notify the Iowa Department of Education.

Superintendent's Signature Date

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