



Test Security Policies and Procedures

34TH ANNUAL TEXAS ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 2019

Agenda

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Maintaining the security and confidentiality of the Texas student assessment program is critical for ensuring fair and equal testing opportunities for all students. Given the high stakes associated with student performance and the need to assure parents, students, and the public that test results are meaningful and valid, it is imperative that individuals participating in the program preserve the integrity of all test content and student data through strict adherence to the instructions and procedures contained in the test administration manuals and resources.

It's the Law!

Texas Education Code (TEC)

Sec. 39.0301. SECURITY IN ADMINISTRATION OF ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS.

The commissioner shall establish procedures to ensure the security of the assessment instruments. Includes:

- Implementation of statistical methods and standards for identifying potential violations
- Identification of patterns of inappropriate assessment practices that occur over time

Sec. 39.0302. ISSUANCE OF SUBPOENAS.

The commissioner may issue subpoenas to compel the production of relevant evidence.

Sec. 39.0303. SECURE ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS; CRIMINAL PENALTY.

An individual commits a Class C misdemeanor offense if he or she intentionally discloses secure test content and/or the answer to any item in the assessment, and the disclosure is likely to affect the performance of one or more students.

Sec. 39.0304. TRAINING IN ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS ADMINISTRATION.

The commissioner may require training to participate in the assessment program.



Commissioner's Rules!

Texas Administrative Code (TAC)

19 TAC §101.3031. REQUIRED TEST ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, AND SECURITY OF ASSESSMENTS.

Districts and charter schools must comply with the procedures specified in the test administration materials, including the requirement to provide and/or receive applicable training covering general assessment program information, test security and confidentiality, test administration procedures, materials control, and records retention.

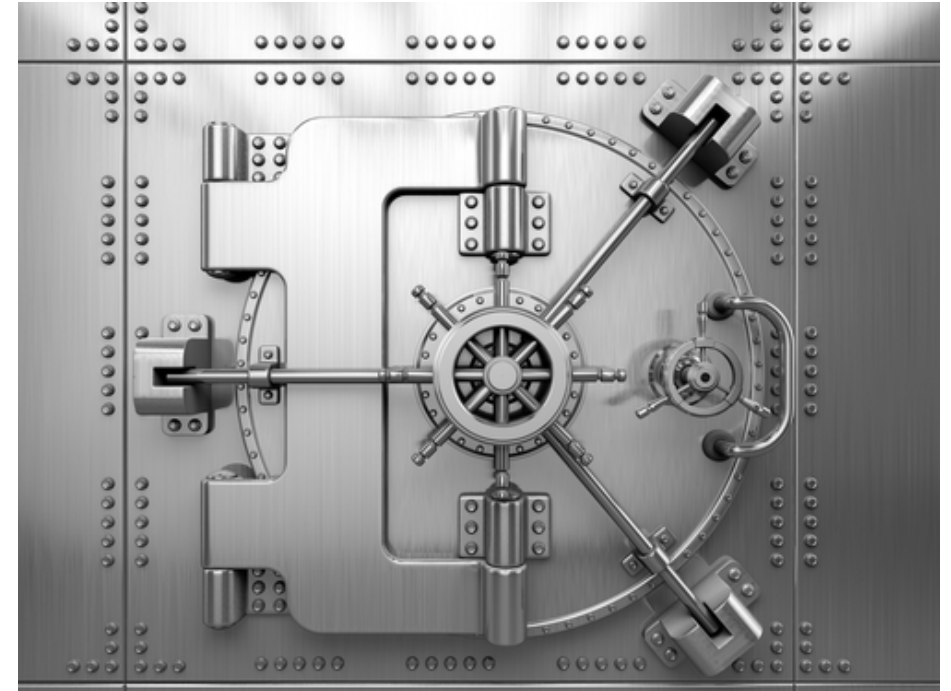
TEC and TAC References for the Texas Assessment Program
https://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/Code_references/

Test Security and Confidentiality

Test Security

Account for all secure materials before, during, and after each test administration.

- Identify who will have access to secure materials.
- Properly store secure materials.
- Track secure material.
- Maintain the integrity of tracking documentation.



Test Security and Confidentiality

Test Security

Key things to consider related to ensuring strong security and proper accounting:

- Identify a suitable location to store secure materials when not in use.
- Limit access to secure materials and ensure that those who do have access have been trained and signed a security oath.
- Use forms to maintain and track the chain of custody.
- Securely store tracking documentation.
- Reconcile answer documents.

Campus Coordinator _____

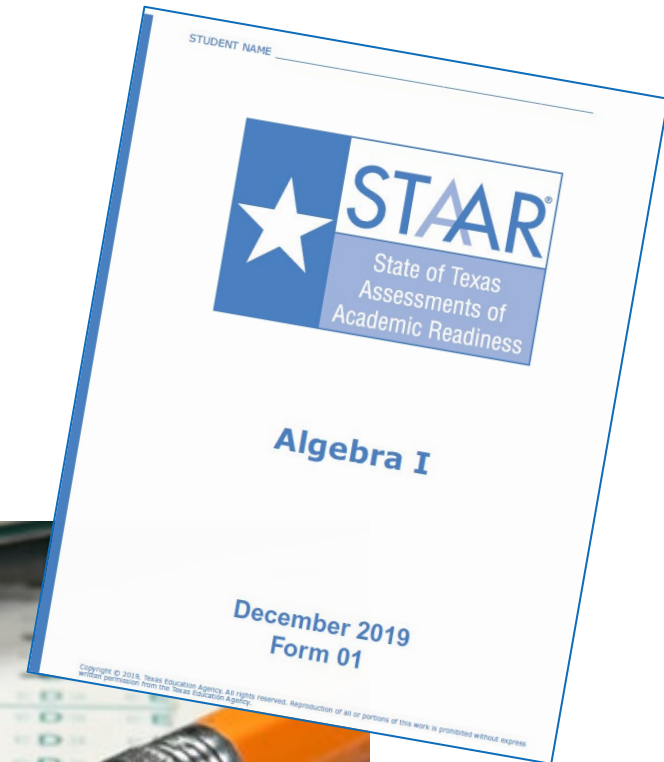
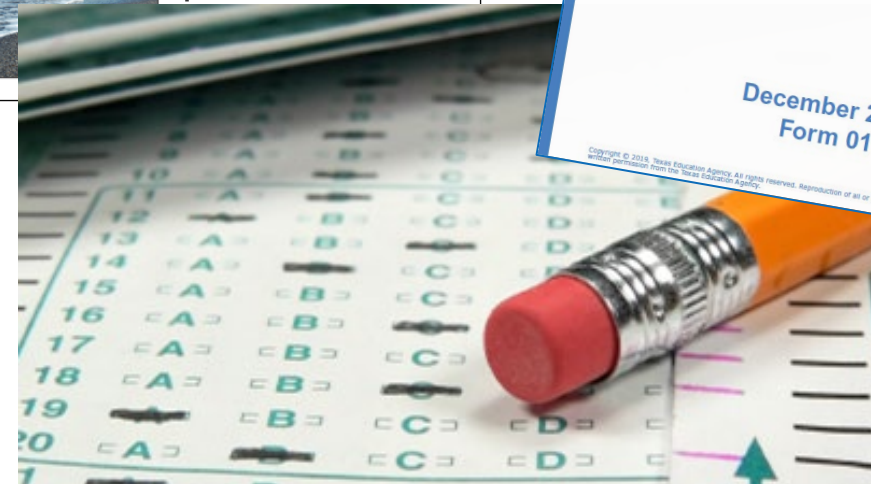
RANGE OF SECURITY NUMBERS CODED ON SECURE MATERIALS	DAY 1		DAY 2	
	OUT	IN	OUT	IN

Test Security and Confidentiality

Confidentiality

Protect all secure test content found in:

- Test booklets
- Online assessments
- Online test tickets
- Completed answer documents
- STAAR Alternate 2 item cards
- TELPAS holistically rated components
- TELPAS calibration activities



Test Security and Confidentiality

Confidentiality

How to ensure compliance with confidentiality requirements:

- Train testing personnel on their obligations concerning confidentiality.
- Monitor administrations to ensure all assessments are administered in strict accordance with the test administration procedures.
- Remain alert to students sharing confidential test content.
- Create and enforce strong cell phone and electronic device policies.
- Investigate and report any alleged or confirmed breaches.

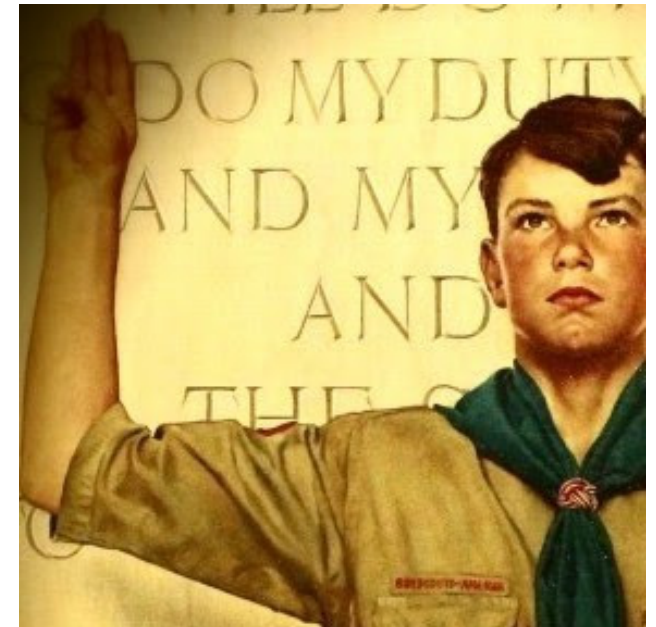


Important Policy Updates and Reminders

Security Oath Updates

Based on feedback from the field, TEA has revised the security oaths.

- Security oath links are on the security forms page. Three links cover the following roles:
 - Superintendent and Chief Administrative Officer
 - District Testing Coordinator
 - General (for CTC, TA, technology staff, proctors, raters, etc.)
- Superintendent and DTC oaths are to be completed online in two parts.
 - Part 1 – before the first state assessment administration
 - Part 2 – after the last administration of the school year
 - TEA will audit for compliance following both submission windows.
- The General oath is a fillable PDF that can be printed and saved electronically.



Important Policy Updates and Reminders

Handling of Reference Materials, Scratch Paper, Graph Paper, and Duplicated or Recorded Secure Test Content

- Districts must ensure the collection and destruction of any scratch paper, graph paper, or reference materials that students wrote on, as well as any recordings.
- Verify that campuses destroy these materials promptly after the test administration.



Important Policy Updates and Reminders

Material Security and Secure Storage

- Districts are required to implement the controls necessary to ensure the proper handling, storage, and tracking of secure materials throughout each stage of all test administrations.
- Ensure that access to secure storage is limited to one person or very few individuals and that these individuals are the only people who possess keys to the locked storage area.
- Verify that all campuses follow these storage requirements.



Important Policy Updates and Reminders

Participation in Testing

- Districts are required to provide all eligible students who are in attendance during the administration of an assessment with an opportunity to participate in the test.
- Students who are in attendance on the day of testing, choose not to participate or refuse to mark their answers on the answer document or in the online form, and who are in grades 3–8 or are taking an EOC assessment for the first time, will have their tests submitted for scoring as is.
- EOC testers who are not taking an EOC assessment for the first time are not required to participate in an administration; HOWEVER, they must be provided an opportunity.



Important Policy Updates and Reminders

Centralized Raters for TELPAS Writing Collections

- Districts now have the flexibility to designate one or more centralized raters to rate TELPAS grades 2–12 writing collections district-wide or only at a campus or grade level.

Exception: This does not apply to raters of students that have been approved for a special administration of the TELPAS listening and speaking assessment.

- Teachers of ELs in grades 2–12 are still required to assemble an EL's writing collection and receive TELPAS administration training in order to ensure that collections are assembled appropriately.
- Districts using centralized raters will need to develop their own process to gather the writing collections district-wide, campus-wide, or by grade level.



When Things Go Wrong...

Despite how well you train, something always seems to go wrong.

Testing Irregularities

Incidents resulting in a deviation from documented testing procedures are defined as testing irregularities.

Testing Irregularities

SERIOUS

Serious irregularities constitute severe violations of test security or confidentiality and can result in the individual(s) responsible being referred to the TEA SBEC Enforcement for consideration of disciplinary action.

PROCEDURAL

Procedural irregularities are less severe, more common, and typically the result of minor deviations in testing procedures.

Testing Irregularities

Serious Irregularities

- Require a prompt investigation by the district
- Require a call to TEA test security as soon as the district coordinator is made aware of the incident

Examples

- Tampering (i.e., altering student responses or falsifying holistic ratings or student responses)
- Assistance (i.e., directly OR indirectly assisting students with responses to test questions)
- Other serious irregularities
 - Viewing secure test content before, during, or after an administration unless specifically authorized by TEA or by the procedures outlined in the test administration manuals
 - Discussing or disclosing secure test content or student responses
 - Scoring student tests, either formally or informally
 - Duplicating, recording, or electronically capturing confidential test content unless specifically authorized by TEA or by the procedures outlined in the test administration manuals

Testing Irregularities

Examples of Other Serious Irregularities

- Responding to secure test questions
- Fraudulently exempting or preventing a student from participating in the administration of a required state assessment
- Receiving or providing unallowable assistance during the TELPAS calibration activities (e.g., taking notes, providing answer sheets, or verbally sharing answers)
- Encouraging or assisting an individual to engage in the conduct described in the items listed above or in any other serious violation of security and confidentiality
- Failing to report to an appropriate authority that an individual has engaged in conduct outlined in the items listed above or in any other serious violation of security and confidentiality

Testing Irregularities

Procedural Irregularities

- Do not require a call to TEA unless guidance is needed by the district
- Do not require the submission of supporting documentation

Examples of Procedural Irregularities

- Monitoring Errors
 - A test administrator left a room unmonitored while students were testing.
 - A test administrator did not actively monitor students and did not detect the improper use of a dictionary or calculator.
 - A test administrator did not verify that a student recorded his or her responses and accepted a blank answer document from the tester.
 - A test administrator was not actively monitoring when a student went back to the previous day's test and bubbled in answers he or she had left blank on the answer document.
 - Students were not prevented from using cell phones or any other electronic device to take pictures, share postings, or send messages.



Testing Irregularities

Additional Examples of Procedural Irregularities

- Accommodation Errors
 - A student was provided an unallowable accommodation.
 - A student, not approved for an accommodation, was provided the accommodation.
 - An allowable and approved accommodation was not provided to a student
 - The district failed to get the required TEA approval for an accommodation.
- Eligibility Errors
 - An English learner (EL) whose parents had waived district English as a Second Language (ESL) services was not administered the assessment.
 - A grade 9 student who is new to the district, currently enrolled in Algebra I, and eligible to participate in the EOC assessment was not administered the assessment.



Testing Irregularities

Additional Examples of Procedural Irregularities

- Improper Accounting for Secure Materials
 - Testing personnel lost completed answer document(s), test booklet(s), or other secure materials.
 - A test administrator did not return testing materials following each day's administration.
 - Secure testing materials were left unattended or secure online assessments were left open and visible.
 - Secure materials were not returned to the testing contractor by the published dates.
- Other Procedural Irregularities
 - Testing personnel did not use the test administrator manual or failed to read the test administration script verbatim as outlined in the resources.
 - A student was permitted to test beyond the allowed time limit on an assessment or was not provided the full allotment of time to complete an assessment.
 - Personnel were permitted to participate in testing even though they had not been properly trained or did not sign the appropriate oath(s).
 - A TELPAS writing collection was not submitted in accordance with required assembly criteria.

Testing Irregularities

2019 Recap

Most common irregularities reported in 2019	Number
Accommodation not provided	544
Exempt or ineligible student tested	312
Unmonitored/improperly secured test material	286
Failed to detect/prevent improper student behavior	278
Provided unallowable accommodation	276
Accepted blank answer document	174
Provided unallowable reading assistance	150
Eligible student not tested	126

Testing Irregularities

Penalties and Consequences

Serious testing violations can result in the following penalties and/or consequences:

- A referral to TEA SBEC Enforcement for consideration of disciplinary action. Referred individuals are subject to the following penalties:
 - placement of restrictions on the issuance, renewal, or holding of a Texas educator certificate, either indefinitely or for a set term
 - issuance of an inscribed or non-inscribed reprimand
 - suspension of a Texas educator certificate for a set term
 - revocation or cancellation of a Texas educator certificate
- Invalidation of student test results
- Class C misdemeanor
- Lowering accreditation status or accountability rating
- Charter sanction or revocation

Investigating Testing Irregularities



Investigating Testing Irregularities

In order to ensure that all reports to TEA accurately and succinctly describe all pertinent aspects of an incident, district coordinators should be aware of how to properly investigate all alleged or confirmed testing violations. Keep in mind the following when investigating testing issues:

- First steps in investigating all incidents
- Investigating procedural incidents
- Investigating serious incidents

Investigating Testing Irregularities

First Steps

- Act quickly and encourage campus personnel to promptly report any testing issues. Addressing a situation immediately helps to:
 - prevent minor issues from becoming more problematic;
 - increase the possibility that a remedy can be applied;
 - spot potentially serious issues and quickly obtain TEA guidance;
 - ensure that if serious:
 - all necessary information can be obtained while the individuals involved are still available and able to recall details; and
 - the possibility of testimony being influenced is minimized.
- Be careful not to underestimate the scope of a situation. Avoid the assumption that a potential error or allegation will be limited to one individual or just the situation at hand.



Investigating Testing Irregularities

First Steps

- If the situation involves secure test materials, ensure that a proper chain of custody is maintained to avoid any appearance of impropriety.
- Ascertain to the degree possible whether the situation likely involves a serious or procedural irregularity. Notify TEA immediately if it appears a serious irregularity occurred. If procedural, contact TEA if guidance is needed.
- Remain objective while gathering information.

Investigating Testing Irregularities

Investigating Procedural Irregularities

- Gather the necessary information to determine:
 - exactly what happened;
 - who was involved; and
 - how or why the error occurred.
- Determine whether additional action is needed (contact TEA for guidance, notify parents, etc.).
- Evaluate the information collected in order to report the following to TEA via the Online Incident Report:
 - Administration details
 - Testing year (2018, 2017, etc.) and administration month (March, April, May, etc.)
 - Program (STAAR, STAAR Alternate 2, TELPAS, etc.)
 - Grade/assessment level (grade 5, EOC, etc.)
 - Subject (math, reading, English I, etc.)
 - An explanation of what happened and how the event occurred

Investigating Testing Irregularities

Investigating Procedural Irregularities

- The sequence of events - clearly laid out
- The type of irregularity involved
- How the problem was resolved or remedied
- The name of the TEA staff member contacted, if applicable
- The district determination in the matter
- A Plan of Action that:
 - lists the individual steps involved and specifically addresses the irregularity type;
 - contains a timeline describing how and when the plan will be implemented;
 - describes how the district will evaluate the effectiveness of the plan; and
 - provides specific corrective actions for the district, campus, or individual(s) involved.

Investigating Testing Irregularities

Investigating Serious Irregularities

Depending on the nature of a serious violation, the following are investigative steps that should be taken in most situations:

- Gather test administration information.
 - Assemble seating chart(s), roster(s), and Materials Control Forms.
 - Identify all of the involved and potentially involved individuals.
 - Identify whether any involved students had accommodations.
- Conduct interviews.
 - Consider who will be interviewed and in what order.
 - Prepare in advance a list of questions for the interviews.
 - Document interviews in a way that most closely matches what the interviewee said. Consider including someone who can transcribe verbatim. Recording student interviews requires parent consent.
 - Review interview statements, reconcile disparities, and conduct follow-up interviews if necessary.

Investigating Testing Irregularities

Investigating Serious Irregularities

- Collect statements.
 - Have students and involved adults write statements.
 - Be sure to sign and date.
- Prepare a timeline of events.
 - Identify who had materials and at what times throughout the day.
 - Determine when events transpired.
- Assemble and evaluate student performance data.
 - Collect historical performance data for students involved.
 - Compare performance data between comparable groups.

Investigating Testing Irregularities

Investigating Serious Irregularities

- Prepare a Report.
 - Include investigative (executive) summary describing how events unfolded, what steps the district took, the high-level findings, and the district determination in the matter.
 - The following information must be provided if collected or evaluated in the course of the district's investigation:
 - interview questions, notes, and transcriptions
 - any physical evidence collected
 - any student performance data that was evaluated
 - seating charts
 - any documentation, including Materials Control Forms, used to record the chain of custody for secure test materials
- Prepare a Plan of Action.

Investigating Testing Irregularities

Investigating Serious Irregularities

REMEMBER!!!

You must notify TEA as soon as you are made aware of any alleged or suspected violations that fall under the category of a serious irregularity.

TEA has to have documentation in order to move forward with appropriate action steps. Districts are required to submit its investigative findings **within 10 days** of becoming aware of a serious irregularity.

Testing Irregularities

Reporting Requirements

Each person participating in the assessment program is responsible for reporting any violation or suspected violation of test security or confidentiality. District coordinators are responsible for notifying TEA (when applicable) and for completing the necessary steps to report violations to TEA.

All confirmed testing irregularities must be reported to TEA within 10 working days.

Reporting requirements differ based on the severity of the confirmed or alleged violation(s).

- Procedural irregularities
 - Require submission of an online report only (any supporting documentation gathered should be maintained locally)
- Serious irregularities
 - Require submission of an online report and supporting documentation

Testing Irregularities

Online Incident Report Form

- The Online Incident Report form is being updated to reflect the changes in the DCCR.
- The form will ask if the irregularity is procedural or serious.
 - If procedural, the submitter will need to select one of the five procedural categories.
 - If serious, the submitter will need to select tampering, assistance, or other.



Questions?