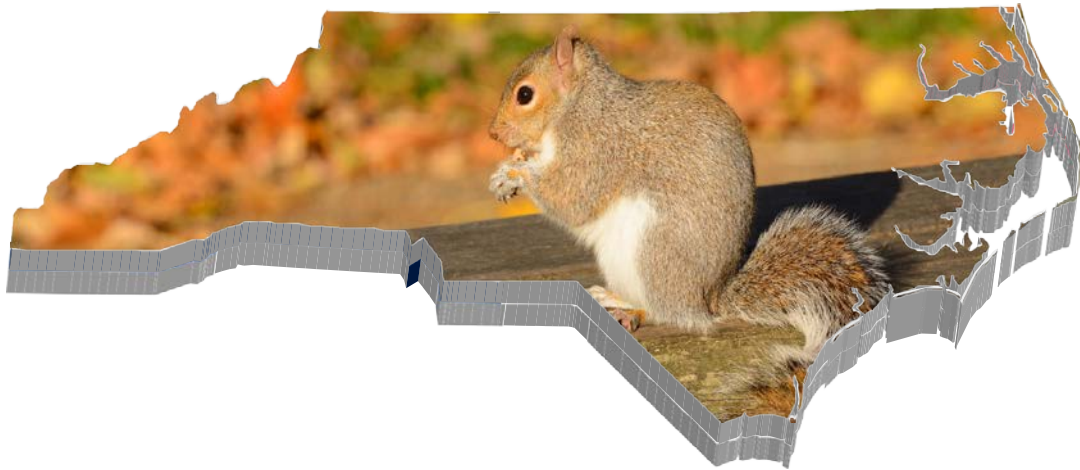


This version of the publication has been provided to nonpublic school test coordinators with key points and specific content highlighted. This version does not replace a thorough review and understanding of the entire publication.

TESTING SECURITY

Protocol and Procedures for School Personnel



2025–26



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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 should be provided to school test coordinators, principals, school personnel, and volunteers as a reference for implementing secure, uniform test administrations. This testing security publication should be kept in schools, and additional copies may be downloaded from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction’s (NCDPI) [Testing Security](#) website.

While reviewing this publication, it is important to note that a public school unit (PSU) is defined as a district, charter school, lab school, regional school, or residential school. The term PSU does not include a school within a district.

Secure Testing Practices

Test Security

Secure test materials include, but are not limited to, blueprints, test layout forms, items, item tryouts, operational and field test books, answer keys, test questions, and test book sections. Secure test materials include electronic and paper formats.

Section (d) of the [Testing Code of Ethics](#) states that “the PSU 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 any purpose other than test administration. (2) No person shall copy, reproduce, or paraphrase the test materials without the express written consent of the test publisher.” Persons who have access to secure test materials must not use their access for personal gain.

School personnel and all others involved in any aspect of state testing, including teachers who have previously served or are currently serving on item writer or test reviewer committees, must not

- disclose the contents of secure tests,
- discuss with each other or with students any specific test questions or information contained in the tests,
- copy, reproduce, paraphrase, file, or use secure tests or information from secure tests directly in instructional activities,
- use excerpts from secure tests at any time during classroom instruction or in resource materials such as study guides,
- write about or post any information pertaining to the tests on the internet or on social media, and
- create, save, or post electronic files of secure tests or answer keys through a vendor, Google Drive, email, social media, web posting, or any other third-party method.

Anyone involved in the testing process is expected to adhere to these guidelines to maintain the reliability and integrity of the tests.

The 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.

A copy of the *Testing Code of Ethics* is in [Appendix A](#) of this publication 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 (q)—unethical testing

practices—and section (r)—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. If needed, a copy of the *Testing Code of Ethics* can be requested from the test coordinator.

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

PSUs and schools are required to use a secure platform to access online, state-mandated tests. It is imperative that PSU and school testing and technology staff work together to appropriately prepare networks and devices for online testing.

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 test administrations. Users must not access a test and then leave the device unsupervised. Locally stored offline content (e.g., cookies, cache) must be cleared or secured after accessing the test so that users cannot launch applications not associated with testing or gain access to secure test materials.

To meet specific technical requirements, schools should review testing technical requirements on days before an online test administration and make any necessary adjustments before administering tests. Schools that administer an online test, but do not meet the technical requirements, are at risk of providing students questions that cannot be navigated (e.g., technology-enhanced questions), questions without associated images (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 students are using acceptable hardware, necessary adjustments are made to the local network, all required applications are loaded and meet necessary version requirements, a minimum screen resolution is set, and volume controls are properly adjusted prior to testing.

It is recommended that students use devices that are school issued with NCTest already loaded by the school. Schools permitting the use of devices not owned or leased by the PSU or school 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. For additional information regarding student-owned devices, refer to the [North Carolina Test Coordinator's Policies and Procedures Handbook](#). Additionally, PSUs and schools 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:

- school staff should never share passwords,
- user accounts must be kept confidential,
- if passwords are written down on a piece of paper, school staff must store the paper in a secure place and destroy it when it is no longer needed,
- school staff must change passwords immediately if they have been compromised, and
- school staff must not save or allow devices to autofill secure passwords. Selecting this option poses a security threat.

Test Preparation

Released Test Questions

The Annual Testing Program has released tests available for most state-mandated tests. Released tests that are aligned to previously adopted standards are retired and are no longer available. Released test forms reflect the currently adopted content standards and can be found by searching for the type of test at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/testing-documents>.

To navigate this site,

- select a test type from the “Type of State Test” dropdown box,
- select “Released Tests” from the “Resource” dropdown box, and
- select “Apply.”

Released questions may also be accessed through the secure browser, NCTest apps for Chromebook and iPad, and via <https://data.ncsu.edu/nctest/Destination.html> by selecting the NC Test Released Items icon.

Released questions and assessments are copyrighted by the NCDPI and cannot be uploaded into third-party applications. These materials must not be used for personal or financial gain.

Copies of any documents suspected of containing secure test questions or information from secure tests must be submitted to the Annual Testing Program through the regional accountability coordinator (RAC). School staff in a district should submit documents to the school test coordinator for submission to the RAC for clearance before use in the PSU or school. Appropriate items for review are any material of unknown origin. PSUs, schools, and the Annual Testing Program must work together to maintain test security.

Preparing Students for Testing

As cited in section (j) of the [Testing Code of Ethics](#), “Teachers may help students improve test-taking skills by: (1) helping students become familiar with test formats using curricular content; (2) teaching students test-taking strategies and providing practice sessions; (3) helping students learn ways of preparing to take tests; and (4) using resource materials such as test questions from test item banks and linking documents in instruction and test preparation.”

Best practices to prepare students for testing 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 stated in [G.S. §115C-174.12](#).

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

Per [G.S. §115C-174.12\(a\)\(4\)](#), “All annual assessments of student achievement adopted by the State Board of Education pursuant to [G.S. §115C-174.11\(c\)\(1\) and \(3\)](#) and all final exams for courses shall be administered within the final 10 instructional days of the school year for year-long courses and within the final five instructional days of the semester for semester courses.”

All state-mandated tests have a designated test date or testing window. The testing window is outlined in the [North Carolina Operational Testing Calendar](#), which is posted on the NCDPI’s [Accountability and Testing](#) website. Failing to administer the secure tests on the test date or during the testing window designated by the Annual Testing Program will result in a testing irregularity.

Test Materials

Test administrators must be provided with the appropriate test administration guide on days before the test administration. The test administrator must thoroughly read the guide before attending the training session, so the school test coordinator can answer any questions the test administrator may have. All test administrators must receive a printed copy of the guide before administering the test. All other test materials must be distributed to test administrators 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 and supplemental materials that are specified in the appropriate test administration guide (or published supplements or updates), or are part of an approved accommodation, are allowed during the test administration.

Student access codes used for online testing are considered secure test materials and must be checked out on test day and accounted for before, during, and after each test administration. The access codes are unique for each student's specified test and are only permitted for in-school test administrations (this applies to all tests except NC Check-Ins 2.0). The access codes can only be used once. After initial use, the access codes can no longer be used.

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.

At each school, the school test coordinator oversees the distribution, collection, and return of the test materials. School test coordinators also provide directions to test administrators for distributing the test materials to students for testing purposes.

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.

With the exception of required test materials, the test administrator should not give students additional materials during the test administration without the prior written consent of the Annual Testing Program. Only supplemental materials specified in the appropriate test administration guide (or published supplements or updates) may be used during the test administration.

Reference books, textbooks, thesauruses, bookmarks, multiplication tables, number lines, music, MP3 players, cameras, cell phones, personal learning devices, personal computers, smartpens, smartwatches, smart glasses, or any other electronic device are prohibited during the administration of any test in the Annual Testing Program (see [Testing Violations, Irregularities, and Misadministrations](#)).

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."

Every PSU must have a clearly defined system for checkout and check-in of test materials to ensure all secure materials are tracked and accounted for at each level of distribution and collection (district, school, and testing room). PSU test coordinators must inventory test materials upon arrival from Technical Outreach for Public Schools

(TOPS) or the test vendor and must immediately inform TOPS or the test vendor of any discrepancies in the shipment.

PSU test coordinators must house all secure test materials in a secure, locked facility and must ensure each school test coordinator receives, stores, and distributes test materials in a secure manner. Secure test materials may be stored at a school for only a short period of time before and after the test administration. Every effort must be made to minimize school personnel's access to secure state tests.

If testing occurs at more than one location, there must be a trained school coordinator at each location for the duration of the testing sessions to ensure someone is available to answer all questions, maintain the school/site testing plan, relieve test administrators as needed, and properly manage testing irregularities and misadministrations. The PSU listed in EDDIE is responsible for training school staff as school test coordinators for the additional testing locations. All duties of the school test coordinator role apply to these individuals, including the completion of the *School Test Coordinator—Confidentiality and Test Security Agreement*. All PSU testing policies and procedures, as designated in the [North Carolina Test Coordinator's Policies and Procedures Handbook](#) and this publication, apply to test sites utilizing a site coordinator.

As established in section (e) of [16 N.C. Admin. Code 06D .0311](#), the *Testing Code of Ethics*, "The principal shall store test materials in a locked facility to which only the principal has access. The principal shall not allow anyone access to the test materials except as necessary for administration." The principal must establish a procedure to have test materials distributed immediately before each test administration. Before each test administration, the school test coordinator or site coordinator, if applicable, must accurately count and distribute test materials to each test administrator.

Each test administrator must count and record in writing the number of secure test materials and supplemental materials (i.e., those specified in the test administration guide or published supplements or updates):

- when the materials are first received from the school test coordinator or site coordinator, if applicable,
- before the distribution of materials to students,
- after the test administration, and
- when the materials are returned to the school test coordinator.

Any discrepancies in the counts must be reported to the school test coordinator or principal immediately.

All testing materials must be returned to the school test coordinator according to the directions specified in the test administration guide. Immediately after each test administration, the school test coordinator shall collect, count, and return all test materials to the secure, locked facility. Any discrepancies in the counts must be reported immediately to the PSU test coordinator. Upon notification, the PSU test coordinator must report the discrepancies to the RAC and ensure the discrepancy is

reported in the [Online Testing Irregularity Submission System \(OTISS\)](#). The OTISS report must be submitted within five days of the occurrence. Procedures established by the school for tracking and accounting for test materials must be provided upon request to the district test coordinator or the Annual Testing Program.

Recognizing and Reporting Testing Violations or Irregularities

Test administrators (and proctors, if utilized) 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 collaborate with either the district test coordinator or the RAC to ensure the violation, irregularity, or misadministration is reported in OTISS within five days of the occurrence.

Testing Violations, Irregularities, and Misadministrations

The use of the following items in the testing room may constitute a misadministration, an irregularity, 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.** 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 must be dismissed from testing and a misadministration declared for that student.
 - If a student must be removed from testing because he or she has a cell phone or electronic device during testing, the test administrator must not leave the testing room unattended but must notify the school test coordinator so that the student can be removed from the testing room in the least disruptive manner possible.
 - 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 and remain in the testing room shall be provided with the opportunity to read novels or any other reading materials that are not a textbook or contain instructional content (e.g., magazines) while waiting for other students to finish the test.
 - 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., used papers) before students can take out their reading materials.
 - For paper administrations, test administrators must collect student test books and all ancillary materials (e.g., used papers) before students can take out their reading materials.
- **Testing aids.** Books, bookmarks, multiplication tables, notes, number lines, cameras, cell phones, personal learning devices, personal computers (if not used for testing), smart glasses, smart pens, smartwatches, or anything not approved by the Annual Testing Program are prohibited during the administration of any test.

Students are not permitted to use electronic reading devices while there are students still testing in the same room.

Test administrators must remain attentive to their testing responsibilities throughout the entire test administration. 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 testing room not related to the test administration is not allowed.

Details regarding what constitutes a misadministration, irregularity, or violation of the *Testing Code of Ethics* and information concerning how to report incidents should be discussed during training. Test administrators must report any alleged testing violation or testing irregularity to the school test coordinator on the day of the occurrence. Examples of testing irregularities include, but are not limited to, the following:

Eligibility

- Eligible students were not tested
- Ineligible students were tested

Accommodation

- Approved accommodation not provided
- Approved accommodation not provided appropriately
- Accommodation provided but not approved or documented
- Accommodation/Designated Feature *Test Read Aloud (in English)* or *Interpreter/Transliterater Signs/Cues Test* provided during a test that measures reading comprehension (e.g., end-of-course English II or end-of-grade reading)

Security

- Students accessed or used a prohibited electronic device during testing
- Staff accessed or used a prohibited electronic device during testing
- Allowing staff access to a test who do not have a verified need (e.g., *Test Read Aloud [in English]* accommodation)
- 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
- Reproducing items from secure test(s) in any manner or form
- Using questions from secure tests for instruction
- Failing to return the originally distributed number of test materials to designated school personnel

- Discussing with others any of the test questions or information contained in the tests, or writing about or posting them on the internet or on social media

Monitoring

- Failing to prevent students from cheating by copying, using cheat sheets, or asking for information
- Failing to prevent students from gaining an unfair advantage by using an electronic device
- 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 paused or open and visible
- Leaving the testing room unmonitored when students and secure materials are present

Procedural

- 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 questions
- Failing to administer tests on the approved date or during the testing window designated by the North Carolina General Assembly
- Failing to follow the test schedule procedures or makeup test schedule designated by the Annual Testing Program
- Providing students with additional time beyond the designated time specified in the test administration guide (except for students requiring accommodations, such as *Scheduled Extended Time*)
- Test administrator or proctor giving improper assistance or providing instruction related to the concepts measured by the test before the test administration or during the test administration session

Technical

- Online test connectivity or technical problems
 - Schools must report online test connectivity and technical problems that occur during the administration of online tests when students are unable 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 did not display properly

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 designated for test administrations (including any rooms to which students may be relocated for testing) must be quiet, orderly, comfortable, and have appropriate seating, lighting, and heating or cooling. Each student must have enough space in which to work. Seating must be arranged to discourage students from sharing responses.

Monitoring Students during the Test Administration

A primary responsibility of the test administrator and proctor (if utilized) is monitoring 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. Students should be informed before the day of the test administration if a proctor will be assisting the test administrator in monitoring their test administration.

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 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, computers, and any other 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; talking casually with a proctor or other staff; or engaging in any activity in the room not 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.

Each student must complete the test without assistance for the scores to reflect the student's ability. To ensure an equitable and standardized testing experience for all students, test administrators and proctors must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Test administrators and proctors must monitor the test administration by walking frequently and quietly throughout the room and scanning the students' work areas to ensure students are following the test directions, performing the required tasks, not sharing responses, and those eligible have access to required accommodations.
- When test administrators or proctors need to sit during the test administration, they should maintain an unobstructed view of and easy access to the students.
- Test administrators and proctors are not to read test questions from students' electronic screens used for online tests or from test books used for paper administrations (except for students with a documented accommodation, such as *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 test administration guides must be followed. Test administrators must follow and present the directions as written in the test administration guides. Test administrators are not permitted to omit, rewrite, or paraphrase orally or in writing the instructions presented in the test administration guides without the prior written consent of the Annual Testing Program. 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 in order for the scores to reflect the student’s ability.

Directions located in the test administration guides for distributing test materials must be followed. Per the test administration guides, designated features and supplemental materials that have been approved by the Annual Testing Program may be used during test administrations. Test administrators must distribute the approved designated features or supplemental materials (e.g., highlighters, color acetate overlays) that will be used, before beginning the testing session.

Placing the required test materials, such as test books or calculators, on students’ desks before beginning the test administration is a violation of the procedures outlined in the test administration guides. To administer statewide tests to North Carolina students in a fair and equitable manner, only the testing materials specified in the test administration guide or part of an approved procedural accommodation are allowed during the test administration.

While most test administrators and proctors (if utilized) may have conducted or

proctored similar testing sessions previously, they must receive training each testing cycle before administering or proctoring any secure state test. In addition, test administrators must study the designated test administration guide before the test administration, ensuring uniform test administration procedures are followed throughout North Carolina.

Makeup Testing

Any student absent from school for 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 PSU or school 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 special studies.

Processing Test Materials

Online administrations. After the completion of each online test administration, the test administrator or principal's designee must purge or delete saved or cached test information on any network appliance (e.g., server) or device. The test administrator follows local procedures for the return of all test materials, including student access codes, to the school test coordinator immediately after each online test administration. Test administrators or designated school personnel complete the special codes and accommodations used in NCTest Admin under the Special Codes tab on test day before 7:00 p.m.

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 PSU test coordinators. PSU test coordinators are then able to distribute school rosters, class rosters, and individual student reports when released.

Paper administrations. All students with a documented accessibility need for a paper format will mark their answers in the test book. When testing is complete, the test administrator or principal's designee will transcribe the student's answers from the test book to the online testing system for the appropriate online test. Additional information about the transcription process can be found in each test administration guide. Designated school personnel complete the special codes and accommodations used in NCTest Admin on test day before 7:00 p.m.

Test administrators must follow local procedures for the return of all test books and other test materials (e.g., scratch paper, graph paper) to the school test coordinator immediately after the test administration. The PSU test coordinator establishes the schedule for returning test books containing marked student answers to TOPS.

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.”

Confidentiality of Student Scores When Publicizing Test Results

It is advised that the confidentiality of test scores must always be protected when publicizing or reporting test results to the public. Districts and schools should not violate confidentiality rights under the provisions of the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974, 20 U.S.C. §1232g*. It is best practice not to publicly post or to announce student names and test results.

As stated in the *Testing Code of Ethics*, “Educators shall maintain the confidentiality of individual students. PSU personnel shall not publicize test scores or any written materials containing personally identifiable information from the student’s educational records as permitted under the provisions of the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g* and regulations adopted pursuant thereto. . .

(r) In the event of a violation of the Rule, the State Board of Education may impose any one or more of the following sanctions:

- (1) withhold any 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 06C .0312, suspend or revoke the professional license of the person or persons responsible for the violation.”

It is best practice that school staff be mindful of student confidentiality and adhere to appropriate policies and procedures when publicizing or reporting test results.

Roles and Responsibilities

Duties of School Counselors

Duties of school counselors are outlined in [G.S. §115C-316.1](#) as follows:

- (a) “School counselors shall implement a comprehensive developmental school counseling program in their schools. Counselors shall spend at least eighty percent (80%) of their work time providing direct services to students. Direct services shall consist of:
- (1) Delivering the school guidance curriculum through large group guidance, interdisciplinary curriculum development, group activities, and parent workshops.
 - (2) Guiding individual student planning through individual or small group assistance and individual or small group advisement.
 - (3) Providing responsive services through consultation with students, families, and staff; individual and small group counseling; crisis counseling; referrals; and peer facilitation.
 - (4) Performing other student services listed in the Department of Public Instruction school counselor job description that has been approved by the State Board of Education.
 - (5) Coordinating and providing training for students in peer-to-peer student support programs that address areas such as conflict resolution, general health and wellness, and mentoring. The Center for Safer Schools will support school counselors in the administration and delivery of peer-to-peer student support programs.
- (b) School counselors shall not assist with the coordination or administration of standardized testing. (2013-360, s. 8.35(a); 2014-100, s. 8.33(a); 2023-78, s. 3(b); 2023-134, s. 7.27(e).)”

This law does not apply to charter schools, lab schools, regional schools, or residential schools.

Duties of Test Administrators

Per [16 N.C. Admin Code 06D .0307](#), “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 as required in [16 N.C. Admin Code 06D .0308](#) of this Section shall administer secure tests.”

The [North Carolina Test Coordinator’s Policies and Procedures Handbook](#) outlines all of the test administrators’ responsibilities. The test administrators’ responsibilities specifically related to test security are as follows:

- Prepare for and attend a test administrator training session(s) conducted by the school test coordinator before each test administration.
- Attend training on the [Testing Students with Disabilities Handbook](#), the [Guidelines for Testing Students Identified as English Learners](#) publication, and published

- supplemental documents when accommodations will be provided to students.
- Follow established procedures to facilitate the provision of accommodations during test administrations for students with disabilities and students identified as English Learners.
 - Read and sign the *Test Administrator—Confidentiality and Test Security Agreement* (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 (when applicable). The required *Test Administrator—Confidentiality and Test Security Agreement* is included in the *North Carolina Test Coordinator’s Policies and Procedures Handbook*.
 - Read and study thoroughly the appropriate test administration guide before the test administration. Review the student directions (script) and be prepared for the variations required by the testing conditions.
 - Read and study thoroughly the *Testing Code of Ethics* before the test administration.
 - 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 and/or where the proctor is a personal family member or close acquaintance.
 - Relatives and wards include children, stepchildren, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, siblings, in-laws, and persons under the test administrator’s guardianship.
 - Maintain test security at all times.
 - 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. Test administrators are expected to notify the school test coordinator or principal immediately of any discrepancies in the counts.
 - 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 breaks.
 - Ensure usernames and passwords are never shared (e.g., test administrator credentials given to students or written on the board). NCTest user accounts are confidential.
 - Maintain the security of student access codes at all times.
 - Before beginning an online administration, confirm the student’s name and the appropriate test 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 test publisher.

- Read directions to the students as they are written 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.
- Avoid actions or behaviors that include: modifying, changing, altering, or tampering with students' responses in a test book or on device screens during or after the test administration.
- Refrain from reading, taking pictures of, taking notes about, or electronically posting test questions from students' test books or screens.
- Assist students with emergencies (e.g., illness, necessary restroom break) 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).
- Refrain from distracting behaviors (e.g., reading, conducting other personal or professional duties, talking or texting on cell phones, working on any other electronic device).
- Follow the directions specified in the test administration guides for returning all used and unused testing materials and supplemental materials to the school test coordinator.
- Refraining from discussing specific questions from the tests with students or colleagues before, during, or after the test administration or asking students questions about the test. The only exception to this directive is when a staff member believes there has been a breach of test security which must immediately be reported to the principal or school test coordinator.
- 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 Proctors

The NCDPI highly recommends, when possible, that schools implement full-time, one-on-one proctors during state testing. This practice affirms testing protocols are followed with fidelity, ensuring that reported test scores accurately reflect student achievement and support state and local accountability measures.

It is a local decision whether to require proctors during state testing. As referenced in ([16 N.C. Admin. Code 06D .0311 \[n\]](#)), "proctors serve as additional monitors to help the test administrator assure that students have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge on the test".

For vendor-made assessments, test coordinators must ensure the proctor guidelines from the test publisher are followed.

For PSUs and schools that opt to assign proctors for state tests, the following best practices should be considered:

- Proctors should be school staff or responsible adult community volunteers (i.e., age eighteen or older and not enrolled as a student in the PSU).
- Proctors 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).
- Proctors may assist in both standard and accommodated test sessions.
- 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.
- Proctors should not be assigned to proctor with a test administrator who is a 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.
- If the assigned proctor is also trained as a test administrator, the proctor cannot assist or participate in the duties and responsibilities of the assigned test administrator.
- 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.
- Proctors must attend a proctor training session before the test administration and understand and agree to perform the duties described.

Training at the school must include the following:

- watch [The Proctor's Guide Online Training Video](#),
- review the *Testing Code of Ethics*,
- provide an electronic or paper copy of [The Proctor's Guide](#), and
- complete the *Proctor—Confidentiality and Test Security Agreement* form found in the [North Carolina Test Coordinator's Policies and Procedures Handbook](#). This form must be completed each testing cycle (e.g., Beginning-of-Grade 3 Reading Test, fall end-of-course [EOC] testing, spring EOC testing) and signed at the conclusion of proctor training. All signed confidentiality and test security agreements must be kept on file (either via paper or electronically) with the school test coordinator and should be available during the monitoring process.

APPENDIX

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 and legal guardians* 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 pages.

16 NCAC 06D .0311 TESTING CODE OF ETHICS

- (a) This Rule shall apply to all public school unit (PSU) employees or agents while they are administering the Annual Testing Program defined in Rule .0307(c) of this Section.
- (b) The PSU 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 PSU shall require all testing coordinators, school test coordinators, test administrators and proctors to be trained as required in Rule .0308 of this Section.
- (d) The PSU 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 any purpose other than test administration.
 - (2) No person shall copy, reproduce, or paraphrase the test materials without the express written consent of the test publisher.
- (e) The principal shall store test materials in a locked facility to which only the principal has access. The principal shall not allow anyone access to the test materials except as necessary for administration.
- (f) When PSU personnel discover loss of materials, failure to account for materials, or any evidence of unauthorized access to the materials, they shall report the discovery without delay to the principal, school test coordinator, school system (LEA) test coordinator, or charter school director.
- (g) PSUs shall ensure that test coordinators:
 - (1) plan and implement training for school test coordinators, test administrators, and proctors;
 - (2) ensure each school test coordinator and test administrator is trained in accordance with Rule .0308 of this Section; and
 - (3) in conjunction with program administrators, ensure test accommodations to students entitled to testing accommodations as defined in 16 NCAC 06G .0315; are documented and provided.
- (h) The principal or the principal's designee shall serve as school test coordinator.
- (i) The principal shall ensure the school test coordinator maintains test security and accountability of test materials, including taking the following actions:
 - (1) before each test administration, the school test coordinator shall count and distribute test materials;
 - (2) after each test administration, the school test coordinator shall without delay collect, count, and return all test materials to the locked storage facility;
 - (3) establishes procedures to assure all students participating in the Annual Testing Program have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge on the test; and
 - (4) identifies and trains personnel, proctors, and backup personnel for test administrations.
- (j) Teachers may help students improve test-taking skills by:
 - (1) helping students become familiar with test formats using curricular content;
 - (2) teaching students test-taking strategies and providing practice sessions;
 - (3) helping students learn ways of preparing to take tests; and
 - (4) using resource materials such as test questions from test item banks and linking documents in instruction and test preparation.
- (k) With respect to test administration, PSUs shall:
 - (1) assure each school establishes procedures to ensure all test administrators comply with test publisher guidelines;
 - (2) inform the local board of education of any breach of this code of ethics; and
 - (3) inform test coordinators and principals of their responsibilities.
- (l) The school test coordinator shall:

- (1) assure school personnel know the content of rules in this Section and local testing policies;
 - (2) implement the school system and local testing policies and procedures to assure all students participating in the Annual Testing Program have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge on the test;
 - (3) ensure proctors are trained; and
 - (4) ensure all violations of rules in this Section and local testing policies are reported to the school system (LEA) test coordinator.
- (m) Test administrators shall:
- (1) administer tests according to the directions in the assessment guide and any subsequent updates developed by the test publisher;
 - (2) administer tests to all students enrolled in a grade or course that requires a test in the Annual Testing Program;
 - (3) report all violations of rules in this Section and local testing policies to the school test coordinator; and
- (n) Proctors shall serve as additional monitors to help the test administrator assure that students have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge on the test.
- (o) 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 scoring 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.
- (p) Educators shall use test scores as one piece of information to be interpreted together with other scores and indicators when determining a student's grade. The PSU shall ensure that school personnel analyze and report test data within the limitations described in this Paragraph.
- (1) Educators shall maintain the confidentiality of individual students. PSU personnel shall not publicize test scores or any written material containing personally identifiable information from the student's educational records except as permitted under the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. 1232g and regulations adopted pursuant thereto.
 - (2) 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.
- (q) Unethical testing practices include 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) classifying students for the purpose of avoiding State testing;
 - (7) not testing all students enrolled in a grade or course that requires a test in the Annual Testing Program;
 - (8) failing to provide required accommodations during testing to students entitled to testing accommodations as defined in 16 NCAC 06G .0315;
 - (9) modifying scoring programs including answer keys, equating files, and lookup tables;
 - (10) modifying student records for the purpose of raising test scores;

- (11) using a single test score to place a student in a grade or a course; and
- (12) providing inaccurate test results and interpretations to the public.
- (r) In the event of a violation of this Rule, the State Board of Education may impose any one or more of the following sanctions:
 - (1) withhold any 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 06C .0312, suspend or revoke the professional license of the person or persons responsible for the violation.

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