

Report of Test Security Activity for Nevada Public Schools School Year 2009-2010

The Department establishes test security and administration protocol for the purpose of upholding the integrity of state-mandated assessments, and for maintaining consistency in test administration by means of uniform procedures. During the 2009-2010 school year, approximately 300,000 students participated in multiple assessments that were administered in grades 3 through 8, 10 through 12, and in adult programs. More than 600,000 separate tests were administered in over 600 locations. Although the number of tests administered was significant, a total of 152 reported testing irregularities resulted from the activity.

Based on a review of reported testing irregularities, the following conclusions may be drawn:

- Incidents reported as testing irregularities cover a broad array of occurrences and varying degrees of severity (see summary table, page 4).
- Since the 2008-2009 school year, the number of reported testing irregularities has increased by 13%. The total number of reported incidents for 2009-2010 was 152, compared to 134 incidents during 2008-2009.
- Of the 152 reported irregularities, 51 occurred during the administration of Nevada's largest assessment, the Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRT) in Reading, Math, and Science, accounting for 34% of all reported cases. Over 200,000 students participated in the Reading and Math CRTs in grades 3 through 8, and over 66,000 of those students also participated in the Science assessment. The number of occurrences has decreased since last year, down from 63 cases. The majority of the incidents involved improper test administration and student cheating or misconduct.
- The High School Proficiency Examinations (HSPE) in Reading, Mathematics, and Science experienced an increase in irregularities over last year, and the majority of the occurrences involved student cheating or misconduct. This year, 52 incidents were reported, compared to 39 during 2008-2009. The HSPE in Science became a requirement for twelfth-grade students for the first time this year, contributing to an increase in participation. Additionally, the total number of tests administered for all subjects in this category increased by approximately 29% since 2008-2009, from 153,800 to almost 198,700.
- Testing irregularity activity for the High School Proficiency Examination in Writing has increased since 2008-2009 as well. A total of 26 incidents were reported, compared to 18 in the previous year. The majority of the incidents were a result of student cheating or misconduct. The total number of tests administered for this assessment rose since 2008-2009, from approximately 42,000 to over 49,000 (17%).

- The Fifth and Eighth Grade Proficiency examinations in Writing incurred 21 incidents, compared to 13 last year. Improper test administration and student cheating or misconduct accounted for the primary incident types.
- To date, the Nevada Alternate Assessment has experienced 2 testing irregularities, but returned materials are currently being reconciled.
- The largest percentage of reported irregularities for 2009-2010 involved student cheating or misconduct, accounting for 47% of all cases (71 of 152 reported incidents), and improper test administration, accounting for 27% of reported cases (41 of 152 reported incidents). The percentages relative to incident type are similar to those reported for 2008-2009.
- Of the 41 cases involving improper test administration, 18 cases impacted special-needs populations (44% of the category). During the previous year, 25 of 38 cases (66% of the category) included this group.

Cause and Outcome

- Among the reported irregularities, 79 cases (52%) resulted from teacher error or action, or from improper procedures at the school level. The majority of incidents occurred during the CRT administration. State-administered corrective actions were in response to either repeated procedural errors or lost test materials, and will require the submission of documentation to the Department for review and/or on-site evaluation of procedures. Invalidations occurred when students received inappropriate assistance and the integrity of their scores was compromised. Of the 79 cases in this category, 48 resulted in no action from the Department because no potential compromise of scores occurred, and schools either demonstrated an appropriate response or developed an acceptable corrective action plan.
- The remaining 73 cases (48%) were caused by events beyond the control of the testing environment. In this category are 71 cases of student cheating or misconduct (provided students were not enabled), and 2 cases of interrupted testing (e.g., emergency evacuations). Schools demonstrated appropriate procedures when responding to a prohibited activity or emergency situation. All instances of student cheating resulted in invalid scores. In cases involving school evacuation, all materials were accounted for, and no compromise of test content or student responses was evident.

See Attachment A for a complete case-by-case summary of occurrences.

Additional Examinations

Pursuant to NRS 389.632, there were no additional examinations administered during the 2009-2010 school year.

Unresolved Cases for 2008-2009

At the time of the report, four cases from the 2008-2009 school year required the submission of a corrective action plan to the Department, and two cases were unresolved, pending additional information. All cases have been resolved.

Unresolved Cases for 2009-2010

To date, one case from the 2009-2010 school year requires the submission of a corrective action plan to the Department before the conclusion of the 2010-2011 school year, and five cases require additional information and/or further review. Those cases may result in corrective actions administered by the Department.

Recommendations

In order to decrease the number of occurrences of testing irregularities, the Department plans to implement the following:

- The Department's program of training and related published materials will continue to emphasize proper test administration procedures.
- School test security plans will be required to have provisions for ensuring that testing accommodations for special-needs students are provided appropriately.
- The Eighth Grade Proficiency Examination in Writing will shift from an analytic assessment to a holistic assessment beginning with the 2010-2011 school year. Administration procedures will be revised accordingly, and the Department's program of training and published procedures will strongly emphasize the changes.
- Nevada's Alternate Assessment (NAA) has been changed significantly from its previous structure, and an expanded program of training is planned for 2010-2011. Students must now read parts of the examination independently, which was not required for alternate assessments administered prior to this year. This procedure will be heavily emphasized during training and will be prominently stated on the actual test materials.

Comparison of Testing Irregularities

The following table provides a comparison of the testing programs to incident type, as described in the narrative on pages 1 and 2. See Attachment A for a complete case-by-case description of occurrences.

Table 2—Summary of Testing Irregularity Cases, School Year 2009-2010

Testing Irregularity	CRT 3 – 8	Writing 5	Writing 8	HSPE Writing 11, 12, Ad	HSPE Reading, Math, Science 10, 11, 12, Ad	Alternate (NAA)	Totals
Improper Test Administration	21	5	3	4	7	1	41
Student Cheating or Misconduct	16		4	17	34		71
Testing Ineligible Students		1	2	4	2		9
Improper Storage or Distribution of Materials	3	1	2		1	1	8
Missing Test Materials	2						2
Multiple Answer Documents	1		1				2
Late Return of Test Materials	1						1
Unsupervised Students with Test Materials	2	1			1		4
Multiple Irregularities				1	7		8
Unauthorized Disclosure of Test Content	4						4
Failure to Administer Tests or Subtests							0
Misc. (e.g., Fire Alarms)	1	1					2
Totals	51	9	12	26	52	2	152

Summary and Considerations

The number of reported testing irregularities has increased over the past two years, with the largest increase occurring at the high-school level. Not only did the addition of the Science examination at grade 12 increase the number of students participating in examinations required for graduation, but the number of tests administered for all HSPE content areas has risen significantly, and testing irregularities have increased accordingly.

Cheating continues to present challenges, and test administrators are vigilantly monitoring student activity. Nearly half of all reported testing irregularities were beyond the control of the testing environment, and school personnel responded swiftly and appropriately in these circumstances.

Procedures at the school level continue to improve. The CRT has historically experienced concerns with improper test administration, particularly with regards to special-needs students, and a downward trend in test administration errors was evident.

Because of the shift from an analytic assessment to a holistic one, the Eighth Grade Proficiency Examination in Writing will now have procedures similar to those for the high school assessment. This change may present new challenges for test administration and security.

New procedures for the NAA may also present security and administration errors, although this assessment impacts less than 1% of Nevada's students.

The number of new state public charter schools continues to increase each year. These schools are not under district jurisdiction, and must be trained individually in test administration and security protocol.

The Department's program of training will continue to emphasize correct procedures for test administration, including administration procedures for students who test with accommodations. We are therefore hopeful that the 2010-2011 school year will experience a decrease in the number of testing irregularities.