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ABSTRACT

High stakes testing has been in place in North Carolina since the late 1970s with highly visible, nationally norm-referenced tests administered to all students in several grades, as well as minimum competency testing as part of high school graduation requirements. A current back-to-basics movement has resulted in cuts to the testing program. A new plan for educational improvement will focus on schools rather than school systems, and will designate rewards for schools with solid performance and exemplary growth and interventions for schools that lag. The first code of ethics for North Carolina testing personnel was published in 1988 to help ensure the integrity of test results and a "level playing field" for all schools. In 1995 a committee was convened to begin to revise the "Testing Code of Ethics" to reflect new programs and new technological approaches to testing. Attachments include the current code of ethics, a model local school board policy statement, and a draft of the new code. (Contains five references.) (SLD)

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**Policies and Standards, Their Role and Revision: The Case of Ethics in Testing in North Carolina.**

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ED 398 281

High stakes testing has been in place in North Carolina since the late 1970's, with highly visible, nationally norm-referenced tests administered to all students in several grades, as well as minimum competency testing as part of high school graduation requirements. A writing assessment began in 1984. North Carolina-developed tests for all students in eleven high school courses were phased in beginning in 1986. This same year, promotion standards for three grades were put in place, and were not removed until 1996. Nationally norm-reference tests were replaced by North Carolina-developed tests in 1993, and were administered to all students in grades 3 through 8. (Note that, as required by state law, samples of students are tested with a norm-referenced test for purposes of a national comparison.) The competency requirement for graduation was raised considerably for the class of 1998 (Ward, 1995). A computer proficiency requirement for high school graduation is in place for the class of 2001.

The current "back to basics" movement resulted in cuts in the state testing program, so that only reading, mathematics, and writing tests are required in the elementary and middle school grades. The computer proficiency and competency requirements, and testing in the "core" high school courses, remain as well. Other tests (science and social studies in the elementary and middle school grades, and advanced mathematics and science courses in high school) are currently offered at "local option".

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The state's accountability programs have run a parallel track (North Carolina State Board of Education, 1995). Prior to 1988, school systems could voluntarily participate in an accreditation program, which involved site visits to evaluate broad program components and opportunity standards. In 1988 accreditation was changed to a mandatory program which included student performance standards. School systems and schools were also challenged to go beyond accreditation standards and set their own annual goals. Additionally, "Report Cards" for school systems were added, with the first publication occurring in 1990. Similar reports for individual schools were first issued in 1994.

Just when we thought that the stakes for testing could not possibly get higher, the North Carolina State Board of Education introduced its newest plan, referred to as the "New ABCs of Public Education". The ABCs, which go into effect for the 1996-97 school year, are based on the basics, high standards, increased local control, and accountability. The focus will be on schools rather than school systems. Schools with solid performance and exemplary growth<sup>1</sup> are eligible for monetary reward, while low performing schools with inadequate growth and getting worse over time will be provided with targeted intervention. If, after assistance and intervention, they still fail to make reasonable growth, "takeover" administrators may be appointed, and loss of tenure for administrators and teachers may result as a last resort. Changes to public school law are

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<sup>1</sup> The North Carolina tests used in elementary and middle schools are reported on a developmental scale, so that growth from year to year can be assessed. The results from the end-of-year tests will serve as the pretest for the following year. A pretest will be administered at the beginning of the third grade, and at the beginning of the "core" high school courses, so that growth can be estimated.

currently being sought, so that the new ABCs can go into effect as planned for the 1996-97 school year.

The first *Testing Code of Ethics for North Carolina Testing Personnel, Teachers and School Administrators* was published by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in 1988. The purpose for the document was twofold. One, there was an obvious concern for the overall integrity of test results, with respect to the validity of individual and group test scores. Of equal concern, though, was the notion of a "level playing field" for the school systems.

Generally, the intent was to put in writing the professional standards to which anyone with responsibilities related to assessment must adhere. The original document, which is provided as an appendix to this paper, drew from the National Education Association's *Code of Ethics of the Education Profession*, and the National Association of School Psychologists' *Principles for Professional Ethics*. The *Testing Code of Ethics* has been inserted into the center of every Test Administrator's Manual published by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction since 1988. Because regulations state that every test administrator must be trained in the use of the appropriate test administrator manual, every teacher who administered a North Carolina test since 1988 presumably was trained on the *Testing Code of Ethics*.

In 1995, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction convened a working committee, later referred to as the Task Force for Ethics in Testing, to revise the *Testing Code of Ethics*. It was felt by many that the then seven-year-old document needed to be generally updated, and that it could more specifically address issues pertaining to the

North Carolina testing programs. One example of the general need to update is that North Carolina Public School Law used to state that the statewide testing program was to help identify and correct student needs in basic skills, rather than to provide a tool for comparing individual students or to evaluate teacher performance. Although that wording is no longer part of the law, and is clearly not in line with the spirit of the New ABCs, reference to it is made in the original *Testing Code of Ethics*. Changes in the use of technology since 1988 have also necessitated revisions. As an example, virtually no one transmitted student achievement records electronically in 1988, while it is commonplace today. Thus, the concept of the confidentiality of student records must be conceived more broadly.

It was also felt that a revised *Testing Code of Ethics* was needed to provide an up-to-date framework for other work in the area of ethics in testing. As Mehrens and Kaminski (1989) pointed out, there is a continuum of sorts with respect to test preparation activities. This continuum ranges from good teaching practices, i.e. teaching the goals of the curriculum which will be tested at some point, to actual practice on the test which will be given. Although outright cheating is recognized by most people, there are "gray areas" of understanding in many cases. Therefore another major goal of the Task Force on Ethics in Testing was to begin work on core documents, which could later be expanded. The expanded documents are intended to specifically define, with examples and vignettes, which activities are recommended, which are acceptable, and which are not acceptable, with respect to test security, test preparation activities, test administration activities, and scoring, reporting, and interpreting test results.

The Task Force was comprised of individuals with responsibilities involving state testing, or with an expressed interest in issues surrounding ethics in testing. The individuals represented a broad range within the North Carolina education community. A listing of these individuals, their job titles, and their affiliations is provided as an appendix to this document.

The Task Force collectively agreed to move the work in the area of ethics in testing forward by producing draft versions of two documents. The first document was a model Board of Education policy on ethics in testing, which the State Board might recommend to local Boards of Education. The second was the draft revision of the *Testing Code of Ethics*.

Several North Carolina school systems have local Board of Education policies which address these issues, and these were examined and found to be helpful. However, the Task Force drew most heavily from standards proposed by the State of Ohio Department of Education for adoption by the Ohio State Board of Education (personal correspondence, 1994). A comparison of the Ohio materials and the North Carolina draft Board of Education policy shows that the North Carolina policy is considerably shorter. It was felt that brevity was key. More definition of intent has been provided by also drafting the regulations to be associated with the policy. This design allows for adjustments to be made to the regulations, in most cases by the school system administration, without the need for a change in local Board policy. A copy of the draft Model LEA School Board Policy and the associated regulations are provided as an appendix to this document.

In drafting the revised *Testing Code of Ethics*, the Task Force had a good start in the original document. Additionally, the Joint Committee on Testing Practices (1988) and the National Council on Measurement in Education (1995) both provided excellent resource documents on fair practices in testing. The results of the Task Force work are quite different, though, to fit the needs of local school systems. The draft of the revised *Testing Code of Ethics* is provided as an appendix to this document.

Until further action is taken by the State Board of Education or the Department of Public Instruction, the work of the Task Force is done. The following recommendations were provided for the consideration of the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Department of Public Instruction:

1. That the structure and composition of the Task Force on Ethics in Testing be formalized, and that the Task Force be charged with continuing its work in this important area;
2. That the draft versions of the revised Testing Code of Ethics and Model Local School Board Policy on ethics in testing be approved, so that distribution to LEAs can commence; and
3. That the Task Force be authorized to seek legal and other specialized advice on issues related to professional practice and disciplinary action.

Additionally, development of supporting materials was suggested:

1. A detailed document on ethics in testing. Although the *Testing Code of Ethics* is critical as a brief set of guidelines which can be disseminated widely, more complete information which helps to distinguish between ethical and unethical practice is needed as well. Clear-cut examples and scenarios or vignettes over a broad range of topics will be used.
2. A series of assessment briefs on topics related to ethics, such as appropriate test preparation activities, would be useful to teachers, as well as those in training at institutions of higher education.
3. Checklists for teachers and principals. These checklists, which could be used throughout the year, would detail good teaching and testing practices.

4. Videotapes for use with both pre-service and inservice teachers. Examples include a general tape on test security, or the appropriate uses of released test items.

#### References

Joint Committee on Testing Practices. (1988) *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education*. Washington, D. C.: (Mailing Address: Joint Committee on Testing Practices, American Psychological Association, 750 First Avenue, NE, Washington, D. C., 20002-4242.)

Mehrens, W. A., and Kaminski, J. (1989). Methods for Improving Standardized Test Scores: Fruitful, Fruitless, or Fraudulent. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 8, 14-22.

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# TESTING CODE OF ETHICS

## FOR NORTH CAROLINA TESTING PERSONNEL, TEACHERS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

### INTRODUCTION

The *Testing Code of Ethics* addresses the special concerns that have surfaced in recent years regarding appropriate professional practices within the Statewide Testing Program. This document is intended to serve as a general guide for experienced as well as new testing personnel, teachers and school administrators. These standards are consistent with the ethics practiced by the education profession<sup>1</sup> and considered a part of functions reviewed in the performance appraisal instruments for public school employees issued by the N.C. Department of Public Instruction.<sup>2</sup> More importantly, failure to adhere to this code will result in less reliable data to use in decision making. The intention of state uniform testing is to enable schools to extract the most reliable information attainable. Test data that are unreliable can lead to misunderstanding and unwise decisions about schools, programs, personnel and students.

Testing is an integral part of the educational experience of North Carolina students. When administered, interpreted and used properly, uniform test results offer schools a good independent source of information. The North Carolina Statewide Testing Program is designed to:

- help schools evaluate programs and make curricular decisions;
- provide schools with information necessary to plan instruction;
- help teachers identify strengths and weaknesses of students and offer them a measure to chart student growth; and
- give parents an independent measure of their child's relative success in school.

The importance of commitment and adherence to this code by those associated with testing cannot be overstated.

The intent of this code is to enhance the awareness of school personnel regarding proper testing procedures, and stress the unrelenting attention necessary to provide accurate test data for decision making.

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Division of Accountability Services / Testing  
NC Department of Public Instruction  
2417 Crabtree Boulevard, Suite 101  
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1988

## TESTING STANDARDS<sup>3</sup>

Following are aspects of the North Carolina Statewide Testing Program that are essential to fulfilling the testing mandate.

### TEST SECURITY

1. School personnel responsible for the testing program should develop appropriate local policies and procedures to ensure maximum test security.
2. Test materials must be stored in a secure place, preferably under lock and key, prior to and following administration.
3. Only school personnel who have a legitimate need should have access to test materials. Test booklets or questions are not to be copied or paraphrased in any way for any reason without permission of the test publisher.<sup>4</sup>
4. School personnel responsible for the testing program should be properly instructed in test administration procedures and know the importance of strictly following the directions as outlined by the test publisher.
5. Before test administration, materials are to be carefully counted and distributed in an orderly fashion according to instructions provided with the test. After testing, all test booklets and answer sheets should be accounted for and returned to a secured facility or forwarded for scoring.
6. Any breach of security, loss of materials, failure to account for materials, or other deviation from acceptable security procedures should be reported immediately to the principal, local test coordinator and the local school superintendent.

### TEST ADMINISTRATION

1. The person responsible for the school testing program must have formal training in the area of measurement and testing. It is this person's responsibility to instruct test administrators, proctors and others involved in the testing program on proper test administration procedures.
2. Administrators of standardized tests must rigorously follow the administrative procedures established by the publisher. Responsibilities include establishing a positive environment,

reading the directions word for word (without modification), and strictly adhering to time schedules. Providing verbal and non-verbal clues, rephrasing directions, teaching items on the test or stopping in the middle of a test to teach something unfamiliar to students is not permitted. Any deviation from stated directions will make the sessions a non-standard administration and may result in sessions being declared a misadministration. Unless non-standard procedures are approved in advance, any divergence from the directions must be documented and reported to the principal, local test coordinator and local school superintendent.

3. Students and/or parents are to be given proper notification before testing and provided information on the purposes of a test and intended uses of the results.
4. Coaching of students on specific test content or dissemination of test materials (including reproductions or modifications) prior to testing is not permitted. Such procedures will make the results invalid. However, it is desirable to teach students general test-taking skills in order to make them aware of strategies that could enhance their performance on tests.
5. Students are not to be coerced or made to feel uncomfortable about a test. Such is likely to produce stress in some students, and may negatively influence their performance.
6. The testing environment is to be reasonably comfortable and well-lighted. There should be minimal opportunity for distraction. All materials to be used by students should be readable and understandable. Testing sessions must be monitored to ensure students' comfort, as well as to maintain proper administrative procedures.

### SCORING

School personnel in charge of scoring must maintain the highest ethical standards. They must follow the scoring directions and routinely check results for accuracy. Scorers should be trained to recognize inappropriate or impossible scores. All score reports must be carefully labeled and dated.

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## STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Teachers play an important role in preparing students for standardized testing. As a result, student performance or reaction to testing is greatly influenced by the perceptions of teachers. Consequently, it is crucial that teachers display a positive attitude towards testing. Listed below are 11 practices that teachers and administrators should adhere to in fulfilling their testing responsibilities.

1. When discussing standardized tests with students or parents, teachers and administrators have a responsibility to be factual. Personal opinions, whether positive or negative, should be channeled to appropriate professional personnel for review and clarification.

2. Teachers and administrators are to fulfill the requirements of the Standard Course of Study. Instructional content should not be geared solely to preparing students to score well on standardized tests.

3. Students must be encouraged to do their best and instructed not to worry if they do not know the answer to a test question. As teachers cover the content in the Standard Course of Study, students are expected to show their level of mastery on standardized tests of this curriculum; however, there will always be some test materials that will not be covered and may be unfamiliar to students.

4. Students should be informed about characteristics of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests. (i.e., norm-referenced tests indicate the performance of a student relative to his/her peers; criterion-referenced tests, on the other hand, seek to ascertain whether students have mastered particular skills or objectives.) Generally, cut-off levels, if applicable, are set by the State Board of Education. Students scoring below the cut-off level may be required to undergo further testing, diagnosis or instruction to better identify weaknesses and help them reach a level of competence.

5. Students are to be informed of upcoming tests, told what to expect and given an opportunity to become familiar with the types of questions covered on the test. However, they are not to be drilled or coached on specific test content. It is

important that students receive guidance and training in test-taking skills and anxiety reducing techniques.<sup>1</sup>

6. Under no circumstances are students to be coerced or threatened with failure if their performance is not as desired. Any perceived pressure to increase academic performance and therefore raise test scores must not be transmitted to students. One of the tenets of effective teaching is that all students are expected to give their best on all school-related work which includes standardized testing.

7. Teachers may not attempt to raise test scores of a particular class or cohort by excluding low-scoring students or groups of students from testing.

8. Scores on standardized tests must not be the sole determinant of whether a student is to be retained or promoted. The Basic Education Program (BEP) specifies a three-phase promotion testing program in grades 3, 6 and 8 to assist students who score below the 25th national percentile for their grade level.

9. The curriculum is not to be taught simply to raise test scores. The weaknesses of students as revealed by test scores are expected to be considered in curriculum planning.

10. Test publishers must provide information on their test's strengths and weaknesses. However, the ultimate responsibility for appropriate use and interpretation belongs to the test users. It is important that teachers consult with the school psychologist, testing coordinator or other personnel with advanced training in tests and measurement for clarification of test scores.

11. Access to tests must be limited, but on rare occasions a parent or guardian who indicates a strong need to examine a test may do so in the presence of a school representative.

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<sup>1</sup> Teachers and school administrators should consult the school system's testing coordinator if further assistance is needed in preparing students for testing or analyzing their testing results.

## REPORTING

1. Test scores must not be released to students, parents, legal representatives, teachers or the media without appropriate interpretations and supporting guides. Materials dealing with test results should provide the following: 1) a description of the test; 2) a description of the subject matter covered; 3) the meaning of the scores; 4) a warning about common misinterpretations; and 5) the intended use of scores. Special effort should be made to avoid attaching unwarranted connotations to group IQ or grade equivalent scores.

2. School personnel who have the responsibility for disseminating test results should have a thorough understanding of the test manuals, handbooks, user's guides and technical reports.

3. Individual test scores are best presented as approximations and not as absolutes. It is preferable to report results as a limited score range rather than points.

4. Although test construction includes reviews to eliminate or minimize test bias, tests should be reviewed for potential bias and test results qualified if sources of bias have affected the scores of a particular individual, gender, group or class.

5. Test scores are to be presented as one source of information about a student or group of students and should not be used alone for placement, referral, and other consequential decisions on the education of a student.

6. When cutoff scores are used as part of a scheme to select, classify or certify students, the method and rationale for arriving at that cutoff score must be supported by research with documentation available for review.

## INTERPRETING RESULTS

1. School personnel must not attempt to interpret test data before studying and fully understanding a test manual that includes information on 1) administration and scoring; 2) norms and related technical features; 3) reliability; and 4) validity. Assistance in interpretation should be sought from the test publisher or other expert personnel if necessary.

2. School personnel must be acutely aware of the limitations of test data and not assert relationships between instructional strategies and

test performance that are unsupported by empirical evidence.

3. Those interpreting test results are to be aware of ethnic and cultural differences among students and the impact that these differences may have on test results. The status of a student in comparison to a norm group can be supplemented by subgroup norms for similar groups of students. Also, equal emphasis can be given to growth trends rather than to normative comparisons.

4. Unless a means can be established and statistically supported which controls the many factors that influence student test results, test scores should not be used in formal teacher or principal evaluations. When test results are used as part of teacher self-analysis, teachers and their supervisors are expected to focus on areas of excellence, as well as areas in need of improvement. All analyses must be done cautiously with reasonable expectations being set as goals for students and schools. Teachers who perceive pressure to raise students' test scores may pressure their students with unrealistic demands, thereby creating anxiety and apprehension to the detriment of the students' adjustment and feelings of self worth. Appropriate mechanisms should be established for teachers and other school personnel through existing channels to address unrealistic demands.

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1 *National Education Associations' Code of Ethics of the Education Profession, National Association of School Psychologists' Principles for Professional Ethics.*

2 *Function 8 of the Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument; Functions 3A & B of the Principal Performance Appraisal Instrument; Functions 5 & 6 of the School Counselor Performance Appraisal Instrument; and Function 1 of the School Psychologist Performance Appraisal Instrument.*

3 *See Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (1985) Published by the American Psychological Association; Ethical Standards (1981) published by the American Association for Counseling and Development; and Principles for Professional Ethics (1984) published by the National Association of School Psychologists.*

4 *The test publisher is Research and Testing Services, NCDPI in most instances.*

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1995-96**

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## MODEL LEA SCHOOL BOARD POLICY

### STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Assessment is an integral part of the educational experience of all students. When administered, interpreted and used properly, uniform test results offer a meaningful independent source of information that can be used to design educational opportunities for students to better meet their needs. Improved student learning is the primary goal of both large-scale standardized assessments and classroom assessments.

It is recognized that any assessment is a limited source of information, and will therefore be used in conjunction with all other available information known about a student to assist in improving student learning. Student test data used for personnel / program decisions shall comply with the Testing Code of Ethics for NC testing personnel, teachers, and school administrators, and this policy.

#### Administration

Standardized tests shall be administered according to procedures established by the test publisher. The Superintendent will ensure that all LEA personnel adhere to all procedures for the administration of standardized tests established by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, including but not limited to regulations and procedures printed in the following documents: *The Testing Code of Ethics for North Carolina Testing Personnel, Teachers and School Administrators; Testing Modifications for Students with Disabilities; Guidelines for Testing Students with Limited English Proficiency; Administrative Information for the North Carolina State Testing Programs*; local written implementation procedures, and other supporting documents.

#### Staff Development

The Superintendent will ensure that all appropriate staff have the knowledge and skills necessary to: prepare students for assessments; administer and score the assessments; and interpret and use the results from an assessment. All staff shall use this knowledge and skills for all aspects of assessment.

#### Confidentiality of Student Records

The Superintendent will ensure that the confidentiality of individual student records is maintained.

#### Enforcement

The Superintendent will ensure that all appropriate staff have knowledge of the standards of ethical practice related to assessment and will monitor the educational practices of all personnel in terms of these standards. The failure of any individual to adhere to these standards is grounds for disciplinary action and/or dismissal'. The Superintendent is responsible for developing regulations to implement this policy, including appointing an Ethical Testing Practices committee. All school personnel shall be responsible for immediately reporting any questionable practice to the committee.

## REGULATIONS PERTAINING TO STUDENT ASSESSMENT

(Local regulations should include, but not be limited to the following.)

The responsibility of the Superintendent includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that the following occurs.

### Administration

- (1) communication to all appropriate staff at least once annually all security procedures established by the LEA for each type of assessment, as identified by the *Testing Code of Ethics*, as well as any supplemental documents.
- (2) communication to all appropriate staff at least once annually procedures for test administration through the use of the *Test Administrator's Manual* for the assessment, as well as any supplemental materials.

### Staff Development

- (1) communication to all appropriate staff at least once annually the purpose(s) for each assessment.
- (2) establishment of procedures for periodically reviewing materials and practices used in the school or LEA to prepare students for assessments, administering and scoring assessments, and interpreting and using assessment results.
- (3) periodic review of materials and practices used in the school or LEA to prepare students for assessments, administering and scoring assessments, and interpreting and using assessment results.
- (4) provision of information and staff development necessary to ensure that all appropriate staff have the knowledge and skills necessary to make ethical decisions related to preparing students for an assessment, administering and/or scoring the assessment, and interpreting or using the assessment results.

### Confidentiality of Individual Student Records

- (1) the safeguarding of the confidentiality of individual students. Any written material and/or data file, regardless of the form of the material or data file, or the technology used to produce the materials or data file, which contains identifiable scores for individual students on any test shall not be considered a public record within the meaning of G.S. 132-1 and shall not be disseminated or otherwise made available to the public except as permitted under the provision of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Acts of 1974, 20 U.S.C. 1231G.

### Enforcement

- (1) communication to all appropriate staff at least once annually the standards for determining what is unethical or inappropriate as per the *Testing Code of Ethics*, as well as any additional standards adopted by the LEA.

- (2) communication at least once annually to all appropriate staff how the standards and/or procedures will be monitored, what sanctions will be imposed, and in what circumstances such sanctions will apply.
- (3) provision of channels of communication that allow teachers and other educators, students, parents, and other members of the community to voice their concerns about practices they consider inappropriate.
- (4) the appointment of a committee on ethical testing practices. The committee may be made of five members which may include the Testing Director, a principal, teacher, curriculum specialist or other necessary personnel to complete the investigation. Reported activities which are deemed to be inappropriate shall be reported to the Board of Education.

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' Refer to Personnel Policy Section for the evaluation of educational personnel using assessment results.



### Model policy on the Ethic of Testing As An Aspect of Personnel Evaluation

It is recognized that measures of student progress can be used to assess both student and personnel performance. As policy X (Student Assessment) indicated for students, assessment results will be used in conjunction with all other available information to judge the adequacy of any individual's performance. However, a pattern of performance over several assessment cycles may be one indicator of the adequacy of an educator's performance. The superintendent is responsible for developing regulations to implement this policy to ensure uniformity.

The inadequacy of individual performance is an indicator of inadequate school performance. According to the ABCs of School Improvement, schools not exhibiting adequate progress will be subject to focused intervention and possible takeover.

## Testing Code of Ethics

### Introduction

Assessments, or tests, are designed to serve as tools to measure the characteristics of people. Effective assessments are: based on a clear understanding of what they are supposed to measure; well-matched to the area of study; not influenced by irrelevant factors; and practical. The *Testing Code of Ethics* applies to any form of assessment that occurs as part of the educational process, including formal and informal, traditional and nontraditional methods. Assessment includes, but are not limited to, multiple choice items, free-response items, open-ended items, performance items, and portfolios.

In North Carolina, 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* 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-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 objectively assess their return on investment in the public schools.

Testing should be conducted in a fair and ethical manner, which includes:

#### Security

- ✓ assuring adequate security of the testing process

#### Preparation

- ✓ teaching the tested curriculum and test-taking 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 resolving questions concerning those practices
- ✓ assuring that all students who should be tested are tested.
- ✓ utilizing tests which are developmentally appropriate

#### Scoring, Analysis and Reporting

- ✓ interpreting test results to

The *Testing Code of Ethics* is a guide to inform and remind those involved in assessment of their obligations to uphold the integrity of assessments: development, use, evaluation, and reporting. This Code applies to all individuals involved in the assessment process. Professionally responsible practice is conduct that arises from either the professional standards of the field, general ethical principles, or both. The importance of commitment and adherence to this code cannot be overstated when using test data for decision-making.

## Test Security

1. Test materials shall be stored in a secure, locked area and distributed immediately prior to the test administration. Materials will be returned to a secure, locked area immediately following the test administration. (Put #4 with this also)
2. Only personnel who have a need (such as signing the test) should have access to test materials. "Access" does not mean school personnel have the right to review tests or test items. "Access" is limited to the actual handling of materials. Test materials (both print and electronic, e.g, audio, video, and computer) shall not be copied, reproduced, or paraphrased in any way, for any reason without the express written permission of the test publisher.
3. Personnel responsible for the testing program shall be properly instructed in test administration procedures, including nonstandard administrations. It is critical to follow all directions, as outlined by the test publisher.
4. Before each test administration, materials are to be carefully counted and distributed in an orderly manner. After each test administration, all testing materials shall immediately be collected and counted by the building level test coordinator. Materials shall then be returned to a secure, locked area or forwarded for scoring.
5. Any breach of security, loss of materials, failure to account for materials, or any other deviation from acceptable security procedures shall be reported immediately to the principal, building level test coordinator, and the school system test coordinator. The severity of the breach may result in disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, a letter of reprimand, suspension with pay, suspension without pay, or certificate revocation.

## Central Office

1. The superintendent (or designee) shall develop appropriate local policies and procedures to ensure maximum test security in coordination with the policies and procedures developed by the test publisher.
2. The superintendent (or designee) should establish a policy for permitting parents/guardians to examine secure local-system tests.

## Preparation for Testing

The Superintendent is responsible for ensuring that the following activities occur throughout the school system. Principals are responsible for ensuring that the following activities occur within school buildings.

## Central Office

1. School system test coordinators must secure necessary materials.
2. School system test coordinators must plan and implement training for building level test coordinators and test administrators.
3. School system test coordinators must ensure that each building level test coordinator and test administrator is trained on the implementation of procedural modifications used during test administrations. They must ensure that each test administrator is trained for those modifications they will administer.
4. School system test coordinators must, in conjunction with the Exceptional Children's Program Administrator, ensure that only appropriate test modifications are used, and that proper documentation is present.

*Building Level*

1. Building level test coordinators must maintain test material security and accountability.
2. Building level test coordinators will identify and train personnel, proctors, and "backup" personnel for test administrations.
3. Building level test coordinators should encourage a positive atmosphere for testing.

*Teachers*

Test administrators must be school personnel who have professional training in education. Generally, teachers administer tests to their students.

1. The *Standard Course of Study* is the curriculum on which state tests are based. However, teachers should not narrow the curriculum in an attempt to "teach to the test."
2. Teachers will become familiar with the types of tests their students will take.
3. Teachers and other staff must be trained for each test they will administer.
4. Teachers should provide a positive atmosphere for testing.
5. Teachers should help students to become test-wise by
  - helping students become familiar with test formats using appropriate curricular content,
  - teaching students test-taking strategies and providing appropriate practice sessions,
  - helping students learn ways of preparing themselves for test-taking sessions.
6. Students should be informed of upcoming tests, told what to expect, and made aware of any consequences of testing (e.g., passing the Competency Tests is a graduation requirement). Students with disabilities and Limited English Proficient students should be aware of their rights regarding procedural modifications for

testing.

7. Teachers must administer tests ethically. Examples of unethical behavior include the following:
  - encouraging students to be absent on the day of testing;
  - using secure test items (or modified secure test items) for instruction;
  - interpreting the test directions and/or test items;

*Administration*

Each local school board should establish written policies and procedures to ensure proper test administration for all eligible students. These policies and procedures should include classification, attendance, when tested, extended time, number of times to take test, modifications. Examples of unethical behaviors include: (same one as above as examples)

*Central Office*

1. The superintendent is responsible for the proper administration of each test.
2. The superintendent (or designee) shall assure that each school establishes an appropriate set of procedures which assure that all test administrations comply with test publisher guidelines.
3. The superintendent shall inform the local and the state board of education of any actions regarding any breach of ethics.

*School Building Level*

The principal is responsible for the proper administration of each test within the school, including the following:

1. Assuring that all school personnel know the content of state and local testing policies.
2. Implementing the school system testing policy and procedures and establishing any necessary school policies and procedures which assure that all eligible

students are fairly tested

3. Reporting any questionable violations to the principal and school system test coordinator.

#### *Teachers and Proctors*

1. Tests should be administered according to the directions in the administration manual developed by the test publisher.
2. Tests should be administered to all eligible students.
3. The teacher will report any questionable violations of the policies and procedures to the principal, building level test coordinator, and the school system test coordinator.
4. The teacher should provide an appropriate testing taking climate.
5. Proctoring protects teachers and ensures that testing occurs fairly.

#### Scoring

The school system test coordinator is responsible for ensuring that each test is scored according to specified procedures defined for the test by the test publisher in terms of the purpose and format of the test.

1. Factors to be addressed include accuracy, personal bias, and scoring consistency.
2. Procedures should be developed in responding to student written responses that suggest the need for referral to appropriate personnel (for example, suggestions of abuse or of potential suicide).
3. Security
  - protect the confidentiality of students and teachers at all times (i.e., data transfer, electronic files, printed materials)
  - maintain appropriate levels of security of tests, answer keys, item-specific

scoring rubrics.

#### Analysis and Reporting of Results

A test score is one piece of information and should be interpreted in light of other scores and indicators.

1. Test scores should be released to students, parents, legal guardian, teachers, or the media with appropriate interpretative materials as needed.
2. The superintendent (or designee) should ensure that staff development is provided so that appropriate personnel feel competent to respond to questions related to testing, including the tests, scores, scoring procedures, and other interpretative materials.
3. A greater understanding of test scores may be achieved by the appropriate analysis of data such as:
  - disaggregation of data based upon variables such as student demographics or school homework policy, and
  - examination of growth trends and goal summary reports for state-mandated tests.
4. Items and associated materials on a secure test are not public domain. Item analysis must be limited to items that are within the public domain.
5. Reporting of students names in not ethical and human subjects committees should review research studies. On the model board policy