

ALVAREZ & MARSAL
2011 Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP)
Test Security Investigation
School Summary Report

SCHOOL A

I. BACKGROUND

Denver Public Schools (DPS) flagged one grade level at School A for high levels of Wrong-to-Right (WTR) erasures on one section of the 2011 Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). School A serves 6th, 7th, and 8th Grade students.

According to information provided to us, the WTR changes for the relevant grade level on the CSAP flagged test section were significantly above the Colorado state mean. One teacher (Teacher A) was associated with these anomalies, but our investigation determined that Teacher A did not proctor the flagged section for all of the students in the relevant grade level. According to the proctoring rolls provided to us by Administrative staff, Teacher A proctored 25 students on the flagged test section.

DPS therefore performed additional analyses based on the median difference between Constructed Response (CR) and Multiple Choice (MC) scores for the students proctored by Teacher A compared to same-grade/same-test sections proctored by others at School A. This analysis revealed that the students proctored by Teacher A scored significantly higher on MC questions than on CR questions. Students at the same grade level, but whose flagged test section was proctored by others at the school, exhibited virtually no difference between MC and CR scores. Comparing the 2011 scores of the students proctored by Teacher A to their 2010 scores revealed a lack of consistency between the years, as these students' MC and CR scores were closely correlated in 2010.

II. THE INVESTIGATION

To determine the source and cause of the anomalies related to the test results of students proctored by Teacher A, DPS asked CDE and its legal advisor, the Colorado Attorney General's Office, to investigate. The Attorney General's Office engaged Alvarez & Marsal (A&M) to conduct an on-site investigation at School A.

Given the fact that flagged test results were associated with one CSAP test section and one grade level, we focused our investigation on the possibility that one or more Test Administrators (generally Teachers or Paraprofessionals) engaged in WTRs to improve student scores.

A. Interviews Conducted

With DPS providing scheduling and personnel assistance, we conducted interviews at School A and other locations over two days, beginning on May 23, 2012. We interviewed 17 individuals, including current and former school staff and students. In some cases, we interviewed individuals on more than one occasion.

B. Interview Process

Four A&M personnel (in two teams) conducted interviews. The interviewers utilized five interview protocols at each school, with approximately 60 questions each. We designed each protocol to elicit information related to the interviewee's role in the 2011 CSAP testing process. Our protocols focused generally on:

1. Background. These questions related to the individual's history at the school and familiarity with the administration of the 2011 CSAP.
2. Process. We used process questions to elicit the individual's understanding of:
 - a. The 2011 CSAP testing guidance issued by CDE and DPS,
 - b. the required CSAP test administration and ethics training, and
 - c. security procedures for test materials before, during, and after test administration.
3. Culture. We designed these questions to elicit information on the environment at the School, in particular whether the School culture is one in which faculty, staff, and students can report concerns over potential violations of testing standards without fear of retaliation.
4. Behavior. We used behavioral questions to obtain information on the individual's awareness of specific activities in the school that might constitute test violations. We specifically asked each individual whether he or she had cheated on the 2011 CSAP and whether he or she was aware of others who may have cheated. This section included questions on types of test violations most often reported, including:
 - a. Assisting students by identifying incorrect answers on test sheets
 - b. Reading correct answers aloud during testing
 - c. Erasing students' incorrect answers and replacing them with correct answers
 - d. Obtaining test materials in advance of the test
 - e. Arranging seating to allow weaker students to copy stronger students' answers

The protocols were prepared for:

1. Principals,
2. Site Assessment Leaders (SAL),

3. Test Administrators,
4. Proctors, Monitors, and School Staff, and
5. Students.

We conducted all interviews with two A&M personnel present - a lead interviewer and a scribe. Except in cases where a school staff member requested the presence of a Denver Classroom Teachers Association (DCTA) representative, we conducted all staff interviews with no one else present. DPS obtained parental permission in advance of all student interviews, and provided an observer for these interviews.

III. FINDINGS

Our investigation revealed a potential testing violation related to the security of test materials, a potential testing violation related to reporting of testing irregularities, and some evidence of testing violations at the classroom level. We describe these potential violations in detail below.

A. Test Storage Location Inadequately Secured

Our interviews revealed that unauthorized individuals had access to the secured closet where the CSAP tests were stored. Those with access included numerous members of the school's Administrative staff as well as Test Administrators. At times, Test Administrators had access to the secured location when the Site Assessment Leader was not present.

The *2010-2011 CSAP Testing Protocols* (Page 1), provided to us by DPS, indicate, in relevant part, that:

All SALs must keep their CSAP materials locked up in a secure location unless they are being used for testing. Access to the secure room must be limited to the SAL, a custodian and the principal. Other staff members should never have access to the CSAP materials unless under the direct supervision of the SAL.

The fact that several staff and faculty members had access to the secure area, and faculty members reported being in this location without supervision while test materials were on site, appears to be a violation of this protocol.

B. Possible Assistance Provided to Students During Test Administration

On May 24, 2012, we interviewed six students who previously took classes with Teacher A. Of the six students that we interviewed, three claimed that Teacher A had proctored their 2011 CSAP exam. In addition, two of those students claimed that they received some form of unauthorized assistance on their exam. However, a review of the student rosters for each proctor kept by the school indicated that these two students were proctored by other Test Administrators.

Teacher A stated in our interviews that s/he may have sometimes reminded students to go back and check their answers on the benchmark tests, but s/he would not provide answers. S/He also stated that s/he never provided any assistance on the CSAP exam. Another student we interviewed who did have Teacher A as a proctor corroborated that information by stating that the most Teacher A would say was “try your best.”

Because we could not corroborate the allegations made by the two students (who were, in any event, apparently not proctored by Teacher A), we cannot confirm that Teacher A disclosed answers or otherwise provided assistance to students during the administration of the 2011 CSAP, and therefore cannot conclude that a violation of test security procedures occurred.

C. Failure to Report Potential Testing Irregularities

One teacher (Teacher B) reported an incident in which s/he and another teacher (Teacher C) were discussing the CSAP after testing had concluded. Teacher B stated that Teacher C commented that, when testing was over, the teacher would review student booklets and comment if the students overlooked any questions. Teacher B did not report this incident to the school’s Administration.

In a subsequent interview with Teacher B, s/he said that s/he recalled conversations with other teachers about the CSAP tests after the tests were finished for the year. Teacher B stated that some teachers had reminded their students to look at the test section again if the students had left some questions unanswered. According to Teacher B, these teachers rationalized their behavior by stating that it did not affect the integrity of the test. While Teacher B disagreed with this statement, s/he did not report it because s/he felt that most people would not consider it a problem.

Teacher B would not reveal the identity of the teachers to whom s/he attributed these statements.

Various documents provided guidance on reporting testing irregularities, including the CSAP Ethics Training, CSAP Materials and Administration 2011, and the Colorado Student Assessment System 2010-2011 Procedures Manual (Procedures Manual). The Procedures Manual (Page 30) specifically required that, “Missing test books or any test irregularities must be reported to the S[chool] A[ssessment] C[oordinator]/D[istrict] A[ssessment] C[oordinator].” The relevant School Assessment Coordinator at School A is the SAL, who is the appropriate individual to whom potential testing irregularities should have been reported by Test Administrators.

Behavior that resulted in changes to student answers or irregularities in scoring is covered by the *Procedures Manual* in Section 4.2, Administration of Assessments, Unethical Behavior/Practice in Preparation and Administration of Assessments. Teacher B’s failure to report the incidents s/he cited may be a violation of the CDE irregularity reporting requirements.

D. Extraordinary WTRs

As previously discussed, the WTR analysis flagged Teacher A because of the CSAP performance of the students assigned to him/her for reporting purposes. Teacher A did not serve

as the Test Administrator for all of these students. However, we were unable to definitively establish that Teacher A had access to the CSAP exams for all of his/her assigned students after tests were administered. Teacher A stated that s/he did not participate in the clean-up of stray marks.

Assuming that irregularities occurred, we identified two possible explanations for the high level of WTRs and the low correlation between MC and CR responses: 1) Teacher A made or facilitated the making of substantial changes to the tests s/he proctored. These changes then influenced the results for the entire cohort selected. 2) There was a systematic effort to change the MC CSAP answers of the students that Teacher A taught – either by Teacher A or by someone else.

Given that we do not have WTR data for individual students, we are unable to analyze the data based on the identity of the Test Administrator. Therefore, we cannot definitively trace the abnormal results to specific actions by Teacher A.

IV. CONCLUSION

None of the identified potential violations explains the WTR changes. Therefore, despite statistical evidence that wrongdoing may have occurred, we were unable to obtain conclusive evidence that Teacher A participated in changing student answers.