

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

SCHOOL B

I. BACKGROUND

Denver Public Schools (DPS) flagged one grade level at School B for a high level of Wrong-to-Right (WTR) erasures on the Reading section of the 2011 Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). School B is an elementary school.

According to information provided to us, the WTR changes, which were subsequently determined to relate to one class at the identified grade level, on the CSAP flagged test section were significantly above the Colorado state mean. One teacher (Teacher D) was associated with these anomalies. In addition, this teacher's test scores on the Reading section of the CSAP dropped from approximately 70 percent Proficient in 2011 to 50 percent Proficient in 2012.

II. THE INVESTIGATION

To determine the source and cause of the anomalies related to the test results of students proctored by Teacher D, 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 B.

Given the fact that flagged test results were associated with one CSAP test section and one class level, we focused our investigation on the possibilities that: 1) Test Administrators at the classroom level were engaged in manipulating answers to improve test scores, or 2) Students engaged in cheating during the test.

A. Interviews Conducted

With DPS providing scheduling and personnel assistance, we conducted interviews at School B on May 23, 2012. We interviewed 10 individuals, including current School B staff and students. In some cases, we interviewed individuals on more than one occasion.

B. Interview Process

Two A&M personnel conducted the interviews at School B. 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. In some cases, parents attended student interviews.

III. FINDINGS

Our investigation yielded no indications of test violations by Teacher D. We noted several issues that do not rise to the level of test violations, which we describe below.

The School Administration advised Test Administrators to keep test materials locked in a cabinet when not in use, and Test Administrators returned tests at the end of the day, rather than at the end of the test period. This approach may have provided Test Administrators with access to testing materials for extended periods.

Multiple sources indicated the possibility that student cheating existed, but we obtained no firm evidence to validate this allegation. Teacher D noticed students looking at other students' tests during the CSAP; however, s/he stated that there was "no overt cheating." Another staff member in Teacher D's classroom during testing confirmed that it was possible that students looked at other students' tests, but s/he did not notice any cheating. One student described another student looking on his/her test, but none of the other students interviewed corroborated any cheating in the classroom.

IV. CONCLUSION

We identified two factors that may have contributed to the abnormal WTR erasures detected in the flagged class: 1) students underlining words on the test and crossing out wrong answers and 2) a seating configuration that was conducive to students observing the test material of others. Three sources verified that underlining words and/or eliminating answers was a testing strategy used in this call. In addition, four sources noted a large amount of erasing by students during the test. We noted no indications of test violations by Teacher D.