

Viewing Secure State Tests/Obtaining Data for Research

Note: Effective with the 2008–09 school year, the State Board of Education directs the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) to release to the school districts and the public one test form for each grade level and subject tested. Visit the NCDPI Web site at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/releasedforms> for all released forms and additional information.

The North Carolina *Testing Code of Ethics* ([GCS-A-010 \[16 NCAC 6D .0306\]](#)) states that items and associated materials on a secure test shall not be in the public domain. Access to the tests shall be limited to school personnel who have a legitimate need. Access to test materials by school personnel means handling the materials, but it does not include reviewing tests or analyzing test items. Furthermore, persons who have access to secure test materials shall not use their access to those materials for personal gain.

Secure test materials include, but are not limited to, test blueprints; test layout forms; item pools; operational or field test books, test questions, or test book sections; operational, field test, or makeup writing prompts; answer documents; and test administrator manuals. Secure test materials may be in electronic or paper format. Because test materials in North Carolina are often reused and because test materials are costly to generate, every precaution is taken to ensure test materials that are to be reused remain secure at all times.

The normal course of the test development process is understood to include educator/stakeholder involvement in test specifications, development, item writing and review; experimental form/section, bias, and operational form reviews; and standard setting. During these processes, educators/stakeholders are asked to view secure test materials but are bound by a signed test security agreement.

In special circumstances, exceptions to this policy can be made for certain stakeholders such as legislators, parents/guardians, or researchers. Any of these individuals or groups who request the opportunity to view secure test materials or test data are to send a letter of request to the director of Accountability Operations at the following address:

Lou Fabrizio, Ph.D., Director of Accountability Policy and Communications
NCDPI Division of Accountability Services
6314 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-6314

Letters of request are to include (1) the specific data/test requested, (2) why the request is being made (e.g., how the data will be used in the research study), and (3) what will be done with the information/data (e.g., information gained from reviewing the test will inform policy decisions).

For individuals or groups who are granted permission to view secure test materials, the review must occur at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in Raleigh under secure conditions. Individuals or groups may not view secure test materials at the district or school sites. Reproducing or copying secure test items is not permitted.

If the individual granted permission to view secure test materials is a parent, the NCDPI will inform the parent that the test that will be viewed may be a parallel and equivalent form of the

test but not necessarily the same test form that was administered to his/her child. The parent will not be able to view his/her child's completed answer document or his/her child's actual test book. The completed test books and answer documents are maintained at the district level and are securely destroyed soon after the test administrations are completed.

Prior to viewing secure test materials, information will be provided to describe how tests are developed. Several public documents about the process may be shared. The NCDPI staff member(s) may also have on hand a copy of additional documentation, such as standard setting reports, technical manuals, or a report of test results that the individual(s) may view during the meeting.

While the individual/group may take notes on information shared prior to viewing the secure test materials, no note taking is permitted during the actual viewing of secure test materials. Also, prior to viewing secure test materials, each individual is required to read and sign a test security agreement form. One copy will be retained by the NCDPI; each individual may take a second copy with him/her. If an individual refuses to sign the test security agreement form, the individual may not view secure test materials at that time.

A designated NCDPI staff member will remain present throughout the period the individual is permitted to view secure test materials. While viewing secure test materials, an individual may not duplicate, scan, copy, photograph, or otherwise create a record of information contained within the secure test materials. The North Carolina *Testing Code of Ethics* may be referenced for additional information relative to test security requirements.