



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PO Box 500
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

JON S. CORZINE
Governor

LUCILLE E. DAVY
Acting Commissioner

August 2006

TO: Office of Evaluation and Assessment

FROM: Office of Compliance Investigation

SUBJECT: Camden City Standardized Statewide Testing Security Breach
Brimm, Wilson and Wiggins Schools
OCI Case #1007

In accordance with Department of Education ("Department") procedures regarding secured state tests, the Office of Compliance Investigation ("OCI") conducted a review of testing procedures utilized by the Camden City School District during the March 2005 administration of the High School Proficiency Assessment Test ("HSPA") at the Charles E. Brimm Medical Arts High School on April 24, 2006. The HSPA review at Brimm Schools was prompted by allegations from the school principal, Mr. Joseph Carruth, that he was instructed to compromise test security to ensure that student scores improved.

On June 14, 2006, OCI initiated investigations into the administration of the NJASK Testing at both the H. B. Wilson and U. S. Wiggins Schools. The review at Wiggins and Wilson Schools was prompted by an extreme performance spike during the 2005 testing cycle.

The OCI review included interviews with various parties, reviews of security procedures, checklists, document storage locations and test material inventories. During the investigation, OCI investigators experienced various levels of cooperation from staff members, including one staff member who failed to respond to requests to be interviewed.

Following is a synopsis of each investigation and a summary of OCI's findings.

Charles E. Brimm Medical Arts High School

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OCI personnel conducted interviews with various personnel at Brimm School including the school test coordinator, test examiners and proctors, as well as any other personnel thought to possess knowledge pertinent to the review. Written security test procedures, storage sites and training were reviewed. The investigation also included a detailed analysis of the 2005 test booklets, answer sheets and individual math test scores.

Specifically, OCI conducted interviews with personnel at Brimm regarding allegations about improper testing practices employed during the 2005 testing period. The former principal of Brimm, Joseph Carruth, alleged that assistant superintendent, Luis Pagan, directed Carruth to compromise established school test security procedures during the 2005 HSPA testing period. He claimed that Pagan suggested the following: that Carruth take specific measures to ensure that all Brimm students perform at or above proficiency on the 2005 HSPA, that Carruth use a razor blade to slice open a test booklet to use as a key for scoring the tests, that Carruth and another staff member develop an answer key that could be used to check student answers, and that Carruth's job with the district would be in jeopardy if his students' scores did not improve. OCI could not verify Carruth's allegations regarding Pagan. Investigators interviewed Pagan, who denied asking Carruth to compromise the security and reliability of the test. As a result, OCI's investigation regarding the allegations made by Carruth was inconclusive.

Carruth also alleged that Michelle Cloth-Quinones, the Brimm Math Chairperson and a test examiner for the 2005 testing cycle, copied a 2005 test booklet. OCI could not verify that Cloth-Quinones copied the HSPA test booklet for the 2005 testing cycle. However, OCI did confirm that Cloth-Quinones requested a copy of the 2005 HSPA test booklet. Cloth-Quinones, herself, admitted that she requested a copy of the test. She explained that she asked for a copy of the test because she wanted to ensure that she was covering the appropriate math subjects during instruction.

The Department's 2005 guidance regarding the administration of the HSPA prohibited school personnel from copying test booklets. See 2005 New Jersey HSPA, District/School Test Coordinator Manual, p. 19. Specifically, the Department directed school districts that "the HSPA test booklet and its contents are secure materials. It CANNOT be read, reviewed or discussed by staff, either orally or in writing, or copied either wholly or in part, for any purpose." HSPA Manual, p. 19.

Because the HSPA manual specifically states that the HSPA test booklet may not be copied by district personnel, Cloth-Quinones' attempt to copy the test booklet was made in complete disregard of testing procedures. Cloth-Quinones as a test examiner should have been familiar with the Department's testing procedures as test examiners receive training on testing practices. HSPA Manual, p. 28. Accordingly, Cloth-Quinones' statement reveals that she either was not properly trained in testing procedures or that she ignored testing procedures when making her request.

U.S. Wiggins School

OCI investigators interviewed various personnel at Wiggins', including the school test coordinator, test examiners and proctors for both the third and fourth grades, as well as any other personnel thought to possess knowledge pertinent to the investigation. Written security test procedures, storage sites and training were reviewed. The Office of Evaluation and Assessment ("OEA") and OCI also reviewed a sampling of the 2005 NJASK 3 tests

from the Wiggins school. They reviewed the NJASK 3 open-ended math questions; however, the review was inconclusive.

OCI staff, however, was able to identify several procedural violations that would adversely affect the reliability of the 2005 NJASK test scores for Wiggins. The investigation revealed that: (1) special education students remained in classrooms with general education students during testing so that all students received the benefit of having test questions read aloud, repeated and explained to them; (2) educational prompts, located on classroom walls and bulletin boards, remained visible during testing giving students the opportunity to view these aides when answering test questions; (3) examiners who signed the security checklist acknowledging custody of secured test materials surrendered those materials to other staff members without approval or documentation of transfer in violation of established testing procedures; (4) the school test coordinator affixed his signature to the security checklists acknowledging receipt of testing materials when in fact he was absent from school on the date in question; and (5) although most staff members returned test booklets prior to the 11:30 a.m. lunch break, the security checklists indicate return times that are up to 30 minutes later. A summary of OCI's findings is listed below.

Testing special education students in the same classroom as the general education students is prohibited by the Department's testing manual for the NJASK. OCI received statements from teachers that Wiggins tested its general education students with its special education students, allowing the general education students to receive accommodations provided to the special education students. For example, certain teachers claimed that questions were read aloud and explained to the special education students. Because general education students took the test in the same room as the special education students, they had the benefit of having questions read aloud to them and explained to them.

First, the Department's test administration manual for the NJASK 2005 did not list the explanation of questions as a permissible test administration modification. 2005 Test Administration Manual for the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge, p. 50. Second, test questions may not be read aloud for certain portions of the test, for example Language Arts literacy test questions may not be read aloud. NJASK Manual, p. 50. Therefore, explaining test questions, and in certain circumstances reading test questions aloud, to special education students are not permitted accommodations.

More importantly, the 2005 manual specifically stated that general education students should not receive special education accommodations and accordingly, students requiring accommodations must be tested in a separate location from general education students. NJASK Manual, p. 11. As a result, testing the general education students in the same classroom as the special education students, where questions were read aloud and explained to the students, violates the Department's established testing procedures.

Furthermore, staff claimed that they tested students in classrooms according to ability, rather than testing the students in their home rooms. Although such a practice is not specifically prohibited by the testing manual, it is unclear why the district would organize its testing in such a way as typically students are tested within their home rooms.

Moreover, some of the teachers made allegations regarding Juanita Worthy, the school principal. They claimed that Worthy directed that students be tested in rooms by ability group, rather than in their home rooms. Also, staff interviewed claimed that Worthy did not direct teachers to remove educational prompts from the walls of their classroom. When

questioned by OCI, Worthy generally denied the allegations made against her by her staff. She claimed that no testing irregularities occurred during the 2005 testing cycle.

OCI learned that a teacher claimed that one particular student, who required a scribe, was tested in a classroom with general education students. She explained that the students within the classroom could hear the student recite his answers to the scribe. Again, general education students are supposed to be tested separately from special education students. NJASK Manual, p. 11. Moreover, as a practical matter, such a practice compromises the reliability of the other students' test answers as they could have easily overheard the particular student's responses.

Additionally, teachers claimed that they were not instructed to remove educational prompts from the walls of their classrooms and as a result, prompts remained on the classroom walls during testing. Although teachers did not specify the subjects the educational prompts related to, they did note that removing or covering any educational prompts was up to the discretion of the teacher. Such a practice is inconsistent with the 2005 NJASK manual as the manual directed that "curriculum materials pertaining to the subject should be covered or removed from the room." NJASK Manual, p. 26.

OCI also found through its interviews of Wiggins' employees that although test materials for the general education students were returned prior to lunch, the security checklists noted receipt of the tests as having occurred after lunch. Specifically, although most staff members claimed that they returned general education students' test booklets prior to the 11:30 a.m. lunch break, the security checklists indicate return times that are up to 30 minutes later, the time when examiners returned the special education students' tests. Moreover, the security test checklists indicate that although special education teachers returned the special education students' tests and the home room teachers returned the general education students' tests, all tests were signed as if they were returned by the home room teachers. Furthermore, when picking up and signing out testing materials, examiners signed for other examiners' testing materials. OCI also learned that although the test coordinator was absent on one of the days of testing, he signed for the distribution and return of secured tests based on the representation of others.

To ensure test security, the Department has established procedures regarding the handling of the State assessment tests.¹ The 2005 NJASK testing manual contained the testing procedures for the 2005 testing cycle. The district test coordinators, the school test coordinators, and the examiners have specific responsibilities to ensure test security. See NJASK Manual, p. 14-15, 22-36. The district test coordinators must verify for the district that the secure test materials have been received and maintain the record of transfer of secure test materials to and from the school test coordinators and the examiners. NJASK Manual, p. 19. The school test coordinators maintain the record of chain of transfer of the secure test materials to and from the test examiners. NJASK Manual, p. 19. They must make note of any testing irregularities. NJASK Manual, p. 19. The school and district coordinators must be available during testing to monitor all aspects of the test administration. NJASK Manual, p. 15.

¹ The Department's testing procedures do not change substantially from year to year. Because the alleged breach occurred in 2005, OCI will use the testing procedures from the 2005 testing manual to summarize the testing process and the responsibilities of the district test coordinator, school test coordinator, and the test examiners.

Test examiners are responsible for distributing the tests to the students each day of the test administration. NJASK Manual, p. 22. They must undergo training to learn how to properly handle the secure testing materials. NJASK Manual, p. 22. The examiners are to return the tests under their supervision to the school test coordinator. NJASK Manual, p. 35. The school test coordinator must receive test materials from the examiners and must record on the security checklists when they obtain the testing materials. NJASK Manual, p. 35.

Through its investigation, OCI learned that the staff at Wiggins did not handle the testing materials in accordance with the Department's 2005 testing procedures. First, examiners allowed other teachers to pick up and return their tests. Also, the school test coordinator did not properly record the return of the tests. Moreover, because the school test coordinator signed for the tests even though he was not present on one of the testing days, he was not able to verify the proper return of the tests. See NJASK Manual, p. 32. Additionally, because he was absent one day of the testing, he was not able to monitor all aspects of the test administration for the testing day. NJASK Manual, p. 15. Furthermore, the chain of transfer was not properly recorded as teachers alleged that testing materials were not marked when they were received. As a result, the proper chain of transfer was not maintained during the 2005 testing cycle at Wiggins and the security of the 2005 tests was compromised.

H.B. Wilson School

OCI investigators interviewed various personnel at the school including the school test coordinator, test examiners and proctors for both the third and fourth grades, as well as any other personnel thought to possess knowledge pertinent to the investigation. Investigators were unable to interview Mrs. Patricia Johnson since she failed to respond to OCI's requests for an interview. Also, the written security test procedures, storage sites and training offered to staff were reviewed. Additionally, personnel from OEA and OCI reviewed the open-ended Math questions for the 2005 NJASK 4 test.

OEA and OCI reviewed a sampling of the 2005 NJASK 4 tests from the Wilson school. Upon review of the open-ended math questions, several of the open-ended math questions, appeared to be highly organized and sophisticated for fourth-grade students. Because the answers did not read as if written by fourth graders, OEA and OCI found the reliability of the answers to be questionable.

Also, similar to the Wiggins school, a number of teachers claimed that special education students were tested in the same classroom as regular education students. Certain staff stated that general education students and special education students were permitted to use calculators on all parts of the math portion. Additionally, general education students were given additional time to complete the test. As noted above, the 2005 NJASK testing manual, specifically notes that special education students are to be tested separately from general education students. NJASK Manual, p. 11. Furthermore, the NJASK 2005 Manual specifically stated that "**General education** students receive no special testing accommodations other than the standard room setup and materials distribution described in the *Examiner Manual*." NJASK Manual, p. 11. Furthermore, for both general education and special education students, calculators may only be used for the math calculator section. NJASK Manual, p. 26. Here, staff claimed that students used calculators for all of the math sections. As a result, allowing the general education students to use calculators and giving the general education students more time to complete the test were in direct violation of the Department's testing procedures.

Additionally, certain staff claimed that Patricia Johnson, the school facilitator, directed teachers to ignore established security procedures. Staff at Wilson claimed that Johnson directed teachers to test the general and special education students in the same classroom. Staff also stated that Johnson directed teachers to allow their educational prompts to remain on the walls of the classrooms. OCI could not verify the statements allegedly made by Johnson as Johnson failed to respond to OCI's requests for an interview.

Personnel also claimed that principal, Michael Hailey, directed teachers to do everything necessary to have students pass the tests. Staff stated that Hailey told teachers they needed their test scores to improve. OCI questioned Hailey about the allegations and Hailey denied that any irregularities or breaches in test security occurred during the 2005 testing cycle.

OCI learned from staff at the Wilson school that teaching aids within classrooms remained on the walls. Again, although it is unclear whether Johnson directed the teachers to allow the aids to remain on the walls, it appears that educational prompts did remain in the classroom during the 2005 testing cycle, a practice prohibited by the NJASK manual. NJASK Manual, p. 26.

Finally, OCI discovered that although one particular teacher claimed that she was a test examiner, her name did not appear on the security checklist demonstrating that she did not sign for the test booklets. As a testing examiner, she would have been required to sign for the pick-up and return of all her tests. NJASK Manual, p. 19. As a result, the chain of transfer of her tests may have been breached.

If you need additional information or clarification of any of my thoughts or recommendations, please contact me at 984-5593.

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c: Lucille E. Davy
Penelope Lattimer
Jay Doolan
Kim C. Belin
Karl Feltes