

**Part I of the Fall 2011/Spring 2012 MEPA
Principal's Administration Manual:
MEPA Test Security Requirements**

MEPA Test Security Requirements

The purpose of the MEPA Test Security Requirements is to protect the validity of MEPA test results.

Section A describes responsibilities of principals and designees (e.g., individuals designated by the principal to assist in coordinating test administration).

Section B describes shared responsibilities of all individuals who have access to secure test materials.

Section C describes responsibilities of test administrators.

Section D provides instructions for reporting testing irregularities and describes the process the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“the Department”) follows for investigation.

Principals and school staff designated to have access to secure materials must follow the requirements listed below and may not participate in, direct, counsel, assist in, encourage, or fail to report any testing irregularity or act of misconduct.

Principals are responsible for ensuring that all test administrators and school staff designated to have access to secure test materials comply with the requirements and instructions contained in this part and in the *Test Administrator’s Manuals* (TAMs).

Also note that information is provided elsewhere in this *Principal’s Administration Manual* (PAM) about topics described below, including who may serve as a test administrator, who may have access to test materials, establishing and following a document tracking system, scheduling test sessions, procedures for contaminated materials, and lists of approved and unapproved materials.

Please note the following definitions for the purposes of this section and this manual:

- **“Secure” test materials** refers to a test question, student response, test, or TAM that has not been made available to the public by the Department. All test questions, student responses to those test questions, test booklets, and answer booklets¹ are confidential and must be kept secure at all times. Because TAMs contain certain test questions, they are also secure test materials.
- **“Access” to test materials** refers to handling those materials, but does not include reviewing tests or individual questions. Students may never be permitted to transport secure test materials.
- **“Locked storage area”** refers to the locked area that must be used to store all MEPA test materials **at all times** when materials are not in use. Principals must restrict access to the locked storage area to only those school employees designated by the principal as being authorized to handle secure materials. For example, cleaning staff may not have access to the locked area where the principal stores secure materials.

Each principal must complete the Principal’s Certification of Proper Test Administration (PCPA) to certify that the school has followed proper MEPA administration procedures. See Appendix D for the certification statements to which the principal must attest.

¹ Throughout this manual, the terms “test booklet” and “answer booklet” also refer to the combined test & answer booklets used at grades 1–4 (fall)/K–4 (spring).

A. Responsibilities of the Principal and Designee

1. Designate and train school employees in conducting a proper MEPA test administration.

- Several days in advance of testing, provide a copy of the test security requirements (available at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/mepa/testadmin) to all school employees who have access to secure test materials.
- Train test administrators prior to each administration during which they will administer any MEPA test. The PAM and TAMs describe the policies and procedures necessary to conduct a proper MEPA test administration.
- Train test administrators who provide test accommodations to students with disabilities in the implementation of accommodations in accordance with Appendix A and *Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS*.

2. Develop local policies and procedures to ensure maximum test security at all times.

- Schedule tests to avoid conflicts with recess or lunch (see pages 14–17 for more information about scheduling test sessions).
- Ensure that tests are administered during the prescribed testing window and in the prescribed order.
- Ensure that test administrators administer tests according to section C on the following pages.

3. Keep all MEPA test materials in locked storage when not in use, from the time of receipt until their return.

- Account for all secure test materials at the end of each day of testing and maintain them in locked storage when not in use.
- Restrict access to the locked storage area to only those school employees designated to have access to secure materials.

4. Monitor the receipt and return of all test materials.

- Inventory materials immediately upon receipt and investigate any discrepancies in counts of materials as described in the PAM.
- Return all materials to the testing contractor according to the prescribed packing instructions and the deadlines in the PAM.

B. Shared Responsibilities of Principals, Test Administrators, and Other School Staff Designated to Have Access to Secure Materials

1. Document the location of secure materials at all times.

- Track secure materials using the sample Test Materials Internal Tracking Form in Appendix D or a similar document (principals keep these forms on file for one year).

2. Ensure the security of the testing environment.

- Prohibit visitors to the classroom or testing environment (including parents, researchers, reporters, and school employees not designated as test administrators), except under emergency conditions.

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3. Ensure the security of test questions, test booklets, TAMs, and other secure materials.

- Do not engage in any of the following activities:
 - leaving materials unattended when not in use
 - viewing or revealing the contents of test booklets or answer booklets before, during, or after a test administration (see TAMs for exceptions, including test questions that must be read aloud)
 - duplicating any portion of test or answer booklets, including but not limited to audiotaping, videotaping, photographing, photocopying, and copying by hand²
- Do not remove test materials from the school. For example, do not share test booklets and answer booklets with another school or test site, even if another test site is located within the same physical building.³
- Ensure that test booklets, answer booklets, and TAMs are not retained, discarded, recycled, removed, or destroyed.⁴
- Ensure that students are not provided access to secure test questions prior to testing.
- Do not read, review, or change student responses.
- Do not attempt to score unreleased test questions.

C. Responsibilities of Test Administrators

1. Receive training from the principal/designee in administering test sessions properly and securely.

- Review the TAM and all relevant test security requirements before administering test sessions.
- Meet with the principal/designee before test administration.
- Understand and follow the policies and procedures related to administering tests to students with disabilities.

2. Administer all tests according to appropriate policies and procedures.

- Administer tests during the prescribed testing window and in the prescribed order.
- Follow the directions and read the scripts in the TAMs (and any subsequent updates provided to principals by the Department) verbatim to students.
- Remove or cover any classroom displays that provide information related to the content being assessed or to test-taking strategies (see page 18).

² The only exceptions are for test administrators who must transcribe student responses into answer booklets for students with disabilities receiving certain accommodations or for students who did some or all of their work in damaged, defective, or void booklets.

³ The only exception is for principals who receive prior written permission from the Department to test a student in an alternate setting. Alternate setting requests must be resubmitted to the Department for approval for each test administration even if approved for a previous administration.

⁴ The only exception is for test materials that have become contaminated; see page 23 for procedures.

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- Provide students with all required test materials as listed in the TAMs. Supplemental or reference sheets are not allowed (except as approved by the Department).
 - Prevent the use of unapproved materials (see page 19 for lists of approved and unapproved materials). Note that results will be invalidated for students who use cell phones during testing.
3. **Focus full attention on the testing environment at all times.**
- Continually monitor the testing process by moving unobtrusively about the room.
 - Ensure that students are not left unsupervised during testing, including breaks and transitions to test completion locations.
4. **Ensure that students provide answers that are strictly their own and do not participate in any form of cheating.**
- Ensure that students do not consult notes, textbooks, or other teaching materials; do not share test questions with other students; and do not consult other students, staff, or anyone else during testing.
5. **Do not provide a student with answers to any test question or make suggestions for responding to any test question.**
- Test administrators must **not**:
 - o Answer verbally or nonverbally any question that relates to the secure content of a test unless specifically authorized to do so by instructions in the TAMs.
 - o Provide clues, hints, and/or actual answers in any written, printed, verbal, and/or nonverbal form (including chalkboards, charts, and bulletin boards).
 - o Coach⁵ a student during testing or alter or interfere with a student's responses in any way. However, at any time during a test session, a test administrator may repeat a portion of the TAM script if necessary for clarification.
 - o Alter, explain, simplify, paraphrase, or eliminate any test question, reading passage, writing prompt, or multiple-choice answer option.
 - o Ask or permit a student to go back to any test session after his or her test and answer booklets have been collected.
6. **Do not read, review, or change student responses** (see exceptions on page 18).
7. **Follow proper procedures for students with disabilities.**
- Provide testing accommodations as prescribed in Appendix A and in *Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS*.
 - Ensure that students are not provided with accommodations that were not approved by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 team or that are not listed as approved in Appendix A.

⁵ Examples of coaching include, but are not limited to, the following: providing answers to a student; changing a student's responses; providing synonyms for unknown words; influencing a student's responses by offering hints, clues, cues, facial expressions, nods, voice inflections; or providing any other manner of assistance that could impact a student's answers. Suggesting to a student that he or she write more on a question or reconsider or review a question constitutes coaching.

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D. Testing Irregularities

Testing irregularities are incidents that represent a deviation from prescribed testing procedures. Testing irregularities may include student impropriety, test violations, educator misconduct, or the mishandling of secure test materials.

In order to ensure the security and confidentiality of the MEPA program, the Department may conduct announced and unannounced monitoring visits to schools to observe the procedures followed during test administration.

1. Reporting an Irregularity

To report a testing irregularity, principals must contact their superintendents and the Department. Test administrators and other school employees must contact their principal and the Department at 781-338-3625.

On occasion, the Department receives allegations of testing irregularities from individuals who do not wish to identify themselves. The individual must provide the Department with sufficient information related to the matter, including the following:

- a description of the alleged incident
- the name of the school involved
- the name(s) of the individual(s) committing the inappropriate practices
- the grade level(s) and specific test(s) affected

The Department will expect school and district employees to cooperate and investigate the allegations to determine whether they can be supported.

2. Investigations into Irregularities

In cases where it is alleged that a MEPA administration was compromised, the Commissioner will write to the superintendent, ask that he or she conduct a local fact-finding investigation into the alleged irregularity, and require that he or she submit a written report, based on the results of the investigation to the Department, within an established timeline.

After receiving the superintendent's written investigative report, the Commissioner may request that the superintendent provide additional information or documentation prior to making a final determination on the matter and notifying the superintendent of this determination. All such correspondence is subject to disclosure under Massachusetts public records law.

If misconduct by a licensed educator is found, as the Massachusetts educator licensing authority, the Commissioner may open a further investigation that has possible licensure consequences.

3. Penalties

Penalties for testing irregularities and/or misconduct could include the following:

- delay in reporting of district, school, and/or student results
- invalidation of district, school, and/or student results
- removal of school personnel from any future role in MEPA test administrations
- possible employment and/or licensure consequences for licensed educators

Penalties imposed by the Department do not limit the local district's authority to impose its own penalties.