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Avoiding Testing Violations

Some of the most common violations include discussing specific test questions and answers with students, taking notes from the actual test, “coaching” students during the test, not following the test instructions, and displaying inappropriate instructional materials in the testing area.

In light of recent, highly-publicized allegations against certain individuals and school systems regarding cheating on standardized tests, it’s a good time to review some pointers for the upcoming testing season.

At times, problems may occur during the administration of the CRCT and other standardized tests. A violation could lead to the test(s) being invalidated. Some of the most common violations include discussing specific test questions and answers with students, taking notes from the actual test: “coaching” students during the test; not following the test instructions; and displaying inappropriate instructional materials in the testing area. To avoid committing a violation, there are some guidelines that educators should keep in mind when administering tests.



Always administer the test as directed. Do not deviate from the standard procedure at all unless a student is entitled to a special accommodation per a 504 plan or an individualized education plan (IEP). This is one of the most common mistakes that educators make regarding testing. Be sure to follow the test instructions to the letter.

Do not provide any unauthorized assistance to students during the test. Unless it has been specifically approved by the test or school protocol, you should not give your students any help while they are being tested. Often, when an educator helps a student by shading in an answer, erasing something or answering a question, it is construed as “coaching” the student. While the educator may not have shared any knowledge or test-related

information with the student, others who see it may interpret it differently. You can avoid this situation by eliminating any unnecessary interaction with your students during the test.

Before the test is administered, make sure that there are no instructional materials in the testing area. Make it a point to take down number lines, log off of computers, put calculators and dictionaries away and remove any unapproved writings from the board. Many educators innocently forget to complete these tasks and find themselves under investigation by the Professional Standards Commission (PSC) for alleged ethics violations.

Do not use any unapproved materials or strategies to help students prepare for the test. Developing and using assessments, teaching test-taking strategies and intensive instruction leading up to the exam are just a few examples of tried and true methods for improving student learning. Take steps to ensure that whatever you’re using is appropriate, ethical and legal. When in doubt, get written approval from your supervisor first.

Finally, never change the students’ answers or answer test questions for them. This is obvious to most but there have been educators accused of committing either or both of these infractions. While educators should do as much as ethically possible to help prepare their students, they must perform without any interference or undue assistance during or after the test. Under no circumstances should an educator change students’ answers or answer test questions for them.

Allegations of failure to follow proper testing procedures should be reported to your building administrator immediately. If there is reason to believe there may have been a testing violation, the matters will also have to be reported to your central office, the Georgia Department of Education (DOE) and likely, the PSC. By following these pointers, you should be able to avoid most testing pitfalls. If you are ever unsure about a testing issue, you should review the testing manual or ask your supervisor. You should do so before or as soon as a problem arises.

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