

April 22, 2015

Re: Online Testing Issues

To Commissioner Cassellius:

Yesterday, Tuesday, April 21, test administrators in Minnesota and elsewhere experienced two periods of brief, unexpected service interruption that affected their use of PearsonAccess, the test management portal used to create, resume, and monitor test sessions.

The first event began at approximately 8:20am CDT and ended around 10:30am CDT. The second event began at approximately 2:30pm CDT and ended just after 3:00pm CDT. At no time during either service interruption was there any risk to student responses or the transmission of data to Pearson.

Investigations have determined that the two service interruptions were two separate issues. The first event is attributed to a PearsonAccess and TestNav 7.5 firewall configuration. To remedy this situation, the firewall has been reconfigured. This reconfiguration was tested thoroughly and Pearson is confident that further interruptions of this nature will not occur.

The second event is attributed to a confirmed distributed denial-of-service (**DDoS**) attack. This malicious attack targeted the TestNav.com portal, but also affected the availability of PearsonAccess as traffic to these systems flows through the same firewall. A DDoS attack is not an effort to hack into Pearson's system, and at no point was student data at risk or compromised. To prevent a recurrence Pearson has enacted additional security measures and monitoring. This additional protection significantly reduces the likelihood of additional service interruptions due to DDoS attacks.

The corrective actions Pearson has taken to address yesterday's events, in addition to the measures enacted last week to address hardware failure experienced on Tuesday, April 14, allow Pearson to be confident that any similar service interruptions will be avoided for the remainder of the MCA testing window.

As of 11:30 a.m. CDT today, Pearson is testing in the following states: Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. So far Pearson has successfully processed approximately 150,000 tests.

The PearsonAccess and TestNav systems are currently available for Minnesota students to resume testing.

Sincerely,

Walter Sherwood
President
State Services

Pearson

D: (512) 989-5354

M: (512) 297-4645

E: Walter.Sherwood@pearson.com