



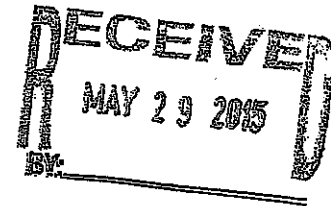
STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0023

PAUL R. LEPAGE
GOVERNOR

THOMAS A. DESJARDIN
ACTING COMMISSIONER

May 26, 2015

James Anastasio; Superintendent Augusta School Department
40 Pierce Drive
Suite #3
Augusta, Maine 04330



Dear Mr. Anastasio:

The following outlines the Maine Department of Education's (DOE) Assessment findings in the case pertaining to Augusta School Department #1008 – Farrington Elementary School #1151. The Maine DOE Assessment Committee met to review the facts and documentation with regards to this case. Additional committee members included Rachelle Tome, Chief Academic Officer; Charlene Tucker, Director of Assessment & Accountability; and Suzan Beaudoin, Director of School Finance and Operations.

As reported, there was a testing irregularity during the Maine Educational Assessment (MEA) for Mathematics and ELA/Literacy administration involving over one hundred students taking the Math Summative Computer Adaptive Tests (CAT) and Math Performance Tasks (PT). Documentation was received outlining the circumstances from Augusta Public Schools.

As per Test Administration Manual Section 3.1, page 14, Table 5, *Security of the Testing Environment*; ***“Instructional materials must be removed or covered, including but not limited to information that might assist students in answering questions that is displayed on bulletin boards, chalkboards or dry-erase boards, or on charts (wall charts that contain literary definitions, maps, mathematics formulas, etc.)”***

Section 3.1, page 15, Table 5, *Security of the Testing Environment*; ***“DSAs, SCs, TAs, and other staff may not review, discuss, or analyze test items, stimuli, reading passages, or writing prompts at any time, including before, during, or after testing. Student interaction during a test is limited to what is necessary for the purpose of a performance task.”***

Based on the investigation supplied by Augusta School Department, a variety of mathematical reference sheets and posters were intentionally made available to students in two testing rooms. Students shared that teachers conducted mini lessons to classes on test items “in case it came up again in the test”, and gave verbal and non-

verbal guidance to students who had questions on test content they had not covered in class.

As per Test Administration Manual SECTION F: TEST SECURITY CHART page 64, test irregularities include:

- *Administrator providing students with non-allowable materials or devices during test administration or allowing inappropriate designated supports and/or accommodations during test administration.*
- *Administrator or teacher coaching or providing any other type of assistance to students that may affect their responses. This includes both verbal cues (e.g., interpreting, explaining, or paraphrasing the test items or prompts) and nonverbal cues (e.g., voice inflection, pointing, nodding head) to the correct answer. This also includes leading students through instructional strategies such as think-aloud, asking students to point to the correct answer or otherwise identify the source of their answer, or requiring students to show their work.*

Conclusion: The unfair advantage given to these students during the Mathematics assessment warrants a determination that the test scores are not valid.

Student Level Determination: Per Maine DOE Protocols for Reported MEA Testing Irregularities, the Department team composed of the Chief Academic Officer, Director of Assessment & Accountability, and the Assessment Coordinator has screened the documentation and made a determination about whether to invalidate scores. As a result of the Maine DOE testing protocol not being followed, we require the invalidation of the students' assessments that had access to the compromised testing environments.

Personnel Level Determination: Per Maine DOE Protocols for Reported MEA Testing Irregularities, the Assessment Committee has forwarded the provided documentation to the Certification Department for further inquiry/investigation. The Certification Department will report independently to the Commissioner, and communicate findings with the Superintendent.

In addition to the 2015 MEA testing irregularities discussed above, it concerns us in the investigative report provided by Augusta School Department that an email from the [REDACTED] states; "I did not have my teachers take down things that are up all year. This would be an unnatural testing environment and may cause even more anxiety. This is the same protocol I used for NECAP." The last administration of the NECAP assessments was fall of 2013. Similar to the 2015 MEA assessment testing protocol, past NECAP Principal/Test Coordinator Manuals state: *It is important to ensure that no students are either advantaged or disadvantaged by their testing environment. Reference materials, including those on the classroom walls,*

should not be used by students. All reference materials printed or attached on student desks should be removed or covered. Any displayed materials in the classroom that interfere with proper test administration are not permitted. It is not possible to list all classroom materials that may potentially create an advantage or disadvantage for students during testing; if in doubt, remove or cover the materials, or reposition students' desks so the materials cannot be viewed.

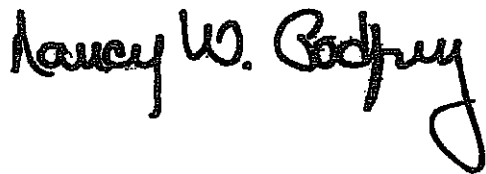
Maine DOE is not in the position to review and/or question past assessment scores or reports. However, it does concern us that compromised testing environments may have been repeated as past practice. We advise enhanced administrative oversight of future standardized assessments.

We ask that the following steps be taken:

1. Inform parents of the involved students of the outcome and invalidation of their tests;
2. Submit in the Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE) Appeals to "invalidate" the Math CATs and Math PTs of the students who had access to this compromise testing environment;
3. Be willing and available for any face-to-face meeting with Maine DOE staff if requested.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention.

Respectfully,



Nancy Godfrey; Acting Assessment Coordinator

cc: ~~Rachelle Tome; Chief Academic Officer~~
Charlene Tucker; Director of Assessment & Accountability
Suzan Beaudoin; Director of School Finance and Operations
Donna Madore; Assistant Superintendent Augusta School Department