

**INFORMATION CIRCULAR NO. 500**  
Office of the Deputy Superintendent

**SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Date:** August 18, 2009

**To:** All Principals

**Subject:** APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE TEST PREPARATION  
GUIDELINES AND TEST ADMINISTRATION GUIDELINES

**Department and/or  
Persons Concerned:** Principals, Vice Principals, Testing Coordinators, and School Site Personnel  
involved in testing

**Reference:** None

**Brief Explanation:**

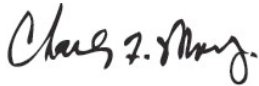
Attached are copies of the *California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program Appropriate and Inappropriate Test Preparation Guidelines* and *California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program Test Administration Guidelines*.

These documents provide guidance relative to the appropriate preparation for, and administration of, the California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program tests. It is essential that all staff members involved with testing at your site are familiar with these test preparation and administration guidelines and comply with them prior to and during the Spring 2010 STAR testing window.

If you have any questions, please call Erin Gordon at (619) 725-5687.

Erin Gordon  
Director  
Assessment Services

APPROVED:



Chuck Morris  
Deputy Superintendent

Attachments (2)

Distribution: Lists B, D, E, and F

SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Office of the Deputy Superintendent  
Assessment Services

**CALIFORNIA STANDARDIZED TESTING AND REPORTING (STAR) PROGRAM  
APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE TEST PREPARATION GUIDELINES**

## **Introduction**

This document provides guidance relative to the appropriate preparation for the California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program tests. It is important to note that the STAR tests are **criterion-referenced or standards-based assessments** which compare a student's performance to set criteria or standards.

## **Test Preparation**

**In general, the best preparation for the STAR tests is high-quality, standards-based, rigorous instruction.** This can be broadly defined as instruction in the content specified in California's content standards, employing the instructional principles and practices set forth in the content-area frameworks. It is the standards, the frameworks, and the district curriculum maps, therefore, that should guide instructional programs. The instructional programs should be designed to ensure that students master the standards at their own and earlier grade levels, since the standards at particular grade levels are based on the content introduced at earlier grade levels. The instructional program should ensure that students are able to demonstrate mastery of the content standards in multiple formats – e.g., multiple choice, short answer, and essay.

*The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* state that “the integrity of test results should be maintained by eliminating practices designed to raise scores without improving performance on the construct or domain being tested.” They comment that practices such as “teaching test items in advance, modifying test administration procedures, and discouraging or excluding certain test takers from taking the test can lead to spuriously high scores that do not reflect performance on the underlying construct or domain of interest” (Standard 15.9). These standards also note that “the appropriateness of test preparation activities can be evaluated ... by determining the extent to which test scores are artificially raised without actually increasing students' level of achievement” (Standard 13.11).

**One way to determine whether a contemplated test preparation procedure is permissible is to ask the following: If the specific test for which I am preparing students were discontinued and a different test of the same type or of a different format were substituted, would my test preparation procedure remain the same or would it change?** If it would remain the same, then it probably is permissible because it is most likely generic preparation for any test or test format rather than for one specific test. On the other hand, if that procedure would change if a different test were substituted, then it probably is not permissible because it is most likely intended to improve achievement on a particular test rather than to teach general test-taking skills.

Education Code Section 60611 prohibits school personnel from conducting “any program of specific preparation of pupils for the statewide pupil assessment program or a particular test used therein.” Except for materials specifically included within the designated achievement test, no program or materials shall be used by any school district or employee of a school district that are specifically formulated or intended to prepare pupils for the standards-based achievement tests or the designated primary language test (Title 5, *California Code of Regulations*, Section 854[a]).

Practice tests provided by the publisher as part of the standards-based achievement tests or the designated primary language test for the limited purpose of familiarizing pupils with the use of scannable test booklets or answer sheets and the format of the test items are not subject to the prohibition of Subdivision (a). (Title 5, *California Code of Regulations*, Section 854[b])

The following test preparation policy was adopted by the State Board of Education on September 7, 2000:

No city, county, city and county, or district superintendent of schools or principal or teacher is to use any test preparation materials or strategies developed for a specific test. This includes but is not limited to published materials, materials available on the Internet, and materials developed by schools, district or county offices of education, and/or outside consultants.

**The most important concept in the policy statement is that test preparation should not be an activity that is separate and distinct from the regular instructional program.** Activities designed to improve test results without also affecting the student's mastery of the underlying academic content are not appropriate test preparation activities. It is certainly appropriate for teachers to know and review the content that will be assessed by the standard-based tests. It is also appropriate for teachers to review and use materials prepared either by the test publisher or the state for curriculum development and instructional planning. Some use of generic test preparation materials designed to familiarize students with the test-taking process is acceptable. However, it is not acceptable to use knowledge about the test content to provide students with materials that mimic the questions found on the STAR assessments. It is important to note that the California Standards Tests are the center of the state assessment system and carry the greatest weight in calculation of the Academic Performance Index (API). **High-quality standards-based instruction is the best preparation for these tests.**

The STAR program consists of four tests: the *California Standards Tests* (CSTs), the *California Alternate Performance Assessment* (CAPA), the *California Modified Assessment* (CMA), and the designated primary language test (*Standards-Based Test in Spanish – STS*). The CSTs, CAPA, CMA, and STS are criterion-referenced tests. All are multiple-choice tests designed to verify breadth of learning. The CST and CMA at Grades 4 and 7 also require students to produce a writing sample. The information below describes test preparation practices that are and are not appropriate for the CSTs, CMA, and STS. The practices identified here as appropriate and inappropriate represent specific applications of State Board of Education policy and statute and regulations.

### **Consequences of Inappropriate Test Preparation**

Confirmed instances of inappropriate test preparation involving school personnel may result in a number of negative consequences for the parties involved. These may include, but would not necessarily be limited to, the following:

- Notice of STAR testing irregularities may be posted on the STAR Internet site for the school involved.
- The school's Academic Performance Index (API) may be invalidated.
- Personnel may be subject to district sanctions as outlined in district policies or teacher contracts.
- Grade 11 students may become ineligible for exemption from taking the English Placement Test (EPT) and/or Entry Level Mathematics (ELM) exam for placement into basic college-level English and/or mathematics in the California State University (CSU) based on their *Early Assessment of Readiness for College Program* (EAP) test results.

**Principals should educate staff in appropriate methods of preparation for the designated achievement test and establish and announce the availability of communication channels allowing teachers, students, and parents to voice their concerns about practices they consider inappropriate.**

### **Appropriate and Inappropriate Test Preparation for STAR Multiple-Choice Tests: CSTs, CMA, and STS.**

#### *Appropriate Test Preparation*

- 1) Provide good instruction. Ensure that students receive instruction in the content specified in California's content standards consistent with the instructional principles and practices set forth in the content-area frameworks.
- 2) Ensure that students master the standards at their own and earlier grade levels, since the standards at particular grades are based on content introduced at earlier grades.
- 3) Use practice tests provided by the test publisher as part of the state testing program.
- 4) Prepare students with test-taking strategies designed to make them better at taking a specific type of test (e.g., a multiple-choice mathematics test) rather than a specific test (e.g., the CST Algebra I). This practice may, in fact, make the test more valid by reducing the influence of factors such as previous testing experience. Examples of appropriate strategies might include:
  - Using time efficiently.
  - Understanding directions.
  - Placing answers correctly on answer documents.
  - Checking answers.
  - Using the problem-solving tactics of educated guessing, estimating, and working problems backward.
  - Exposing students to various test formats, including questions that contain "none of the above," "all of the above," "not here," negative wording, and true-false statements.

The restrictions noted above apply to materials produced by test-preparation companies as well. Such materials are appropriate as long as they are intended to familiarize students with strategies for taking a particular type of test rather than with the content of the actual CST, CMA, or STS. The use of commercial test preparation materials that are focused on only one type of test question format (e.g., multiple-choice) is **not appropriate**.

- 5) Ensure that students can demonstrate mastery of content in multiple formats – e.g., multiple choice, short answer, and essay.
- 6) Give occasional practice assignments that are timed.
- 7) Use the CST reports for individual students and groups of students to identify areas of strength and need.

#### *Inappropriate Test Preparation*

(This section is not intended to cover all inappropriate test preparation practices.)

- 1) Do not prepare students in ways that improve scores without improving underlying achievement.
- 2) Do not use sample items to prepare practice items in the same format.

- 3) Do not conduct reviews or drills that use actual test items or identical format items of the CSTs, CMA, or STS.
- 4) Do not conduct a test preparation program designed specifically to prepare students to perform well on the CSTs, CMA, or STS, as opposed to a program designed to teach general test-taking strategies.
- 5) Do not administer interim assessments for the sole purpose of identifying and targeting areas of weakness in the content covered on the CSTs, CMA, or STS, as opposed to using periodic, curriculum-embedded assessments to inform instructional practice.
- 6) Do not use alternate forms of the test. Practice with alternate forms affects the accuracy of generalizations that might be made about a student's mastery of the content domain the test is designed to sample.
- 7) Do not use copies of tests from previous years.
- 8) Do not review the test to be administered and then review the test-specific curriculum content of the test with students before administration of the test.
- 9) Do not review only skills, strategies, and concepts tested on a designated achievement test, or review only those areas in which student performance was low in previous test administrations.
- 10) Do not develop/modify curriculum that is based solely on the content or objectives of a designated achievement test or modify curriculum to accomplish a similar purpose.
- 11) Do not frame questions only in the format used on a designated achievement test.

**Appropriate and Inappropriate Test Preparation for STAR Writing Assessments: California Standards Writing Tests and the California Modified Writing Assessments at Grades 4 and 7**

*Appropriate Test Preparation*

- 1) The best preparation for the writing component of the *CST* and *CMA* is classroom instruction that requires students to write regularly for specific purposes and audiences in all content domains. The Reading/Language Arts Framework contains standards that describe writing strategies, applications, and conventions for these grade levels as well as teaching strategies for implementing these standards effectively.
- 2) Have students practice "on demand" writing activities as well as activities involving revision of existing work.
- 3) Have students edit their own work and the work of other students.
- 4) Share scoring rubrics and sample papers with students and help them use these materials to evaluate their own writing.
- 5) Provide written directions for writing prompts throughout the school year and teach students to identify key words in them.
- 6) Teach students to reread directions for written assignments and then read their responses to verify that they have fulfilled all requirements.

*Inappropriate Test Preparation*

(This section is not intended to cover all inappropriate test preparation practices.)

- 1) Do not use worksheets that only ask students to edit for mechanics, conventions, and the like. While not prohibited, these typically are not effective in helping students learn to write well.
- 2) Do not focus on one type of writing in the expectation that it will be tested during a specific year.

SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
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Assessment Services

**CALIFORNIA STANDARDIZED TESTING AND REPORTING (STAR) PROGRAM  
TEST ADMINISTRATION GUIDELINES**

### **Introduction**

This document provides guidance relative to the appropriate administration of the California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program tests. It is important to note that the STAR tests are **criterion-referenced or standards-based assessments** which compare a student's performance to set criteria or standards.

### **Pupil Testing**

School districts shall administer the designated achievement test to each eligible pupil enrolled in any of Grades 2-11, inclusive (Title 5, *California Code of Regulations*, Section 851[a]). An "eligible pupil" is any pupil in Grades 2-11, inclusive who is not otherwise exempted (Title 5, *California Code of Regulations*, Section 850[e]). All students in Grades 2-11 must participate in STAR testing, including English Learners and students with disabilities.

Education code section 60615 provides exemption from testing for pupils whose parent or guardian submits a written request that the pupil not be tested. A parent or guardian may submit to the school a written request to excuse his or her child from any or all parts of any STAR test pursuant to Education Code section 60640. The parent or guardian must initiate the request, and the school district and its employees **shall not solicit or encourage** any written request on behalf of any child. Parents may be notified of their right to excuse their child from the test under the law; however, this notification cannot, in any way, be considered a solicitation and should be provided only as a part of general information about the STAR testing program.

No test shall be administered to a pupil by the parent or guardian of that pupil. This subdivision does not prevent classroom aides from assisting in the administration of the test under the supervision of a credentialed school district employee provided that the classroom aide does not assist his or her own child and that the classroom aide signs a security affidavit. (Title 5, *California Code of Regulations*, Section 851[d])

No test may be administered in a private home or location unless an employee of the school district with credential status administers the test and the employee signs a security affidavit. (Title 5, *California Code of Regulations*, Section 851[d])

### **Administration**

The designated achievement test, which includes all those materials set forth in Section 850, shall be administered and returned in accordance with the manuals or other instructions provided by the publisher for administering and returning the tests unless specifically provided otherwise in this subchapter. The procedures shall include, but are not limited to, those designed to ensure the uniform and standard administration of the test to pupils and the security and integrity of the test content and test items (Title 5, *California Code of Regulations*, Section 853[a]). **No coaching or monitoring of correct or incorrect responses by any pupil by any school employee is permissible.**

Except as provided in Section 853(d), the reading section of any test shall not be read, interpreted, or translated to any pupil and no pupil may use a calculator while taking the designated achievement test (Title 5, *California Code of Regulations*, Section 853[c]).

Pupils in special education programs with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) delineating accommodations such as, but not limited to, large print, Braille, extended time, or the use of a reader or scribe or a calculator; or pupils with current plans under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 specifying such accommodations shall be tested and the prescribed adaptations or accommodation shall be made (Title 5, *California Code of Regulations*, Section 853[d]).

Students, other than those with IEPs/504 Plans that specifically allow for the use of a scribe and/or a large print answer document requiring transcription, must "bubble in" their own answers. It is **not permissible** for students other than those specified to "mark" their answers and for teachers to "bubble in" the answers on each student's answer document.

### Testing Period

The designated achievement test shall be administered to each pupil during the testing period ( $\pm 10$  days from the day on which eighty-five percent of instructional days are completed) as defined in Section 850(d). (Title 5, *California Code of Regulations*, Section 855[a])

All makeup testing must be completed within the testing period designated above. (Title 5, *California Code of Regulations*, Section 855[b])

### Principal

The principal is responsible for setting the expectations for the STAR Test Site Coordinator, test examiners, and proctors regarding appropriate and accurate test administration, and for detailing the consequences of testing irregularities. The principal should discuss the use of teacher professional judgment in the administration of the test. For example, if a teacher discovers he/she is administering a subtest at a time that is different from the school testing schedule during the administration of the subtest, he/she needs to complete the subtest according to the instructions in the *Directions for Administering*. The teacher should NOT stop the administration of the subtest and begin the administration of another subtest since this constitutes an adult testing irregularity. Many principals have found it useful and desirable to use proctors to assist teachers in the administration of these tests.

### STAR Test Site Coordinator

The STAR Test Site Coordinator is responsible for directly supervising the administration and security of the STAR Program materials according to the instructions in the *California STAR Program Test Site Coordinator's Manual* and for becoming familiar with the instructions for teachers/examiners found in the *Directions for Administering*. This person is also responsible for ensuring that all procedures and policies required by the STAR Program are implemented within the test site. The STAR Test Site Coordinator shall sign the *STAR Test Security Agreement*. (Title 5, *California Code of Regulations*, Section 858[b])

The Test Site Coordinator's responsibilities include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- Determining the quantities of test materials needed by the school and communicating this information to the District Coordinator.
- Determining where tests will be administered.
- Overseeing the receipt and distribution of test materials at the test site.

- Providing the regular testing and make-up testing schedules for the test site within the established district testing window.
- Selecting teachers/examiners and proctors (if required).
- Obtaining a signed *STAR Test Security Affidavit* from each teacher/examiner, proctor, or any other person handling or having access to the STAR test materials.
- Keeping the test (and all related materials, as appropriate) secure, in locked storage, accessible only to authorized users.
- Determining the size of the testing groups.
- Scheduling test administrations for the school (and additional test sites, if necessary).
- Overseeing the administrations of the STAR tests to eligible students at the test site.
- Collecting all test materials from teachers/examiners, properly packaging and accurately completing all control documents (SGID sheets, *Master File Sheets*, Inventory Control Forms, etc.) and arranging for their delivery to the District Coordinator within two (2) days of the last testing day for the school or test site.
- Ensuring accuracy in completing the demographic information on hand-gridded student answer documents and the school apportionment information on the *Principal's Certification to Superintendent*.
- Assisting the District Coordinator and Educational Testing Service with the resolution of discrepancies related to missing materials.
- Overseeing the collection of all student data required to comply with state law.
- Assisting the District Coordinator with the resolution of discrepancies in test information or problems related to scoring.

**Any individual at the test site who has not signed a *STAR Test Security Affidavit* must not be allowed access to STAR test booklets, answer documents, or *Directions for Administering*. The Test Site Coordinator is responsible for keeping all STAR Program materials in locked storage when these materials are not in use. Student answer documents may not be removed from locked storage at the test site except during actual testing periods.**

The STAR Test Site Coordinator must ensure that all persons having access to STAR materials understand that these are copyrighted materials and that any violation of the provisions of the *STAR Test Security Affidavit* will be considered a serious offense by the California Department of Education and by Educational Testing Service. **Any violation of these provisions may cause the invalidation of test results for classes, schools, and districts.**

It is important that the Test Site Coordinator provide formal training for teachers/examiners (and any proctors who have been enlisted). The training should include a discussion of the responsibilities, procedures, and policies described in the *California STAR Program Test Site Coordinator's Manual*, a review of any information and instructions that are specific to the test site, and a thorough review of security procedures. Additionally, the following topics should be addressed:

- Responsibilities of teachers/examiners.
- Subtests to be administered.
- Security requirements (including use of the *STAR Test Security Affidavit*).
- Testing schedules and locations.
- Preparing test locations for test administration.
- Using professional judgment in the administration of the test.
- Regulations and special instructions for participation of ELs and special education students.
- Testing accommodations and proper marking of demographic fields.
- Arranging for additional proctors, as required.
- Schedule and procedures for returning test materials.

STAR Test Site Coordinators should be actively involved in the administration of the STAR tests through careful supervision and monitoring of procedures described in the *Directions for Administering* and in the *California STAR Program Test Site Coordinator's Manual*. They should be available for questions and problem resolution each day of the test administration and should remind teachers/examiners to follow the provisions of the *STAR Test Security Affidavit* regarding maintaining the security of the test materials.

### **Teachers/Examiners**

Teachers/examiners who administer the STAR tests are responsible for following all procedures in the separate and grade-specific *Directions for Administering* and in any supplemental instructions provided, and for ensuring the security of test materials.

### **STAR Test Security Affidavit**

**All** persons having access to the designated achievement test and test materials shall acknowledge the limited purpose of their access to these tests by signing the *STAR Test Security Affidavit* set forth in Subdivision (e). (Title 5, *California Code of Regulations*, Section 859[d])

The *STAR Test Security Affidavit* requires signers to acknowledge that they have access to highly secure test materials and it is their professional responsibility as follows:

- (1) I will not divulge the contents of the tests to any other person through verbal, written, or any other means of communication.
- (2) I will not copy any part of the test(s) or test materials.
- (3) I will keep the test(s) secure until the test(s) are actually distributed to pupils.
- (4) I will limit access to the test(s) and test materials by test examinees to the actual testing periods when they are taking the test.
- (5) I will collect and account for all materials following each period of testing and will not permit pupils to remove test materials from the room where testing takes place.
- (6) I will not disclose, or allow to be disclosed, the contents of the test instrument. I will not review any test questions, passages, or other test items with pupils before, during, or following testing.
- (7) I will not develop scoring keys or review or score any pupil responses except as required by the publisher's administration manual(s) to prepare answer documents for machine or other scoring.
- (8) I will return all test materials to the designated STAR test site coordinator daily upon completion of testing.
- (9) I will administer the test in accordance with the directions for test administration set forth in the publisher's manual for test administration.

(Title 5, *California Code of Regulations*, Section 859[e])

No one other than school district employees who have signed the *STAR Test Security Affidavit* may be involved in the distribution, collection, or processing of any test materials.

### **After Testing**

If it is necessary to transfer answers from a damaged answer document to a new answer document, this should be done by a school employee only under the supervision and presence of another credentialed school employee designated by the school principal.

## Principal's Certification to Superintendent

Principals must sign the *Principal's Certification to Superintendent* which requires signers to acknowledge that *STAR Test Security Affidavits* were completed by all individuals given access to test materials, security procedures required by the STAR Program were followed and all test materials were accounted for and returned to the Assessment Services Department, certificated personnel charged with the responsibility of administering the tests received instruction in the proper procedures, and proper procedures as outlined in the examiner's manuals were followed. **Principals are responsible for reporting any possible testing irregularities to the Assessment Services Department immediately upon their occurrence.**