

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MISSISSIPPI STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM  
STANDARD 16

**I. PURPOSE**

It is the policy of the State Board of Education that all test procedures and results that are used in the Mississippi Statewide Assessment System and/or used in the Mississippi Statewide Accreditation System be valid and accurate for making related decisions. In order to protect the security and integrity of all tests administered through the Mississippi Statewide Assessment System, as well as to ensure reporting of accurate assessment results, the State Board of Education establishes the following requirements and the consequences applied when a school district or school is found in violation of any requirement. These requirements are established under the authority granted in Miss. Code Ann. § 37-16-1, § 37-16-3, and § 37-16-4.

**II. DEFINITIONS**

Secure test materials include certain test administrator manuals, test booklets, answer documents, and other materials as specified by the Office of Student Assessment.

A possible testing irregularity is any incident in the test handling or administration that leads to a question regarding the security of the test or the accuracy of the test data.

A verified testing irregularity is a violation of a testing requirement.

**III. REPORTING AND USE OF TEST DATA**

The school district will release test score information to parents, legal representatives, teachers, students, other educators, the media, and the public in a timely manner and provide interpretive material as necessary. The school district will use test scores appropriately in making decisions regarding students. A decision or characterization that will have a major impact on an individual student is not made on the basis of a single test score. Additional retesting opportunities will be made available for any “high stakes” test.

**IV. REQUIREMENTS**

The following is not an exhaustive list of requirements.

1. The District Test Coordinator or a designated representative of the school district must attend applicable training sessions sponsored by the Office of Student Assessment.
2. A District Test Security Plan is prepared each new school year no later than September 30.
  - a. The District Test Security Plan contains all components as required by the Office of Student Assessment.

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- b. The District Test Security Plan is signed by the district superintendent, the district test coordinator, and the chairman of the school board. The School Test Security Plan, which is a part of the District Test Security Plan, is signed by the school principal, school test coordinator, and the district test coordinator.
  - c. The District Test Security Plan identifies **all** individuals who have access to the secure storage area at district and school sites.
3. Except during actual test administration, secure test materials are kept under lock and key, and access to secure test materials is limited to individuals identified in the test security plan as responsible for their security. While secure test materials are in the District, anyone listed as having access to the secure storage area must be accompanied by a second person when entering the secure storage area. To ensure that security is maintained from year to year, it is the responsibility of the District each year to review the list of individuals who have access to the secure storage area and to ensure that only those individuals listed have access to the secure area by way of keys or vault combination.
- a. Secure test materials are kept in locked storage before testing at both the district and school levels.
  - b. Access to secure test materials is limited to those individuals identified in the test security plan. Test administrators and proctors will have access as described in the district test security plan. Access to test materials means handling the materials, not reviewing and analyzing test items, unless reading accommodations are required. The superintendent or a specified designee shall designate the personnel who are authorized to have access to test materials.
  - c. Test materials are not to be removed from security packaging prior to the time indicated on instructions from the Office of Student Assessment.
  - d. Secure test materials are kept in locked storage after testing at both the District and school levels unless otherwise directed by the Office of Student Assessment.
4. All secure test materials are accounted for before, during, and after testing as specified in the District Test Security Plan. Test administrators and proctors will have access as described in the district test security plan. Access to test materials means handling the materials, not reviewing and analyzing test items, unless reading accommodations are required. The superintendent or a specified designee shall designate the personnel who are authorized to have access to test materials.
- a. All secure test materials are accounted for before testing at the district level.
  - b. All secure test materials are accounted for before testing at the school level.
  - c. Test administrators account for all secure test materials before students are allowed to leave the testing room.
  - d. All secure test materials are accounted for after testing at the school level.
  - e. All secure test materials are accounted for after testing at the district level.
  - f. All secure materials are returned according to the schedule published by the Office of Student Assessment. In the event that a secure testing document has been contaminated by bodily

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fluids or other health-related hazards, the district test coordinator will follow procedures for disposal as outlined during District Test Coordinator training, and include these procedures in the District Test Security Plan.

- g. If supplementary materials, such as scratch paper, maps, and manipulatives are provided, procedures for disposal are outlined in the District Test Security Plan and followed.
5. Any person involved in any phase of the testing program has been trained in appropriate assessment administration and test security procedures.
- a. Test administrators shall be licensed school personnel.
  - b. Due to the need for the one-on-one administration of the English language proficiency test for English Language Learners, which includes component subtests such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, the test administrator may be a non-licensed employee as long as the proctor for the administration is a licensed staff member.
  - c. For only the English language proficiency test for English Language Learners, if a licensed employee is the test administrator, the District is not obligated to provide a second person as proctor.
  - d. The District conducts professional development training on proper assessment administration procedures and test security for all individuals involved in the handling and administration of each test.
  - e. The District maintains complete records of all professional development related to assessment.
  - f. The District has documentation that training related to assessment included information on test security violations and the consequences of violations.
6. Both a test administrator and a proctor are present and actively monitoring students during the entire test administration.
- a. At least two (2) people are present from the time that testing materials are distributed to the test administrator until all test materials have been returned to the secure area.
  - b. A seating chart is required for each room/site used for any statewide assessment; the seating chart must be signed and dated by the test administrator, proctor, and school test coordinator.
7. Students are not allowed access to test questions prior to testing and are not allowed access to answers at any time.
8. Reproducing (by any means) or disclosing secure test material (including pilot material) and student responses before, during, or after test administration are prohibited. Reproduction or disclosure of secure test materials includes but is not limited to the following: reviewing, reading, or looking at secure test material in a manner that is inconsistent with test security regulations and/or procedures as outlined in the test administrator's manual. Use of unreleased test items in any form (including rewording of such test items) is strictly prohibited.

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9. Coaching students, altering responses, or interfering with responses in any way during or after the scheduled test administration is prohibited. Coaching students is defined as providing answers by staff or other students to students in any manner during the test, including cues, clues, hints, and/or actual answers in any form-written, printed, verbal or non-verbal (including, but not limited to, chalkboards, charts, bulletin boards, posters, computers, hand signals) or allowing students to alter responses after the scheduled test administration.
10. All eligible students are tested. (See also *Testing Students with Disabilities Regulations and Guidelines for English Language Learners: Policies, Procedures, and Assessments.*) (7 Miss. Admin. Code Pt. 3, Ch. 34, R. 34.1, Ch. 36, R. 36.1, Ch. 78, R. 78.1) {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-16-3(2)}
- a. Accurate exclusions, absences, and other required data are compiled for each test for each school.
  - b. Exclusions and absences data for each test for each school are maintained on file in the District.
  - c. Students who drop a course for which an end-of-course Subject Area Test is required after the dates noted below shall still take the appropriate end-of-course Subject Area Test.  
Traditional Schedule
    - Students enrolled in a course at the end of January (5<sup>th</sup> month) must be tested.Fall Block
    - Students enrolled in a course at the end of October (2<sup>nd</sup> month) must be tested.Spring Block
    - Students enrolled in a course at the end of March (7<sup>th</sup> month) must be tested.
  - d. Students enrolled in and taking courses for the first time for which end-of-course Subject Area Tests are required shall take the appropriate Subject Area Tests. These students shall take the appropriate end-of-course Subject Area Test, even if the course title in *Approved Courses for the Secondary Schools* of Mississippi includes the words Accelerated, Enrichment, or Advanced Placement.
  - e. Each student enrolled in and re-taking courses for which end-of-course Subject Area Tests are required shall take the appropriate Subject Area Test only if the student has not previously passed the Subject Area Test.
  - f. Each student shall take the appropriate end-of-course Subject Area Test at the end of the course regardless of the grade level in which the course is offered.
  - g. Students enrolled in a Mississippi public school will be required to pass end-of-course Subject Area Test in a course for which the school accepts Carnegie units earned by the student through enrollment in summer school, virtual school, or any other non-standard school as defined by the Office of Accreditation.
11. Only appropriate allowable testing accommodations are provided for students as specified in the current edition of *Testing Students with Disabilities Regulations* and the current edition of *Guidelines for English Language Learners: Policies, Procedures, and Assessments.* (7 Miss. Admin. Code Pt. 3, Ch. 34, R. 34.1, Ch. 36, R. 36.1, Ch. 78, R. 78.1, R. 78.10) The use of any accommodation not listed in these documents or in the current edition of the *Testing Accommodations Manual*

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published by the Office of Student Assessment must first be approved by the Office of Student Assessment.

12. Makeup testing is provided for students who are absent during the regularly scheduled test administration.
13. Tests are administered according to the standard procedures defined in the test administrator's manuals and related documents and according to the schedule published by the Office of Student Assessment.
14. Anyone with knowledge of or information regarding a possible testing irregularity or alleged security violations reports the alleged irregularity/violation to an appropriate authority. {Miss. Code Ann. § 37-16-4(1)(f)}
15. Test administrators and proctors keep written records of any testing irregularities occurring during testing and report these to the school test coordinator who then reports to the District Test Coordinator. The District Test Coordinator reports all irregularities for a test administration to the district superintendent for investigation. Documentation regarding testing irregularities is maintained on file in the district.
16. The superintendent of the District investigates all reports of alleged violations of test security and/or potential testing irregularities and submits a report of findings to the Office of Student Assessment within fifteen (15) working days after the alleged violation and/or potential irregularity has been reported to him or her.
17. No statistically significant similar or identical patterns of responses and/or erasures are noted in students' answer documents.
18. No statistically significant group or individual scores that are inconsistent with established patterns of achievement are noted.
19. The school prohibits the possession and/or use of any electronic communication device, including, but not limited to, iPods, MP3 players, Bluetooth devices, cell phones, and/or other personal digital assistance devices during the administration of scheduled statewide tests.
20. Tests are to be administered in an environment that provides an adequate test setting for students. Such an environment should provide adequate lighting, reduced noise level, and spacing to ensure that students cannot see the answers being bubbled (or answers being selected during computer-based online testing) by other students.

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**V. INVESTIGATION**

The Office of Student Assessment follows a systematic procedure to ensure that all evidence indicating possible testing irregularities is investigated. Corrective action will be taken when warranted.

**A. PROCEDURE FOR INVESTIGATION**

Identifying and investigating possible testing irregularities involves a variety of data sources. These include formal testing audits, self-reports of testing irregularities, allegations/complaints related to possible testing irregularities, and results of analyses and reports designed to identify possible irregularities, including the percent of students tested, changes in enrollment, score exceptionalities, erasure report results, and missing documents reports.

The procedure for handling testing irregularities is repeated for each test administration. The Office of Student Assessment will notify the school district in writing when a possible testing irregularity has been identified. Within fifteen (15) working days following a reported potential irregularity/violation and/or receipt of the written notification from the Office of Student Assessment, the District will submit a written report to the Office of Student Assessment. The Office of Student Assessment reserves the right to conduct an independent investigation.

The Office of Student Assessment will evaluate the District report to determine whether the possible testing irregularity has been resolved or the testing irregularity has been verified. If the possible testing irregularity has been resolved, the Office of Student Assessment will notify the District that no further action is required. If a testing irregularity has been verified, the Office of Student Assessment will notify the district superintendent.

In the case of any verified testing irregularity that jeopardized or may have jeopardized the security and integrity of the test(s) or the accuracy of the test results, the Office of Student Assessment will report the irregularity to the Office of Accreditation for appropriate action and follow-up. (See VI.*CONSEQUENCES*.) In the case of improper student behavior supported by a data forensics company and not disproved in the District report, the Office of Student Assessment will respond to the district superintendent with a request on behalf of the State Superintendent of Education that the district superintendent ask for the invalidation of the suspect test scores and prepare for the students with the suspect test scores to participate in the next test administration. If the District refuses to invalidate the suspect scores, the State Superintendent will have the authority to invalidate the scores.

In case of an allegation of an irregularity that prompts a need for an investigation by the Mississippi Department of Education and the investigation provides substantial evidence that an irregularity has occurred, the State Superintendent will have the authority to invalidate suspect scores. The district superintendent will be notified of the invalidated suspect scores and of the need to prepare students with the suspect scores to participate in the next test administration.

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**B. PROCEDURES FOR PERSONAL MISCONDUCT INVESTIGATION**

If an irregularity that represents misconduct or other breaches of test security on the part of district personnel within a school district is identified, the superintendent of the District will be notified of the irregularity. It is the responsibility of the District to conduct an investigation into the allegation and report findings to the Office of Student Assessment. If the Office of Student Assessment concludes that the irregularity was resolved, the district is notified that no further action is necessary.

If the Office of Student Assessment concludes that the irregularity was verified, the district superintendent is notified that the Office of Accreditation is being apprised of the finding.

In case of an allegation of an irregularity or in the case of statistical analyses that prompt a need for an investigation by the Mississippi Department of Education and the investigation provides substantial evidence that an irregularity has occurred, the State Superintendent will have the authority to invalidate suspect test scores. The district superintendent will be notified of the invalidated suspect scores and of the need to prepare students with the suspect scores to participate in the next test administration. The district superintendent will be notified that the Office of Accreditation is being apprised of the findings.

The district attorney may investigate allegations of violations of test security on his own initiative following receipt of allegations, at the request of a school district, or at the request of the Mississippi Department of Education.

After a conviction, the personnel in question will be notified in writing that the evidence of conviction will be presented to the Commission on Educator and Administrator Education, Certification and licensure and development and that the Commission is required to take action pursuant to the authority granted in Miss. Code Ann. § 37-16-4. In the case of improper student behavior supported by the data forensics company and not disproved in the district report, the district superintendent will be asked to request the invalidation of the suspect test scores and prepare for the students with the suspect test scores to participate in the next test administration.

**VI. CONSEQUENCES**

**A. LETTER OF WARNING**

If a violation has been verified that did not result in a substantial probability that the security, accuracy, or validity of the test results has been jeopardized, then the Office of Student Assessment may issue a letter of warning to the school district superintendent to be placed in the district and/or school file.

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Multiple and/or repeated minor violations that indicate the district and/or school has not corrected issues addressed in previous letters of warning or that the district and/or school has continued to be in noncompliance with the numbered issues listed in Requirements (Section IV) may result in a recommendation for a citation to be placed on the accreditation record. (See Section B below.) In the case of improper student behavior supported by the data forensics company and not disproved in the district reports, the District will be asked to request the invalidation of the suspect scores. If the improper student behavior is determined to be isolated to an individual student's or to individual students' behavior and not supported or condoned by the District, the District will not receive a letter of warning. The District will be asked in an official letter by the Office of Student Assessment to put measures in place to address and prevent the possibility of such improper behavior being repeated. However, multiple administrations resulting in suspect scores may result in further investigation by the Office of Student Assessment that may lead to further consequences. (See VI. CONSEQUENCES.)

**B. CITATION PLACED ON THE ACCREDITATION RECORD WITH NO IMMEDIATE ACTION TO DOWNGRADE THE ACCREDITATION STATUS**

**1. Multiple Letters of Warning**

Multiple and/or repeated violations as outlined in Section A above may result in a recommendation for a citation to be placed on the district's Accreditation Record Summary. The Office of Accreditation will note the citation of noncompliance on the district's accreditation record and notify the superintendent of this action. No immediate action to downgrade the district accreditation status will be recommended. This citation will remain on record until the district has **successfully** completed the next scheduled administration of the same test for which the irregularity was originally verified.

The Office of Student Assessment may recommend to the Commission on School Accreditation that the school's annual performance classification include the label School in Violation of Test Security.

**2. Substantial Probability That the Security, Accuracy, or Validity of the Test Results Has Been Jeopardized**

If a verified violation has resulted in a substantial probability that the security, accuracy, or validity of the test results has been jeopardized, the Office of Student Assessment will issue written notification to the district superintendent. The Office of Student Assessment will note the violation on the School and/or District Assessment Record and notify the Office of Accreditation.

The Office of Accreditation will note the citation of noncompliance on the district's accreditation record and notify the superintendent of this action. No immediate action to downgrade the district accreditation status will be recommended. This citation will remain on record until the district has **successfully** completed the next scheduled administration of the **same test** for which



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the irregularity was originally verified. For example, if the citation is issued for the December Subject Area Administration of the U.S. History Test, the next scheduled administration for the same test will be the December Subject Area administration the following year.

The Office of Student Assessment may submit a recommendation to the Commission on School Accreditation that the school's annual performance classification include the label School in Violation of Test Security.

**C. CITATION PLACED ON THE ACCREDITATION RECORD THAT MAY RESULT IN IMMEDIATE ACTION TO DOWNGRADE OF ACCREDITATION STATUS**

If it is determined that a violation of a testing requirement jeopardizes the security and integrity of the test(s) or the accuracy of test results, the Office of Student Assessment will issue written notification of the violation to the superintendent of the school district and to the Office of Accreditation.

The Office of Accreditation will note the citation of noncompliance on the district's Accreditation Record Summary and notify the superintendent of this action. The citation of noncompliance will be presented to the Commission on School Accreditation for appropriate action. This citation will remain on record until the district has **successfully** completed the next scheduled administration of the **same test** for which the irregularity was originally verified. For example, if the citation is issued for the December Subject Area Administration of the U.S. History Test, the next scheduled administration for the same test will be the December Subject Area administration the following year.

The Office of Student Assessment may recommend to the Commission on School Accreditation that the school's annual performance classification include the label of School in Violation of Test Security.

**D. INVALIDATION OF SCORES**

**1. Student Retest and Score Invalidation Procedure**

In the case of findings that reveal misconduct at the District or school level, the State Superintendent of Education may order the local school district to have students retake the examination(s) at the district's expense for all areas in question. Should the local district choose not to have students re-examined to establish validity, the State Superintendent of Education will have the authority to have affected scores invalidated. At such time, the local district will be notified.

A school will not receive a school performance classification if the test data have been invalidated, and the school performance classification will be noted as Test Data Invalidated. (See Accreditation Policy 3.3.) In the case that the Office of Student Assessment has requested the

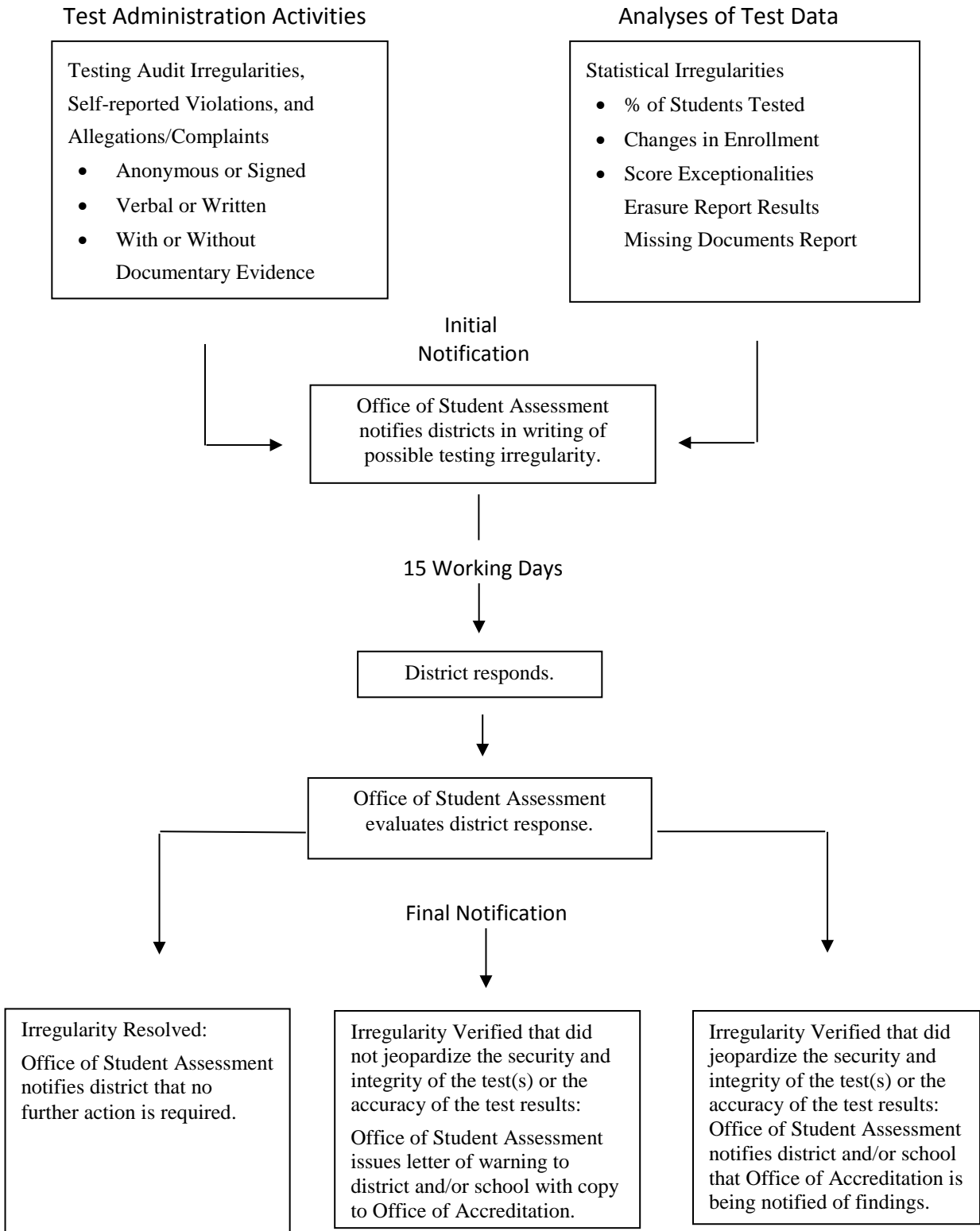
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district superintendent ask for the invalidation of a student's (or students') suspect scores based upon the analyses by the data forensics company and the refusal to do so by the district superintendent, the State Superintendent will have the authority to have suspect score(s) invalidated. At such time, the local district will be notified.

**2. Individual Irregularity Procedure**

If there is evidence of a nature that confirms one (1) or more individual testing irregularities on the Subject Area Tests or other tests that have high stakes consequences for individual student(s) resulting in the student or students not being able to graduate in the current school year, the individual(s) in question shall be notified in writing of the irregularity by the district superintendent and given an opportunity to provide an explanation and evidence that the questioned score(s) is/are consistent with other test scores or other academic performance. If retesting of individuals on the test is required and the retesting yields scores that would deny students a diploma or affect promotion/retention decisions after all retesting opportunities have been exhausted, affected individuals will be given an opportunity to appeal to the State Board of Education the decision to invalidate their original scores on the test. No hearing will be granted to any student who has not completed all other requirements for graduation or promotion and exhausted all retake opportunities.

## Procedure for Handling Possible Testing Irregularities



The procedure for handling testing irregularities is repeated for each test administration.