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**Standardized tests: Irregularities in the administering of tests
affect test results**

Gay, Genevieve Hodgin, Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1989

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STANDARDIZED TESTS: IRREGULARITIES
IN THE ADMINISTERING OF TESTS
AFFECT TEST RESULTS

by

Genevieve Hodgins Gay

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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Approved by


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APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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This study sought to determine whether irregularities exist in the administering of standardized tests. It was hypothesized that irregularities do exist: inaccurate timing, altering answer sheets, coaching, teaching the tests, errors in scoring/reporting, and student cheating.

The participants were the eight education regional research/test coordinators and 265 teachers, randomly selected, who administer the California Achievement Tests in Grades 3, 6, 8, and the North Carolina Competency Tests in Grade 10 from 18 school districts representing urban and rural schools, schools at the poverty level, those above the poverty level, and large and small districts.

The data were collected from a survey sent to the 265 teachers and personal interviews with the eight research/test coordinators in the spring of 1989. These data were analyzed to determine if irregularities do exist in the administering of standardized tests, the reasons for careless or abuse of testing procedures, by whom is pressure applied for examinees to excel, and what recommendations can be made to improve the ethics of test administration.

The analyses supported the hypothesis that irregularities do exist in the administering of standardized tests. In order to use test results effectively, they must be valid. Inservice programs alone will not decrease testing

irregularities. Teachers and regional research/test coordinators recommended a review of the Testing Code of Ethics for North Carolina Testing Personnel, Teachers, and School Administrators with all teachers and monitors. A second recommendation was to constantly monitor/audit test administration. Both groups further recommended that testing be kept in the proper perspective and not as a threat to teachers or students.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Background and Overview

At no time in the history of the American schools have educators been held more accountable for student achievement than during the last 5 years. In its report, A Nation at Risk (U.S. Department of Education, 1983), the National Commission on Excellence in Education carefully examined the quality of education in the United States. It was found that our schools were not doing as well as expected. In reaching this conclusion, the Commission analyzed performance on achievement, aptitude, and admissions tests to determine if an increase or decrease in scores for overall achievement was occurring as compared to the standards of what schools were expected to accomplish.

Standardized tests serve a dual purpose in education: to assess the current status of a program of study and as the vehicle for improving a program (Seldon, 1985). Because of these purposes, the role of standardized testing is becoming increasingly important.

In 1983, school systems in the United States purchased an estimated \$500 million worth of commercial standardized achievement tests. This estimate did not include IQ,

diagnostic or minimum competency tests (George, 1985). John Stewart, research analyst with CTB/McGraw-Hill (personal communication, October, 1988), stated that in 1987 CTB/McGraw-Hill alone sold more than 6,000,000 achievement tests at a cost of \$2.00 per test.

The increase in the use of standardized tests came with the implementation of guidelines for ECIA Chapter I in 1964. Mr. Stewart further stated that the use of achievement tests is increasing. The number of children being tested is not increasing, but the number of tests being administered to the same children is increasing.

Recently, many states have added a new instrument, the competency test, to determine a student's readiness for promotion, advancement, or graduation (Prell & Prell, 1986).

The temptation to turn to tests to measure individual readiness or achievement is actually growing on the American educational scene. Students will undoubtedly continue to be required to take tests of all kinds in the future. It is unlikely that the number and/or importance of tests will be diminished. (Summers & Shobe, 1983, p. 1)

North Carolina

Two separate statewide testing programs are conducted in North Carolina. An "annual testing" program is administered in Grades 3, 6, and 8 for the purpose of assessing the "effectiveness of the educational process, and to insure that each pupil receives the maximum educational benefit from the education process" (N.C. General Statutes 115C,

174.11 (a)). The California Achievement Tests is the instrument used in this program.

The North Carolina Competency Tests are administered in Grade 10 and are required of all students graduating from high school to assure that those graduating "possess the skills and knowledge necessary to function independently and successfully in assuming the responsibilities of citizenship" (N.C. General Statutes 115C, 174.11(b)).

A third program, End-of-Course Testing, is being implemented. All students shall participate in this program if they are taking for credit a course for which an end-of-course test has been developed and is being administered statewide.

It is the responsibility of the local education agency (LEA) to provide personnel for the purpose of observing test administration procedures. Instances of improper administration procedures are to be reported in writing to the Local Board of Education or other school administrative authority. The irregularity(s) will be reviewed (Rules and Procedures N.C. Annual and Minimum Skills Diagnostic Testing Program, pp. 3-7). If, as a result of the irregularity, the validity of the test is affected, the school district (SD) must order the retesting of the affected students. The SD may request the State Department of Public Instruction to assist in the review of the report

(Rules and Procedures N.C. Annual and Minimum Skills Diagnostic Testing Program, pp. 3-9).

In a personal interview (November, 1988), William J. Brown, Director of Division of Research and Testing, State Department of Public Instruction, estimated that in excess of 2.75 million standardized tests were administered to students in 1987-1988. In addition to testing students in Grades 3, 6, and 8, as required by the Annual Testing Program, a number of units test students in all Grades 3 through 8.

Beginning with the 1988-1989 school year, all public school administrative units are required to participate in the State Accreditation Program (Division of Accreditation, 1988). A performance standard for State Accreditation requires measured levels of academic achievement and the success of students based on objective measures such as average test scores. This may add to the pressure on educators for students to perform well on the California Achievement Tests.

Purposes of Testing

The purpose of an achievement test is simply to find out whether the student has learned what the teacher has been trying to teach. An individual's test performance is a sample of what he/she is able to do at the time of testing (Anastasi, 1966).

Reliable test information is a valuable resource in decision-making, but the potential for abuses in the administration of standardized tests abounds (Gertz, 1985).

The North Carolina Statewide Testing Program is designed to:

- help schools evaluate programs and make curriculum decisions;
- provide schools with information necessary to plan instruction;
- help teachers identify strengths and weaknesses of students and offer them a measure to chart student growth;
- give parents an independent measure of their child's relative success in school. (Testing Code of Ethics for North Carolina Test Personnel, 1988)

The North Carolina State Board of Education approved the North Carolina Program of Accreditation Manual for Public School Units in July 1988, effective in the fiscal year 1988-89. The accreditation process involves two types of standards: performance and opportunity. The performance standards are those measured by student test scores. For example, the average of median California Achievement Tests scores for the most recent 3 years is expected to be above the 40th percentile for a school system to be accredited by the state. A system that does not meet this standard will not be accredited. The system must demonstrate a plan for improvement and specify what technical assistance, if any, is needed from the state. This process is designed to hold school systems accountable to the Basic Education Program standards. For this reason both the test

administrator and the students will experience pressure to excel in test performance.

As part of the Preparation and Examiner Training for administering the California Achievement Tests, the instructions include the following:

To obtain the most valid test results, it is important to simulate the standardization conditions as closely as possible.

Follow the specific directions for administering each test. Be precise.

Make sure that the students understand what they are to do before beginning.

Monitor the students to be sure each student is marking the answers properly.

Observe the time limits that are timed.

Do not allow students to work longer than the specified working time.

Discourage talking or sharing of answers.

Do not show or suggest the correct answer to the students. (Examiner's Manual CAT E and F, 1985, pp. 5-6)

Failure to comply with the above instructions will constitute "testing irregularities."

Every school board member and superintendent wants students within their systems to score well on standardized tests. Poor test performance brings criticism to the organization. To assure top performance, school officials may resort to questionable practices. The testing industry uses the term "testing irregularity" as the standard generic phrase to refer to situations, including--but not limited to--

cheating. Other irregularities may include inaccurate timing of a given section, administration of an incorrect test form, or an error in scoring or reporting (Buss & Novick, 1980).

The fact that testing irregularities do exist in the administering and use of standardized tests places responsibility on educators.

Buss and Novick (1980) identified the following irregularities in the administering of standardized tests:

- Inaccurate timing,
- Altering answer sheets,
- Coaching,
- Teaching the tests,
- Errors in scoring/reporting, and
- Students cheating.

Statement of Problem

Irregularities in the administering of standardized tests do exist (Buss & Novick, 1980). Failure to properly follow the publisher(s)' guidelines for administering tests creates problems for students, teachers, and the school/school system (Medina & Neill, 1988).

Results obtained from valid scores on standardized tests serve important functions in education, from measuring whether curriculum requirements are being met to evaluating the status of teaching effectiveness. Test scores, employed

for measuring student progress, are increasingly used in the evaluation of educational programs (Walsh, 1987). Accountability has increased the use of standardized tests in the United States. In the spring of 1981, North Carolina public schools administered over one-half million achievement tests in Grades 1-9. However, some educators would solve the problem of irregularities in the administering of tests by eliminating their use entirely (George, 1981).

The increasing number and extent of the use of the results on standardized tests makes it imperative for test administrators to observe and follow the publisher(s)' guidelines when administering tests. Failure to adhere to the guidelines destroys the validity of the scores.

Need for the Study

The culture, history, and mission of a school are reflected in its academic integrity. Educators, parents, and students must admit that "cheating" is a problem but realize the fact that it can be controlled. One must accept the fact that the student of 1988 is confronted with many temptations, values that are questionable, and a society that takes the attitude "It is all right if you don't get caught."

Testing irregularities are extreme and serious causes of test invalidity. Not all test administrators, not even very many of them, cheat when administering tests; but enough do to make cheating a major concern for all who use

test data for decision-making (Ligon, 1985). Those who fail to adhere to the guidelines rationalize their behavior by the ad populum fallacy of Aristotle saying "Everybody's doing it, so it must be OK" (Hopkins & Stanley, 1981). An additional observation was made by an administrator in discussing the ethics of test administration. He had observed that many educators, students, and parents feel that cheating is perfectly permissible because standardized tests are biased, unfair, and the relationship to specific teaching and learning that occurs in the classroom and what is tested is questionable (personal communication). For example, the California Achievement Test is usually given during the seventh month of the academic year. In test form CAT E Level 14 (Third Grade) the student is asked to identify a cylinder. The recognition of this geometric figure had not been taught prior to the time of testing. It is introduced in the final weeks of the year.

John Dewey believed that many acts are done with no thought of their moral quality on impulse. Dewey wrote:

Persons, children and grown-ups alike, often say in justification for some act that turned out badly that they meant well; they allege some innocent or amiable feeling as the "motive" of the act. The real fact in all probability was that they took no pains to think out the consequences of what they proposed to do. They kept their minds upon any favorable results that might be fancied to follow, and glossed over or kept from view its undesirable consequences. (Sites & Blossom, 1972, p. 2)

A "dramatic" change in test scores may be evidence of practicing irregularities (Savage, 1984). Conversations with administrators, teachers, and parents show a concern for any irregularity in the administration of standardized tests, or for dishonesty in any form. School board members, administrators, and test coordinators are reluctant to admit nonstandard practices, their response being, "We don't have that problem and if we do, it is minimal." School boards are displeased when test data show their school district as being in the lower percentiles. Administrators feel threatened and are concerned about the reputations of their schools. Teachers may face a poor evaluation.

In a pilot study (Gay, 1987), 30 educators, including superintendents, test coordinators, teachers, and teacher assistants in the eight educational regions of North Carolina, were surveyed for a response to the concerns expressed in this study. Twenty-two of the 30 responded. Fifty percent felt that cheating is increasing; 36% felt that it is decreasing; 9% did not answer the question. Five percent commented: "There are no irregularities in my SD."

In the same study, parental expectations were ranked highest by the respondents as students' reason for cheating. The students' desire to obtain a high score was second, with peer pressure ranking third. The least frequent reason was to score high enough, for example on the SAT, to be accepted

by the college of his/her choice. There was no response to this question from 3 of the 22 participants.

In the pilot study (Gay, 1987), teachers rated pressure from the principal as the main reason for irregularities in testing. Principals and teachers take pride in being able to say that students in their school or classroom exceeded the expected annual gain in progress. If this progress is made by teaching the test, inaccurate timing, assisting a student with an answer, or editing an answer sheet, what is it worth? A well meaning teacher added 5 minutes to the given time for the comprehension section of the reading test so that her students "could carefully check their answers" (personal interview). Little did this teacher realize that these extra 5 minutes invalidated the test results for the third grade in her school, the system, the region, and the state. The proctor didn't report this violation. It was reported by a parent who felt that the "dramatic" improvement in her son's score was not valid. the child was retested. The teacher was slightly reprimanded. She did recognize her performance as being unethical. Her only comment was, "I was just trying to help my students." This teacher was not a test administrator the following year.

The formulation, adoption, general observance, and enforcement of a code of ethics are basic characteristics of

all professional organizations. The testing program is no exception. Parents, students, and colleagues depend upon the integrity of the test administrator. It is important, for these reasons, that the test administrator be aware and accept the responsibility of an honest administration of the test.

Summary

Testing is an integral part of the educational experience on the national scene. When administered properly, the results provide schools a valuable source of information. The presence of irregularities in the administering of standardized tests can destroy the validity, and subsequently the utility, of test results. An irregularity will mar the administration of a test.

Importance of Study

Educators are aware of the need to determine student achievement in major learning areas. Scores on standardized tests have been found to be a useful means of measuring and evaluating student achievement (Mehrens & Lehmann, 1969). When educators experience pressure to improve the performance of their class, school, or school district, irregularities emerge. These irregularities may be simple mistakes in the administering of standardized tests such as incorrect timing, failure to follow the directions to examinees, or

editing answer sheets (Lyman, 1978), but they destroy the validity of the results.

Not all teachers fail to follow the publisher(s)' guidelines for test administration, but enough do to make this failure a concern for all who use test data for decision-making (Ligon, 1985). Research supports the belief that irregularities do occur in the administering of standardized tests. This suggests the need for closer surveillance in the testing program in classrooms, schools, and school districts to assure validity in scores that make a strong impact on educational decisions.

Research Questions

In order to assess the extent of testing irregularities and to encourage ethical testing processes, the following questions were addressed:

- A. The extent and nature of testing irregularities
 - Do testing irregularities exist?
 - What are the reasons for carelessness or abuse of testing procedures?
 - How should an administration handle testing infractions?
 - By whom is pressure applied for examinees to excel?
 - How can pressure be relieved?
 - To what extent do test irregularities affect students' scores?

B. Is ethics considered when testing irregularities exist?

- Where should the burden of proof fall when the possibility of an irregularity is raised?
- What should be accepted as evidence of an irregularity?
- Should the public be informed of irregularities?
- What recommendations can be made that will improve the ethics of test administration?

Definition of Terms

In this study, the following definitions will be used:

1. testing irregularities--failure to follow uniform procedures and the directions as stated by the publisher(s) of a standardized test;
2. standardized test--commercially prepared tests made up of a fixed set of questions and administered with the same set of directions and timing constraints;
3. CAT--California Achievement Test--a norm-referenced test designed to measure achievement in the basic skills;
4. achievement test--a test devised to permit a student to demonstrate what he can do with the information and skills he is supposed to have learned in school;
5. North Carolina Competency Test--a standardized test of functional math and reading skills given to 10th grade students in North Carolina;

6. North Carolina Writing Test--a test given to students in Grades 6 and 8 to measure ability to integrate four characteristics: main idea, supporting details, organization, and coherence in composition;

7. test administrator--the educator who administers/directs a test-taking activity;

8. LEA--Local Education Agency--a public school administrative unit under the direction of the State Board of Education;

9. SDPI--State Department of Public Instruction;

10. SD--School District;

11. FY--Fiscal Year.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History of Standardized Tests

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature relevant to irregularities found in administering standardized tests. Irregularities do exist (Lyman, 1978) and affect results. These results are used extensively in the planning of curriculum and evaluating programs (Mehrens & Lehman, 1969). To assure validity of the scores, near-perfect accuracy in administration of tests is necessary at every stage of testing.

The first use of uniform written examinations in schools in the United States is usually attributed to Horace Mann in 1846 (Wolf, 1974). However, the "real inventor of comparative tests" is usually given to Dr. J. M. Rice (Wolf, 1974). In 1894, Rice developed a series of spelling tests which he used in a study of the relationship between the amount of time devoted to spelling instruction and spelling achievement. E. L. Thorndike turned his attention to the field of testing shortly after the turn of the century (Wolf, 1974). Most of the early standard tests and scales for measuring achievement, in addition to a number of highly influential publications on statistical methods in education and pioneer work on intelligence tests for college entrance, are attributed to Thorndike and his students (Wolf, 1974).

As the goals of education have become more complex and the numbers of students have increased enormously, the educator's task of measuring and evaluating has become more difficult. Standardized tests constructed by various educational and psychological specialists have been found to be quite useful in the task of measurement and evaluation. "As a result, the use of standardized tests has permeated the educational establishments" (Mehrens & Lehmann, 1969, p. 1).

Massive financial support has been given to the development of programs in mathematics and science since Sputnik. Educators asked for additional means of evaluating the effectiveness of these programs. This request stimulated the development of new procedures, instruments, and theories (Tyler & Wolf, 1974).

The National Defense Education Act of 1958 provided funds for public school testing. School administrators quickly made use of these new funds. The Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965 also had an impact on the use of standardized tests. Section 205 in Title II deals directly with evaluation. It reads:

. . . effective procedures including provision for appropriate objective measures of educational achievement will be adopted for evaluating at least annually the effectiveness of the program in meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children. (Mehrens & Lehmann, p. 4)

These "appropriate measures of educational achievement" are, for the most part, standardized tests. Test publishers were and still are aware of the financial aid that federal legislation provides.

Functions of Standardized Tests

Even though the functions of standardized tests--especially achievement tests--are many and varied, the sum is that of decision-making. For example, The North Carolina Statewide Testing Program is designed to:

- help schools evaluate programs and make curriculum decisions;
- provide schools with information necessary to plan instruction;
- help teachers identify strengths and weaknesses of students and offer them a measure to chart student growth;
- give parents an independent measure of their child's relative success in school. (Testing Code of Ethics for N.C. Testing Personnel, p. 1)

Individual decisions, such as a vocational choice or whether to attend college, are influenced by test results.

The range of educational testing begins with test selection but includes administration, scoring, and interpretation (Mehrens & Lehmann, 1969).

Irregularities in Test Administration

A standardized test has uniform procedures with respect to administration. Physical arrangements made for the actual testing, directions to be followed in the administering of the tests, and conditions prior to the actual testing are

included in the guidelines of the publisher(s). To insure near-perfect accuracy in the administration of standardized tests, some kind of check should be made at every stage of testing (Lyman, 1978). The following are examples of relatively simple mistakes in the administering of tests: "failing to start the stopwatch used in timing; failing to stop at the proper time limit; and omitting part of the directions" (Lyman, 1978, p. 132).

Another variation in test administration occurs when one administrator tells students to "Answer every question and guess at the ones you do not know, because you have some chance to get it correct" (George, 1981, p. 75). The administrator in the next room never suggests guessing. Publishers' guidelines sometimes tell administrators not to mention guessing unless a student asks about it.

The test administrator is the focal point of a testing program. Test scores may be affected by the attitude of the administrator. Strong feelings about a particular test--it is a waste of time and should not be taken seriously, or it is very important and should be taken seriously--may influence those taking the tests (George, 1981).

A frequently offered justification for a testing irregularity is test bias. Some educators feel that standardized tests are by their very nature and content biased against minority students.

This argument suggests that because blacks and others represent a cultural, as well as a numerical and economic minority, tests constructed by and for the cultural majority (the white middle-class) are simply inappropriate and unfair. (Walsh & Betz, 1985, p. 379)

Both the nature and the content of standardized tests reveal cultural bias.

It is assumed that tests developed by and for white middle-class stress white, middle-class values and areas of knowledge, rather than the values and areas of knowledge within the black or other minority cultures. (Walsh & Betz, 1985, p. 379)

An example of this bias is the question, "What is the color of bananas?" Many students would say "yellow." A child in the minority culture may never have seen a banana until it turned brown. Therefore, this student may have thought that bananas were brown and not yellow (Williams, 1970).

It is further believed that standardized tests are not as standardized as most people think (Bracey, 1986). Bracey found that given any text and any test, as much as 50% of the time, students were tested on topics they had not been taught, or had been taught subjects that were not tested.

In the Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education (1988), prepared by the Joint Committee on Testing Practices, American Psychological Association, it is stated that "Test developers should strive to make tests that are as fair as possible for test takers of different races, gender, ethnic backgrounds, or handicapping conditions" (Section C, p. 3).

Students cheat when taking a test for a variety of reasons. The test administrator and testing conditions

influence the extent to which cheating will occur (Bushway & Nash, 1977).

Eric Johnson (1987), a former teacher and a principal, asked 400 students in Grades 5 through 9 why they cheated. The following were among the reasons given:

I want a good grade.
To get the answer
Everybody was doing it.
I'm scared if I flunk my parents will punish me.

A responsible test administrator will reduce the opportunities for cheating through conscientious monitoring.

Educators daily confront legislative and public demands to improve the quality of education at all levels. Policy makers, politicians, and taxpayers want to know how their education resources are being used. One way to meet this accountability is to provide test scores. Problems arise when test scores are abused or an irregularity existed in the administering of the test.

Considerable pressure builds up to boost test scores regardless of the method when administrators see funds being cut, teachers see poor evaluations, and students and their parents are frustrated about what effects test results will have on them (Haney, 1985). Test scores are used to determine who passes and who fails, who will not be promoted, who is placed in special education, remedial or enrichment classes, and who receives a high school diploma. Tests further decide who goes to college, who gets a scholarship, and who is admitted to graduate school (George, 1981).

Testing in Prince George County, Maryland

Evidence of pressure is found in Prince George County, Maryland, where a new superintendent, intent on improving the public's image of his school, evaluates his principals on only one criterion--student test scores (Weiss, 1988).

Marjorie Spierer, a social studies teacher and president of the Prince George County Educators Association, writes:

Numbers have become more important than anything else. All they're looking at are the scores, not what the kids can and cannot do. The only name of the game is results, and the pressure is immense. (Weiss, 1988, p. 5)

Test Audit in Chicago

The validity of standardized tests scores on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills prompted a test audit in Chicago public elementary schools in 1984. For several years concern had been expressed regarding the validity of the test scores. "There was talk of teaching the test, of disregard for the publisher's time limits, and of altered answer sheets" (Perlman, 1985, p. 3). Perlman reported that irregularities were difficult to spot other than where test scores improved dramatically. A citizens' group task force on schools recommended an audit. Board members and the news media began to ask questions that only an audit would answer. Given these pressures, the system administration consented to an audit.

The audit was limited to 40 schools. Two schools were selected from each of the 20 administrative districts, with each school testing one seventh- and one eighth-grade class.

Data analysis for this audit centered on answering two questions:

1. How did the results from the retest compare within the citywide results?
2. How did the results from the suspect schools compare with those from the comparison schools?

This audit found a substantial decline in test scores in some classrooms. This raised the question of what caused the decline. Exceeding the publisher's time limits was suspected as the most common way of increasing test scores in the initial testing.

A number of instances of altered answer sheets were detected by using a computer program that prints out item strings for each student in a class, percent of students scoring each item correct, the expected percent correct based on the national norming sample, and percent of students choosing each distractor. Difficult answers that nearly all students got right or items that nearly all students got wrong by choosing the same distractor were studied. It was difficult to explain why an entire class of exceptional students would choose the same wrong answer (Perlman, 1985).

The average number of erasures on the citywide tests was compared with the number of erasures on the retest answer sheets. This gave an indication of whether the answer sheets in the citywide testing program had been tampered with.

The conclusion of the audit was that changes had to be made in the citywide testing program of the Chicago public elementary schools.

Student Cheating

Delbert Fowler (1986) writes that student cheating may be a bigger problem than educators realize. Fowler found that 24% of students polled in a Salt Lake City high school felt that cheating might be justified under certain circumstances, especially pressure. Ninety-four percent of the students felt that cheating could be found in almost any high school. The most common reason found by Fowler was parent attitude and pressure. Forty percent of the students gave this as a reason for cheating. Popularity is important, therefore he/she may not report the cheating; he/she keeps quiet and allows it to go on around him/her, thereby becoming a part of the problem (Fowler, 1986). Allowing others to cheat without doing something about it can be considered the same as endorsing it.

Fowler (1986) further states that "cheating is a short-term answer to a long-term problem. When cheating is practiced, accepted, and used, we all lose, we all are short-changed, we are robbed" (p. 96).

Test Scores--A Guideline in N.C. Accreditation

The focus of accountability of the new accreditation process for schools in North Carolina was reported in the Education Report (November, 1988) published by the North Carolina Department of Public Education, State Department of Public Instruction, Division of Communication Services. The guidelines in the new process, implemented in 1988-1989, are designed to hold school systems accountable to the Basic Education Program. The State Board of Education approved the North Carolina Program of Accreditation Manual for Public Units in July, 1988. A trial implementation of the 216 standards will begin during the fiscal year 1988-1989. The report states that student test scores will be among the items to show how well a school system is progressing under the Basic Education Program.

Austin Simpson, Director for Accreditation, says the new standards are a major change from the old accreditation process. Simpson states, "The new standards are performance based. The old process was based on planning and was more subjective" (Education Report, 1988, p. 1). The state accreditation program is now mandatory rather than voluntary.

In the new accreditation process are two types of standards: performance and opportunity. The performance standards are those measured by student test scores. The average of median California Achievement Test scores for

the most recent 3 years is expected to be above the 40th percentile in each school system.

A school system that does not meet accreditation standard will need to demonstrate how it plans to bring about improvement and to specify any technical assistance needed by the state.

Reaching accreditation will be easier for some systems than others. Some may have to move more slowly than others. These will need additional resources from the Basic Education Program. Simpson predicts that school systems will start immediately working on areas of weakness.

William J. Brown, assistant superintendent for research, testing and accreditation in the State Department of Public Instruction in North Carolina, stated: "The new accreditation process is an effort to hold schools accountable for providing quality opportunities and for getting positive, measurable results" (Education Report, 1988, p. 1). James B. Martin, Governor of North Carolina, endorsed the same degree of accountability in his inaugural address on January 7, 1989, by saying, "The ultimate evaluation of our schools depends not on input formulas, but on students achievement scores, and subject mastery, and attendance and dropout rates" (Martin, 1989, p. 8A).

Test scores may be improving, but too much stock must not be put in any one testing technology. "It is more

important to engage the judgment and concern of people directly involved--students, teachers, and parents--in testing ideas and expectations about teaching and learning" (Haney, 1985, p. 13).

Summary

Testing is a powerful instrument with potentialities for both good and bad (Tyler, 1966). Those who are responsible for the improvement of education must seek ways to achieve the maximum good potential from testing and minimize or eliminate irregularities in test administration. Ethical test administrators will be familiar with and carefully observe the test publisher(s)' directions for administration. There is evidence in practical testing situations that these directions may not be followed, thus creating problems for students, teachers, and the school/school system (Medina & Neill, 1988).

Testing will continue, and the problem to be faced is ethical testing practices in order to assure valid test results.

Tests are here to stay, and their uses will increase (Tyler, 1966).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Population

Participants for this study were randomly selected from teachers who administer the California Achievement Tests in Grades 3, 6, and 8, and the North Carolina Competency Tests in Grade 10, from 18 school districts representing urban and rural schools, schools at the poverty level and those above the poverty level, and large and small districts. Names and addresses of teachers who administer these standardized tests in each of the selected school districts were obtained from the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction.

A request for the number of teachers who administer standardized tests was sent to the superintendent of each of the school districts. From this information the number of teachers to whom a survey would be sent was determined. The number of teachers per grade in the selected school districts ranged from 4 to 170. At least two teachers per grade level were chosen from each school district. Where there were more than 20 at a given grade level, 10% of the number reported were chosen (Table 1). Two hundred sixty-five teachers were asked to respond to the survey.

Research/Test Coordinators in each of the eight education regions of North Carolina were interviewed. These

Table I
PARTICIPANT SELECTION

SCHOOL DISTRICTS	Grade							
	3		6		8		10	
	Number Employed	Participants	Number Employed	Participants	Number Employed	Participants	Number Employed	Participants
A	16	2	15	2	16	2	20	2
B	50	5	60	6	72	7	70	7
C	41	4	25	3	29	3	30	3
D	17	2	14	2	14	2	14	2
E	4	2	4	2	5	2	5	2
F	24	3	42	4	42	5	34	4
G	22	2	20	2	20	2	25	3
H	44	5	45	5	48	5	39	4
I	35	3	36	3	37	4	47	5
J	15	2	14	2	12	2	13	2
K	8	2	10	2	10	2	7	2
L	30	3	14	2	16	2	16	2
M	10	2	11	2	10	2	7	2
N	170	17	161	16	160	16	153	15
O	10	2	11	2	10	2	12	2
P	5	2	4	2	4	2	5	2
Q	39	4	38	4	39	4	49	5
R	24	2	20	2	24	3	26	3
Total	502	64	545	63	580	68	592	70

Note: At least two participants per grade level were chosen in each SD .
Where possible the number of participants was 10% of the number of
teachers employed at each grade level.

individuals, who are primarily concerned with an education region, were included in the study because of their responsibility for testing procedures and practices. They were asked to respond to questions similar to those on the survey. A copy of the interview questions is found in Appendix B.

Instrument

An instrument was developed to address the objectives of the study. This instrument utilized the testing irregularities defined by Buss and Novick (1980) in the administering of standardized tests. These are:

- Inaccurate timing,
- Altering answer sheets,
- Coaching,
- Teaching the tests,
- Errors in scoring/reporting, and
- Student cheating.

A copy of the instrument is presented as Appendix A.

Procedure

A pilot study was conducted to check for clarity and reliability. Test coordinators, two of whom were not in school districts in which participants were chosen, were asked to respond to the survey. Three teachers from each level in Grades 3, 6, 8, and 10 were asked to pilot the instrument. These teachers were in different school

districts that reflected the variety of those in which the study would be conducted.

Superintendents from three school districts, not included among those to be surveyed, were asked to review the instrument. As with the teachers, one superintendent represented a large urban district, one a rural district, and one a small district. The 18 pilot surveys were returned with recommendations. Responses such as Agree and Disagree were changed to Yes or No. Counselor was added to those to whom one would report an observed irregularity. The question asking for ways in which students cheat was deleted. All items were retained or modified according to the results of the pilot review.

A request for permission to survey personnel in his district was sent to each superintendent in the 18 school districts chosen for the study. This was for his information and as a courtesy to the superintendent. Permission was granted from each superintendent. The instrument and a letter stating the reason for the survey, assuring confidentiality and asking for completion and return of the survey, were sent to each randomly selected participant. A copy of this letter is found in Appendix C.

Data Analysis

Responses to the survey from teachers were recorded in Tables 1-16 showing the number surveyed and responding by

grade level. Responses from the eight regional coordinators are shown in Tables 17-21. Table 22 compares the recommendations to reduce irregularities in the administering of standardized tests made by teachers with those made by the Regional Research/Test Coordinators.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Two hundred sixty-eight teachers who administer the California Achievement Tests in Grades 3, 6, and 8, and the North Carolina Competency Tests in Grade 10, were asked to respond to a survey. One hundred seventy (63.4%) responded as shown in Table 2. Three persons chosen as participants had moved out of the state and one was deceased. One survey was returned with the comment, "I do not wish to participate in this study." Another survey gave only the demographic data with the comment, "I cannot respond to this survey. My job would be in jeopardy."

The problem with testing irregularities was not confined to the inexperienced teacher. As shown in Table 2, 86% of the participants had more than 5 years' experience and 84% reported being tenured.

Table 3 indicates the number of times that teachers reported irregularities in the administration of standardized tests.

In addition to those shown in Table 3, teachers reported other infractions as:

1. Allowing students to talk during testing, (3)
2. Leaving students unsupervised, (1)

Table 2

Demographic Data of Survey Participants

Participant Data	<u>Grade</u>			
	3	6	8	10
Responses (63.4%)	40	41	42	47
Degree				
AB	33	29	29	33
Master's	7	11	12	11
6th year	0	1	0	1
Doctoral	0	0	0	0
Years of Experience				
0-5	9	4	4	6
6-10	4	8	10	8
11-15	10	13	12	11
16-20	6	6	10	8
More than 20	11	10	5	13
Tenure				
Yes	30	36	38	36
No	10	5	3	10

Table 3

Occurrence of Irregularities in the Administration of
Standardized Tests as Reported by Teachers

Test irregularity	<u>Grade</u>			
	3	6	8	10
Added extra time to the publisher(s)' time limits				
Colleague	8	4	7	4
Self	4	1	1	0
Changed responses on answer sheets				
Colleague	1	2	0	0
Self	0	0	0	0
Coached students in answering questions				
Colleague	10	6	3	5
Self	1	1	0	0
Suggested answers to students				
Colleague	3	3	2	3
Self	0	0	0	0
Taught sections of the test				
Colleague	10	9	12	7
Self	2	1	2	4
Other				
Colleague	4	4	6	1
Self	2	1	1	0

3. Making gestures to help students choose the correct answer, (3)
4. Giving the total battery of tests in one day, and (1)
5. Changing the publisher(s)' directions. (1)

A teacher and a regional coordinator reported incidents in which dictionaries and thesauri were provided students who were encouraged to use them while taking the North Carolina Writing Test.

Table 4 indicates the sources of external pressure to alter directions in the administration of standardized tests as reported by a colleague or the respondent.

Thirty-five percent of the respondents reported that they were aware of or had participated in one or more irregularities in the administering of standardized tests. Of those who were aware of irregularities, only 20% reported the infraction to the administration. Table 5 presents:

1. The number and percent of respondents who reported that they were aware of test irregularities in the administration of standardized tests;
2. If the respondent was aware of an irregularity, if it was reported;
3. The position of the person(s) to whom the irregularity was reported;
4. Response to the question, "Should the public be made aware of testing irregularities?"

Table 4

Sources of External Pressure to Alter
Standardized Test Instructions

Source of pressure	<u>Grade</u>			
	3	6	8	10
Superintendent				
Colleague	1	2	0	2
Self	2	2	0	1
Principal				
Colleague	4	3	1	5
Self	5	3	0	2
Parents				
Colleague	2	2	0	1
Self	1	3	0	1
Other				
Peers				
Colleague	2	1	0	0
Self	0	1	0	0
Competition among Teachers/Schools				
Colleague	0	0	0	0
Self	1	0	0	0
Society in General				
Colleague	0	0	0	2
Self	0	0	0	2
Mentor Teachers				
Colleague	0	0	0	0
Self	1	0	0	0
Counselors				
Colleague	0	1	0	0
Self	0	1	0	0
Never been pressured	2	3	0	3

Table 5

Respondents' Awareness and Reaction to Testing Irregularities
in the Administering of Standardized Tests

Aware of irregularity	<u>Grade</u>							
	3		6		8		10	
Number responding	40		41		42		47	
Yes	16	40%	16	39%	18	43%	10	21%
No	23	58%	24	59%	23	55%	36	77%
No response	1	2%	1	2%	1	2%	1	2%
Irregularity reported								
Yes	1	6%	5	31%	4	22%	2	20%
No	15	94%	11	69%	14	78%	8	80%
Irregularity reported to								
Building Test Coordinator	0		2		3		1	
System Test Coordinator	1		2		1		1	
Principal	1		1		1		0	
Superintendent	0		1		0		0	

A narrow margin was revealed between those who felt that the public should be made aware of testing irregularities and those who were undecided. Forty percent said "Yes," 38% were undecided, and 22% responded "No."

Reasons for not reporting testing irregularities varied. The main reasons given were lack of proof, pressure from the administration, and peer pressure as shown in Table 6.

There are educators who believe that the California Achievement Tests are biased; therefore, it is appropriate to engage in testing irregularities. The majority feel that it is inappropriate to allow irregularities (Table 7).

When a testing irregularity occurs, the rationale often given is "to help the student." This study did not support this reason. Of the 161 responses, 11% agreed that the irregularity was allowed to promote the self-image of the student. Eighty-nine percent disagreed. One hundred fifty-seven participants responded to the question "To improve the image of the teacher." Sixty percent agreed. Only 15% agreed that assisting examinees in testing was to improve the image of the principal (Table 8).

Teachers gave parental expectation as the number one reason for students cheating, followed closely by peer pressure. Other reasons were a personal desire to excel, to graduate, and to get into college (Table 9).

Table 6

Reasons for Not Reporting Testing Irregularities

Reason	<u>Grade</u>			
	3	6	8	10
Lack of proof	2	1	2	1
Test coordinator aware of irregularity	2	1	0	0
Pressure from administration	3	2	0	1
Peer pressure	2	2	1	2
Many teachers teach certain sections of the test	1	0	0	0
Tenure may be jeopardized	1	0	0	0
An honest mistake	0	1	0	0
Review is vital and necessary	0	1	0	0
Test questions were different from those the teacher expected	0	0	1	0
Counselor left students unsupervised during testing	0	0	1	0
Taught the material without knowledge of what would be on the test	0	0	0	1

Table 7

Number and Percent Who Feel That the CAT Is Biased
Against Certain Ethnic/Economic Groups

CAT is biased	<u>Grade</u>			
	3	6	8	10
Number responding	38	38	41	46
Yes	15 39%	16 42%	11 27%	11 24%
No	23 61%	22 58%	30 73%	35 76%
No response	2	3	1	1
The presence of bias makes it appropriate to engage in testing irregularities				
Yes	5 36%	4 28%	1 10%	1 9%
No	9 64%	10 72%	9 90%	10 91%
No response	26	27	32	36

Table 8

Reasons Teachers Report for Assisting Students
When Administering a Standardized Test

Reason	<u>Grade</u>			
	3	6	8	10
To promote the self-image of the student				
Agree	5	5	3	4
Disagree	31	35	36	42
To improve the image of the teacher				
Agree	27	25	21	21
Range of percent of time this occurs	5-100%	1-90%	10-90%	5-80%
Median score	30%	50%	50%	50%
Disagree	10	13	18	22
No response	3	2	3	4
To improve the image of the principal				
Agree	5	7	2	6
Range of percent of time this occurs	10-90%	1-75%	5-75%	10-50%
Median score	25%	26%	33%	34%
No response	10	7	7	7

Table 9

Reasons Reported for Students Cheating

Reason	<u>Grade</u>			
	3	6	8	10
Peer pressure	29	34	41	39
To graduate	8	12	13	28
To get into college	5	7	8	21
Parental expectations	32	36	31	32
Personal desire to excel	22	27	22	33
Other	9	7	11	8

In response to the question "Cheating is increasing/decreasing among teachers/students," 75% believe that cheating is increasing. Of this number, 43% believe that cheating is increasing among teachers. Twenty-five percent of the respondents believe that cheating is decreasing, of which 56% believe that the decrease is among teachers (Table 10).

Students who are aware of their peers cheating will not always report this behavior. The most frequent reason given for this behavior was that students are scared of what their peers will do to them if they are reported. Table 11 reports reasons given for students not reporting cheating.

Participants were asked if better inservice on the administering of standardized tests would decrease cheating (irregularities). Thirty percent answered with a definite "Yes." This training should include an evaluation of the value/use of test results. Forty-six responded with a "No." The No's questioned how better inservice would decrease cheating. Table 12 suggests that teachers feel inservice programs alone will not decrease testing irregularities.

In 1988 the State Board of Education established performance standards as a part of the Accreditation Process. A number of administrators expressed the hope that this would reduce the number of irregularities. There were concerns that pressure for higher results would increase, especially where a school district failed to meet the minimum

Table 10

Teacher/Student Cheating (Irregularities)Is Increasing/Decreasing

Cheating is	<u>Grade</u>			
	3	6	8	10
Increasing	32	26	29	33
by Teachers	15	17	10	10
by Students	17	9	19	23
Decreasing	7	15	10	9
by Teachers	5	7	6	5
by Students	2	8	4	4

Table 11

Reasons Reported for Students Not Reporting Cheating

Reasons for not reporting	<u>Grade</u>			
	3	6	8	10
"Tattling"	1	0	4	0
Don't want to get involved	2	2	0	1
Afraid of losing friends	2	1	2	0
Programmed not to "tattle"	2	4	0	0
Scared of what peers will do	0	11	0	3
Don't care	0	4	2	2
Fear of being beaten	0	0	5	0
Don't want to be the "informer"	0	0	0	6
Other	14	7	1	5

Table 12

Will Improved Inservice Decrease Testing Irregularities?

Response	<u>Grade</u>			
	3	6	8	10
Yes	11	14	10	15
No	19	18	23	18
Undecided	8	7	6	11
No response	2	2	3	3

standards. Table 13 reports the responses to the question, "What effect, if any, will the inclusion of performance results from standardized tests as a part of the State Accreditation Process, have or influence the administration of standardized tests?"

Sixty-four percent of the respondents were aware of the Testing Code of Ethics for North Carolina Testing Personnel, Teachers, and School Administrators. Thirty-four percent were not aware of this code of ethics. Of those who were unaware of this instrument only 10% did not have tenure (Table 14). One participant wrote, "Ethics will facilitate procedures, and better procedures will improve ethics." Another commented that "Survival takes precedence over ethics."

Recommendations for the improvement of the ethics in test administration were numerous and wide in scope. Teachers at each grade level voiced a concern about the pressure they experience for students to score high on standardized tests. The comparison of results among teachers, schools, and school systems prompted negative responses. A review of the Code of Ethics by all administrators, teachers, and proctors was highly recommended. Table 15 reports the recommendations made by teachers.

Participants made a number of recommendations for the improvement of testing procedures. A beginning point would

Table 13

Perceived Influence of Utilizing Test Results as a Part
of State Accreditation Process

Response	<u>Grade</u>			
	3	6	8	10
Increase pressure	11	8	0	0
Increase irregularities	6	6	7	9
Have no effect	3	3	8	3
Increase pressure on principal	0	2	0	0
Increase "teaching the test"	0	2	0	0
Increase coaching	0	2	0	0
Reduce irregularities	0	2	2	0
Improve testing	0	0	2	0
Increase pressure on teachers to "look good"	0	0	2	4
Cause teachers to recall test items and teach the test	0	0	2	0
Increase desire of teachers to succeed by any means	0	0	0	4
Cause teachers to provide more assistance	0	0	0	2
Increase fear of teachers that they will be evaluated on test results	0	0	0	2

Table 14

Respondents' Awareness of the Testing Code of Ethics
for North Carolina Testing Personnel, Teachers,
and School Administrators

Response	<u>Grade</u>			
	3	6	8	10
Yes	20	29	30	29
No	18	10	12	17
No tenure	1	2	2	1
No response	2	1	0	1

Table 15

Recommendations by Teachers to Improve the Ethics
of Test Administration

Recommendation	<u>Grade</u>			
	3	6	8	10
Review the <u>Code of Ethics</u> with all administrators, teachers, proctors	5	2	3	2
Identify common irregularities and review ways to eliminate them	0	3	2	3
Inform teachers of the multiple uses of valid test results in decision-making	3	3	2	4
Refrain from comparing scores among teachers, schools, school districts	3	3	2	2
Put less emphasis on test results	3	1	2	3
Relieve pressure on teachers and principals to obtain high scores	2	3	2	2
Do not use test results in evaluating teachers	2	3	2	2
Eliminate questions that are biased	0	3	1	0
Administer fewer tests	0	2	1	0
Make use of an outside Testing Team	2	2	0	4
Provide better security for test materials	2	1	0	1
Reduce class size for testing	2	1	2	2
Impose a fine on those who allow an irregularity to occur	0	1	1	0

be to make teachers aware of the format, the content, and the multiple uses of valid test results in making decisions in the curriculum. It was felt that North Carolina puts too much emphasis on test results. One teacher reported that her sixth grade took eight standardized tests in 1987-1988.

All grade levels recommended that outside teams administer the tests. Table 16 reports the recommendations by teachers for the improvement of testing procedures.

The Research/Test Coordinators confirmed that irregularities in the administering of standardized tests do exist. Like the teachers, they believe that the administrators who fail to follow the publisher(s)' guidelines are few. Seven of the eight coordinators had observed testing irregularities, and five had received reports of irregularities.

Teachers were not always aware of the administrative action when an irregularity was noted. Regional coordinators stated that the superintendent will usually call for an investigation. The type of discipline is determined by the seriousness of the infraction and varies from system to system. Disciplinary actions reported were: a letter of reprimand was placed in the teacher's personnel file; the teacher was no longer allowed to administer tests; the school district did not validate the scores and the students were retested using the Stanford Achievement Test. One dismissal was reported by a regional coordinator and a superintendent

Table 16

Recommendations by Teachers for the Improvement
of Testing Procedures

Recommendation	<u>Grade</u>			
	3	6	8	10
Use an outside team to administer the tests	7	4	3	2
Educate parents and public that test results have a place, but are not the only criteria for judging teachers and students	3	4	2	1
Review the time frames for each test	2	1	1	2
Revise the questions more often	1	2	1	2
Be more selective in choosing a test coordinator	0	3	1	0
Use only competent, certified teachers to administer standardized tests	0	0	1	1
Correlate skills taught with skills tested	0	1	3	1

reported a second one. Table 18 provides the number of Regional Research/Test Coordinators who have knowledge of testing irregularities and the action taken.

Regional Research/Test Coordinators

Data in Tables 17 through 21 show the information from interviews with the eight Research/Test Coordinators in the education regions of North Carolina. These individuals have an overall perspective of the testing program in their region. The coordinators are experienced in the field of testing, with seven having had more than 5 years as test administrators in the classroom and five having served as test coordinators in a school district. Three of these individuals hold doctoral degrees in research. See Table 17.

No coordinator was aware of extra time added to the publisher(s)' time frame. Students were coached in answering questions in five separate administrations, and sections of the CAT had been copied. The most serious offense was that of a teacher who received the tests two days early and put the questions and answers on the board for the students to study. Table 19 reports irregularities occurring in the administration of standardized tests reported by the Regional Research/Test Coordinators.

It was the opinion of the regional coordinators that irregularities in testing occur due to teachers' lack of

Table 17

Demographic Data of Regional Research/Test Coordinators

Highest degree earned

AB	0
Master's	5
6th year	0
Doctoral	3

Years of experience

0-5	1
6-10	1
11-15	0
16-20	3
More than 20	3

Years of experience as Regional Test Coordinator

0-5	6
6-10	0
11-15	2

Table 18

Number of Regional Research/Test Coordinators Who
Have Knowledge of Testing Irregularities

Knowledge of Irregularities	Yes	No
Observed testing irregularities	7	1
Received report of irregularity(s)	5	3
Reported irregularity(s)	7	1

Reasons for not reporting the irregularity(s):

- (1) Offense not serious: scores not affected.
- (2) Irregularity already reported to superintendent.

Response of administration when irregularity(s) was reported:

- (1) Called for an investigation.
- (2) A letter of reprimand placed in teacher's personnel file.
- (3) School District did not validate scores:
Students were retested using Stanford Achievement Test. High correlation between two scores.
- (4) Teacher no longer administers tests.
- (5) Teacher dismissed.

Table 19

Irregularities Occurring in the Administration of
Standardized Tests Reported by Regional
Research/Test Coordinators

Irregularity

Extra time added to publisher(s)' time frame.
 None reported.

Responses changed on answer sheets.
 One incidence reported; however, one must be present to verify this irregularity.

Students coached in answering questions.
 Reported in five separate administrations.

Answers suggested to students.
 The most serious irregularity:
 (1) A teacher received the tests two days early. Teacher put questions and answers on the board for students to study.
 (2) Teacher gave questions from CAT and told students to look up the answers.

Sections of the test taught.
 Sections of the tests were copied.

Others
 Administrator allowed students to use extra sheets of paper to complete Writing Test. Teacher reported she had attended workshop and was told that this was permissible.

Inexperienced teachers.
 The North Carolina Writing Test is new.
 (1) The format of the instrument permits much latitude in its administration.
 (2) The newness of the test left many questions about the administering unanswered; therefore, the manuals are being revised.

Test administrators omitted parts of the directions.

Lack of communication between test coordinators and test administrators.

knowledge about the place of measurement in a student's education. Table 20 indicates the reasons for the occurrence of irregularities in the administering of standardized tests reported by the Regional Research/Test Coordinators.

Each of the eight coordinators emphasized the Testing Code of Ethics for North Carolina Testing Personnel, Teachers and School Administrators. It is their belief that a thorough knowledge of this code could improve professionalism. Three of these individuals were of the opinion that teachers would follow the publisher(s)' guidelines more closely if they were aware of the importance for reliable/valid test results in the day-to-day decisions of the curriculum. Two, who had the greatest number of years in the testing program, felt that more structure is needed in the training of test administrators in the ethics, procedures, and hazards of testing. Table 21 reports the recommendations by the Regional Research/Test Coordinators to reduce irregularities in the administering of standardized tests.

Recommendations to reduce irregularities in the administering of standardized tests by teachers and regional coordinators had a number of similarities. Three were directly expressed by both groups. Table 22 compares the recommendations that were made.

Table 20

Reasons for the Occurrence of Irregularities in the
Administering of Standardized Tests Reported
by Regional Research/Test Coordinators

Reason

To improve the image of the school district

To improve the image of the principal

To improve the image of the teacher

To improve the self-image of the student

Two incidences were reported:

(1) An Academically Gifted student who experienced a mental block was coached while taking the North Carolina Writing Test.

(2) Students were given dictionaries and thesauri and encouraged to use them while taking the North Carolina Writing Test.

Teachers experience pressure for students to score well.

Sources of external pressure

Superintendent

Superintendent doesn't want to be embarrassed by poor performance of school district.

Administrative pressure

Press releases

Principal

"This test is very important."

Administrative pressure

Peer pressure

Test Coordinators

Expected performance for State Accreditation

Parent expectations

Varies from system to system.

Others

Teachers threatened by test results.

Poor evaluation

Loss of job

Disparity between City and County school districts.

Table 21

Recommendations by Regional Research/Test Coordinators to
Reduce Irregularities in the Administering of Tests

Recommendation	Response
Educate teachers/users of the importance of reliable/valid information in making day-to-day decisions in the curriculum.	3
Test Administrator	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thoroughly familiar with nuts and bolts of testing, • believes that reliable testing can make the difference, • highly respected, • committed, and • does his/her job. 	2
More structure in training test administrators in the ethics, procedures, and hazards of testing.	2
Design testing procedures to give faculties more ownership.	1
Train teachers to be <u>test makers</u> . Better teacher-made tests will improve performance on standardized tests.	1
Provide ample inservice for testing personnel.	2
Emphasize professionalism.	1
Keep testing in the proper perspective and not as a threat to teachers or students.	2
Emphasize the <u>Testing Code of Ethics for North Carolina Testing Personnel, Teachers, and School Administrators</u> .	8
If a teacher has a history of poor test performance, select another test administrator.	1
Audit test administration.	1

Table 22

Comparison of Recommendations by Teachers and Regional
Research/Test Coordinators to Reduce Irregularities
in the Administering of Standardized Tests

Recommendation	Teacher	Research/Test Coordinator
<u>Review/emphasize Testing Code of Ethics for North Carolina Testing Personnel, Teachers and School Administrators</u>	9	8
Constantly monitor/audit test administration	9	1
Keep testing in the proper perspective and not as a threat to teachers or students.	4	2

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The culture, history, and mission of a school are reflected in its academic integrity. Educators, parents, and students must admit that "cheating" in test administration is a problem, but at the same time, realize the fact that it can be controlled through educational efforts in promoting good testing practices. How a standardized test is administered is just as important as the selection of the appropriate instrument.

Robert Tyler (1966) noted:

Since tests have a powerful directive influence on teaching and the study of pupils, a major policy to follow is to establish a testing program that faithfully reflects the objectives sought by the school. In this way the influence of testing is to reinforce the objectives sought by the school. (p. 49)

Increasingly, funding is allocated annually by legislatures and school districts for commercially-prepared, standardized tests in an effort to gain reliable measures of student proficiency, thereby ensuring that the school's objectives are met. A study (1988) by the National Center for Fair and Open Testing estimated that the United States public schools administered 105 million standardized tests in 1986-1987.

Good test administration requires careful observation of, and adherence to, the publisher(s)' guidelines. The testing industry uses the term "testing irregularity" as the generic phrase to refer to situations, including--but not limited to--cheating. The data from this study support the conclusion that test irregularities do exist:

- (1) Teachers reported 135 incidents of irregularities in testing and this number may be only the tip of the iceberg. These incidents were reported by a sample of teachers in only one of the eight education regions in North Carolina. One testing irregularity has a wide-range effect, not only in the individual classroom, but also on the grade level throughout the state.
- (2) Regional Research/Test Coordinators reported 13 testing irregularities. The eight regional coordinators reported that test administrators who fail to follow the publisher(s)' guidelines are few. Seven reported that incidents of irregularities had been observed and five had received reports of irregularities.
- (3) Personal interviews revealed other testing infractions such as:
 - (a) Five minutes were added to the publisher(s)' time frame.

- (b) CAT Reading Comprehension section was read to students and answers to the questions were given prior to testing.
- (c) Answer sheets were corrected thereby assuring that students answered as they had been taught.
- (d) Geometry proofs on the end-of-course testing were identical. This was true in proofs from two separate schools.

Irregularities in the administering of standardized tests were reported as occurring for the following reasons:

- (1) Teachers experience pressure from the administration, peers, mentors, counselors, parents, and society in general for students to excel on standardized tests.
- (2) Administrators do not want to be embarrassed by having their schools show a poor performance.
- (3) Some educators charge that standardized tests are biased. Less than 1% of the respondents believe that the presence of bias makes it appropriate to engage in testing irregularities.
- (4) Regional Research/Test Coordinators reported that a poor performance by students had resulted in teachers receiving poor evaluations. One teacher reported that she could not respond to the survey, because her candor would jeopardize her job.
- (5) Teachers gave "parental expectation" as the number one reason for students cheating. This was followed

closely by "peer pressure." Other reasons were "a personal desire to excel, to graduate, and to get into college."

Testing irregularities definitely affect test results. The rationale for failure in following the publisher(s)' guidelines is simply to obtain higher scores. A few additional correct answers will substantially raise the percentile score. For example, on the CAT Reading Comprehension Test, Level 13 Form E, a difference of two correct answers results in a percentile gain of 14%:

<u>Number Correct</u>	<u>Percentile</u>
29	32%
31	46%

A similar increase is found in the CAT Mathematics Concepts/ Application Test, Level 13 Form E, where a difference of three correct answers results in a percentile gain of 17%:

<u>Number Correct</u>	<u>Percentile</u>
34	33%
37	50%

The inclusion of performance results from standardized tests as a part of the State Accreditation Process may affect the administration of standardized tests, especially where a school district fails to meet the minimum standards for accreditation. Participants from more affluent systems reported that the inclusion of test results on the California

Achievement Tests as one of the requirements for State Accreditation would have no effect. (These school districts are already accredited.)

Standardized tests are here to stay (Tyler, 1966). There is no one solution to the elimination of testing irregularities. All parties involved in the testing process must accept responsibility for valid test scores and strive to relieve the multiple pressures for excellence. How the test is used is just as important as which test to use. Tests and test use must be of high technical, informative, and interpretive quality. Those who use such instruments must be qualified, knowledgeable, ethical, and care deeply about the rights and welfare of the students they serve. An unqualified or careless administrator can destroy the validity of the highest quality test. It is necessary to engage the judgment and concern of all who are involved in testing--administrators, teachers, students, and parents--to establish ethical expectations in the administering of standardized testing.

Testing Program Recommendations

(1) A staff development program to better inform administrators, test coordinators, teachers, and monitors of the reasons for valid test results:

- (a) To provide reliable/valid information in making day-to-day decisions in the curriculum, and
- (b) To provide insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the instructional program.

Staff development sessions on the security of tests, administering, and editing answer sheets must be improved and expanded so that those educators who administer tests will better understand the need for valid scores.

(2) Test program coordinators should review the Testing Code of Ethics for North Carolina Testing Personnel, Teachers, and School Administrators with the entire staff in each school. One session on the security of tests, administering of tests, and editing answer sheets will not suffice.

(3) Test Program coordinators should work towards identifying common irregularities and review ways to eliminate them:

- (a) failure to observe publisher(s)' time frame,
- (b) failure to give directions as printed in the manual,
- (c) teaching the tests, and
- (d) coaching during the administering of tests.

(4) System-wide test coordinators should be selected with care and invested with the authority to conduct a reliable/valid testing program.

(5) Select administrators who:

- (a) are thoroughly knowledgeable of the testing program,
- (b) believe that reliable testing can make a difference,

(c) are committed to the responsibility of valid testing procedures,

(d) are highly respected, and

(e) will do his/her job.

(6) Keep the testing program in the proper perspective and not as a threat to teachers or students.

(7) Test administrations in classrooms throughout the school district should be monitored and audited by personnel external to the school/system.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of this study support the presence of irregularities in the administering of standardized tests. Data collected on existing irregularities will prove useful in educating test administrators in vulnerable areas. Further research should include investigation of the multiple pressures that contribute to unethical administration of standardized tests and how such administrations can be reduced.

Other Recommendations

Professional educators cannot accept the belief "We don't have that problem and if we do it is minimal." Every school district should:

- Review the Testing Code of Ethics for North Carolina Testing Personnel, Teachers, and School Administrators with the entire staff in each school.

- Discuss ways in which test results are used.
- Look for dramatic changes of high or low scores on a given instrument by the same grade/class within a school.
- Listen to comments by teachers and students following the administering of standardized tests.
- Recognize teacher-made exercises/reviews that contain actual test items.
- Conduct quality monitoring at the time of testing.
- Make an immediate follow-up where irregularities are suspected.

Regular and thorough analyses of the testing program and results is strongly recommended to detect strengths and weaknesses. Improvements in the ethical efficiency of the administering of standardized tests are likely outcomes of such analyses.

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APPENDIX A
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

SURVEY

Please find the time in your schedule to complete this survey. All information will be strictly confidential and destroyed at the completion of this project.

Grade level taught _____

Highest degree earned: AB _____, Master's _____,
6th year _____, Doctorate _____

Years of experience: _____

Tenure: Yes _____ No _____

1. Irregularities in the administration of standardized tests sometimes occur. If you are aware of such an occurrence by a colleague, please check all of the following that apply:

_____ added extra time to the time frame given by the author(s) of the test;

_____ changed responses on answer sheets in any way;

_____ coached students in answering questions;

_____ suggested answers to students;

_____ taught sections of the test;

_____ other?

Please specify _____

2. As increased emphasis is placed on using test results from standardized test scores, teachers may experience pressure from external sources to alter standardized test instructions. If you have knowledge of a colleague being pressured to do so, please indicate the source below. (Check all that apply.)

_____ The superintendent

_____ The principal

_____ Parents

_____ Other

Please specify _____

3. Have you ever allowed an occurrence of any irregularities in the tests you have administered?

Yes _____ No _____

If your response is No, go to number five.

4. If you responded Yes in number three, please check each of the following that apply:

_____ added extra time to the time frame given by the author(s) of the test;

_____ changed responses on answer sheets in any way;

_____ coached students in answering questions;

_____ suggested answers to students;

_____ taught sections of the test;

_____ other?

Please specify _____

5. As more emphasis is placed on using test results from standardized test scores, teachers may experience pressure from external sources to alter standardized test instructions. If you have been so pressured, please indicate the source below. (Check all that apply.)

_____ The superintendent

_____ The principal

_____ Parents

_____ Other

Please specify _____

6. If you checked irregularities in question number one, please respond to the questions that follow in this item.

If you did not check irregularities in question number one, go to question number seven.

a. Did you report the irregularity?

Yes _____ No _____

- b. If your response is No, why did you not report it?

- c. If you reported the irregularity, to whom did you report it?

_____ Building Test Coordinator/Counselor
 _____ System Test Coordinator
 _____ Principal
 _____ Superintendent

- d. What action, if any, was taken?

7. Do you feel that the CAT is biased against certain economic/ethnic groups?

Yes _____ No _____

If your response is No, go to number eight.

- a. If your answer is Yes, do you feel that it is appropriate to engage in testing irregularities because tests are biased?

Yes _____ No _____

- b. If your answer is Yes, please explain your rationale.

8. When a teacher provides assistance to a student while administering a standardized test, the reason often given is to promote the self-image of the student. This is an acceptable practice.

Agree _____ Disagree _____

9. When a teacher provides assistance to a student while administering a standardized test, the reason may be

- a. To improve his/her image as a quality teacher.

Agree _____ Disagree _____

If you agree, what percent of the time do you think this occurs? _____

b. To improve the image of the principal.

Agree _____ Disagree _____

If you agree, what percent of the time do you think this occurs? _____

10. In the event that student cheating occurs, why does it occur? (Check all that apply.)

_____ Peer pressure;

_____ To graduate;

_____ To get into college;

_____ Parental expectations;

_____ Personal desire for a high score;

_____ Other?

Please specify _____

11. Why would students not inform the test administrator when they observe other students cheating?

12. Do you feel that cheating (irregularities) is

_____ increasing

_____ by teachers

_____ by students?

_____ decreasing

_____ by teachers

_____ by students?

13. Should the public be informed of a testing irregularity?

Yes _____ No _____ Undecided _____

14. Do you think that better inservice on the administering of standardized tests will decrease cheating (irregularities)?

Yes _____ No _____ Undecided _____

15. In 1988 the State Board of Education established performance standards as a part of the State Accreditation Process. What effect, if any, will this have on testing irregularities?

16. Are you aware of the TESTING CODE OF ETHICS FOR NORTH CAROLINA TESTING PERSONNEL, TEACHERS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS?

Yes _____ No _____

17. Do you have a recommendation for the improvement of the ethics of test administration?

18. Do you have a recommendation for the improvement of the testing procedures?

Thank you for finding the time to complete this survey. I will keep all information confidential.

Please return the completed survey to me in the self-addressed, stamped envelope.

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Educational Region _____

Highest degree earned: AB_____, Master's_____,
6th year_____, Doctorate_____

Years of experience: _____

Years in position as Regional Test Coordinator _____

1. As Regional Test Coordinator, have you observed irregularities in the administering of the California Achievement Tests, the North Carolina Competency Test, or the North Carolina Writing Test?

Yes_____ No_____

2. Did you report the irregularity?
3. To whom did you report it?
4. How was it handled?
5. Please comment on the type of irregularity:
- _____ added extra time to the time frame given by the author(s) of the test;
- _____ changed responses on answer sheets in any way;
- _____ coached students in answering questions;
- _____ suggested answers to students;
- _____ taught sections of test;
- _____ other?

6. Why do you feel these irregularities occurred?
7. In your opinion, do teachers feel pressure for the children whom they teach to score well on standardized tests?

8. (If Yes to Number 7) What kinds of pressure do teachers experience?
9. What can SDs do to further reduce irregularities in the administering of standardized tests?
10. Please comment on the TESTING CODE OF ETHICS FOR NORTH CAROLINA TESTING PERSONNEL, TEACHERS, AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS.

APPENDIX C
CORRESPONDENCE

LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENTS IN SELECTED SCHOOL DISTRICTS
REQUESTING PERMISSION TO SURVEY TEACHERS
IN HIS/HER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dear _____:

As a partial requirement for a doctoral degree, I am conducting research on possible testing irregularities in the administering of standardized tests.

With your permission, I would like to confidentially survey a few teachers in Grades 3, 6, 8, and 10 of your school system. This would be a random selection.

Your assistance will be greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions concerning this research I can be contacted Monday through Friday at the Administrative Office of the Northampton County Schools. You may call me at 919-534-1371.

A copy of the results will be sent to participating superintendents.

Sincerely,

SURVEY: NUMBER OF TEACHERS IN GRADES 3, 6, 8, and 10

SCHOOL SYSTEM	
PERSON RESPONDING	TITLE
DATE	

Please give the number of teachers in your LEA who administer the California Achievement Tests, the North Carolina Writing Test, and the North Carolina Competency Test in the following grades:

CAT/Writing Test

Grade 3 _____

Grade 6 _____

Grade 8 _____

North Carolina Competency Tests

Grade 10 _____

Thank you for furnishing me this informaton. Please return it to me in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Sincerely,

LETTER ENCLOSED WITH SURVEY TO SELECTED PARTICIPANTS

Dear _____:

As a partial requirement for a doctoral degree, I am conducting research on possible testing irregularities in the administering of standardized tests. Your superintendent has given me permission to request participants from teachers in his system. Participants from several school systems have been selected at random. I will keep all information strictly confidential and destroy all identifying information at the completion of the project. I will in no way single out anyone who responds to the survey.

Will you take the time to complete the enclosed survey? You will find a self-addressed, stamped envelope in which to return the completed survey to me by March 15, 1989. Your assistance is appreciated.

Sincerely,

If you would like to receive a copy of the results, please signify.

I would like a copy of the results:

Name _____

Address _____

Mail to:

Mrs. Genevieve H. Gay
P. O. Box 7
Jackson, North Carolina 27845