



# Maine Educational Assessments Security Handbook

## **The Maine Department of Education Assessment Team**

**Chief of the Office of Federal Programs**

**Interim Director of Assessment:**

Janette Kirk

207-441-2958

janette.kirk@maine.gov

**Alternate and English Language Proficiency Assessments Coordinator:**

Mechelle Ganglfinger

207-242-4244

mechelle.ganglfinger@maine.gov

**Math, Reading, & Science Assessments Coordinator:**

Krista Averill

207-215-6528

krista.averill@maine.gov

**NAEP & International Assessments Coordinator:**

Regina Lewis, Ph.D.

207-530-1355

regina.lewis@maine.gov

## Table of Contents

|                                                                                    |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction .....                                                                 | 3  |
| Importance of Assessment Security .....                                            | 3  |
| Section 1 – Prevention of Assessment Irregularities .....                          | 3  |
| Local Assessment Personnel.....                                                    | 4  |
| Training of Assessment Personnel.....                                              | 4  |
| Assessment Security and Student Data Privacy Agreement .....                       | 5  |
| Prohibited Assessment Preparation Practices.....                                   | 5  |
| Assessment Administration Environment .....                                        | 5  |
| Instructional Materials.....                                                       | 5  |
| Student Seating.....                                                               | 5  |
| Prohibited Electronic Devices .....                                                | 5  |
| Security of Assessment Materials.....                                              | 6  |
| Assessment Administration .....                                                    | 6  |
| Section 2 – Detection and Reporting of Irregularities .....                        | 7  |
| Reporting by Assessment Personnel .....                                            | 7  |
| Reporting by Others.....                                                           | 7  |
| Data Forensics Analysis.....                                                       | 7  |
| Monitoring Online Activity .....                                                   | 7  |
| Section 3 – Investigation and Resolution of Irregularities.....                    | 8  |
| Investigation Process .....                                                        | 8  |
| Possible Determinations.....                                                       | 9  |
| APPENDIX A: Maine Educational Assessment Security and Data Privacy Agreement ..... | 10 |
| APPENDIX B: Examples of Reportable Irregularities.....                             | 11 |
| APPENDIX C: Assessment Irregularity Reporting Form.....                            | 12 |
| APPENDIX D: Monitoring Guidance for Smart Glasses .....                            | 13 |

The Maine Department of Education gratefully acknowledges the generous contributions to this document from the Michigan Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability, as well as Caveon Test Security, LLC.

## Introduction

Assessing student learning is an essential aspect of education, providing data that supports improved outcomes for students. In accordance with Maine Statute [20-A §6202](#), the Maine Department of Education (DOE) must establish a statewide assessment program to measure and evaluate, on a continuing basis, the academic achievement of students in Maine's public schools, charter schools, and private schools consisting of at least 60% publicly funded students. Results from statewide assessments inform educational decision-making at the federal, state, and local levels, including the planning and allocation of resources and programming for students. It is critical that assessment results are accurate, fair, and comparable across students, schools, and School Administrative Units (SAUs).

To support the integrity of the state assessment system, the Maine DOE has established policies and procedures for assessment administration and security. Adherence to these security requirements helps ensure that assessment data are high-quality and can be trusted to support valid and fair conclusions about student achievement.

To maintain the integrity and validity of assessment results, the following actions may be taken when Maine's assessment administration and security requirements are not met:

- Delays in reporting student, school, district, or state assessment results.
- Invalidation of student, school, district, or state assessment results.
- Further review by the Maine DOE for technical assistance and potential corrective action.

## Importance of Assessment Security

Standardized assessments present students with questions from a common item bank and are administered and scored using consistent procedures. This standardization enables meaningful comparisons of student performance of individual students or groups of students. Assessment security is an important condition for the standardization of assessments.

Occasionally, events occur before, during, or after assessments are administered that may affect the integrity of the assessment. These incidents are known as assessment irregularities. An **assessment irregularity** is any event, act, or omission which may compromise the integrity or validity of the Maine Educational Assessments (MEA) or the resulting data. Assessment irregularities may be unintentional, such as power outages or assessment administration errors, or they may involve more deliberate actions. More examples of assessment irregularities can be found in [Appendix B](#). In all cases, state and local assessment leaders share responsibility for evaluating the irregularity, determining potential impacts, and implementing appropriate resolutions.

## Section 1 – Prevention of Assessment Irregularities

The consequences of a breach in assessment security can be significant. The purpose of this section is to outline practices that help state and local assessment personnel prevent assessment irregularities.

Assessment irregularities can take many forms and may be intentional or unintentional. Regardless of cause, they can impact the validity and comparability of assessment results. The focus of assessment security is to prevent, identify, and address irregularities that may compromise the quality and validity of assessment data.

Maine administers several statewide assessments that measure grade-level knowledge and skills for eligible students. Collectively, these assessments are known as the Maine Educational Assessments (MEA). The principles and guidance in

## Maine Assessment Security Handbook

this *Maine Assessment Security Handbook* apply to all MEA. Assessment-specific requirements are detailed in the corresponding test administration and coordination manuals, as well as training materials provided by the Maine DOE.

| Maine Educational Assessments                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                          |                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Content Assessed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Assessment Name                          | Required Participants                                                                                       |
| <b>Mathematics &amp; Reading/English Language Arts</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Maine Through Year Assessment            | Students in grades 3-8 and second-year high school students                                                 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)* | Students in grades 3-8 and third-year high school students with the most significant cognitive disabilities |
| <b>Science</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Maine Science Assessment                 | Students in grades 5, 8, and third-year high school                                                         |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)* | Students in grades 5, 8, and third-year high school with the most significant cognitive disabilities        |
| <b>English Language Proficiency</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | ACCESS for ELLs                          | Multilingual learners in grades K-12                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Alternate ACCESS                         | Multilingual learners in grades K-12 with the most significant cognitive disabilities                       |
| *Alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) are designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. This determination is made by the local IEP Team utilizing state resources for eligibility. |                                          |                                                                                                             |

### Local Assessment Personnel

The SAU Superintendent has ultimate responsibility for the administration of assessments within the SAU and designates a staff member to serve as the District Assessment Coordinator (DAC). The DAC must be listed in the [NEO Staff Module](#) at the beginning of the school year and serves as the primary point of contact with the Maine DOE Assessment Team. At the school level, the building administrator is responsible for ensuring the security and integrity of all assessment administrations within the school.

Assessment Administrators (also referred to as Test Administrators or Proctors) are responsible for administering the assessments to students. Whenever possible, Assessment Administrators should be selected in the following order:

1. Certified teachers or administrators employed by the SAU
2. Paraprofessionals or non-licensed administrative personnel
3. Substitute teachers or contracted employees

In the instance of a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), Section 504 Plan, or Individual Language Access Plan (ILAP), the Assessment Administrator should be familiar with the student's assigned and regularly used accommodations.

### Training of Assessment Personnel

All SAU and school staff involved in the administration of state assessments must complete required annual training. The DAC is responsible for ensuring that staff receive comprehensive training on assessment administration and security procedures.

### Assessment Security and Student Data Privacy Agreement

Following training, all applicable staff must sign the *Security and Student Data Privacy Agreement* ([Appendix A](#)). Agreements may be completed electronically or in writing and must be retained by the SAU for the current academic year. The Maine DOE may request copies of signed agreements when reviewing an assessment irregularity or providing technical assistance.

### Prohibited Assessment Preparation Practices

The following practices are prohibited:

- Discussing, retaining, reproducing, photographing, or otherwise capturing secure assessment questions, materials, or student responses.
- Using secure assessment questions or modified versions of secure assessment questions to prepare students for an assessment.

### Assessment Administration Environment

Schools must provide assessment environments that minimize distractions and interruptions. Appropriate assessment environments may include classrooms, computer labs, or libraries. A “Do Not Disturb” sign should be posted on the door during administrations. When distractions are identified, reasonable steps should be taken to eliminate or reduce them.

### Instructional Materials

Materials that provide content-related information or assessment-taking assistance must be removed, covered, or otherwise inaccessible during testing. Students may not access unauthorized notes, textbooks, or other instructional resources. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Content displays or posters
- Word lists
- Writing formulas
- Definitions
- Charts or maps
- Desk tags

### Student Seating

Students must be seated so there is enough space between them to minimize opportunities to view one another’s work. Seating charts are not required by Maine DOE.

### Prohibited Electronic Devices

Students are not permitted to access or use any electronic device that could enable communication, recording, internet or Wi-Fi access, information storage, or otherwise compromise assessment security during the assessment. Prohibited devices include, but are not limited to:

- Smartphones and cell phones
- Smartwatches and fitness bands
- Smart glasses (including Meta glasses; see [Appendix D](#) for monitoring guidance)
- Electronic tablets and e-readers

- Cameras
- Voice recorders
- Pagers
- Music players
- Non-approved calculators

All personal electronic devices must be powered off and securely stored out of sight before the assessment begins. If a student is found accessing a prohibited device, or if a device activates, sounds an alarm, or makes any noise during the assessment, the assessment irregularity must be reported.

Exceptions to the use of electronic devices are limited and considered on an individual basis. For example, an exception may be granted for students who require a device to monitor a medical condition, such as an insulin monitor for diabetes. Requests are reviewed through established IEP or Section 504 processes when necessary to support a student's documented needs.

### Security of Assessment Materials

The DAC should work with School Assessment Coordinators (SACs) to ensure secure handling of assessment materials before, during, and after the administration. Secure assessment materials include, but are not limited to, assessment booklets (such as a braille or paper form as necessitated by the student's IEP), assessment tickets, answer documents, scratch paper, materials used to provide accommodations, and ancillary materials specific to assessments (e.g., Listening & Speaking CD for ACCESS for ELLs).

Specifically, school personnel **must** follow these assessment security practices:

- Keep printed secure assessment materials in a locked storage area that is only accessible to the SAC and designees. Materials should be locked before and after administration.
- Distribute and collect secure materials, including test tickets, to and from students individually at the beginning and end of each session.
- Implement careful inventory procedures to account for secure materials as they are checked in and out by designated staff.
- Securely destroy all student test tickets and scratch paper after testing.
- Retain packing lists and shipping records. These will be helpful if a discrepancy arises, or if the receipt of materials cannot be confirmed.

**Any actual or suspected compromise of secure assessment questions or forms must be reported immediately to the appropriate State Assessment Coordinator identified on the cover of this document.**

### Assessment Administration

An Assessment Administrator must be present at all times during the administration. Assessment Administrators have a critical role in ensuring a valid and secure assessment and must actively monitor students throughout the assessment session. Active monitoring includes moving frequently and unobtrusively throughout the room and closely observing student behavior.

Assessment Administrators must avoid activities that could distract from their monitoring responsibilities, including:

- Engaging in extended conversations with other staff

- Reading newspapers, books, or other materials unrelated to the assessment
- Eating
- Using a computer, cell phone, or other electronic device unless directly required for the assessment administration
- Performing unrelated duties, such as grading papers

## Section 2 – Detection and Reporting of Irregularities

Timely reporting of an assessment irregularity is essential to protecting the integrity of assessment results. Many irregularities can be remediated without significant consequences when identified and reported promptly.

### Reporting by Assessment Personnel

Assessment Administrators, SACs, and other staff directly involved in the assessment administration are often the first to identify potential irregularities. Assessment Administrators must report irregularities to the SAC or building administrator. Prompt reporting is especially important when an irregularity:

- Involves a breach of assessment item security
- May result in assessment invalidation
- Involves student misconduct
- Involves educator misconduct

The SAC or building administrator must notify the appropriate Maine DOE Assessment Coordinator as soon as possible.

### Reporting by Others

Occasionally, there will be other parties with concerns about a particular assessment practice. Students might discuss concerns with their parents. Other educators might observe questionable practices. To support reporting from all available sources, the Maine DOE maintains an [Anonymous MEA Tip Link](#) on the [Maine DOE Assessment Security webpage](#). The availability of the tip link should be communicated to educators and parents along with other assessment information.

Because reports submitted through the tip link are anonymous and cannot be followed up on directly, individuals should provide as much detail as possible when submitting a concern.

### Data Forensics Analysis

During and following the assessment administration, the Maine DOE may conduct statistical analyses on student assessment data. Data forensics analyses help the Maine DOE flag potential irregularities.

### Monitoring Online Activity

To the extent practical, the Maine DOE, in collaboration with SAUs, is responsible for monitoring the internet and social media for any disclosure of secure assessment questions or materials. Any SAU or school staff who becomes aware of secure assessment content being posted, shared, or discussed online must immediately notify the appropriate Maine DOE Assessment Coordinator, as identified on the cover of this document.

## Section 3 – Investigation and Resolution of Irregularities

In investigating irregularities, the Maine DOE considers three overarching questions:

- Did the irregularity result in the exposure of secure assessment materials?
- Did the irregularity affect the validity of student performance or assessment results?
- Is there evidence that the irregularity was deliberate or involved academic fraud?

For more complex irregularities, the Maine DOE Assessment Coordinator may conduct a formal review and work with the DAC and other appropriate staff to gather information and determine an appropriate resolution.

### Investigation Process

The Maine DOE protocol to preserve assessment security is as follows:

1. If secure assessment materials have been exposed, immediate action must be taken to prevent further access or distribution.
2. The Maine DOE Assessment Coordinator and DAC will identify the appropriate staff to assist with information gathering.
3. Incidences involving assessment security will be shared by the SAU with the parent(s)/guardian(s) of affected students.
4. The Maine DOE Assessment Coordinator may request information through the [Assessment Irregularity Reporting Form](#), including:
  - Student State IDs (not names) for all students involved
  - Names and roles of involved staff
  - Grade levels and assessment sessions affected
  - A description of the incident and any potential security concerns
  - The scope and duration of any secure assessment material exposure: what material, exposed to whom, and for what period of time
  - Follow-up actions taken by the school or SAU

Additional documentation may be requested, including documentation of assessment security training and signed Assessment Security and Data Privacy Agreements.

5. The Maine DOE Assessment Team will review the available information and determine whether any student, school, or SAU assessment results must be invalidated and communicate that decision to the DAC and appropriate administrator. Students whose assessment results are invalidated are identified as non-participants for accountability purposes.
6. The Maine DOE Assessment Team will determine whether concerns exist regarding teacher or administrator conduct.

## Maine Assessment Security Handbook

7. Following its review, the Maine DOE Assessment Team will provide a written summary of its findings, determinations, and any required actions.
8. The Maine DOE Assessment Team will support the SAU as needed to ensure that all appropriate actions are implemented.

### Possible Determinations

Based on the information collected, the Maine DOE Assessment Team will create a summary and make one or more of the following determinations:

1. No irregularity: No assessment irregularity occurred.
2. Irregularity resolved: An irregularity occurred, and all necessary corrective actions have been completed.
3. Breach of assessment security: Secure assessment materials were exposed.
4. Invalid assessment administration: An administration error occurred that may have affected the validity of assessment results.
5. Student misconduct: The irregularity involved intentional student behavior that compromised, or had the potential to compromise, the integrity of the assessment.
6. Educator misconduct: The assessment irregularity involved intentional misconduct by an educator or administrator.



## Maine Assessment Security Handbook

### APPENDIX A: Maine Educational Assessment Security and Data Privacy Agreement

As an assessment coordinator, assessment administrator, or proctor of the Maine Educational Assessments, I agree that:

1. I have participated in the required training for the applicable assessments, including reviewing related administration manuals and training materials.
2. I will provide a secure assessment environment and securely handle printed materials.
3. I will report any potential assessment security incidents to the School Assessment Coordinator, District Assessment Coordinator, and/or Maine Department of Education Assessment Coordinator, as appropriate.
4. I will comply with the security guidance and understand technical assistance may occur to ensure that assessments are administered in accordance with established policies.
5. I understand that failure to address the above requirements may result in one or more of the following:
  - delay in reporting of student, school, or School Administrative Unit (SAU) results,
  - invalidation of student, school, or SAU results, and/or
  - additional review by the Department of Education.

#### Student Data Privacy Agreement

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. No information may be disclosed during or following the assessment administration about individual students, including student demographics, student assessment settings and responses, and incidents that occur during administration, except to the District Assessment Coordinator as needed. I agree to protect the confidentiality of student information in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and to only access student information that is related to the scope of my work.

I understand and voluntarily accept and agree to the conditions outlined above in the Assessment Security Agreement and the Student Data Privacy Agreement.

Name (print or type): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B: Examples of Reportable Irregularities

This list is not comprehensive but constitutes the most common irregularities experienced by Maine SAUs.

| Example of Irregularity                                     | Explanation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Incorrect Test Ticket                                       | The student took the assessment with the incorrect test ticket (i.e., logged in as a different student).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Incorrect Grade Level                                       | If a student is assessed using the wrong grade level form, then the student has not been provided with the opportunity to show what they know and can do in relation to grade level content; this does not meet federal and state requirements.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Access to a Prohibited Electronic Device                    | Secure assessment administration practices require the removal of student access to prohibited electronic devices. A student with access to a prohibited electronic device may use the device to expose secure assessment material or commit academic fraud.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Coaching                                                    | The coaching and leading of students to an answer or response is deemed academic fraud.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Emergency Procedures (e.g., fire alarm, lockdown)           | In case of an emergency, student safety is prioritized, and it is understood that standardized assessment procedures, such as suspending all student assessments, may not occur during an emergency. Reporting an emergency procedure as an assessment irregularity allows the Maine DOE Assessment Team to work collaboratively with the SAU to determine if the incident resulted in adverse impact to assessment security or validity.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Unauthorized Access to Instructional Materials or Resources | Students should not have access to unauthorized instructional materials during the assessment. A student with access to unauthorized instructional materials may use the instructional materials to commit academic fraud.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Misadministration of Accommodations                         | Misadministration of accommodations impacts the validity and comparability of the student assessment results. This includes not providing accommodations included in an Individualized Education Program (IEP), Section 504 Plan, or Individual Language Acquisition Plan (ILAP) as well as incorrectly providing an accommodation that is not included in the IEP, Section 504 Plan, or ILAP.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Misadministration of the Assessment                         | <p>Examples of misadministration of the assessment include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proctor did not read the assessment administration scripts to the students, as contained within the Assessment Administration Manuals.</li> <li>The proctor did not provide the appropriate amount of time for completion of the assessment session (e.g., 60 minutes per session for the grades 5 and 8 Maine Science Assessment and 50 minutes per session for the high school Maine Science Assessment).</li> <li>The proctor did not follow the expected procedures for transitioning between assessment sessions (e.g., sessions 1, 2, and 3 of the Maine Science Assessment).</li> </ul> |

**APPENDIX C: Assessment Irregularity Reporting Form**

This reporting form is also available as a [fillable PDF](#).

|                                                                                                                                                 |         |                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------------------|
| School Administrative Unit:                                                                                                                     | School: | Student State ID(s): |
| Names and roles of involved staff:                                                                                                              |         |                      |
| Grade level(s) and assessment session(s) affected:                                                                                              |         |                      |
| Provide a description of the assessment irregularity.                                                                                           |         |                      |
| Describe any potential security concerns.                                                                                                       |         |                      |
| If applicable, describe the scope and duration of any secure material exposure (e.g., what material, exposed to whom, for what period of time). |         |                      |
| Describe any follow-up actions taken by the school or School Administrative Unit.                                                               |         |                      |
| Date family was informed of irregularity:                                                                                                       |         |                      |
| Optional - Additional information:                                                                                                              |         |                      |

**\*\* Please do not include student names or PII in this document or subsequent emails.\*\***

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Role: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please submit via email to the appropriate Assessment Coordinator: <https://www.maine.gov/doe/assessment/contact>.  
The Maine DOE Assessment Team will review documentation and provide a response within one week of receipt.

## APPENDIX D: Monitoring Guidance for Smart Glasses

Because wearable technology is evolving rapidly, staff should focus on behaviors and adherence to assessment policies rather than attempting to identify specific brands or models. Assessment Administrators are not expected to determine whether a device is a particular type of smart glasses; they are expected to enforce assessment policies consistently and report potential irregularities to the Assessment Coordinator.

### Recommended Proctor Procedures

#### Before Assessing

- Conduct a visual scan of the room as students enter.
- Remind students that smart glasses and other wearables are prohibited.
- Ensure all personal electronic devices are collected or stored according to policy.

#### During Assessing

Active monitoring during the administration is essential for maintaining assessment security and ensuring the integrity of state assessments. The following signs *could* indicate someone is wearing smart glasses:

##### Physical indicators

- Glasses frames that appear thicker than normal, particularly at the temples.
- A small camera lens near the corner of the frame.
- Tiny indicator lights on the frame (though many newer devices have very subtle or no visible lights).
- Unusual charging ports, buttons, or touch-sensitive areas on the arms of the glasses.
- The individual is reluctant to remove the glasses when asked to verify they are standard prescription eyewear.

##### Behavioral indicators

- Frequently touching or tapping the sides of the glasses.
- Appearing to listen to something not audible to others.
- Pausing and looking upward or off to the side before answering questions, as though accessing information.
- Repeatedly adjusting the glasses in a manner that seems unrelated to comfort or fit.

##### Assessment administration practices

Rather than trying to identify specific devices during testing, the most effective approach is to establish clear procedures:

- Require all electronic devices to be stored before testing begins.
- Include smart glasses, wearable technology, and recording devices in test security guidance.
- Train proctors on what common smart glasses look like.
- If permitted by state policy, ask students wearing glasses that appear unusual to briefly show that they are standard eyewear before testing starts.
- Follow established test-security procedures if a device is suspected rather than confronting a student directly.

#### If a Device Is Suspected

1. Do not accuse the student publicly.
2. Minimize disruption to other students.
3. Follow state assessment security procedures.
4. Document observations objectively using the [Assessment Irregularity Reporting Form](#) and report to the Assessment Coordinator.