



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PO Box 500
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

DAVID C. HESPE
Commissioner

September 16, 2015

Mr. Pedro Garrido, Superintendent
Roselle Park School District
510 Chestnut Street
Roselle Park, NJ 07204

Dear Mr. Garrido:

SUBJECT: NJ ASK Erasure Analysis Security Review – Roselle Park School District
Ernest J. Finizio-Aldene Elementary School – OFAC Case #INV-085-14

The Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance (OFAC) completed an investigation of the testing procedures utilized at Ernest J. Finizio-Aldene Elementary School (Aldene) in the Roselle Park School District. The review was initiated in response to irregularities in student answer patterns during the administration of the 2012 New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK).

Following a review of all pertinent information and documentation, The OFAC investigation concluded a determination could not be made whether a breach occurred during the administration of the 2012 NJ ASK at Aldene. The information obtained during the OFAC review of this matter is detailed in the attached report. Please provide a copy to each board member.

Utilizing the process outlined in the attached "Procedures for LEA/Agency Response, Corrective Action Plan and Appeal Process," the Roselle Park School District Board of Education is required, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.6, to publicly review and discuss the findings in this report at a public board meeting no later than 30 days after receipt of the report. Within 30 days of the public meeting, the board must adopt a resolution certifying the findings were discussed in a public meeting and approving an appeal of any findings in dispute. A copy of the resolution and the appeal must be submitted to the OFAC within 10 days of adoption by the board. Please direct your response to my attention.

Also, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.6(c), you must post the findings of the report on your district's web site. Should you have any questions, please contact Teresita Munkacsy, Manager, Special Investigations Unit, at (609) 984-7096.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Cicchino, Director
Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance

RJC/SA/UNION COUNTY/Roselle Park School District/INV-085-14-Ernest J Finizio-Aldene/Report/INV-085-14 Ernest J. Finizio Aldene Final Report.docx
Attachment

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMPLIANCE
SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

ROSELLE PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT
ERNEST J. FINIZIO-ALDENE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
NEW JERSEY ASSESSMENT OF SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE
ERASURE ANALYSIS SECURITY REVIEW
OFAC CASE #INV-085-14

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2015

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2015
ROSELLE PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT
ERNEST J. FINIZIO-ALDENE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
NJ ASK 2012 ERASURE ANALYSIS SECURITY REVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Subsequent to the release of the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) 2012 New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) Erasure Analysis Report (EA Report), the Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance (OFAC) was tasked with conducting an investigation into potential irregularities in student answer patterns during the administration of the 2012 NJ ASK.

The irregularities that launched the investigation were the wrong to right (WTR) erasure patterns detected on the tests by Measurement Incorporated (MI), the NJDOE state assessment contractor for the NJ ASK. The NJDOE's Office of Assessments (OA) set the criteria by which further investigation would be warranted by the OFAC based on one of two criteria; schools that were flagged for a WTR erasure rate four standard deviations (SD) above the statewide mean in the same grade area and subject area for two consecutive testing years, or schools that were flagged for a WTR erasure rate 4 SD above the statewide mean in the same grade area and subject area partnered with unusual gains in the same grade area and subject area for the 2012 NJ ASK. The SD is an indication of how far the values in a data set deviate from the mean.

In May 2013, MI released the 2012 erasure analysis data to the OA. The OA reviewed the 2012 EA Report at the grade level by subject area to pinpoint a specific area of concern. After reviewing the grade level by subject area mean WTR erasure rates per student, and reviewing unusual gains in the same grade level and subject area, the OA determined the Ernest J. Finizio-Aldene Elementary School (Aldene), in the Roselle Park School District (district), emerged as a school wherein an investigation would be conducted. Aldene's 2012 fourth grade mathematics was flagged for a WTR erasure rate four SD above the statewide mean partnered with unusual gains in the fourth grade from 2011 to 2012.

In September 2013, the OFAC sent a letter directing the district to provide all documentation associated with the 2012 NJ ASK in the custody or control of the district, district personnel, or any other school personnel. In order to determine the underlying causes of the excessive WTR erasures on the 2012 NJ ASK, the OFAC investigators (investigators) examined the following: district supporting documents; the 2012 test booklets; the School Security Checklists; the testing data; and the individual fourth grade Language Arts Literacy, Mathematics, and Science test scores. The investigators also conducted interviews of 23 students and eight district personnel.

The OFAC investigation concluded a determination could not be made whether a breach occurred during the administration of the 2012 NJ ASK 4 at Aldene. Although witness statements did not confirm whether students were provided assistance during the 2012 NJ ASK, the data indicates the high WTR erasures were inconsistent with the student erasure patterns of previous and subsequent years.

The remainder of this report consists of a background, investigative procedures, an investigative summary, and a conclusion.

BACKGROUND

New Jersey's state-required assessment program was designed to measure the extent to which all students at the elementary, middle, and secondary-school levels have mastered the knowledge and skills described in New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards. The statewide assessments for elementary and middle school grades are administered annually as the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) in Language Arts Literacy (LAL) and Mathematics (MATH) at grades three through eight and in Science (SCI) at grades four and eight. Testing is conducted in the spring of each year to allow school staff and students the greatest opportunity to achieve the goal of proficiency.

The Office of Assessments (OA) coordinates the development and implementation of the NJ ASK. Measurement Incorporated (MI), the New Jersey Department Of Education (NJDOE) state assessment contractor for NJ ASK, is responsible for all aspects of the testing program including receiving, scanning, editing, and scoring the answer documents; scoring constructed-response items; and creating, generating, and distributing all score reports of test results to students, schools, districts, and the state.

In 2008, the NJDOE requested information regarding erasure rates on the NJ ASK. Since that time, MI has provided such erasure analyses to the NJDOE. MI scans and scores the NJ ASK exams. Scanners are set to detect erasures. Computer scoring programs capture the evidence of erasures and accumulate the results by school. Erasures fall into one of three types: a change from a wrong to a right answer (WTR); a change from a wrong to another wrong answer (WTW); or a change from a right to a wrong answer (RTW). MI examined the mean WTR erasure rates of all New Jersey schools to identify potential irregularities in response patterns and then compared each school mean to the statewide mean.

In 2012, schools for which the erasure rate exceeded the NJDOE defined threshold of four standard deviations (SD) above the statewide mean were flagged and their WTR erasure rates were noted in the NJ ASK Erasure Analysis Reports (EA Reports). The OA assumed responsibility for investigating those schools that had WTR erasure rates exceeding four SD above the statewide mean and set the criteria by which further investigation would be warranted by the Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance (OFAC) based on one of two criteria; schools that were flagged for a WTR erasure rate of four SD above the statewide mean in the same grade level area and subject area for two consecutive years, or schools that were flagged for a WTR erasure rate four SD above the statewide mean by grade level and subject area partnered with unusual gains in the same grade level and subject area for the 2012 NJ ASK.

Ernest J. Finizio-Aldene Elementary School (Aldene), in the Roselle Park School District (district), was flagged for a WTR erasure rate of four SD or more above the statewide mean in mathematics, partnered with unusual gains during the Grade 4 2012 NJ ASK (NJ ASK 4). As a result, the OA decided that an investigation was warranted to determine the underlying causes of the excessive WTR erasures during the 2012 NJ ASK and the unusual gains from 2011 to 2012.

INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES¹

Erasure Analysis Report Review: The OFAC investigators (investigators) reviewed the results from the 2011 and 2012 NJ ASK EA Reports, received from MI, to assist in determining the underlying causes of the excessive erasures.

Erasure Analysis Data Review: The investigators reviewed and analyzed erasure analysis data received from MI, from the 2011 and 2012 NJ ASK testing cycles, in order to assist in determining the underlying causes of the excessive erasures.

Historical and Mapped Testing Data: The investigators reviewed and analyzed students' historical testing data and the erasure patterns within a grade for each subject in order to determine the underlying causes of the excessive WTR erasures.

Test Booklet/Answer Sheet Analysis: The students' multiple choice answers and open ended responses for the SCI tests were examined to determine whether any form of feedback or intervention, including any hint about the correctness of a response, was provided to any student.

Examiner/Proctor Training Sessions: The investigators interviewed the School Test Coordinator (STC), the test examiners, and the test proctors to determine whether: (1) all school examiners and proctors attended a training session conducted at the testing site by the STC; (2) a copy of the examiner's responsibilities and one Test Examiner Manual was distributed to each examiner; and (3) all school examiners and proctors signed the NJDOE Statewide Assessments Test Security Agreement (TSA).

Test Booklet Distribution and Security: The investigators interviewed the STC, the test examiners, and the test proctors to determine: (1) whether test materials were stored in a secure and locked location that was accessible only to individuals whose access was authorized by the STC when not being used during a test period; (2) whether test examiners verified the quantity and security numbers for the test booklets they received; (3) whose signatures appeared on the School Security Checklist acknowledging receipt of test materials; and (4) where and how the test booklets were secured when not in use.

Test Booklet Collection: The investigators interviewed the STC, the test examiners, and the test proctors to determine: (1) who collected the test booklets; (2) when the test booklets were collected; (3) where the test booklets were located during any breaks; and (4) how the test booklets were returned to the test collection site.

Examination of School Security Checklists: The investigators examined the School Security Checklists to determine whether: (1) examiners properly signed for each test booklet they received; (2) the times and dates associated with the signatures corresponded with the test

¹ The Security Procedures listed on page 13 of the Test Coordinator's Manual served as a guideline for the Investigative Procedures.

schedule time frames; and (3) the STC signed for the return of test materials and included the time and date returned.

INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

The investigators conducted interviews with eight staff members and 23 students who participated in the 2012 NJ ASK 4 at Aldene; reviewed the 2012 testing data provided by MI; reviewed the 2012 test administration documents provided by the district; and reviewed the students' individual LAL, MATH, and SCI test scores. According to the OA, Aldene's fourth grade was flagged for unusual gains and high WTR erasures for MATH in 2012. Based on the information gathered during the review, the investigators did not obtain substantial witness testimony to justify the high number of erasures; however, when reviewing the testing data for the 2012 fourth grade LAL and MATH tests the following statistics are noteworthy:

2012 Fourth Grade Data

According to the 2012 data from MI, the statewide mean WTR erasure rate for a fourth grade student for LAL was 0.45 and for MATH was 0.89. Aldene's fourth grade mean WTR erasure rate for LAL was 1.56, which was 4.63 SD above the statewide mean. Aldene's WTR erasure rate for MATH was 2.51, which was 4.76 SD above the statewide mean.

██████████ – Fourth Grade Examiner

██████████ – Fourth Grade Proctor

According to the district documents, ██████████ and ██████████ administered the 2012 NJ ASK 4 to 16 general education students. Those 16 students had 55 WTR erasures for a mean WTR erasure rate of 3.44, which was 12.46 SD above the statewide mean on the 2012 NJ ASK 4 LAL. They had 56 WTR erasures for a mean WTR erasure rate of 3.50, which was 7.68 SD above the statewide mean on the 2012 NJ ASK 4 MATH.

██████████ – Fourth Grade Examiner

According to the district documents, ██████████ administered the 2012 NJ ASK 4 to two students who had a Section 504 Plan. Those two students had zero WTR erasures for a mean WTR erasure rate of zero, which was -1.86 SD below the statewide mean on the 2012 NJ ASK 4 LAL. They had six WTR erasures for a mean WTR erasure rate of 3.00, which was 6.21 SD above the statewide mean on the 2012 NJ ASK 4 MATH.

██████████ – Fourth Grade Examiner

██████████ – Fourth Grade Proctor

According to the district documents, ██████████ and ██████████ administered the 2012 NJ ASK 4 to four classified students. Those four students had three WTR erasures for a mean WTR

erasure rate of 0.75, which was 1.25 SD above the statewide mean on the 2012 NJ ASK 4 LAL. They had eight WTR erasures for a mean WTR erasure of 2.00, which was 3.26 SD above the statewide mean on the 2012 NJ ASK 4 MATH.

██████████ – Fourth Grade Examiner
██████████ – Fourth Grade Proctor

According to the district documents, ██████████ and ██████████ administered the NJ ASK 4 to 18 general education students. Those 18 students had five WTR erasures for a mean WTR erasure rate of 0.28, which was -0.71 SD below the statewide mean on the 2012 NJ ASK 4 LAL. They had 32 WTR erasures for a mean WTR erasure rate of 1.78, which was 2.62 SD above the statewide mean on the 2012 NJ ASK 4 MATH.

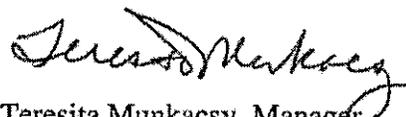
██████████ – Fourth Grade Examiner

According to the district documents, ██████████ administered the 2012 NJ ASK 4 to one English as a Second Language student. That student had one WTR erasure for a mean WTR erasure rate of 1.00, which was 2.29 SD above the statewide mean on the 2012 NJ ASK 4 LAL. The student had one WTR erasure for a mean WTR of 1.00, which was 0.32 SD above the statewide mean on the 2012 NJ ASK 4 MATH.

CONCLUSION

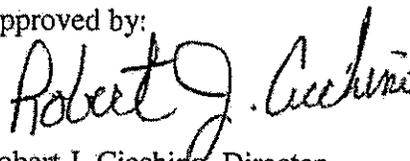
Based upon the information obtained during this investigation, the investigators concluded although witnesses did not provide substantial information regarding teacher assistance during the 2012 NJ ASK 4, the unusual gains from 2011 to 2012, along with the unusually high WTR erasure rates indicated the probability of assistance, either during or subsequent to testing. Further review of the data disclosed a small number of teachers exhibited a substantial number of WTR erasures in excess of four SD above the statewide mean.

Submitted by:



Teresita Munkacsy, Manager
Special Investigations Unit

Approved by:



Robert J. Cicchino, Director
Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance

Investigators:

Jeannine Pizzigoni
Francesco Frangella

State of New Jersey
Department of Education
Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance

PROCEDURES FOR LEA/AGENCY RESPONSE
CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN AND APPEAL PROCESS

Board of Education Response:

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.6, the following actions shall occur:

- (a) Any school district or county vocational school district that has been subject to an audit or investigation by the Department of Education, Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance (OFAC) shall discuss the findings of the audit or investigation at a public meeting of the district board of education no later than 30 days after receipt of the findings.
- (b) Within 30 days of the public meeting required in (a) above, the district board of education shall adopt a resolution certifying that the findings were discussed in a public board meeting and approving a corrective action plan to address the issues raised in the findings. The resolution shall be submitted to the OFAC within 10 days of adoption by the board of education.
- (c) The findings of the OFAC audit or investigation and the board of education's corrective action plan shall be posted on the district's web site, if one exists.

If the board of education disputes any of the findings of the audit or investigation, it may file a written appeal with the OFAC of any disputed finding(s) within 10 days of adoption of the resolution. Seeking an appeal of the findings does not preclude adherence to the provisions of (a), (b), and (c) listed above.

Corrective Action Plan:

The corrective action plan is to be used when the LEA/Agency is in agreement with any of the findings. To contest a finding, the appeal process must be used. After the appeal is settled, a corrective action plan must be filed for any finding upheld during the appeal process.

The corrective action plan must be prepared by completing the attached form. The LEA/Agency must submit the following information:

- Recommendation number
- Corrective action (approved by the board)
- Method of implementation
- Person responsible for implementation
- Completion date of implementation

If the corrective action plan is acceptable, a letter will be sent to the LEA/Agency indicating that it has been accepted.

If the corrective action plan is not acceptable, a letter will be sent to the LEA/Agency indicating whether further clarification is required or further action is necessary.

Appeal Process:

The appeal process is used to contest disputed findings.

Within 10 days of the board's adoption of the resolution approving an appeal of the findings of the audit or investigation, a written request by the LEA/Agency to review the disputed finding(s), recommendation(s), or questioned costs must be submitted to the OFAC Director. The Request for Appeal must indicate the finding(s) in question.

The Request for Appeal must be in writing and the LEA/Agency must present any supporting documentation for the appeal. Subsequent to the submission of the Request for Appeal, the OFAC Director will issue a written decision.

If the final determination made by the Director, is still unsatisfactory to the LEA/Agency, the LEA/Agency may file a Petition of Appeal pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:3-1.3.