



TEST NOTES

February 14, 2008

...looking towards spring 2008 testing....

I know everyone is already busy preparing for the upcoming spring testing season. Time, as always, is the critical element. I am intrigued with the element of "time" in schools and in our lives--how we manage it as well as how time manages us. The Standards of Learning (SOL) testing season is right around the corner. Here are a few dates you might find of interest. As of today, the number of days before the...

- ... SOL Spring Writing = 11 days (March 3)
- ... SOL Spring Non-writing – modified calendar = 51 days (May 5)
- ... SOL Spring Non-writing – standard calendar = 60 days (May 19)
- ... End of the school year – standard calendar = 81 days (June 17)
- ... Opening day for the Nationals = 45 days (March 30)

This fall, the Office of Student Testing (OST) conducted a review of test security practices with the leading firm in this arena, Caveon Test Security (CTS). The CTS group reviewed Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) policies and procedures related to test security. This review was based on 10 of 14 standards applicable to FCPS that CTS uses as part of their test security review. CTS spent two days conducting site visits and interviewing a cross-section of staff members who are part of the testing environment. Interviews included principals, directors of student services, assessment coaches, school test coordinators, Forte warehouse staff, IT staff, and, of course, staff from OST.

After the review, CTS provided feedback under each of the 10 standards citing both strengths and recommendations for improvement. Here are some key points that are identified as a part of sound testing procedures and practices in FCPS community:

- A high level of commitment and responsibility of test security and management throughout the organization from schools to the warehouse distribution and central office
- Positive working relationships among personnel across all schools and offices that are supportive and collaborative in delivering fair and valid testing
- Strong information technology security principles and procedures that are responsive to the challenges of delivering tests on-line
- Evidence of policies and procedures that address test security and supporting documentation that ensure that students, school division personnel, contractors and suppliers understand and are committed to implementing and monitoring test security measures

CTS also provided recommendations for how FCPS could strengthen test security in each of the 10 test security standards which were the basis of their review. Many of the recommendations could be instituted with little additional effort, cost, or organizational change while recognizing that some may need to be phased in over a longer period of time. Among their recommendations were:

- Develop a comprehensive test security plan that brings together all policies and procedures related to test security, including information security and test administration processes.
- Establish a school testing review program (self-assessment) that uses a broad group of reviewers trained for the purpose of informally monitoring and checking school-based and central office test security.

We are beginning to finalize the divisionwide comprehensive test security plan. For the second recommendation, we will be developing and piloting a small scale school-based test security review this spring. If you are interested in participating in this review development, and would like to be a part of the pilot, we welcome your involvement. Continued success and thanks for all that you do!

Pat Murphy