



## 2008 State Education Test Security Survey Results

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## Executive Overview

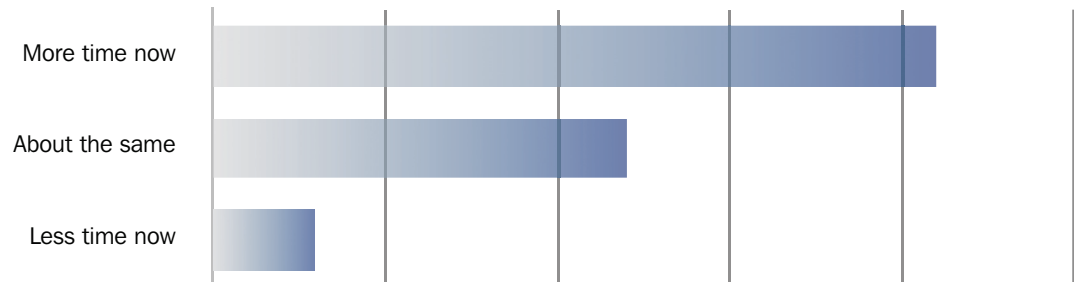
Concerns about test security have reached an all-time high. With the increase in accountability measures for state assessment programs, test theft and cheating have become an unintended consequence of both educator and individual performance. The following report summarizes the results of a recent survey carried out by Caveon Test Security. The purpose of the survey was to determine trends, indicators, and practices of state departments of education on the topic of test security.

Respondents from 29 states responded to the short, 9-item survey.

The results of the survey indicate that:

- Test security is very much a paramount concern for state assessment programs.
- Efforts to enforce test security practices are increasing.
- Policies and tools are in place to take action when there is a suspicion that cheating has occurred.
- Further steps are being taken when cheating has been confirmed.

## Compared to two years ago, how much time do you find yourself spending on test security?

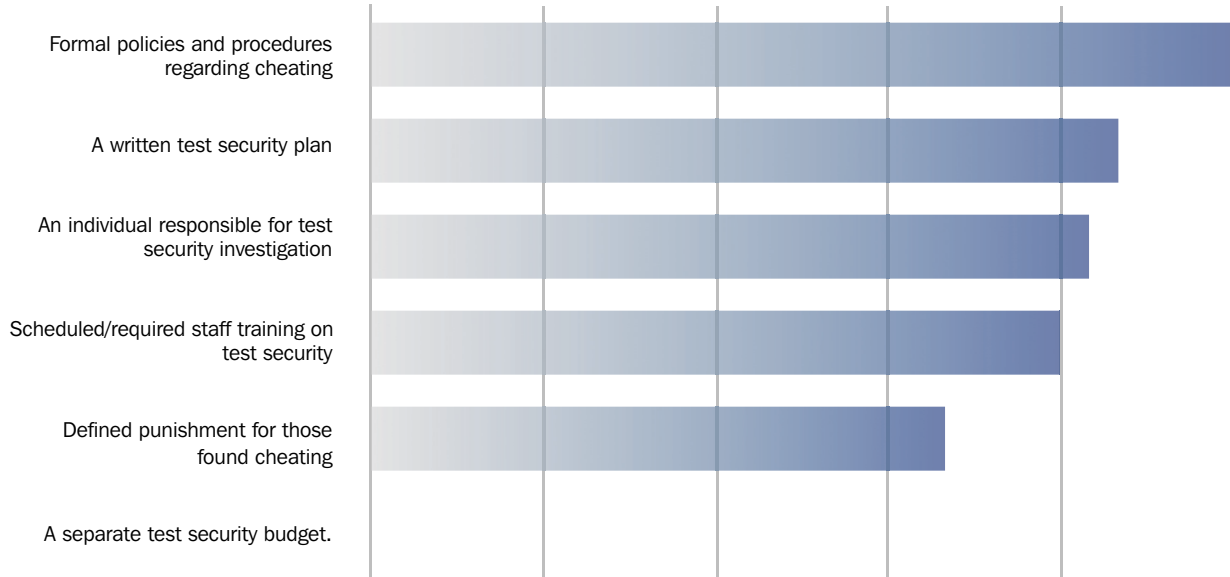


With the continued increase in academic cheating over the last 40 years, it is no wonder that state assessment programs spend more time on test security issues than ever before. When asked whether they were spending more time on test security issues than five years ago:

- 55% of respondents reported they are spending more time.
- 32% said they are spending about the same amount of time.
- 8% said they spend less time now on test security issues than 2 years ago.

The responses suggest that administrators and staff may be shifting attention from other activities in order to plan for and manage test security issues.

**Which of the following test security measures are available in your testing program? (check all that apply)**



When it comes to test security measures, respondents indicated they are employing a number of initiatives to increase test security.

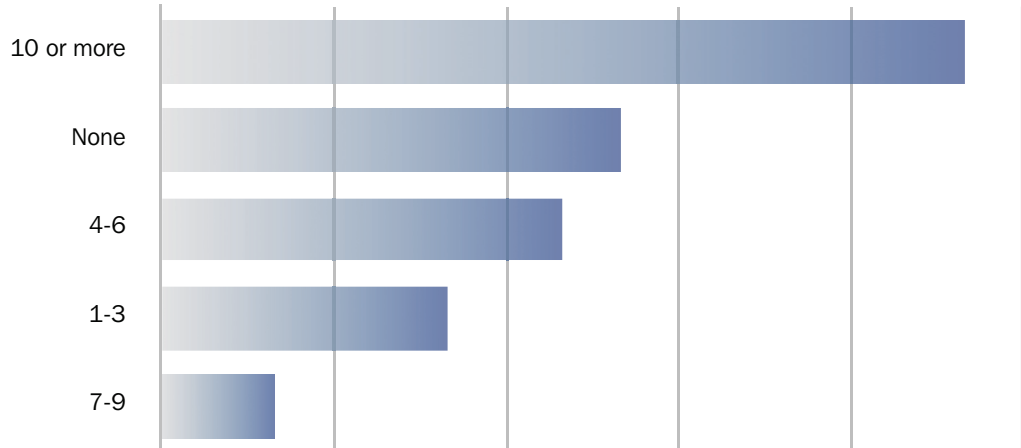
- Over three quarters (77%) of respondents indicated they have formal policies regarding cheating.
- 68% indicated they have written test security plans in place.
- 64% indicated they have an individual or group responsible for responding to security incidents.
- 62% percent of respondents indicated that test security training is a requirement for staff.
- Just over half of those who responded indicated that prescribed actions are taken when cheating is either suspected or confirmed.
- None of respondents report they have a separate budget for test security measures, so states fund these security measures using other budgetary strategies.

These findings are consistent with feedback from Caveon clients:

- Training of staff is very important.
- Having policies in place is necessary for enforcement.
- Planning security efforts reduces the need for “ad hoc” actions at the last minute.

The absence of a separate line item in their budgets for test security may impact a state’s ability to act quickly in managing security incidents when they occur.

## How many times in the last 2 years has your program canceled test scores or taken some other formal action because cheating has been confirmed or suspected?

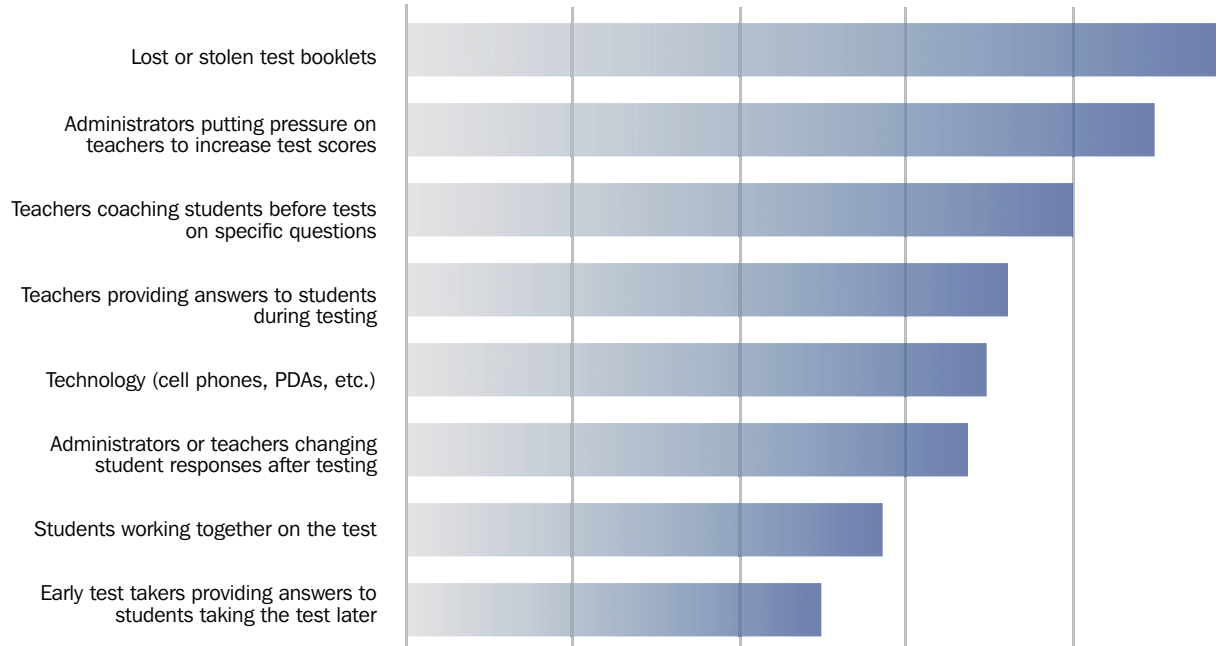


Suspected or confirmed cheating can have quite negative impact on a state testing program. Tests may need to be rewritten, scores may need to be canceled, or some other form of formal action may need to take place. From the states who reported that suspected cheating had occurred in the last two years:

- 37% of the states reported having to take action 10 or more times.
- 21% did not take any action as a result of suspected or confirmed cheating in the last two years.
- 18% indicated having to take action between 4-6 times.
- 13% said they had to take formal action up to 3 times.
- 5% reporting they had to take action between 7-9 times.

Trends in test accountability can be expected to have an ongoing effect on state assessment programs. Anything that increases the “high stakes” nature of exams will create additional pressures on all who are involved in the process. Unless states take forceful actions, cheating is likely to increase.

**On a scale of 1-5 indicate the importance of each of the following security threats faced by your testing program. (5 being the greatest threat)**



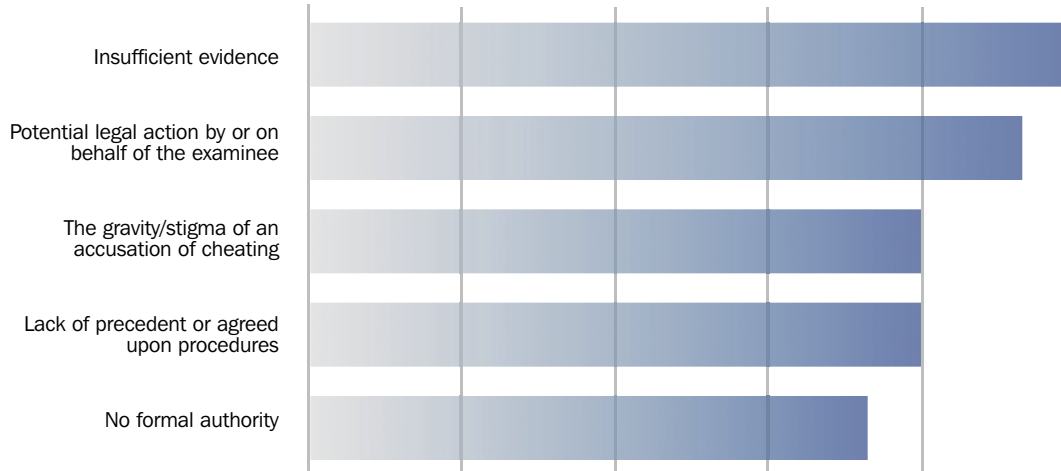
Security threats are those incidents that have the greatest impact on valid and fair test results for students.

When asked to rate security threats in terms of importance (on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being highest):

- States rated lost or stolen booklets the highest with a mean of 3.9.
- Administrators putting inappropriate pressure on teachers to increase test scores had the next highest rating with a mean of 3.6.
- Teacher coaching prior to, and during test administration were ranked as the next highest threat with mean ratings of 3.2 and 2.9 respectively.
- Technology was ranked as the next threat with a mean rating of 2.8.
- Of concern to test security were administrators or teachers changing student responses after testing with a mean rating of 2.7.
- Students working together on tests with a mean rating of 2.3.
- Students who passed along test information to students who took the test at a later time with a mean rating of 2.0.

These findings are consistent with feedback from other testing organizations that suggests that loss or theft of test items has the greatest potential to impact a testing program.

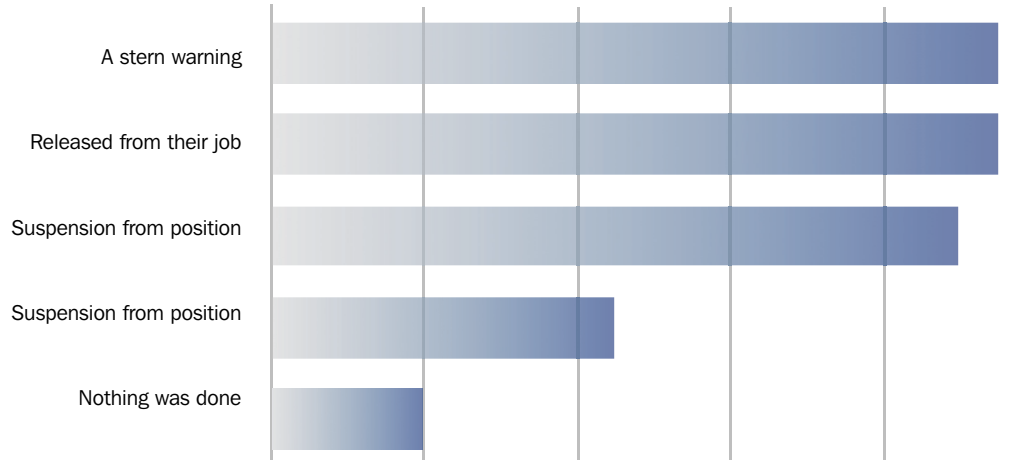
**On a scale of 1-5 please rank your program’s chief worries as they relate to the cancellation of examinee test scores on the grounds of cheating. (5 being the greatest worry)**



When it comes to concerns related to the cancellation of examinee test scores on the grounds of cheating, many states had no serious reservations about taking such an action. Respondents rated these concerns on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being highest.

- The greatest concern was having insufficient evidence to support the cheating with a mean of 3.0.
- The next concern was potential legal action by or on behalf of the examinee with a mean of 2.8.
- The gravity/stigma of an accusation of cheating had a mean of 2.4.
- Lack of precedent or agreed upon procedures with a mean of 2.4.
- The least concern was having no formal authority to address the cheating with a mean of 2.2.

**When you have firm evidence of teachers or administrators cheating on behalf of their students, what sanctions have been imposed? (check all that apply)**

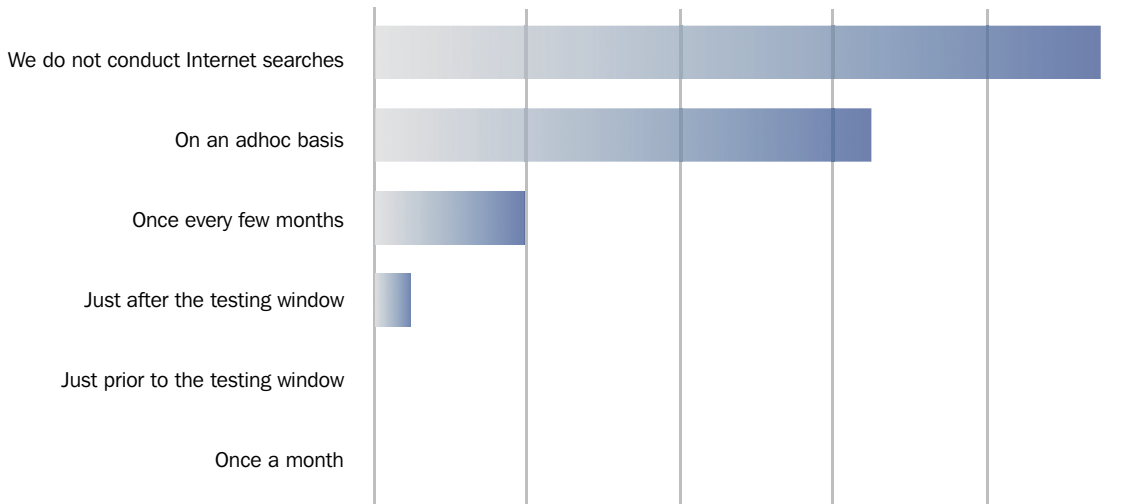


Confirmed evidence of teacher or administrator cheating on student assessments can result in heavy sanctions for those involved. When asked about the sanctions states have imposed for those who have been caught cheating on behalf of their students,

- 48% responded that a stern warning was given.
- 48% responded that these individuals were released from their jobs.
- 46% were suspended from their positions.
- 23% were publicly condemned.
- Only 10% of respondents indicated no sanction was imposed at all.
- 48% said that other sanctions such as loss of their certification, a letter placed in their file, and corrective action plans were put in place.

These findings suggest that state assessment programs regard teacher or administrator cheating as having severe impact on student testing results. By and large, state testing programs are willing to impose some type of sanction when school staff have engaged in impermissible behavior in an effort to improve test results.

## How often does your program conduct routine searches of the Internet for disclosed test content?

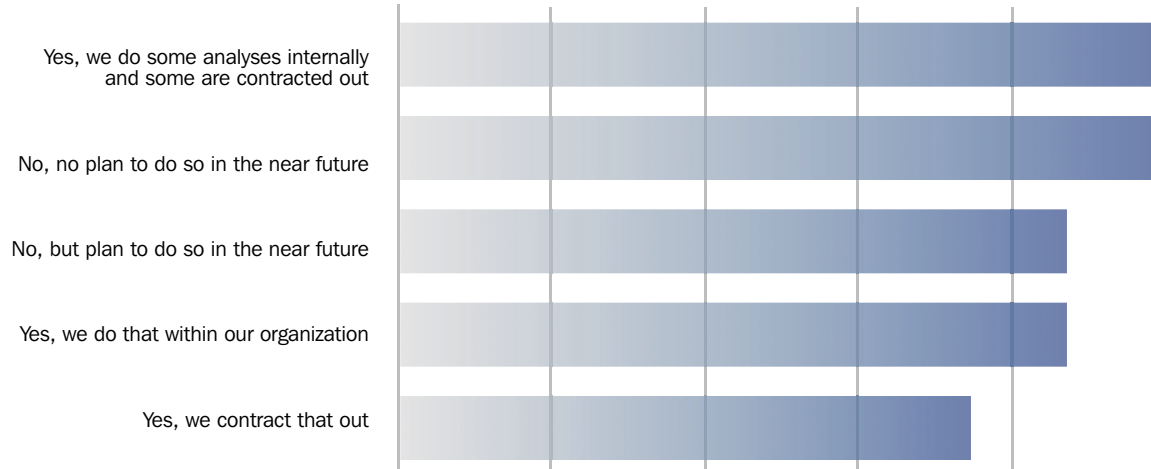


Routine searches of the internet for disclosed test content has become common practice for high tech companies and licensure organizations. However, results from this survey indicate the practice may not be as popular with state assessments.

- 50% of states indicated they did not conduct Internet searches.
- 34% say they searched the web on an ad hoc basis, while
- 10% indicated they search once a month and 5% indicated they search every few months.
- 3% indicated that they conducted internet searches just after the testing window.
- None of the states that responded said that they conducted systematic Internet searches once a month or prior a testing window.

These results, combined with the concern regarding lost or stolen test items mentioned above, creates a potential for wide disclosure of stolen test content. Given that more states are putting high stakes exams in place, it seems that there is an opportunity to improve efforts in monitoring the Internet for stolen test content.

## Do you routinely conduct statistical analyses of test responses to detect indications of cheating on your statewide assessments?

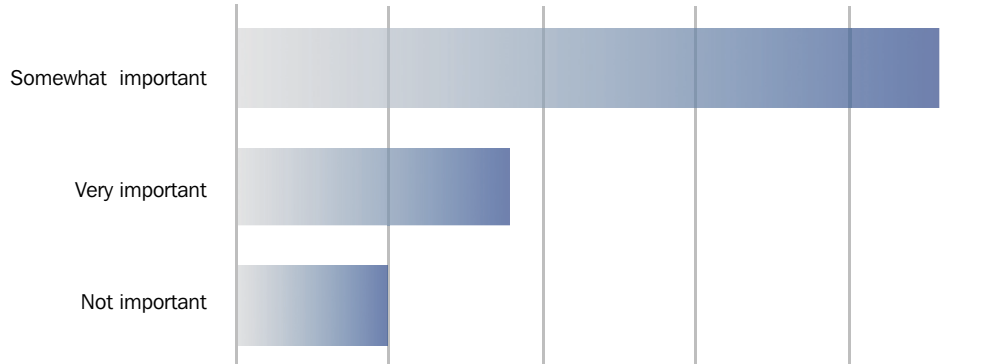


Statistical analysis of test responses for the purpose of cheating detection can be useful in pinpointing testing anomalies, identifying weak test administration practices, and reducing test item exposure. When respondents were asked whether their states conducted statistical analyses of test responses to detect cheating,

- Some states, (21%) did their own internal analysis with some help from outside contractors.
- 21% indicated they didn't do the analysis and did not plan to do so in the future.
- 18% indicated that they currently did not do this type of analysis, but planned to in the future.
- 18% of the state respondents did the statistical analysis within their organization.
- 16% contracted out the work to a third party.

With over half of the respondents stating they did not conduct data forensics using statistical analysis, the results suggest a great opportunity for improvement. Data analysis can provide robust confirmatory evidence when suspicious testing activities take place. By having this data, policies and sanctions are more likely to be adhered to and evoked.

## How important is an outside, objective, third-party evaluation of your test security measures to your testing program's stakeholders?



A third-party evaluation of test security measures can provide state testing organizations with objective feedback for process and programmatic improvements. When asked how important an objective evaluation of test security measures was to state programs,

- 61% felt an objective evaluation was somewhat important.
- 24% indicated it was very important.
- 13% found it not important at all.

These results suggest that third party evaluation is viewed as important in providing objective feedback on test security practices and policies.

## Summary of Results

This survey was conducted to determine trends, practices, and policies around test security efforts for state assessment programs. A total of 39 respondents participated in the survey representing 29 of 50 states. Survey results suggest that test security is in the forefront of testing concerns for state assessment programs. With the ongoing requirements of No Child Left Behind, (NCLB) including the reporting of AYP, pressures to perform are substantial.

The good news is that efforts to enforce test security practices are on the rise. Sound consideration is being given to making testing more secure so that student testing is fair, valid, and reliable.