

Executive Summary
Investigation of Hart ES Testing Irregularities
For the 2009/10 and 2010/11 CST Administrations

Background

The following is a summary of the actions taken by LD 1 based on the report of possible testing irregularity at Hart ES that was reported to Director Lisa Gaboudian on May 13, 2011 in a written correspondence from Principal Curtis Johnson (ATTACHMENT A). Ms. Gaboudian informed Superintendent Linda Del Cueto, who assigned me to investigate on Monday, May 16, 2011.

I was assured that Principal Johnson had taken all the necessary precautions had been taken for the current year's testing administration, including a proctor in every room.

Preparation

My first step on Wednesday, May 18, was to have Carol Alexander, Program Improvement Coordinator, pull the Hart ES data for the last few years via MyData. The analysis based on that data indicated that several teachers had statistically high increases in student performance (ATTACHMENT B). Those teachers were:

Gonzalez



In some cases the data showed that the students' raw scores on the CST improved by over 100 points in one calendar year. Some were over 200 points.

After reviewing the data, I consulted Naomi Suenaka, Office of Staff Relations, and Paula Mosely, Office of Student Testing, for guidance and assistance. It was determined that an investigation team would interview:

- former Hart students at the feeder middle schools
- current Hart students at the school
- Hart teachers and coordinators
- Hart proctors
- middle school principals of the receiving schools
- former Hart principal Susan Klein, currently an LD 1 Elementary Director

Because the current testing administration was in progress, it was determined that the interviewing of students and staff could begin when the testing administration was concluded.

On Monday, May 23, I spoke with Principal Johnson to provide an overview of the logistics for the interviews for students and teachers. LD 1 provided template letters for him to give to teaching staff and the appropriate 24 hour notice (ATTACHMENT C). Subs were arranged for the Chapter Chair and for the teachers being interviewed (three subs in total, paid for by LD 1). The principals of Sutter, Columbus and Woodland Hills MS were informed that an investigation team would be interviewing students and that their support in arranging appropriate interview space, supervision of students, etc was needed.

Working with interview questions that had been designed for a similar investigation earlier this year, and which were crafted by Dr. Sandra Cruz, LD 1 Field Director, I developed a series of questions for both teacher and student interviews. The questions were submitted to Naomi Suenaka, currently assigned as LD-1 Field Director, and Paul Mosely, for review and revision.

Note:

Elementary student questions ATTACHMENT D
Middle school student questions ATTACHMENT E
Teacher questions ATTACHMENT F
Coordinator questions ATTACHMENT G
Principal questions ATTACHMENT H
Proctor questions ATTACHMENT I

Investigation

An investigation team was assembled, protocols were established and the need for confidentiality was emphasized. The team included the following LD 1 and Testing Unit staff:

- * Byron Maltez - Administrator of Instruction, LD 1
- * Carol Alexander - Program Improvement Coordinator, LD 1
- * Dea Tramble - Operations Coordinator, LD 1
- * Karen Miller - Operations Coordinator, LD 1
- * Michele Parsons - RTI² Coordinator
- * Mary Lu Camacho - Counseling Coordinator
- * Temo Arroyo - Categorical Programs Coordinator
- * Edwin Guerra - Specialist in Testing Unit

On Tuesday, May 24, teams were dispatched to interview the middle school students:
Woodland Hills: Carol Alexander, Karen Miller, Byron Maltez
Columbus MS: Michele Parsons
Sutter MS: Dea Tramble

The following numbers of students were interviewed:
Columbus MS - 14 students
Sutter MS - 17 students
Woodland Hills Academy - 42 students

On Wednesday, May 25, the team went to Hart BS and interviewed students and teachers. 94 students were interviewed by Michele Parsons, Dea Tramble, Karen Miller and Mary Lu Camacho. 16 teachers were interviewed by Carol Alexander, Edwin Guerra, Temo Arroyo and myself. All teachers were accompanied by their UTLA representative.

On Thursday, May 26, 14 teaching assistants and Special Education Assistants were interviewed by Dea Tramble, Karen Miller, Temo Arroyo and Carol Alexander. All aides were accompanied by their union representatives. Both Literacy and Math Coaches were interviewed by Karen Miller and Temo Arroyo. Both declined to have UTLA present.

On Thursday, May 26, I interviewed former principal Susan Klein in my office.

Preliminary Findings from Students

Elementary student interview questions were designed so that students would respond about the testing for 2009/10 and the current year 2010/11.

The data from the student interviews revealed the following. Students in certain classes were provided assistance by their teachers on the CST in the following ways:

- Read/expained questions to general education students
- Simplified or defined the meaning of words
- Gave hints by working similar problems on the board.
- Gave clues to identify the correct math operation to solve a problem
- Teachers checked answers, pointed out incorrect ones and told student to try again
- Allowed students to use a dictionary
- Read portions of the ELA test aloud
- Students were allowed to use their notes
- Allowed breaks during administration of single section test section
- Allowed use of manipulatives

These practices were repeated by several students and were mentioned by both former students (presently at middle school) and by current students. Students at both the middle school and those currently at Hart mentioned the same teachers and the same practices.

The names of several teachers reoccurred.

It is important to note that it appears that some of these practices continued during the current administration of the CST for this year.

Preliminary Findings from Teachers and Proctors

All teachers interviewed responded to all questions. Some teachers gave examples of practices that were questionable (reading the questions to students) All responded with an understanding of what teacher actions were allowed and disallowed on the CST. All were familiar with, and had signed, the STAR Affidavit.

) Instructional Coach Falco, who was interviewed alone, stated that she had brought her concern about one of the teachers to former principal Klein, and felt that she had done her job by informing Klein. Falco noticed the discrepancy between the students' SOAR scores and the CST.

Preliminary Findings from Middle School Principals

Three middle school principals were interviewed. Principal Hayak of Woodland Hills was made aware by his teachers of concerns re the Hart students' CST scores. He called Principal Johnson to inform him of his concerns.

Preliminary Findings from Former Hart ES Principal

) Dr. Klein stated that all the necessary protocols were in place for security for the CST testing. She indicated that while she did supervise the campus, she did not interrupt classrooms during testing by entering them. She did not notice any discrepancy between the students' achievement and the teacher practice she saw in daily classrooms at Hart. When asked specifically about teachers with high achievement, she stated that they were among the best she had worked with.

May 13, 2011

Lisa Gaboudian
Director
LAUSD, Local District 1

Re: Statement regarding testing Irregularities

On Tuesday, May 10, 2011 at approximately 1:45 p.m. I received a call from Mr. Ed Hayek, principal at Woodland Hills Academy Middle School. Mr. Hayek had asked if we had started the CST's yet, because a concern had been brought to him by some of his math teachers. He stated that his teachers were trying to figure out how many of their students had scored so high on the previous year's CST, and yet were clearly not able to demonstrate achievement or skills comparable to those results. The teachers had determined that the students in question had all come from Hart Elementary, and more specifically, from one 5th grade teacher, Mr. Gonzales. When the teachers at Woodland Hills Academy asked the students, they were told that Mr. Gonzales would give them the answers. According to the students, Mr. Gonzales would walk around the room with the answers on a little paper and share it with the students, or he would read the questions out loud and emphasize the correct answer when reading it. The teachers at Woodland Hills Academy then brought this information to Mr. Hayek.

I informed Mr. Hayek that I, too, had questions regarding the validity of test scores of students from that class. I assured Mr. Hayek that I had put safeguards in place this year for the middle school diagnostic exams in math and language arts, and CST testing. The safeguards included; having the instructional team administer the math diagnostic test, and the literacy coaches administer the MAZE test. For the CST proctors were placed in every class, with a certificated proctor (literacy coach) specifically placed in Mr. Gonzales' room. I assured Mr. Hayek that testing results from Hart would be reliable and valid. Mr. Hayek was appreciative to hear this, because his teachers expressed grave concern about how their AGT results were compromised. Mr. Hayek was very supportive, and understands that I would be bringing this matter to your attention.

In regards to my knowledge of the Irregularities:

- Early in the year, when the instructional team was creating our tier 2 Learning Center (LC) schedule, I was asked if all identified students would be required to attend the LC, because there was one 5th grade teacher that refused to send his students. When I inquired as to why and how those identified students would be supported, I was informed that he would usually keep those students, and that they all miraculously somehow started scoring at or above benchmark.

- When reviewing the 2009-2010 CST data with the Instructional team, the RST and Instructional coaches all dismissed the results of Mr. Gonzales' class because they knew it was not an accurate picture of what the students were capable of. One of the comments was, "They did not know how, but he was cheating, and had been for years. The previous administration was aware of it, but nothing was done."
- At the 2nd or 3rd LD Principal's meetings, we met by complexes to articulate in math. As I introduced myself as the new principal at Hart, one of my colleagues, the principal from Columbus MS, made a comment that Hart Street students come with inflated scores.
- In reviewing the 2nd set of periodic assessment data in language arts and math, I noted that Mr. Gonzales' class scored higher on all assessments than even our SAS/Gifted Identified students.
 - I attended the 5th grade meeting where they were reviewing the 2nd periodic math assessment data. I pointed out how well Mr. Gonzales' class had done and specifically asked Mr. Gonzales to share the strategies he was using to teach math. He told the group that he just uses a variety of strategies so students know more than one way of doing a problem.
 - It was at this point that I first mentioned to you, as my director, my concern about this teacher's testing irregularities. You cautioned me not to be accusatory without specific evidence of wrong-doing, and guided me to putting in assessment safeguards without appearing to be singling out this teacher.
- Due to these concerns I decided to take specific action to ensure validity of test results.
 - I had our Instructional team administer the 5th grade math diagnostic test. Mr. Gonzales' class, which scored higher than all classes on the three math periodic assessments with about a 90% class average, scored the second lowest (just above our SDC class) with a 64% class average.
 - I had our literacy coaches administer the 5th grade MAZE diagnostic test.
 - I have not yet put in safeguards for periodic assessments in this class due to a "window" for testing, which makes it difficult to monitor.
 - I put in specific safeguards for all CST and CMA testing.

In regards to testing practices at Hart this year, 2010 – 2011:

- To the best of my knowledge, there have been no other allegations that teachers are "giving" students the answers on any test; periodic, diagnostic, STAR assessments, CELDT
- To the best of my knowledge, there are no irregularities in STAR testing this year. Safeguards that have been put in place include:
 - Placing a proctor in every classroom administering CST or CMA
 - Security control of sign-out and sign-in. All tests are returned immediately after completion.
 - I am walking through every classroom administering the CST during administration, checking room environment, observing teacher and proctor actions, and checking for any possible irregularities that might occur in rooms

- I am checking with proctors daily. (Note: after the first day of CST testing the proctor in Mr. Gonzales' class (Literacy coach) said to me, "I think I know how he was doing it. The students were circling their answers in the test book. The first student done raised her hand and said she was finished. When I went to check she hadn't bubbled in anything on the answer document. She (the student) acted surprised, like she was waiting for it to be checked before bubbling in the answer document. I (literacy coach) just told her to bubble her answers in on the answer sheet."

Respectfully yours,

Curtis Johnson
Principal
Hart Street Elementary, LAUSD

Student Interview

Name:	
Date of Birth:	
Date:	May 25, 2011

Introduction

Hi, I work for the district office, and we need your help. You are not in any trouble. We are here doing a survey on testing and we would like to ask you some questions about the CST test you took last year as well as this year. First, I want you to think about the CST test that you took last year. I am going to ask you some questions about last year's CST test.

Questions for the Student

1. What is the name of the teacher who gave you the test? _____
2. When you knew the answer where was the first place you wrote it? (scratch paper, notebook paper, the test booklet or scantron)
3. How did the teacher help you if you got stuck on a question?
4. If you did not understand the meaning of a word, did the teacher help you understand it? If yes, how?
5. If you did not understand whether to add, subtract, multiply or divide, how did the teacher help you?
6. If you didn't remember how to figure out an answer, how did the teacher help you remember?
7. Did the teacher check your answers before you bubbled the scantron?
8. Who bubbled in the answers on the scantron (answer document)?

Now I am going to ask you questions about the CST test you just took.

9. What is the name of the teacher who gave you the test? _____

10. When you knew the answer where was the first place you wrote it? (scratch paper, notebook paper, the test booklet or scantron)

11. How did the teacher help you if you got stuck on a question?

12. If you did not understand the meaning of a word, did the teacher help you understand it? If yes, how?

13. If you did not understand whether to add, subtract, multiply or divide, how did the teacher help you?

14. If you didn't remember how to figure out an answer, how did the teacher help you remember?

15. Did the teacher check your answers before you bubbled the scantron?

16. Who bubbled in the answers on the scantron (answer document)?

17. What was different about taking the test this year compared to last year?

signature below indicates that I have provided the answers to the above question.

Student Signature: _____

Teacher Interview

Teacher:

Date: May 25, 2011

Introduction

The purpose of the meeting is to investigate some CST testing irregularities identified here at Hart Elementary during the spring of 2010, last year. Just so you know, we are interviewing all 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade teachers who tested last year.

Questions for the Teacher

1. Did you sign a security affidavit for the STAR tests last year? Or is this your signature?
2. Did you attend the training for the test administration for spring 2010?
3. Are you aware of any testing irregularities that have occurred in the spring of 2010?
4. Did you give breaks during the test? If yes, what were students allowed to do?
5. How did you assist a student if they were stuck on a question?
6. Where did students write their initial answers?
7. Did the students show you their answers before they wrote them on the scantron? If yes, then what did you do or say?
8. Did you ever write on a student scantron for any reason? Explain.

Did you ever read or rephrase a question for a student?

10. How did you clarify a question when the student didn't understand what the question was asking?
11. How did you encourage students to keep working if they didn't know the answer and felt frustrated?
12. Were you able to familiarize yourself and review the test booklets before the first day of testing?
13. Did you read any of the test questions for any section before administering the test to the students? If yes, how did you use that information with your students?
14. Did you write down or copy any CST or CMA test questions? If yes, what was your purpose in writing down or copying the questions?
15. When did you return the testing materials each day? (directly after testing; at lunch; after school; or at the end of the week)
16. How did you return each of the testing materials (booklets, directions, scantrons, scratch paper)?
17. Were there any circumstances upon which you could keep any testing materials? (If students were absent or did not finish for example)
18. Where and to whom did you return the materials each day?
19. Did anything about the testing last spring concern you?

GONZALEZ

2009-2010

- Allowed students to use post it notes around the test and test booklet
- Gave hints
 - [REDACTED] said, "He tried to help but not give us the answer."
 - [REDACTED] said, "the teacher would point out which paragraph to look for the answer"
 - [REDACTED] said, "the teacher would help us know which answers to throw out"
 - Erik M. said, "the teacher helped a little and gave us hints"
 - Erik M. said, "help us know which ones made sense and which ones are not part of the question, like he would say, 'look at A or C'"
 - Leslie V. said, "the teacher would point out which paragraph to look for the answer"
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher kind of helped us. Sometimes he guided us to the answer. He helped us through the process. He would watch me do the problem. He would say 'look at it again'. He would point to the mistake in my work."
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher would help a little bit. He would come over and help me. He would let me know when the answer was right. He kind of explained it to us."
- Simplified the language in the questions to help students understand what the question was asking
 - Santiago P. said, "The teacher would explain the question in different words."
 - Erik M. said, "the teacher would point out main words and explain the question in different words"
 - Leslie V. said, "The teacher gave the question in other words."
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher explained the question in different words."
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher explained how to do the question."
- Read the question aloud to the student
 - [REDACTED] said, "the teacher read the question aloud"
 - [REDACTED] said, "the teacher read the questions aloud"
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher would read the question to them and the stories during the language arts section."
- Simplified or defined the meaning of words
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher told us what a word meant."
 - Leslie V. said, "The teacher told us the meaning of words."
- Allowed students to look at their notes
 - [REDACTED] said, "the teacher let us look at our notes for math"
- Gave examples of math steps
 - Santiago P. said, "The teacher would remind us of the steps to solve a math problem."
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher would write out the math problem on scratch paper and remind us of the steps."
 - Erik M. said, "The teacher would write the problem on a paper and give us the steps and then we could figure it out."
 - Leslie V. said, "The teacher told us the steps and reminded us of the steps to solve the math problems."
- Gave clues as to which operation to use for math problems
 - When asked what the teacher did if you did not know the answer, [REDACTED] said, "The teacher tried to help without telling us the answer. The teacher would tell us to multiply this number by that number and that would give us the answer."
- Went over problems with the students that were on the test
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher gave problems to do on the board and some of the problems were on the test. He told us to write the problems in our notebook and study them so we will get good grades."
 - [REDACTED] said, "the teacher told us that he gave us problems that he knows are in the test book. He would write the problem on the board. We would work it out together, copy it into our notes and study it. Some of the problems would be on the test."

- Teacher checked student answers, pointed out if an answer was incorrect and told the student to go back and try again
 - Santiago P. said, "The teacher checked the answers and then we wrote the answers on the scantron."
 - ██████ said, "If we didn't get the right answer, he would say try something else."
 - ██████ said, the teacher would check and tell us which ones to fix and then we wrote on the scantron."
 - ██████ said, "The teacher would tell us which questions to correct".
 - Erik M. said, "the teacher would check our answers and then he would give us hints and tell us this is wrong go back and work before giving us the scantron."
 - Leslie V. said, "We wrote on notebook paper first and then the teacher checked our answers. He told us which ones to go back and work on and then we wrote the answers on the scantron."
 - ██████ said, "We wrote the answers on a piece of paper and if they were wrong, he told us to try again. After he checked the answers, he would direct the students to write it on the scantron."
 - ██████ said, "The teacher would tell me if it is correct. He pointed to the correct answer to remind me."

GONZALEZ

2010-2011

- Gave examples of problems right before the test
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher told us step by step how to do the question before the test."
- Allowed students to look at notes
 - In response to how did the teacher help you if you got stuck on a question, [REDACTED] said, "The teacher told us to look at our notes and in the dictionary."
- Read and rephrased questions aloud
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher read the question to me so I could understand it."
- Simplified or defined the meaning of words
 - [REDACTED] said, "He didn't understand a word and the teacher said the word aloud."
 - [REDACTED] said, "If I didn't know the meaning of a word, the teacher would give an example."
- Allowed students to look in the dictionary
 - In response to how did the teacher help you if you got stuck on a question, [REDACTED] said, "The teacher told us to look at our notes and in the dictionary."
- Gave clues as to which operation to use for math problems
 - [REDACTED] said, "When he didn't understand whether to multiply, divide, add or subtract, the teacher would tell him what to do."
- Gave examples of steps by putting a similar problem on the board
 - [REDACTED] said, "If I didn't know how to figure out an answer, the teacher would write the problem on the board. The teacher wrote multiplication, division and sometime science."
- Told students the steps to solve problems
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher helped. He told me how to get the answer. If the answer was not right, he would tell us to try again."
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher wrote an example of the same kind of problem to explain it."
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher would show us how to do it and show us what the symbol means."
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher gave me an example."
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher would sometimes tell us how to do the steps."
- Checked answers and if wrong he would tell students to go back and check it... Pointed out which numbers a student got wrong
 - [REDACTED] said, "If we didn't get the right answer, he would say try again."
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher checked our work and told us if we got it wrong before we bubbled."
 - [REDACTED] said, "the teacher checked our answers and if it was wrong he told us it was wrong and to change it. Then we put the answers on the scantron."
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher would check our answers before we bubbled the scantron."
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher told us if the answer was wrong."
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher was walking around and checking our answers."
 - [REDACTED] said, "sometimes the teacher would tell me it was not right and to try it again. The teacher checked the answers. If it was correct he would say go on to the next question but if it was wrong he would say 'check it'."
 - [REDACTED] said, "The teacher would tell us what numbers we got wrong."

Student Statements

- Gonzalez helped but not as much as last year with [REDACTED]
- In response to what was different this year from last year, Santiago P. said, "he couldn't ask questions this year."
- Erik M. said, "I didn't get help this year. It helped to have a teacher check the answers last year."
- [REDACTED] said, "This year's test was really hard. At Hart, the teachers would help us. Here they tell me that they are not going to help me because I studied for this and I'm suppose to know it."