



OFFICE OF INTERNAL AUDIT

Investigation of Improper Testing Processes
Reagan High School

Connie Berger, Principal

Issue Date:

12/17/2015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Houston Independent School District's (HISD) Office of Internal Audit received information from HISD's Media Relations Office in regards to a news story covered by FOX 26 News. During the news story, a retired HISD teacher who worked at Reagan High School until May 2012 alleged that failing students were allowed to retake final exams until a passing grade was achieved. The retired teacher further alleged that if a student failed an exam, the student was given the same exam along with the corrected scantron (after the scantron had been graded) to aid in passing the exam. The retired teacher asserts that this practice continued at Reagan High School through May 2015.

On August 5, 2015, staff from the Office of Internal Audit conducted a telephone interview with the retired teacher and were told the following:

- The retired teacher had no documentation to support the allegations made during the news story.
- The retired teacher never witnessed the aforementioned practices alleged but overheard other unnamed staff members discussing the matter during his tenure at Reagan High School.
- The grading practice alleged occurred during Saturday school.
- Students who failed were allowed to receive course credit if they passed the final exam.
- Students received previously used scantrons to take the same exam.
- It was also alleged that an administrator at Reagan High School made the following statement: "I don't care if they learn as long as they pass the test."

The auditors met with relevant personnel from Reagan High School to obtain additional information related to the allegations and were told the following:

- Approximately five years ago, a teacher was asked by someone from the school's administration to tutor an unknown student who had failed a physics course during the fall semester, therefore, making the student ineligible for graduation the following spring semester. The teacher was given a copy of the student's initial final exam which had been taken by the student and he/she was tutored during Saturday school. Subsequently, the student passed the class by attending Saturday school and was able to graduate that spring.
- In addition, the same teacher informed auditors that he/she allows students to re-use scantrons. The teacher stated that when a test is given and the test requires the use of only the front of the scantron, that he/she will allow the students to re-use the unused side of that scantron for an unrelated test administered at a later date. The teacher stated that students are only allowed to re-use scantrons for regular tests and quizzes but not final exams.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of our investigation was to determine the validity of the aforementioned allegations, as they relate to the school administration's adherence to HISD's Board of Education and administrative policies and procedures regarding testing.

SCOPE

The auditors obtained the following documents for review:

- HISD's School Guidelines
- Documents related to Reagan High School's Saturday school program

CONCLUSION

The Office of Internal Audit was unable to validate the allegations involving students at Reagan High School being allowed multiple attempts to pass final exams. In regards to the allegations, we concluded the following:

- According to HISD's Federal and State Compliance Department, no policy violation occurred as it relates to the unknown student that failed a physics course and was allowed to attend Saturday school tutorials, which aided in the student successfully completing the class in question.
- We identified one instance in which a teacher allowed students to re-use scantrons but determined that this was an isolated practice and not a school-wide practice. It should be noted that the re-use of scantrons was for exams offered at a later date covering different course content.

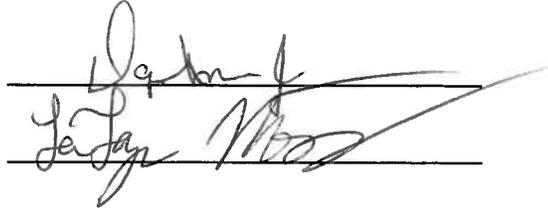
Please see **Observations** on page 5 of this report.

We appreciate the cooperation and work performed by those individuals involved in the compliance with HISD's Board of Education and administrative policies and procedures. All questions concerning this audit should be directed to the Office of Internal Audit, Level 2 East of the Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center. The telephone number is (713) 556-6325.

Audit Team:

Daphne Jones – Senior Internal Auditor

LaToya Moss – Internal Auditor



DJ/LM/jyr

APPROVED:



Lauro Garza
Internal Audit Manager
Office of Internal Audit



Richard Patton
Chief Audit Executive
Office of Internal Audit

Attachment

- cc: Jason Bernal, Chief School Officer – Secondary Transformation Schools
Dino Coronado, School Support Officer – Secondary Transformation Schools
Wanda Thomas, Senior Manager – Federal and State Compliance
Juliet Stipeche, Chair, Board Audit Committee
Manual Rodriguez, Jr., Board Audit Committee
Anna Eastman, Board Audit Committee

ATTACHMENT

OBSERVATION

During the course of this investigation, audit staff learned of a matter in which a teacher was asked by a member of Reagan's administration to tutor a student (name unknown) during Saturday school. The student allegedly failed a physics course taught by the retired teacher during the fall semester of their senior year, resulting in the student being ineligible for graduation. The teacher was provided with the student's previous final exam in order to assist with tutoring and to familiarize the teacher with the student's problem areas. School administrators at Reagan stated that teachers are required to submit copies of final exams to the dean of instruction after it has been administered to the class.

Auditors were told that the student was re-enrolled in the physics course for the spring semester, while he/she was tutored during Saturday school. According to the teacher, the student passed the physics course upon completing Saturday school requirements. In collaboration with the Federal and State Compliance Department, the Office of Internal Audit determined that this is an allowable practice to help students recover credits needed to graduate.