

# CHAPTER 9: QUALITY CONTROL PROCEDURES

The statewide testing program and its data play an important role in the state accountability system as well as in many local school district evaluation plans. It is the practice of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to verify the accuracy of the work done by the current testing contractor, Pearson Educational Measurement (PEM). In addition to PEM's internal quality control, TEA has a comprehensive verification system with three mock school districts simulating real demographic categories and test-scoring scenarios.

Individual student test scores are used for promotion, graduation, and remediation. In addition, the aggregated student performance results from the statewide testing program are a major component of the accountability system that is used to rate individual public schools and school districts in Texas. The data are also used in education research and in the establishment of public policy. Therefore, it is essential that the tests are scored correctly and the data are accurately reported to school districts. PEM is responsible for scoring the tests, aggregating the results, and printing and shipping the reports to the school districts. To ensure the accuracy of the reported test data, TEA uses a comprehensive quality-control system (QCS) to verify the accuracy of the data and reports produced by PEM. The QCS is implemented for every TAKS, RPTE, SDAA, and exit level TAAS administration.

Before each test administration PEM and TEA prepare answer documents for hundreds of fictitious students who are assigned to a campus in one of three fictitious school districts. PEM grids these answer documents (marks the answer choices and identification information) using detailed instructions provided by TEA. The answer documents represent real-world scenarios of the numerous correct and incorrect ways actual answer documents are completed by students and school districts. For example, there will be an answer document that has all questions answered correctly in all subjects. Also, there will be an answer document that has an incorrect Public Information Management System (PEIMS) identification number. Other examples of scenarios that are tested include the following:

- Gridding of all possible demographic categories (for example, special education status, gifted/talented status)
- Gridding two score codes instead of one for the reading test
- Changing the name on a precoded answer document
- Marking a score code of "A" (absent) for a student who took the test
- Receiving each of the possible raw score points in mathematics
- Returning answer documents to PEM for scoring with incomplete or missing identification information and/or improper ID header

PEM then processes, scores, and prepares reports for these fictitious students using answer keys, editing rules, and formats approved previously by TEA. TEA simultaneously processes the same student-level information and produces its own reports. When TEA receives PEM's reports for the fictitious students and districts, it compares PEM's reports with its own reports. In addition to checking the calculations involved in the reporting, this procedure confirms that edits are made properly when the scanner encounters missing or invalid data. Reports are not sent to school districts until all discrepancies in the comparative data for the fictitious districts are resolved and the reports generated by TEA and PEM match. In addition, the verification system allows TEA to monitor the distribution of all testing materials, reports, and information letters.

When all the student and optional reports for the mock school districts have been verified, PEM completes the scoring and reporting process for the actual school districts. PEM also ships final reports to the addresses of the mock school districts on the same schedule as shipments to the actual districts, and TEA monitors these shipments for timeliness and completeness.