



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
PO Box 500  
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

CHRIS CHRISTIE  
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO  
Lt. Governor



November 18, 2014

Ms. Cami Anderson, State District Superintendent  
Newark Public Schools  
2 Cedar Street, Room 1003  
Newark, NJ 07102

Dear Ms. Anderson:

SUBJECT: NJ ASK Erasure Analysis Security Review – Hawkins Street Elementary School  
OFAC Case #INV-047-14

The Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance (OFAC) completed an investigation of the testing procedures utilized at Hawkins Street Elementary School in the Newark Public Schools. The investigation was initiated in response to irregularities in student answer patterns during the administration of the 2011 New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK).

Following a review of all pertinent information and documentation, a violation of test security protocols was confirmed at Hawkins Street Elementary School. The information obtained during the OFAC review of these matters is detailed in the attached report. Please provide a copy of the report to each board member.

Utilizing the process outlined in the attached "Procedures for Audit Response, Corrective Action Plan and Appeal Process, State-Operated School Districts," pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.6, the Newark Public Schools is required to publicly review and discuss the findings in this report at a public board meeting no later than 30 days after receipt of the report. Within 30 days of the public meeting, the board must adopt a resolution certifying the findings were discussed during a public meeting. The resolution must indicate if the board approved a corrective action plan (CAP) as required by the report recommendation and/or submitted an appeal of any issue in dispute. A copy of the resolution and approved CAP and/or appeal must be sent to this office within 10 days of adoption by the board. Direct your response to my attention.

Also, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.6(c), you must post the findings of the report and the district's CAP on your school district's website. Should you have any questions, please contact Teresita Munkacsy, Manager, Special Investigations Unit, at (609) 984-7096.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Cicchino, Director  
Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance

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STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMPLIANCE  
SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

NEWARK PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
HAWKINS STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
NEW JERSEY ASSESSMENT OF SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE  
ERASURE ANALYSIS SECURITY REVIEW  
OFAC CASE #INV-047-14

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT  
NOVEMBER 2014

**INVESTIGATIVE REPORT – NOVEMBER 2014**  
**NEWARK PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**HAWKINS STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**  
**NJ ASK 2011 ERASURE ANALYSIS SECURITY REVIEW**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Subsequent to the release of the New Jersey Department of Education's (NJDOE) 2010 New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) Erasure Analysis Report (EA Report), the then Acting Commissioner of Education, Christopher Cerf, tasked the Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance (OFAC) to conduct an investigation into potential irregularities in student answer patterns during the administration of the 2010 NJ ASK and subsequent years.

The irregularities that launched the investigation were the wrong to right (WTR) erasure patterns detected on the tests by Measurement Incorporated (MI), the NJDOE state assessment contractor for the NJ ASK. The NJDOE set a threshold of four standard deviations (4 SD) above the statewide mean for WTR erasures before the OFAC was assigned to investigate. The SD is an indication of how far the values in a data set deviate from the mean.

The Office of Assessments (OA) reviewed the 2011 EA Report at the grade level by subject area to pinpoint a specific area of concern. After reviewing the grade level by subject area mean WTR erasure rates per student from the 2011 EA Report and reviewing unusual gains in the same grade level and subject area, the OA determined the Hawkins Street Elementary School (Hawkins) in the Newark Public Schools (district), third grade in 2011, emerged as a school needing review. Hawkins' 2011 NJ ASK 3 Language Arts Literacy (LAL) and Mathematics (MATH) WTR erasure rate was 4 SD above the statewide mean.

In August 2012, the OFAC sent a letter directing the district to provide documentation regarding the administration of the May 2011 NJ ASK at Hawkins. In order to determine the underlying causes of the excessive WTR erasures on the 2011 NJ ASK, the OFAC investigators (investigators) examined the documentation provided by the district as well as, the 2011 NJ ASK 3 scanned tests, the historical testing data, and individual student LAL and MATH scores. In addition, the investigators interviewed 15 district personnel and 27 students.

The investigators concluded three examiners breached the security of the 2011 NJ ASK 3 by interfering with the independent work of students during the administration of the test.

The remainder of this report consists of a background, investigative procedures, an investigative summary, a conclusion, a recommendation, and a referral to the State Board of Examiners for its determination and recommendations.

## **BACKGROUND**

New Jersey's state-required assessment program was designed to measure the extent to which all students at the elementary, middle, and secondary-school levels have mastered the knowledge and skills described in New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards. The statewide assessments for elementary and middle school grades are administered annually as the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) in Language Arts Literacy (LAL) and Mathematics (MATH) at grades three through eight and in Science at grades four and eight. Testing is conducted in the spring of each year to allow school staff and students the greatest opportunity to achieve the goal of proficiency.

The Office of Assessments (OA) coordinates the development and implementation of the NJ ASK. Measurement Incorporated (MI), the New Jersey Department Of Education (NJDOE) state assessment contractor for NJ ASK, is responsible for all aspects of the testing program including receiving, scanning, editing, and scoring the answer documents; scoring constructed-response items; and creating, generating, and distributing all score reports of test results to students, schools, districts, and the state.

In 2008, the NJDOE requested information regarding erasure rates on the NJ ASK. Since that time, MI has provided such erasure analyses to the NJDOE. MI scans and scores the NJ ASK exams. Scanners are set to detect erasures. Computer scoring programs capture the evidence of erasures and accumulate the results by school. Erasures fall into one of three types: a change from a wrong to a right answer (WTR); a change from a wrong to another wrong answer (WTW); or a change from a right to a wrong answer (RTW). MI examined the mean WTR erasure rates of all New Jersey schools to identify potential irregularities in response patterns and then compared each school mean to the statewide mean.

In 2011 and 2012, those schools for which the erasure rate exceeded the NJDOE defined threshold of three standard deviations (3 SD) above the statewide mean were flagged and their WTR erasure rates were noted in the NJ ASK Erasure Analysis Reports (EA Reports). The OA set the criteria by which further investigation would be warranted by the Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance (OFAC) based on one of two criteria; schools that were flagged for a WTR erasure rate four standard deviations (4 SD) above the statewide mean in the same grade level and subject area for two consecutive years, or schools that were flagged for a WTR erasure rate 4 SD above the statewide mean in the same grade level and subject area, partnered with unusual gains in the same grade level and subject area.

Hawkins Street Elementary School (Hawkins), in the Newark Public Schools (district), was one of the schools flagged in 2010 for the third grade, and again in 2011 for the third grade, for high WTR erasures on the LAL portion of the test. Hawkins' mean WTR erasure rate for the 2010 NJ ASK 3 LAL was 1.69, which is 4.61 standard deviations above the statewide mean of 0.40. In 2011, for the NJ ASK 3 LAL, Hawkins had a mean WTR erasure rate of 2.14, which is 4.94 standard deviations above the statewide mean of 0.46. In 2011, for the NJ ASK 3 MATH, Hawkins had a mean WTR erasure rate of 4.27, which is 5.1 standard deviations above the

statewide mean of 1.16. As a result, the OA decided that an investigation was warranted to determine the underlying causes of the excessive WTR erasures during the 2011 NJ ASK.

### **INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES<sup>1</sup>**

**Erasure Analysis Report Review:** The results from the 2011 NJ ASK EA Report, received from MI, were reviewed to assist in determining the underlying causes of the excessive erasures.

**Erasure Analysis Data Review:** The OFAC investigators (investigators) reviewed and analyzed erasure analysis data received from MI, from the 2011 NJ ASK testing cycle, in order to assist in determining the underlying causes of the excessive erasures.

**Historical and Mapped Testing Data:** The investigators reviewed and analyzed students' historical testing data and the erasure patterns within a grade for each subject in order to determine the underlying causes of the excessive WTR erasures.

**Test Booklet/Answer Sheet Analysis:** The students' multiple choice answers and open ended responses for the LAL and MATH tests were examined to determine whether any form of feedback or intervention, including any hint about the correctness of a response, was provided to any student.

**Examiner/Proctor Training Sessions:** The investigators interviewed the School Test Coordinator (STC), the test examiners, and the test proctors to determine whether: (1) all school examiners and proctors attended a training session conducted at the testing site by the STC; (2) a copy of the examiner's responsibilities and one Test Examiner Manual was distributed to each examiner; and (3) all school examiners and proctors signed the NJDOE Statewide Assessments Test Security Agreement (TSA).

**Test Booklet Distribution and Security:** The investigators interviewed the STC, the test examiners, and the test proctors to determine: (1) whether test materials were stored in a secure and locked location that was accessible only to individuals whose access was authorized by the STC when not being used during a test period; (2) whether test examiners verified the quantity and security numbers for the test booklets they received; (3) whose signatures appeared on the School Security Checklist acknowledging receipt of test materials; and (4) where and how the test booklets were secured when not in use.

**Test Booklet Collection:** The investigators interviewed the STC, the test examiners, and the test proctors to determine: (1) who collected the test booklets; (2) when the test booklets were collected; (3) where the test booklets were located during any breaks; and (4) how the test booklets were returned to the test collection site.

**Examination of School Security Checklists:** The investigators examined the School Security Checklists to determine whether: (1) examiners properly signed for each test booklet they received; (2) the times and dates associated with the signatures corresponded with the test

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<sup>1</sup> The Security Procedures listed on page 13 of the Test Coordinator's Manual served as a guideline for the Investigative Procedures.

schedule time frames; and (3) the STC signed for the return of test materials and included the time and date returned.

### **INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY**

The investigators conducted 42 interviews of teachers, staff, and students who participated in the 2011 NJ ASK 3 at Hawkins. The investigators reviewed the 2011 testing data provided by MI, the 2011 test administration documents provided by the district, and the students' individual LAL and MATH test scores. The investigators determined that the security and/or confidentiality of the testing materials was breached at Hawkins by the following three staff members:

1. Poliana Seromenho - Third Grade Teacher and Examiner
2. Angela Arpino - Third Grade Teacher and Examiner
3. Michelina Pugliese - Third Grade Teacher and Examiner

The information obtained during the OFAC review of these matters is detailed below.

#### **Poliana Seromenho – Third Grade Teacher and Examiner**

Based on witness accounts and a review of testing data, the investigators determined Mrs. Seromenho, a 16 year veteran at Hawkins, breached the security of the 2011 NJ ASK 3 by influencing, or interfering with examinees' responses, and by providing feedback, including hints about the correctness of a response.

#### **Influencing/Interfering with Examinees' Responses**

The investigators interviewed 10 of the 17 students who were administered the 2011 NJ ASK 3 by Mrs. Seromenho, as well as staff members. The investigators obtained the following information during those interviews:

- Student A stated Mrs. Seromenho pointed at the test and said to check that one over.
- Student B stated Mrs. Seromenho shook her head no, tapped on the test, and told the student to change the answer. This student also stated the following year, he/she thought his/her fourth grade teacher, Mrs. O'Neill, told Mrs. Seromenho the student said she helped him/her during the test. The student said, "Mrs. Seromenho pulled me out of class and said you can't tell people that because then you'll have to stay back in third grade and take the test over."
- Student C stated he/she recalled having the same conversation as the one above in fourth grade. This student stated when the students were discussing it, Mrs. O'Neill said she could not help them during the NJ ASK and that they were on their own.
- Student D stated he/she saw Mrs. Seromenho pointing at the test and talking to another student. This student also stated the following year, in fourth grade, a student talked about how Mrs. Seromenho helped them in third grade. The student said the fourth grade

- teacher, Mrs. Vezina, said she was not supposed to do that. During an interview with Mrs. Vezina, she denied that occurrence.
- Student E stated Mrs. Seromenho would point at the number of the question and say check that one again. This student also recalled Mrs. Seromenho pointing to another student's test and telling the student to check the answer again. This student also stated, after the test, students were talking about how easy the test was because Mrs. Seromenho helped them.
  - The remaining four students did not have any information related to testing.
  - Mrs. O'Neill stated that in 2012, while she was preparing her students for the 2012 NJ ASK 4, many students asked if she would help them on the NJ ASK just as their third grade teacher had the year before. She added, the students told her their teachers said "Are you sure? You sure? You wanna look at it again?" She stated she thought the students were kidding and she never reported it to administration.
  - According to documents provided by the district, James Stack, Physical Education teacher, served as the proctor for Mrs. Seromenho. During his interview, the investigators asked Mr. Stack if he was with Mrs. Seromenho for all four testing days. He replied, "I'm not sure if I was with Mrs. Seromenho. I proctor for all three tests (referring to the third/fourth, fifth/sixth, and seventh/eighth grade testing groups), so I really can't remember." He stated he believed Mrs. Seromenho was doing the same as he was during testing, which was walking up and down the rows. When asked if he heard Mrs. Seromenho say look that over, check your work, or noticed Mrs. Seromenho doing anything to assist the students, Mr. Stack replied, "No, I don't recall any of that."

The investigators interviewed Mrs. Seromenho with regard to the 2011 NJ ASK 3. Mrs. Seromenho stated she was asked to teach kindergarten for the 2013-2014 school year and has been teaching that grade ever since. She stated she attended NJ ASK training on April 27, 2011 and confirmed her signature on the TSA.

During the course of the interview, the investigators shared the 2011 EA Report and the witnesses' information. The investigators informed Mrs. Seromenho several students stated while she was walking around the room during testing, she told students to check that one over, shook her head "no" while tapping on the desk and said change the answer, or said check that one again while pointing to the test. Mrs. Seromenho stated she reminded the students to check their work while she was walking around the room. She stated when she would change the testing time she would tap on the board and remind students how much time they had left and they should check their work. She added as she walked up and down the aisles she would also tell her students how much time they had left and remind them to check their work. She also stated she would tap on the students' desks or shelves as she walked around to keep the students' attention while reminding them to check their work. She stated she did not speak to or point to the papers of specific children.

Mrs. Seromenho explained, "If I do see a child that's sitting there, because we do have to keep track of the time on the board. So, if I see that we have 40 minutes left or 30 minutes left and the

child has their book closed I say (while tapping on the desk) check your answer. Yes, but I do that all the time. That's something I do during testing."

The investigators asked Mrs. Seromenho if she made general statements while standing in front of the class, such as you have 10 minutes left check your work or if while she was walking around the room, standing next to students, tapping on their desk, said check your work. Mrs. Seromenho replied, "No, I say it in general and I tap to multiple people just as I walk by. What I would do to a specific child was, let's say I had someone fall asleep. I mean, I don't recall what happened that year, but let's say if a child did have their head down and was falling asleep I would say (rapping knuckles on the desk) let's go, keep working, something like that, but not to a specific child with answers. No. Check their answers specifically, no." Later in the interview, the investigators asked Mrs. Seromenho the same question. She replied, "Yea, but I'm not. Like I said, I don't recall exactly what happened three years ago because I can barely remember what I did yesterday, but I know that in general what I always do. I speak as I'm walking. We are not supposed to stand. That's one of the things. We are not even to stop and look at one of the papers hanging. It's just like keep walking, wear your sneakers, and keep walking around all day. So, I might voice this, check your answers you still have 20 minutes left and I change the time on the board. That's what I do or I did because I don't test any longer."

The investigators also informed Mrs. Seromenho several students told the investigators while she was walking around the room she would point at their paper and say look that one over or check your answer. Mrs. Seromenho responded, "Not specific questions though and not specific students. I say it in general (rapping on the desk) you still have time. There's still 10 minutes or 20 minutes or whatever. Pencils shouldn't be down after 30 minutes. I mean that's part of our training. That's part of our NJ ASK practice throughout the whole year. That's what we do. Don't put that pencil down if you still have 10, 15 minutes left, because you shouldn't be done in 10 or 20 minutes. I do say (tapping on the desk) check your answers in general. I do say check your answers to the class, because like I said if pencils are down, but not to specific students."

During the interview, Mrs. Seromenho would tap her fingers or rap her knuckles on the desk. Therefore, the investigators asked her if she would do the same thing during testing as she was doing during the interview. She replied, "I say it. I don't recall if I specifically tapped. I have tapped. Yes, I have tapped. I do it all the time and just generally (tapping on the desk) check your answers boys and girls, but not to specific students. It could be on my table, it could be on the shelf. I can't talk to them. I can't speak to them personally, so I'm not going to address a specific child or ... so, in general I try to get their attention (tapping on the desk) by making the noise and then I say check your answers there's still 20 minutes. Even on the board, as I change the time, (tapping), check your answers you still got 20 minutes. So they look up and see that there's still time left on the board, but to specific children, no."

At this time, the investigators informed Mrs. Seromenho about the student who stated she pulled him/her out of class. Mrs. Seromenho stated, "That never happened. Never happened. That's totally false."

In accordance with the Spring 2011 Grades 3-8 Test Coordinator Manual, page 22:

*Examiners should read the Test Examiner Manual carefully for each section of the test they are to administer. Please emphasize to examiners that, during testing, students can be given no assistance or coaching beyond that specified in the manual. Strict test security must be maintained.*

In accordance with the New Jersey Department of Education Test Security Agreement, which Mrs. Seromenho stated she read and signed:

6. *I will not review any test items or passages with students before, during, or after the assessment.*
8. *I will not interfere with the independent work of any student taking the assessment, and I will not compromise the security of the test by any means including, but not limited to:*
  - c) *Coaching students during testing or altering or interfering with the students' responses in any way.*
  - f) *Failing to follow test administration directions specified in test examiner manuals.*

### **Data Review**

When looking at the totality of the circumstances for Mrs. Seromenho's students in 2011, the following statistics are noteworthy:

- The students who were administered the 2011 NJ ASK 3 by Mrs. Seromenho had a WTR erasure rate of 4.47 in LAL, which is 11.79 standard deviations above the statewide mean, and a WTR erasure rate of 5.19 in MATH, which is 6.61 standard deviations above the statewide mean. These statistics are the highest for the third grade at Hawkins.
- Fifty-one students at Hawkins took the 2011 NJ ASK 3 LAL, and had a total of 109 WTR erasures. Seventeen of those students were administered the NJ ASK 3 LAL by Mrs. Seromenho, and had 78 total WTR erasures, 72 percent of the total erasures for the NJ ASK 3 LAL at Hawkins. In 2012, sixteen of those same students were administered the NJ ASK 4 LAL by a teacher other than Mrs. Seromenho, and had a total of three WTR erasures. In 2013, fifteen of those students were administered the NJ ASK 5 LAL by a teacher other than Mrs. Seromenho, and had a total of four WTR erasures.
- Fifty-two students at Hawkins took the 2011 NJ ASK 3 MATH, and had a total of 222 WTR erasures. Sixteen of those students were administered the NJ ASK 3 MATH by Mrs. Seromenho, and had 83 total WTR erasures, 38 percent of the total erasures for the NJ ASK 3 MATH at Hawkins. In 2012, fifteen of those same students were

administered the NJ ASK 4 MATH by a teacher other than Mrs. Seromenho, and had a total of nine WTR erasures. In 2013, fifteen of those students were administered the NJ ASK 5 MATH by a teacher other than Mrs. Seromenho, and had a total of six WTR erasures.

Upon review of the historical testing data, the investigators compared the scores of the students who were administered the test by Mrs. Seromenho in 2011 with those same students' scores when they were in fourth grade in 2012 and fifth grade in 2013, and were not administered the test by Mrs. Seromenho.

- In 2011, thirty-seven percent of Mrs. Seromenho's students achieved a Proficient score or better on the NJ ASK 3 LAL and 84 percent of Mrs. Seromenho's students achieved a Proficient score or better on the NJ ASK 3 MATH. In 2012, 18 percent of those same students achieved a Proficient score or better on the NJ ASK 4 in LAL and 28 percent of those same students achieved a Proficient score or better in MATH.
- Fifteen of the 17 students' LAL scores decreased from 2011 to 2012. Six of those 15 students' LAL scores decreased 30 or more points from 2011 to 2012. One student's score was unavailable and one student's score increased.
- Fourteen of the 16 students' MATH scores decreased from 2011 to 2012. Thirteen of those 16 students' scores decreased 30 or more points in MATH from 2011 to 2012. One student's score was unavailable and one student's score increased.

When comparing the 2013 LAL and MATH scores and erasures to the 2012 LAL and MATH scores and erasures, the investigators noticed they were similar to each other and varied in comparison to the 2011 LAL and MATH scores and erasures.

#### **Angela Arpino – Third Grade Teacher and Examiner**

Based on witness accounts and a review of testing data, the investigators determined Mrs. Arpino breached the security of the 2011 NJ ASK 3 by influencing, or interfering with examinees' responses, and by providing feedback, including hints about the correctness of a response. Mrs. Arpino has since resigned from the district.

#### **Reviewing Students' Test Booklets**

There are 35 multiple-choice questions on the 2011 NJ ASK 3 MATH. Upon review of the 2011 NJ ASK 3 test booklets, the investigators noticed three of Mrs. Arpino's 17 students with high WTR erasures also had more than half of their short constructed-response questions incorrect and scored at a Proficient level in MATH. The results of the three students' tests are:

- One student erased 15 of the 35 multiple-choice questions. Thirteen of the erased answers went from a wrong answer to a right answer. After erasing, this student got 29 of

the 35 multiple-choice questions right. This student had an 87 percent correction rate. This student got six of the 11 short constructed-responses wrong, or 55 percent wrong. The student's score was 232.

- One student erased 12 of the 35 multiple-choice questions. Ten of the erased answers went from a wrong answer to a right answer. After erasing, this student got 29 of the multiple-choice questions right. This student had an 83 percent correction rate. This student got nine of the 11 short-constructed responses wrong, or 82 percent wrong. The student's score was 222.
- One student erased nine of the 35 multiple-choice questions. Seven of the erased answers were changed from a wrong answer to a right answer. After erasing, this student got 28 of the multiple-choice questions right. This student had a 77 percent correction rate. This student got six of the 11 short-constructed responses wrong, or 55 percent wrong. The student's score was 232.

### **Influencing/Interfering with Examinees' Responses**

The investigators interviewed seven of the 17 students who were administered the 2011 NJ ASK 3 by Mrs. Arpino, as well as staff members. The investigators obtained the following information during those interviews:

- Student F stated Mrs. Arpino tapped on the test and said to check it over. This student also stated when he/she was in fourth grade with Mrs. O'Neill he/she heard students ask her for help on the NJ ASK 4 because they had received help the year before.
- Student G stated Mrs. Arpino would explain the questions if he/she did not understand it. The student also stated Mrs. Arpino would point at the test and tell the student to look over the question because it was not right. This student also named another student that he/she saw receive help from Mrs. Arpino by way of pointing on the test. This student named the student, whose parents refused to allow the student to be interviewed.
- Student H stated while Mrs. Arpino was walking through the rows she would look at the students' tests, tap on the desk, and tell the students the answer was wrong, they need to redo it. This student also stated when testing was done another student said to him/her, good thing Mrs. Arpino was in the classroom because she helped me with answers. The student named this student, but the contact information for this student was incorrect.
- Student I stated Mrs. Arpino looked at the test and told the student you may want to do that one over again. This student also stated, after testing some of the students were talking about having received help from Mrs. Arpino during the test. The student could not recall the names of the other students.
- A student from Mrs. Pugliese's class stated a student in Mrs. Arpino's class who had a perfect score told the student Mrs. Arpino would tell the student to check over his/her question because it was wrong. The investigators tried to interview this student, but the parents refused to allow the student to be interviewed.
- The three remaining students did not have any information related to testing.

- o Mrs. Arpino's proctor, Chris Trott has retired and the district did not have contact information for him.

The investigators interviewed Mrs. Arpino, with regard to the 2011 NJ ASK 3.

Mrs. Arpino stated she attended NJ ASK training on April 27, 2011 and confirmed her signature on the TSA; however the TSA was dated April 28, 2011. The investigators shared the 2011 EA Report and the witnesses' information that was obtained during interviews. The investigators informed Mrs. Arpino several students stated while she was walked around the room during testing, she told students to check that answer, look that over again, or check your work. Mrs. Arpino responded, "No, no. I would never do that. There's just too much going on to keep walking up to even read it. For me to figure out the answer? There's no way." The investigators asked Mrs. Arpino why the students would say she did that. She replied, "I have no idea. I don't do that, so for them to say ... I don't know. They're taught all year to go back and check their work, but for me to say check. I don't even know the answers to do that or even to have more time to stand there and figure it out. Plus, a proctor in the room. We're constantly ... he's going one way and me going another. No, I don't, no there's no way, no." The investigators asked Mrs. Arpino if she thought that perhaps someone outside of the classroom could have tampered with the tests. She responded, "I don't know. I don't think so."

In accordance with the Spring 2011 Grades 3-8 Test Coordinator Manual, page 22:

*Examiners should read the Test Examiner Manual carefully for each section of the test they are to administer. Please emphasize to examiners that, during testing, students can be given no assistance or coaching beyond that specified in the manual. **Strict test security must be maintained.***

In accordance with the New Jersey Department of Education Test Security Agreement, which Mrs. Arpino stated she read and signed:

6. *I will not review any test items or passages with students before, during, or after the assessment.*
8. *I will not interfere with the independent work of any student taking the assessment, and I will not compromise the security of the test by any means including, but not limited to:*
  - c) *Coaching students during testing or altering or interfering with the students' responses in any way.*
  - f) *Failing to follow test administration directions specified in test examiner manuals.*

### **Data Review**

When looking at the totality of the circumstances for Mrs. Arpino's students in 2011, the following statistics are noteworthy:

- The students who were administered the 2011 NJ ASK 3 by Mrs. Arpino had a WTR erasure rate of 0.82 in LAL, which is 1.04 standard deviations above the statewide mean, and a WTR erasure rate of 4.65 in MATH, which is 5.72 standard deviations above the statewide mean. The mathematics statistics are the second highest for the third grade at Hawkins.
- Fifty-one students at Hawkins took the 2011 NJ ASK 3 LAL, and had a total of 109 WTR erasures. Seventeen of those students were administered the NJ ASK 3 LAL by Mrs. Arpino, and had 14 WTR erasures, 13 percent of the total erasures for the NJ ASK 3 LAL at Hawkins. In 2012, those same students were administered the NJ ASK 4 LAL by a teacher other than Mrs. Arpino, and had a total of 10 WTR erasures. In 2013, those students were administered the NJ ASK 5 LAL by a teacher other than Mrs. Arpino, and had a total of eight WTR erasures.
- Fifty-two students at Hawkins took the 2011 NJ ASK 3 MATH, and had a total of 222 WTR erasures. Seventeen of those students were administered the NJ ASK 3 MATH by Mrs. Arpino, and had 79 total WTR erasures, 36 percent of the total erasures for the NJ ASK 3 MATH at Hawkins. In 2012, those same students were administered the NJ ASK 4 MATH by a teacher other than Mrs. Arpino, and had a total of 15 WTR erasures. In 2013, those students were administered the NJ ASK 5 MATH by a teacher other than Mrs. Arpino, and had a total of 10 WTR erasures.

Upon review of the historical testing data, the investigators compared the scores of the students who were administered the test by Mrs. Arpino in 2011 with those same students' scores when they were in fourth grade in 2012 and fifth grade in 2013, and were not administered the test by Mrs. Arpino.

- In 2011, twelve percent of Mrs. Arpino's students achieved a Proficient score or better on the NJ ASK 3 LAL and 76 percent of Mrs. Arpino's students achieved a Proficient score or better on the NJ ASK 3 MATH. In 2012, twelve percent of those same students achieved a Proficient score or better on the NJ ASK 4 in LAL and 35 percent of those same students achieved a Proficient score or better in MATH.
- Nine of the 17 students' LAL scores decreased from 2011 to 2012. Eight of the 17 students' LAL scores increased from 2011 to 2012.
- Sixteen of the 17 students' MATH scores decreased from 2011 to 2012. Ten of those 16 students' MATH scores decreased 30 or more points from 2011 to 2012. One student's score stayed the same.

When comparing the 2013 LAL and MATH scores and erasures to the 2012 LAL and MATH scores and erasures, the investigators noticed they were similar to each other and varied in comparison to the 2011 LAL and MATH scores and erasures.

### **Michelina Pugliese – Third Grade Teacher and Examiner**

Based on witness accounts and a review of testing data, the investigators determined Mrs. Pugliese breached the security of the 2011 NJ ASK 3 by influencing, or interfering with examinees' responses, and by providing feedback, including hints about the correctness of a response. Mrs. Pugliese was moved to kindergarten during the 2013-2014 school year and is currently teaching that grade.

### **Influencing/Interfering with Examinees' Responses**

The investigators interviewed seven of the 17 students who were administered the 2011 NJ ASK 3 by Mrs. Pugliese, as well as staff members. The investigators obtained the following information during those interviews:

- Student J stated while Mrs. Pugliese was walking around she would point at the test and tell the student to look over the answer.
- Student K stated Mrs. Pugliese would point at the tests and tell students to check that one over, make sure it's correct.
- The remaining five students did not have any information related to testing.
- According to documents provided by the district, Duane Smith, a music teacher, served as the proctor for Mrs. Pugliese. During his interview, the investigators asked Mr. Smith if he noticed Mrs. Pugliese telling the students to check their work again or pointing to the tests. He replied, "I don't think so. I didn't see her pointing to anything." He also added he has never heard any of the children discussing having received assistance on the test.

The investigators interviewed Mrs. Pugliese with regard to the 2011 NJ ASK 3. Mrs. Pugliese stated she attended NJ ASK training on April 27, 2011 and confirmed her signature on the TSA. The investigators shared the 2011 EA Report and the witnesses' information that was obtained during interviews.

The investigators informed Mrs. Pugliese several students stated while she was walking around the room during testing, she told students to check that answer, look that over again, or check your work. Mrs. Pugliese responded, "I would never tell them that. We tell them if they have time they can go back, but during the testing, there's absolutely no talking. I am walking up and down. I have a proctor in the room. There's always someone standing outside in the hall coming in. So, no." The investigators asked Mrs. Pugliese why the students would say she did that. She replied, "I have no idea. I don't really know."

In accordance with the Spring 2011 Grades 3-8 Test Coordinator Manual, page 22:

*Examiners should read the Test Examiner Manual carefully for each section of the test they are to administer. Please emphasize to examiners that, during testing, students can be given no assistance or coaching beyond that specified in the manual. Strict test security must be maintained.*

In accordance with the New Jersey Department of Education Test Security Agreement, which Mrs. Arpino stated she read and signed:

6. *I will not review any test items or passages with students before, during, or after the assessment.*
8. *I will not interfere with the independent work of any student taking the assessment, and I will not compromise the security of the test by any means including, but not limited to:*
  - c) *Coaching students during testing or altering or interfering with the students' responses in any way.*
  - f) *Failing to follow test administration directions specified in test examiner manuals.*

### **Data Review**

When looking at the totality of the circumstances for Mrs. Pugliese's students in 2011, the following statistics are noteworthy:

- The students who were administered the 2011 NJ ASK 3 by Mrs. Pugliese had a WTR erasure rate of 1.16 in LAL, which is 2.06 standard deviations above the statewide mean, and a WTR erasure rate of 2.8 in MATH, which is 2.69 standard deviations above the statewide mean.
- Fifty-one students at Hawkins took the 2011 NJ ASK 3 LAL, and had a total of 109 WTR erasures. Twelve of those students were administered the NJ ASK 3 LAL by Mrs. Pugliese, and had 14 total WTR erasures, 13 percent of the total erasures for the NJ ASK 3 LAL at Hawkins. In 2012, 11 of those same students were administered the NJ ASK 4 LAL by a teacher other than Mrs. Pugliese, and had a total of zero WTR erasures. In 2013, ten of those students were administered the NJ ASK 5 LAL by a teacher other than Mrs. Pugliese, and had a total of five WTR erasures.
- Fifty-two students at Hawkins took the 2011 NJ ASK 3 MATH, and had a total of 222 WTR erasures. Twelve of those students were administered the NJ ASK 3 MATH by Mrs. Pugliese, and had 34 total WTR erasures, 15 percent of the total erasures for the NJ ASK 3 MATH at Hawkins. In 2012, eleven of those same students were administered

the NJ ASK 4 MATH by a teacher other than Mrs. Pugliese, and had a total of seven WTR erasures. In 2013, ten of those students were administered the NJ ASK 5 MATH by a teacher other than Mrs. Pugliese, and had a total of eight WTR erasures. The data for two students was unavailable.

Upon review of the historical testing data, the investigators compared the scores of the 12 students who were administered the test by Mrs. Pugliese in 2011 with those same students' scores when they were in fourth grade in 2012 and fifth grade in 2013, and were not administered the test by Mrs. Pugliese.

- In 2011, seventeen percent of Mrs. Pugliese's students achieved a Proficient score or better on the NJ ASK 3 LAL and 75 percent of Mrs. Pugliese's students achieved a Proficient score or better on the NJ ASK 3 MATH. In 2012, eighteen percent of those same students achieved a Proficient score or better on the NJ ASK 4 in LAL and eighteen percent of those same students achieved a Proficient score or better in MATH.
- Nine of the 12 students' LAL scores decreased from 2011 to 2012. One student's score decreased 30 or more points in LAL from 2011 to 2012. Two students' LAL scores increased from 2011 to 2012 and one student's LAL scores were not available.
- Ten of the 12 students' MATH scores decreased from 2011 to 2012. Five of those 10 students' scores decreased 30 or more points in MATH from 2011 to 2012. One student's score increased from 2011 to 2012 and one student's score was not available.

When comparing the 2013 LAL and MATH scores and erasures to the 2012 LAL and MATH scores and erasures, the investigators noticed they were similar to each other and varied in comparison to the 2011 LAL and MATH scores and erasures.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based upon the preponderance of evidence collected during the investigation, the OFAC concluded the aforementioned named individuals breached the security of the 2011 NJ ASK 3 by influencing and interfering with examinees' responses, and providing feedback, including hinting about the correctness of a response.

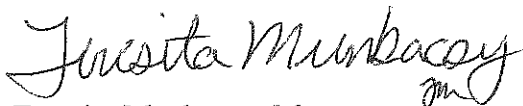
### **RECOMMENDATION**

The district shall submit to the OFAC a corrective action plan indicating the measures the district will implement to ensure staff compliance with the testing security procedures.

**REFERRAL**

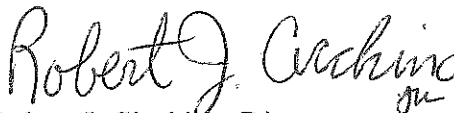
This investigative report will be referred to the State Board of Examiners for further review and whatever action it deems appropriate.

Submitted by:

Handwritten signature of Teresita Munkacsy in cursive script.

Teresita Munkacsy, Manager  
Special Investigations Unit

Approved by:

Handwritten signature of Robert J. Cicchino in cursive script.

Robert J. Cicchino, Director  
Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance

Investigators:

Karl T. Feltes  
Jeannine Pizzigoni

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMPLIANCE  
CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

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SCHOOL DISTRICT NAME: The Newark Public Schools – Hawkins Street Elementary School COUNTY: Essex

TYPE OF EXAMINATION: NJ ASK

DATE OF BOARD MEETING: December 16, 2014 OFAC Case #: INV-047-14

CONTACT PERSON: Gabrielle Wyatt

TELEPHONE NUMBER: (973) 733-7334

FAX NUMBER: (973) 733-8771

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER	CORRECTIVE ACTION	METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION	INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	COMPLETION DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION
1. Staff compliance with testing security procedures	<p>A. <b><i>Ensure all STCs attend the Office of Data &amp; Policy's workshop on test administration.</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since SY10-11, all STCs have attended a district-led testing compliance and security half-day workshop (see Appendix A: NPS STC Training Presentation).</li> <li>In addition, the principals of the identified schools under investigation were required to attend the district's workshop in spring 2014.</li> <li>None of the STCs that served in this capacity during the years that were under investigation were permitted to serve as STCs in the</li> </ul>	<p>A. Training B. Training C. Operational protocols D. Training E. Training</p>	<p>A. Gabrielle Wyatt B. Gabrielle Wyatt C. Charlotte Hitchcock D. Gabrielle Wyatt E. Gabrielle Wyatt</p>	<p>A. April 2015 B. April 2015 C. May 2015 D. April 2015 E. May 2015</p>

Carri Anderson  
Chief School Administrator

12/16/14  
Date

Board Secretary/Business Administrator

12/17/14  
Date

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMPLIANCE  
CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN**

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	<p>years thereafter.</p> <p><b>B. <i>Continue current requirement for all School Testing Coordinators (STCs) to attend the District Testing Coordinator (DTC) Workshop provided by the NJDOE.</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since SY13-14, STCs were required to attend the State's DTC workshop (see Appendix B: DTC Presentation).</li> <li>• In addition, the principals of the identified schools under investigation were required to attend the NJDOE workshop in spring 2014.</li> <li>• All STCs received a copy of the NJDOE's Spring 2014 Test Coordinator manual (see Appendix C: Test Coordinator Manual)</li> </ul> <p><b>C. <i>Continue practice of General Counsel's review and approval of test security plans.</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The original Test Security Plans will continue to be kept on file at the district and a copy at schools, subject to audit by the district.</li> <li>• Since SY12-13, all principals were required to certify their test security plans, as well as receive</li> </ul>		
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Chief School Administrator

Date

Board Secretary/Business Administrator

Date

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMPLIANCE  
CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN**

	<p>General Counsel's approval on the plan's content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test plans are required to include information pertaining to: mandatory turnkey training; storage of secure materials; delivery problems; centrally located distribution center; missing test booklets; chain of command; sick students; disruptive students; fire/emergency procedures; and inclement weather (see Appendix D: Test Security Plans).</li> <li>• All school personnel are required to be informed of security procedures prior to all test administrations.</li> </ul> <p><b>D. <i>Train and assign Central Office Staff to serve as District Testing Monitors.</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since SY10-11, Central Office staff members were assigned to serve as monitors during the NJASK administration (see Appendix E: Central Office Training Presentation).</li> <li>• Monitors are present for all days of the administration and report daily on: student attendance, staff attendance, staff notes, and call log</li> </ul>			
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Chief School Administrator

Date

Board Secretary/Business Administrator

Date

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMPLIANCE  
CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

	<p>of absent students (Appendix F: NJASK District Monitor Checklist).</p> <p>E. <i>Monitor the implementation of STC “turn-key” trainings.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All STCs are required to train school-level examiners and proctors on testing protocols.</li> <li>• STCs will be required to send the training’s agenda, handouts, staff assignments, bell schedule, security plan, and sign-in sheet to their district monitor in advance of turn-key trainings. Audits of school presentations will be conducted as determined by the district.</li> <li>• Following the turn-key trainings, school examiners must read and sign a Test Security Agreement (See Appendix G: Test Security Agreement)</li> <li>• In SY13-14, a Central Office staff member attended the turn-key trainings at the schools under investigation (see Appendix H: Turnkey Trainings).</li> </ul>			
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Chief School Administrator

Date

Board Secretary/Business Administrator

Date