



<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/comm/page1.html>

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## **More than 590 schools cleared of testing irregularity allegations**

AUSTIN – Investigations into possible testing irregularities at 592 Texas schools were closed today when no evidence of wrongdoing was found, the Texas Education Agency announced.

A statistical analysis conducted by Caveon Test Security earlier this year flagged 700 schools as having data anomalies during the 2005 testing period.

The Commissioner's Task Force on Test Integrity concluded that security audits and, in some cases, on-site investigations found no evidence of action that violated the state's extensive test security system at 592 schools. The task force recommended that Commissioner of Education Shirley J. Neeley close the investigations and clear these schools, which she did.

Grant funds totaling about \$3 million will flow as soon as possible to 23 schools that have been cleared and qualified for the Governor's Educator Excellence Award, a teacher incentive pay grant.

Three of the 700 schools that were flagged for their 2005 test results have since closed.

Cases are still open for 105 schools that were flagged by the Caveon report. In most cases, additional information is needed before any conclusion can be reached in the remaining cases.

A school was flagged by Caveon if the firm's review found an aberrant or unusual response pattern; a large score gain; a statistically unusual number of erasures or very similar test responses, such as correctly answering hard questions while missing easy questions.

"I want to express appreciation to the task force members and to our Texas educators who have responded to our audits and on-site visits in a professional and prompt manner. It is with great pride and pleasure that we are now able to exonerate a large majority of the schools flagged by the Caveon report," Neeley said.

A list of the schools that have been cleared is attached and is also available at:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/comm/page1.html>.

The agency's recently appointed inspector general, his staff and the staff of the student assessment division will continue to work to bring closure to the investigations that remain open.

The task force is finalizing and will submit recommendations to the commissioner for future test irregularity analysis and investigative procedures.

Greg Cizek, a professor of Educational Measurement and Evaluation at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and author of *Cheating on Tests: How to Do It, Detect It and Prevent It*, who served as an advisor to the task force, said Texas already has one of the most

comprehensive test security systems in the country and recommendations being discussed by the task force will improve the system further.

Neeley thanked the task force members for their five-month review of the testing irregularities. “I sincerely appreciate and applaud their hard work and commitment to doing whatever it takes to clear up any cloud of doubt among the public. It is imperative that Texans trust our test results and have confidence that they are valid and reliable,” she said.

The task force members are A.J. Rodriguez, president of the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; George McShan, a former president of the National School Boards Association; Bill Hammond, president and chief executive officer of the Texas Association of Business and Chambers of Commerce; Sylvia Hatton, the former executive director of the Region I Education Service Center; and Diane Boudreaux-Kraft, a clinical psychologist. Inspector General Michael Donley served as an ex officio member of the group and Olga Garza, who previously conducted School Performance Reviews for the comptroller’s office, facilitated the task force.

Neeley also said, “It is important that Texans remember that there was never even a hint of doubt about the test results at more than 91 percent of our schools. Today, I hope we have restored the public’s confidence in a number of additional schools. This has been a painful process but I believe the results are confirming that the vast majority of Texas educators and schools operate with a high degree of integrity.”