

## General Guidance on Appropriate Test-Preparation Practices Using CASCADE-Supported Assessments

Classroom assessment practices are an integral part of teaching and learning in JCPS. Without classroom assessment, we may not know if students' learning is progressing or if learning has taken place. When using CASCADE-supported assessment, it is important to follow professional ethics guidelines such as the ones presented on the *Student Evaluation Standards* (see more details at [www.icsee.org/ses](http://www.icsee.org/ses)). No test-preparation practice should violate our professional ethical norms. No test-preparation practice should increase students' test scores without simultaneously increasing students' mastery of the curriculum assessed. *We should teach to the content associated with the curriculum and not teach to the test.* JCPS teachers' instruction is aimed toward student mastery of content knowledge and skills associated with Kentucky's curriculum and should not be directed toward a specific set of test items. Some of the commonly used test-preparation practices follow:

- **Varied-format test preparation.** This test-preparation practice provides regular classroom instruction associated with the content covered on the test, but employs practice items representing a variety of test-item formats (e.g., selected-responses, constructed-responses, portfolios, and performance assessments).
- **Generalized test-taking preparation.** This test-preparation practice provides –as part of the regular teaching process- test-taking strategies for dealing with a variety of test formats.
- **Same-format test preparation.** This test-preparation practice provides regular classroom instruction dealing directly with the content covered on the test, but employs only practice items that embody the same format as items actually used in the test. For example, it might use selected-responses and constructed-responses formats which are the same format that appears on the state-wide assessment.
- **Previous-form or released-items test preparation.** This test-preparation practice is based on students' use of a previous form or released-items of the actual test, but linked to instruction. It is mainly used for purpose of diagnostic assessment and only for the purpose of helping plan next instructional steps in terms of content (not preparation for specific test items). Please note that for specific guidelines about using released test items, there may be different rules per testing vendor; in general, you should refer to the specific test administration manual, Kentucky's Administration Code regulation and/or contact your DAC/BAC for details.
- **Use of actual test as test preparation.** This test preparation practice is when instruction is based directly on actual test items that exist in CASCADE rather than teaching the content associated with the assessment. It is **NOT** acceptable to use the actual test as test preparation.

### Rationale

Prior to undertaking any form of CASCADE-supported assessment, it is essential that we develop a clear understanding of the following: (a) purpose of the assessment, including users and decisions to be influenced by the results; (b) what is to be assessed, in terms of learning targets; (c) the best method for conducting the assessment given the purpose and learning targets; (d) how to best communicate the results and to whom; and, (e) how to involve students in the assessment process (Stiggins et al., 2004). These five basic considerations must guide us for planning the assessment as well as the instruction associated with it. Failure to pay attention to these basic decision points (purpose, targets, method, communication, and student involvement) risks the positive impact of classroom assessment which is to be effectively used to support student learning (i.e., assessment for learning) and to verify it (i.e., assessment of learning). In general, classroom assessment practices in CASCADE are guided by the *Student Evaluation Standards* (2003). The *Standards* contains a set of standards and related guidelines accepted by professional organizations as indicative of technically sound classroom assessment practices. The classroom assessments that adhere to these standards can then be used with confidence by teachers/students to better foster student learning.