

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE TEST PREPARATION PRACTICES

Two primary standards can serve as a basis for determining the appropriateness of specific test preparation activities:

- 1) *Professional ethics.* This standard requires us to avoid test preparation practices which would violate the ethical standards of the education profession. Concern for personal integrity, for the credibility of the education profession, and for our role as models for students are the foundation of professional ethics.

Violations of this standard include actions that would typically be defined as cheating : providing answers before or during a test, giving out test questions ahead of time, and altering student answers on test sheets. Positive responses to this standard might include discussions of test-taking ethics with students and encouragement to do their own best work.

- 2) *Educational defensibility.* This standard has to do with the accuracy of the inferences we draw from tests. Most standardized tests are only a sample of items and objectives from a larger content domain. We infer from performance on this sample, to performance on the domain as a whole. If we improve student performance on the specific content and format of the test items without also improving the student's mastery of the broader domain, then we get an inaccurate picture of the student's achievement.

Appropriate test preparation practices under this standard include:

- General instruction on objectives not limited to specific test content.
- General instruction on test-taking skills
- Instruction and practice with content using a variety of formats.

Inappropriate test preparation practices under this standard include:

- Instruction only on specific test content
- Practice on current, previous, or parallel forms of the test
- Instruction using only the same format as test items.

Appropriate test administration practices under this standard include:

- Prior to testing, talking with students about the purpose of the test and explaining its overall structure, pace, and format
- Being sure students understand the directions for each section of the test
- Following scripted instructions in administration manual

Inappropriate test administration practices under this standard include:

- Coaching students or indicating in any way that their answer choices may be wrong or should be reconsidered
- Stopping in the middle of the test to give students instruction on content they are having difficulty with on the test
- Changing the time allotment on a timed test