

Research Plan for the Consolidation of Examinations Required of California Teachers

Professional Services Division
August 13-14, 2003

Executive Summary

Currently, teacher candidates are required to pass several different examinations in order to complete the requirements set forth by the California Education Code. Senate Bill 2042 (Alpert and Mazzoni, Chapter 548, Statutes of 1998) calls for the Commission to ensure that teacher preparation and assessment is fully aligned to the K-12 student academic content standards (Education Code Section 44259(b)(5) and Section 60605). The law also requires that teacher candidate assessment be streamlined. In an effort to streamline assessment, Commission staff discusses how to explore options for consolidating current exam programs.

Fiscal Impact Summary

The Commission budget supports the costs of these activities and no budget augmentation is needed.

Policy Issues to be Addressed

Should the Commission explore the consolidation of the different examinations now required of California teacher candidates seeking a to Multiple Subject Teaching Credential?

Option

Direct Commission staff to conduct:

- a) A thorough study of consolidating the criterion-referenced examination requirements for Multiple Subject Teaching Credential candidates: CBEST, CSET and RICA.

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Summary

Current Education Code directs Multiple Subject Teaching Credential candidates to take and pass several, rigorous examinations to meet preliminary credential requirements. Typically, a candidate must pass a basic skills test, pass a reading instruction examination and, based on the federal Public Law 107-110: No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), pass a multiple subject examination. (The respective examinations used currently are the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST), Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA), and California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET): Multiple Subjects.)

Senate Bill 2042 (Alpert and Mazzoni, Chapter 548, Statutes of 1998) calls for the Commission to ensure that teacher preparation and assessment is fully aligned to the K–12 student academic content standards (Education Code Section 44259(b)(5) and Section 60605). The law also requires that teacher candidate assessments be streamlined. In an effort to streamline testing, Commission staff would need to explore options for consolidating current exam programs.

Concerns raised regarding the number of tests currently required

Few have argued that multiple subject teacher candidates should not be required to demonstrate competency in basic skills, subject matter, and reading instruction. However, candidates, university faculty, representatives of the media, and policymakers have expressed concern about the number of separate exams that teacher candidates are required to take as well as the time and effort devoted to the system that calls for several separate examinations.

It is important to note that one goal of consolidating the exams currently required of multiple subject candidates is to decrease the costs of testing for candidates. It is also important to note that the proposed consolidation of examinations for licensure would become one route to satisfy examination requirements for a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential.

The Commission will want to continue to make the separate exams (CBEST, RICA and CSET) available to candidates because they are used to meet requirements for other types of credentials. The eventual outcome would be to have a consolidated examination available to multiple subject candidates and to provide the examination in “components” to allow candidates, if they so desire, to take each component separately. For example, if a candidate wanted to pass the basic skill component in order to qualify as a substitute teacher, he or she would not be required to retake that component when pursuing a preliminary teaching credential

Current testing requirements for Multiple Subject Teaching Credential candidates

Candidates for a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential are required to pass tests to verify basic skills, subject matter competence, and reading instruction skills competence. The details of those tests are described below.

Basic skills (EC §44252) - The California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) assesses basic reading, writing, and mathematics skills found to be important for teaching in California public schools. Passage of the CBEST is required for all Multiple Subject Teaching Credential candidates. This requirement is generally fulfilled before admittance to a teacher preparation program. This examination is also used to verify basic skills for other teaching and services credentials and for employment purposes.

Subject matter (EC §44281) - The California Subject Examinations for Teachers: Multiple Subjects (CSET: Multiple Subject) is a current option to verify subject matter competence for self-contained classroom teacher candidates who do not complete an approved subject matter program in liberal studies. Candidates who choose this option must attain a passing score before entering the student teaching portion of their teacher preparation program. This examination is also an option used to verify subject matter competency for special education credential candidates.

Reading instruction (EC §44283) - The Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) is required for all California-trained Multiple Subject Teaching Credential candidates and verifies possession of the knowledge and skills important for the provision of effective reading instruction for K–8 students. Candidates generally fulfill this requirement during or after completion of their teacher preparation program. This examination is also a requirement for special education credential candidates.

The chart in Appendix A provides a brief description of the current requirements that define the Commission's existing testing programs. The chart provides the type of test, the purpose of the test, the education code, when multiple subject credential candidates are required to take the test, and the test fee. The final column addresses whether or not the candidate has an option other than passing the exam. Currently multiple subject credential candidates have the option of completing an approved liberal studies subject matter program instead of taking an examination to demonstrate their subject matter competency, however, under the new federal law, the No Child Left Behind Act, this will no longer be an option in California for multiple subject credential candidates.

Commission test development process

The development process for all tests used by the Commission for a certification purpose is comprehensive and rigorous. California K-12 teachers, teacher educators, and administrators are involved throughout the test development process as described below. This includes:

- a) A survey of educators throughout California to determine the primary skill areas necessary for effective teaching (job analysis) from which the test specifications are developed and aligned with K-12 Academic Content Standards and other regional and/or national standards as appropriate;

- b) A large-scale field-review of the test specifications focusing on their accuracy, fairness, clarity, and job relevance (validity study);
- c) Development of test items, review by panels of California K-12 teachers, teacher educators, and administrators to ensure accuracy, and field testing of those items by a representative sample of teacher candidates;
- d) A bias review of the test specifications and items by panels of California K-12 teachers, teacher educators, and administrators to ensure fairness to candidates from all backgrounds;
- e) Standard-setting activities by panels of California K-12 teachers, teacher educators, and administrators to determine the appropriate passing scores for the tests; and
- f) Periodic review of test validity and alignment to K-12 Academic Content Standards approximately every five years or as deemed necessary.

Research study implementation plan

In order to create a consolidated examination for multiple subject candidates, Commission staff would pursue a thorough investigation of technical measurement issues and questions, explore new testing formats including the feasibility of an on-line examination option, and consult periodically throughout the process with stakeholders for their professional advice.

Commission staff would engage in the following research strategies during the next six-month time period:

- conduct periodic consultation with stakeholders;
- conduct periodic consultation with testing experts and testing vendors;
- research the Education Code for possible future revisions in relation to how candidates are assessed for licensure and how fees are determined;
- study current test forms and structures used in California and elsewhere for potential reconfiguration or redesign;
- study potential linkages between current criterion reference tests (CBEST, CSET, RICA);
- connect federal teacher testing development efforts to state led initiatives;
- conduct a cost analysis and feasibility study;
- study the possible impact of a consolidated examination on the educational community, candidates, and quality of instruction over time; and
- align the potential consolidated examination with the requirements of the federal *No Child Left Behind Act*

Timeline for research and development

The process of carefully examining what it would entail to consolidate CBEST, CSET and RICA could take up to six months. Staff could be prepared to present a fuller, more articulated plan to the Commission in January 2004. After a fuller plan is presented for the Commission's

review and, if approved, staff anticipates the consolidation of examinations to take approximately one year.

The first phase, lasting about six months and completed with the support of a contractor, would include designing a revised test structure and examining currently existing CBEST, CSET and RICA item banks. In the following six months, the test developer and Commission staff would need to pilot and field test the newly configured instrument (see the detail in the above section for the steps of test development). If staff finds a solution to creating a more efficient, less time consuming, and potentially less costly instrument, a new consolidated examination could be ready for administration by January 2005.

In summary, consolidation of exams would continue the efforts of the Commission in several key areas and may result in the following short-term and long-term multiple benefits to Multiple Subject Teaching Credential candidates, preparation programs, policymakers and the public:

- Streamline examination requirements for to Multiple Subject Teaching Credential candidates by restructuring current examinations into one that measures basic skills, subject matter and the knowledge necessary to teach reading.
- Lower entry-level examination costs to candidates. to Multiple Subject Teaching Credential candidates would pay a single fee for the consolidated examination and would be able to take the examination at one time, in one place.
- Provide consistent and transportable data to Multiple Subject Teaching Credential candidates.
- Provide longitudinal, uniform data and research to assist in future policy development.
- Provide a valid examination that is aligned to other national examinations to meet comparability criteria and potentially ease out of state teacher requirements for Multiple Subject Teaching Credential candidates in California.

An option for consideration

Direct Commission staff to conduct:

- a) A thorough study of consolidating the criterion-referenced examination requirements for Multiple Subject Teaching Credential candidates: CBEST, CSET and RICA.

Appendix A
Key Examinations used for the Multiple Subject Teaching Credential

Key Examinations Used for the Multiple Subject Teaching Credential

Type	Current Test	Purpose	Other uses	Ed code/ description	When needed		Cost	Option available?
					CA trained	Out-of-state		
Basic Skills	California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST)	To verify proficiency in basic English reading and writing, and in basic mathematical skills for educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency and other permits • employment • Single Subject and other teaching and services credentials 	44252(b) “demonstrated proficiency in basic reading, writing, and mathematics skills in the English language”	<p>Take prior to admission to the program</p> <p>Pass prior to earning initial credential</p>	<p>Employment: during first year of preliminary</p> <p>Credential: before issuance of professional clear credential</p>	\$41	None
Subject Matter	California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET) : Multiple Subjects	To verify subject matter competence in liberal studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Specialist Instruction Credential 	<p>44281 “to assure minimum levels of subject matter knowledge by all certified personnel regardless of the pattern and place of preparation”</p> <p>44282(b) “A general subject matter examination authorizing teaching multiple subjects shall include an examination of the candidate’s knowledge of the following areas: language studies, literature, mathematics, science, social studies, history, the arts, physical education, and human development.”</p>	Pass all required tests prior to advancing to student teaching or to obtaining intern certification	Pass prior to obtaining the professional clear credential	\$216	<p>CA trained: Yes, liberal studies subject matter program</p> <p>Out-of-state: Yes, liberal studies subject matter program, or out-of-state experience or education</p> <p>Note: This will change under NCLB.</p>

	Current Test	Purpose	Other uses	Ed code/ description	When needed		Cost	Option available?
					CA trained	Out-of-state		
Reading Instruction	Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) (Available as <i>either</i> the Written Examination (WE) or Video Performance Assessment (VPA))	To verify knowledge and skills necessary for effective teaching of reading	option to reading methods course for those who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • out-of-state trained, or • adding an authorization 	44283(b) “to measure an individual's knowledge, skill, and ability relative to effective reading instruction...of first-time applicants...that the commission determines to be essential to reading instruction and shall be consistent with the state's reading curriculum framework adopted after July 1, 1996, and the Reading Program Advisory published by the State Department of Education in 1996.”	Pass prior to earning initial credential	not needed	WE: \$134 VPA: \$226	None