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Information

General Session

Public Study Session on the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) and the Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA), as Required by SB 1209 (Chapter 517, Statutes of 2006)

AGENDA INSERT

Executive Summary: This agenda insert contains the letters received by Commission regarding the study session on the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) and the Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA).

Recommended Action: For information only.

Presenter: Yvonne Novelli, Assistant Consultant, Professional Services Division, and Phyllis Jacobson, Administrator, Professional Services Division

Strategic Plan Goal: 1

Promote educational excellence through the preparation and certification of professional educators.

- ◆ Sustain high quality standards for the preparation of professional educators.
- ◆ Sustain high quality standards for the performance of credential candidates.

February 2007

Cheryl Hickey
California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
1900 Capitol Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95814
FAX (916) 445-0800

Dear Ms. Hickey:

As a reviewer of the proposed revision of RICA, I predict that this revised test will lead the nation as a test of scientifically based reading research. Below is a 1/31/07 Education Daily article that reports on the abysmal state of teacher assessments with respect to SBRR. I believe over time not going forward with the proposed excellent revision of RICA will set back student reading achievement in California. Using other flawed assessments or having a small number of items on reading in a larger new test will undermine accountability for prospective teachers. Why should California hold k-12 students accountable for learner to read while not holding teachers accountable for having the knowledge to teach reading?



Douglas Carnine
5455 Saratoga
Eugene, OR 97405

Teachers & Principals

'Scientifically based' reading not measured by teachers' tests

By Stephen Sawchuk | Education Daily | January 31, 2007

Research shows that few states' licensure exams for elementary school teachers properly assess whether teachers have been instructed in the five components of effective reading identified by the 2000 **National Reading Panel** report.

Those five components, which include phonics and phonemic awareness, form the basis of scientifically based reading research, a hallmark of the No Child Left

Behind Act's Reading First program. Early studies found Reading First has significant positive effects for low-achieving students.

With few states actually testing teachers on their knowledge of SBRR instruction, however, federal teacher testing requirements in NCLB and the Higher Education Act have done little to supplement Reading First's focus.

"The very best way to ensure that teachers aren't entering a classroom lacking the skills they need to teach children how to read is through an assessment," said **Sandi Jacobs**, vice president for policy for the **National Council on Teacher Quality** and former Reading First program specialist.

Researchers **Sandra Stotsky** and **Diana Rigden**, in separate reports, found most states' licensure exams for elementary school teachers do not measure scientifically based reading in any significant depth.

Many states use a standardized exam from ETS's Praxis series for elementary school licensure; Rigden found only one Praxis test measured SBRR and only Tennessee required that test for elementary licensure.

At press time, ETS officials had not returned a call seeking comment.

The issue is not limited to ETS tests; Stotsky found some states commissioned alternate tests, but only a handful of those measured teacher knowledge of SBRR.

In a report last year, NCTQ found only a handful of teacher preparation programs prepared students in SBRR instruction.

"Frequently there is a mismatch between standards and assessments, but this is a case where there isn't one," Jacobs said. "The teacher preparation standards aren't requiring it and the states aren't measuring it."

Reading First puts heavy emphasis on professional development for current teachers, and while some states have used Reading First to leverage changes to their entire teacher preparation pipeline, federal teacher quality requirements do not encourage or require similar connections. For example, NCLB required all states to institute elementary teacher content exams and ED successfully enforced the requirements. But the law did not specify that the tests had to measure SBRR.

Similarly, Title II of the HEA requires states to report the percentages of teachers exiting programs who pass licensure exams, but does not mandate particular cut scores.

"I think when these cut scores are all over the place, it creates the same dilemma we have with adequate yearly progress, where you've got 50 different standards and definitions of proficiency," said **Jane West**, vice president for government relations for the **American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education**.

In fact, Stotsky's research found that, in some states, the combination of little emphasis on SBRR and low cut scores could allow a teacher to miss every question on SBRR and still pass the exam.

With the upcoming reauthorization of NCLB and HEA, **Congress** could have an opportunity to address the issue, possibly requiring states to report a SBRR subscore.

Jacobs, for her part, is optimistic that time and data will leverage more changes in reading instruction.

"As more data comes out of Reading First schools, it's just going to be impossible for states to ignore."

To: Cheryl Hickey
California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
1900 Capital Avenue
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FAX (916) 445-0800

Date: January 31, 2007

From: Anna E. L. Chee, Ph.D.
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Re: CCTC: RICA – TPA Public Study Session

To Whom It May Concern:

As an associate professor who teaches the reading methods course, EDEL 415: Proseminar: Curriculum and Teaching of Reading Language Arts, in the multiple-subject teaching credential program at CSULA, I wish to submit this written comment on the issue, (hopefully) to be shared at the RICA-TPA Public Study Session. I have been teaching this methods course in the program for the past 8 years.

As the course coordinator for the only reading methods course in the program, I have had the challenge of putting and addressing about 95% of the RICA standards and the TPE standards (in the SB 2042 program) in this course. I have also had opportunities to score the RICA essays in Sacramento.

The experiences I have had, with examining the contents of the RICA standards, preparing our students to meet the RICA demands and the TPE standards, supervising how our teacher candidates perform during student teaching, and scoring the RICA essays, allow me to take a perspective on the RICA and TPA standards. Although RICA may still have some of the pitfalls that come with standardized testing, in the end, I strongly believe, that having something like RICA ensures that more California credential candidates receive much more rigorous methods instruction for Reading/Language Arts.

Major reasons why I believe RICA serves our teacher candidates better and should be retained include the following:

- I. The existence of RICA improves the contents of reading/language arts methods course(s):

- RICA pass rates are the only quantitative data that come from credential programs in California and reflect the quality of the whole credential program in various educational institutions.
 - Due to this reason, effort is given to make the contents of reading/language arts methods courses much more rigorous. (If RICA were not in place, I believe that many more teacher candidates will receive a weak curriculum for reading instruction.)
 - Effort is given so that teacher candidates in various sections of the course have access to the same or uniform content (Many sections of the courses in the credential programs are taught by adjuncts who may lack sufficient knowledge or may not be current).
- II. RICA essay questions are well-constructed; they are valid and reliable:
- Most of the RICA essay questions capture and reflect a key instructional cycle:
 - a. assessment(data) analysis
 - b. identification of needs and strengths from assessment results
 - c. identification of effective instructional strategy(ies) that is(are) supported by research and literature
 - Knowledge about and the ability to carry out this instructional cycle are necessary in becoming an effective teacher of reading/language arts in the classroom setting.
 - This instructional cycle reflects and is well aligned with the TPE and TPA standards of the multiple subject credential program.
 - The RICA standards incorporated into the RICA essay questions are aligned with the research and literature such as the National Reading Panel Report. That is, the essay questions incorporate the idea that key areas within reading, such as phonemic awareness, letter recognition, the alphabetic principle, concepts about print, comprehension, phonics, vocabulary, and literary elements need to be taught ambitiously to all students.
- III. The existence of RICA has a strong positive effect on being able to develop teacher candidates who will be able to successfully teach reading and language arts skills and strategies in diverse classrooms:
- In today's society, there exist many K-8 students who come to school with underdeveloped general skills and knowledge in reading/language arts. These students will benefit from teachers who can deliver instruction that reflect the RICA standards.
 - In California classrooms, there exist many English learners, who need explicit and ambitious instruction in English and in the reading/language arts areas. Teachers who have passed the RICA will be much better equipped to teach reading and language arts skills and strategies to English learners.

For the reasons I have listed above, based on my personal and professional experiences, I believe that RICA and TPA standards serve an important role as an aspect of a rigorous, developmentally sequenced credential program. I hope that my views will be shared at the study session. If you have any questions about my comments in this letter, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,


Anna E. L. Chee, Ph.D.

February 2, 2007

Cheryl Hickey
Commission Offices
1900 Capitol Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Hickey:

I strongly urge the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing to retain the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) as a separate assessment.

If every child in California is to succeed as a reader, it is essential for all teachers to have a firm grasp of current and confirmed research about the five major elements of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Because RICA tests teacher candidates' knowledge about these components, as well as their abilities and skills to plan, deliver and assess reading instruction, this examination is a key tool in California's systemic and calibrated approach to improve teachers' basic competence in the most crucial aspect of their profession: ensuring that every child will read at or above grade level.

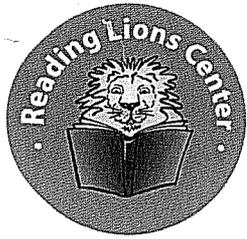
Therefore, I do not support incorporating the comprehensive assessment of these complex teaching skills into the Teacher Performance Assessment. Teaching reading truly is "rocket science" and cannot be adequately assessed as part of a list of other performance-based assessments.

Very truly yours,



Marilyn Astore, Past Chair

California Curriculum Development and Instructional Materials Commission



January 30, 2007

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
1900 Capitol Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Members of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on the implications of incorporating the assessment of ability, skills, and knowledge related to effective reading instruction that is currently assessed by the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) within the teacher performance assessment (TPA). I am pleased to have been recently asked by CTC to review the new draft Content Specifications for the RICA and applaud your work in this area. Since the development of the initial RICA test specifications in 1998, reading research and our field experiences of the last eight years have certainly provided new insights worthy of consideration.

I encourage you to continue to require the RICA as a separate examination for the following reasons. Teaching children to read is a complex and challenging responsibility. Establishing and assessing minimum competencies in reading instruction for teacher candidates is critically important. Equally important is ensuring to the greatest extent possible, that the assessment of these competencies is valid, consistently measured, and uniformly interpreted and reported. The content knowledge that teacher candidates need to demonstrate before licensing is far too broad and complex to be adequately measured through a performance-based assessment such as the TPA.

The foundation of teacher knowledge related to reading instruction should be a deep understanding of the five (5) key domains of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension); the relationship among the key domains; and their importance in the process of learning to read. In addition, teacher candidates need to possess a basic knowledge about parts of speech, syntax, aspects of text organization and genre, how to use instructional materials, how to link various levels of language organization, and how to assess in ways that inform instruction (Moats 2007).

Recent scientific research findings clearly show that the degree to which teachers possess content knowledge, skills, and abilities related to high quality instruction has a direct and profound impact on student academic achievement (Kroese, Mather, and Sammons 2006; Spear-Swerling and Brucker, 2004; Hanushek 1992; and Saunders and Rivers, 1996).

Our mission is to improve academic achievement by building district, school, and classroom capacity to ensure that district-adopted, standards-based programs are effectively delivered to all students.

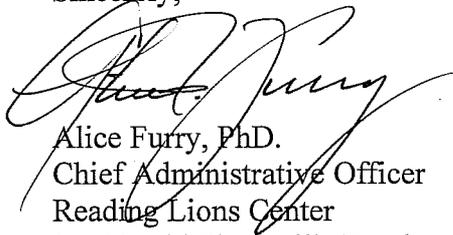
Research by Hanushek (1992) found that the impact of variances in high versus low teacher performance on student achievement in a single academic year was more than one full year standardized achievement. Rivkin et al. (2001) found that high quality teachers over a period of five consecutive years can overcome the achievement gap in mathematics between high and low income 7th grade students.

Teachers entering the classroom must have knowledge about current and confirmed research regarding how children learn to read and the characteristics of effective, high quality reading instruction in order to be successful. They should know why, when, and how to apply this knowledge in planning, delivering, and assessing the effectiveness of their instruction. Teachers need be able to recognize atypical development in their students who are struggling readers and know how and when to intervene. Teachers must also possess a willingness to use instructional approaches that are founded in research rather than personal preference, philosophy, or passing fads.

Districts continue to grapple with issues related to new teacher preparation and retention. Newly licensed teachers who possess necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities related to reading instruction are critical to California student achievement across all subject areas. Teachers who begin with a strong foundation of knowledge gained from an academically rigorous preparation program are more likely to be successful in the classroom, thus more likely to remain in the profession.

The relationship between effective, high quality reading instruction and student achievement in reading language arts and all other core subject areas is firmly established in research and practice. Given the important role that reading instruction plays in student achievement, it is imperative that we continue to administer the RICA to teacher candidates to assure that they are prepared for the challenging responsibility of teaching reading to all children. Adequate assessment is most likely to occur if a separate, comprehensive assessment that focuses solely on reading research and effective instructional practice is administered through a valid, in-depth assessment that assures that all candidates state-wide are evaluated in a consistent manner. Thank you for your consideration of these important issues.

Sincerely,



Alice Furry, PhD.
Chief Administrative Officer
Reading Lions Center
10461 Old Placerville Road
Sacramento, CA 95827

**SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION**FREDRICK A. WENTWORTH
County Superintendent

February 1, 2007

P. David Pearson, Chair
California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
1900 Capitol Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: RICA with TPA

Dear Commissioners;

Thank you for requesting public input regarding whether or not there is redundancy in what is measured by the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment, RICA and the Teaching Performance Assessment, TPA.

We have traveled to Sacramento today to support NOT merging the two teacher assessments. Although each has a place in the preparation and assessment of beginning teachers these assessments serve two distinct and valuable purposes.

Student success in reading is the most significant educational issue facing California's future prosperity. The fundamental skill upon which all formal education depends is reading. The fact that classroom instruction, more than any other factor, is crucial in preventing reading problems, underscores the obligation of teacher preparation programs to provide candidates with a rigorous, research-based curriculum and the need for the state licensing authority to assess that knowledge.

Therefore, the RICA cannot be diluted, but must be a tool by which we design and develop our teacher preparation programs. The license earned by teachers in California tells parents and the general public that our children are receiving effective reading instruction by knowledgeable teachers.

Maintain the integrity of Reading Instruction Competence Assessment, RICA by keeping it separate from the Teaching Performance Assessment, TPA.

Respectfully,

Constance J. Tate
Director, Regional Technical Assistance Center

Cyndi McDaniel
Literacy Coach, Keyes Union Elementary

Deirdre Marsh-Girardi
Coordinator II, Regional Technical Assistance Center

Melissa Phillips
Literacy Coach, Romero Elementary

Shela Seaton
Coordinator II, RSDSS

Patty Bettencourt
Literacy Coach, Gustine Elementary

2/1/07

To: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing

From: Credential Counselors and Analysts of California*

Re: RICA-TPA Public Study Session

Concerns should the RICA be combined with the TPA:

1. Multiple Versions of the TPA: It is virtually certain that in the near future there will be at least two approved versions of the TPA in use by university credential programs: the CA TPA and the PACT. It is possible that additional versions of the TPA will be developed and approved in at a later time. The RICA measure would need to be re-configured for each version of the TPA. Would this cause extra cost and confusion?
2. Different Programs: IHE's offering both Multiple and Single Subject teacher preparation programs would be required to maintain two versions of whichever TPA they were using, one including the RICA measure for Multiple Subject Candidates and a second without it for Single Subject candidates, who are not held to RICA.
3. Special Education: Education Specialist credential candidates are required to pass RICA but they do not take the TPA as it is not required for the education specialist programs. If only Education Specialist candidates need the stand alone RICA, the costs of administration would be excessively high due to the much smaller number of test takers. Would this result in the RICA exam being priced out of reach of credential candidates?
4. Validation and Consistency: As a stand alone exam, the issues of test validity and consistency in scoring of the RICA are laid solely on the company administering the exam. If the TPA and the RICA are combined, such responsibility would shift to almost a hundred IHE's, districts and county offices with multiple subject and/or education specialist programs. Would training competent reading specialists to score the RICA at the program level would be a burden, especially at IHE's without reading programs and at districts and county offices?
5. Independent Monitoring: The RICA was created to answer a concern about the assessment of ability, skills and knowledge related to effective reading instruction in multiple subject and education specialist programs in the state. Will handing the administration and the scoring of the exam back to the programs jeopardize the important independent monitoring function?
Is an objective evaluation of expertise the goal? It would appear that moving the process to the TPA would create a more subjective evaluation. What value does the objective RICA evaluation have over the more subjective TPA? Is a balance between the objective and the subjective desirable as it appears that the current system may provide that balance. It also seems that by having such a balance, the RICA exam is confirming the training and assessment and conversely the training and assessment is confirmed by the RICA exam.
6. Funding: Administration and scoring the TPA costs money. Will funding be provided to either the state-supported or private teacher preparation programs in the state? Shifting

the costs of the RICA measure to the same programs makes the funding issues worse. There is no way to assure that costs to the students will actually decrease.

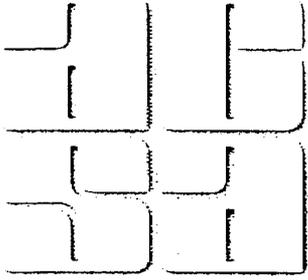
CONCLUSION: SB 1209 mandates study of combining of tests to eliminate the amount of testing required of credential candidates and to reduce costs to those candidates. Combining CBEST and CSET and/or offering other options to the CBEST makes sense to achieve this goal. In the case of RICA it appears from the above concerns that combining the RICA into the TPA could result in more testing and higher costs to credential candidates and to programs that offer credentials. Would a better solution for RICA be to retain the current testing instrument?

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input.

Tedi Kostka
President
CCAC
(619) 260-4821
tkostka@sandiego.edu

* Credential Counselors and Analysts of California (CCAC) is a non-profit professional organization of credentialing personnel from universities, school districts and county offices of education in the state of California. The organization is dedicated to the dissemination of credential information and provides liaison services to agencies involved in the credentialing process for California school personnel. The website and a member list serve is maintained to distribute time sensitive and important information.

CCAC committed to furthering the knowledge of its members by maintaining an informational network between certification personnel at California institutions of higher education, school districts, county offices of education and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC). CCAC represents the link between the CCTC and teachers, students and the public in the state of California. Members interact with students at universities who seek certification, with teachers employed at school districts, with those seeking employment and with personnel involved in assigning teachers to appropriate grade levels and subject areas. CCAC, in collaboration with the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, sponsors and organizes an annual fall conference in Sacramento and regional workshops in the spring.



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January 30, 2007

Dr. P. David Pearson, Chair
Commission on Teacher Credentialing
1900 Capitol Ave.
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re:GS-2I: Study Session on the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment and the Teaching Performance Assessment

Dear Chair Pearson,

The Association of California School Administrators respectfully requests that the Commission consider the interests of our members as you review the potential merger of the RICA and TPA.

1. All considerations must focus primarily on the candidate and the potential that any action would have to streamline the credential process, avoid redundancies and reduce the time and cost of obtaining a credential. The impact on the CTC staff and/or program providers should be a secondary consideration.

2. All assessments must ensure that candidates can demonstrate sufficient skills, knowledge and abilities to successfully teach a diverse population.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input into this and other topics and look forward to a continued dialogue on this topic.

Sincerely,

Sharon S. Robison, Ed.D.
Consultant

C. Dale Janssen, Interim Executive Director

San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools
601 North E Street, San Bernardino, CA 92410-3093
Herbert R. Fischer, Ph.D., Superintendent

**SCHOOL DISTRICT PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATORS *of*
SAN BERNARDINO & SAN DIEGO COUNTIES**

January 22, 2007

Cheryl Hickey
California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
1900 Capitol Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95814

**SUBJECT: LETTER OF SUPPORT TO MOVE THE RICA INTO THE
TEACHER PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

Honorable Commissioners:

The teaching of reading to our children is the greatest educational responsibility we have. Determining that every credential candidate is fully qualified to meet that obligation is of the highest importance.

The relocation of the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) into the teacher training process, by way of the Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA), will locate this responsibility where it belongs. Assessment is an important part of the teaching process. Located in this environment it will provide for remediation that can lead to competence. This will be a more effective way to empower our teachers than simply requiring a pass or fail examination.

We strongly encourage the Commission to establish the importance of successful teacher training by instituting the RICA as a part of the teacher preparation process by including it in the TPA requirement.

Sincerely,



Bruce Kitchen
CCTC/School District Liaison

Resource Specialist
Folsom Lake High School
955 Riley
Folsom, CA 95630

1-18-7

Cheryl Hickey
California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
1900 Capitol Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95814

To Whom it May Concern:

On the subject of incorporating the assessment of effective reading instruction with the teacher performance assessment, I am in support. The teacher performance assessment is an excellent tool for determining teacher effectiveness and should be fully utilized. As a teacher in a high school and student in an internship I can attest to the thoroughness of the teacher performance assessment.

Furthermore, subject matter competence tests such as the CBEST and CSET undermine the credibility of high schools and colleges who issue degrees that confer the very competencies these tests attempt to confer. For example a graduate from a 4 year university with a degree in math, has to take the math CSET before he can apply for a teaching credential. It is a redundant and frustrating process that steers potential teachers away from the profession and slows applicants journey from college, or employment in another field, to the classroom.

Integrating the RICA with the teacher performance assessment will streamline the process for becoming a teacher in a California school and be a needed step in reforming a process already beleaguered by endless hoop-jumping.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brendan Peacock", written over a horizontal line.

Brendan Peacock

January 18, 2007

Cheryl Hickey
California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
1900 Capitol Avenue
Sacramento, CA. 95814
FAX: 916-445-0800

Dear Ms. Hickey:

I was an original RICA panel member and served on the first RICA panel for seven years. I am now on the RICA Redesign Team and wanted to share with you that I do not think it is a good idea to make the RICA part of the Teaching Performance Assessment. I have never seen students study as hard as they do in each of the reading courses since we have had the RICA be a required and a separate test. I am proud that our students getting a credential in special and regular education need to study hard and learn the information that is required to be a good beginning teacher of reading in California. I know my students know their material after taking two reading courses and preparing after taking the courses to take the RICA. It is a serious exam and students take this task with utmost seriousness. I recall when I first came to California and started teaching at California State University, Sacramento. the students studied and knew their information but not like they do now. We have competencies for the RICA which are aligned with the English Language Arts Standards and I have heard more reading professors tell me they are better organized now to teach reading because of all that has been done to get every student candidate ready to teach reading and pass the state-wide reading exam (RICA).

Having the RICA be part of the Teaching Performance Assessment will result in different campuses doing different things and there will also be much inconsistency across each campus. Also, some campuses do not even have the TPA organized or developed. I can just see reading faculty and other faculty saying (if the RICA becomes part of the TPA) that the reading assessment could be held off until the TPA is completed or they may decide to assess in a very watered down fashion through the proposed TPA. Also there is no funding in the Cal State system to fund the TPA and allowing Colleges of Education to be responsible for assessing the RICA competencies through the TPA would probably not be accomplished because there are professors who oppose having our students who are becoming teachers take any state-wide exams.

I am hopeful that the RICA remain a separate exam and not become part of the TPA because it is currently working for our students and the test is also being revised to include even more assessment information in each of the critical areas that the National Reading Panel has suggested through scientific evidence are most important to teach in reading. Also, making it part of the TPA will not offer consistency to our campuses and will more than likely not even be completed because TPA's are not even organized in many campuses and departments across our state. How could we place such an important

part of reading and teacher certification in the hands of so many different professors who would gladly not have any forms of assessments for our students? This makes no sense to me at all.

I am committed to making certain our candidates receiving a credential in multiple subject and special education credentials be the best prepared teachers they can possibly be. Keeping the RICA as a separate exam just like it is presently works very well because everyone needs to be assessed on very similar competencies and everyone must demonstrate they have a beginning understanding of teaching reading to many of our diverse students in California schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elva Durán".

Elva Durán, Ph.D.

Professor

Special Education & Language and Literacy



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TO: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
 FROM: John Shefelbine, Professor
 RE: Replacing the RICA with the TPA
 DATE: 2/1/07

I am writing to express my concerns about replacing the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) with the teacher performance assessment (TPA). Over the past 15 years, a major part of my teaching load has involved teaching language and literacy (reading) methods to multiple-subject preservice teachers in the Sacramento region. As the Commission well knows, learning the content of reading and language arts subject matter is a challenging endeavor because of the quantity and complexity of topics that have to be covered in a relatively short amount of time.

While I was quite skeptical about the usefulness of the RICA when it was initially proposed, over the years I have become a "believer" for the following reasons:

Comprehensiveness. Because the written RICA is comprehensive, it has helped both professors and students pay more attention to areas of literacy that, in the past, have often been overlooked (for example, systematic, explicit approaches to teaching beginning reading). We all tend to spend more time on what we know the best and love the most. After RICA arrived, language and literacy faculty at CSUS sat down, compared their syllabi, and actually wrote in codes for RICA objectives to ensure that all domains were covered.

The TPA, on the other hand, seems more focused and less comprehensive. Both the teaching event and the assessment-oriented signature assignment in the language and literacy courses at CSUS entail assessing a student or teaching a particular grade level. Performance on these measures, while important and informative, will not adequately assess the breadth of teacher knowledge across grade levels. Because assessments influence what professors teach and what student teachers study, teachers in upper grades will be less likely to study lower-grade content (and vice versa).

Motivation. Many student teachers work hard in my courses because they are interested in the subject matter, want to be the best at what they do, and/or are not burdened down by a job on the side. For others who, for whatever reasons, are less involved in the course, RICA clearly is a "motivator" that helps reading methods courses get their "fair share" of students' limited study time outside of class.

Validity. I regard RICA as an assessment of "basic," foundational knowledge of reading and language arts. It measures knowledge that is "necessary but not sufficient." Relatively few students in my courses receive "Cs" (considered failing for graduate work). But those that do are much more likely to fail RICA. This pattern suggests that RICA is indeed doing what it was intended to do: helping ensure that beginning teachers are skilled enough to be responsible for teaching students to read, write, comprehend, and think.

Respectfully,


 John Shefelbine, PhD