
3G

Information

Professional Services Committee

Alternative Subject Matter Competency Assessment for Additional Less Commonly Taught Languages Other Than English (LOTE)

Executive Summary: This agenda item presents a proposed plan for an alternative subject matter competency assessment process to meet the needs of teachers of those less commonly taught languages other than English for which there is currently no CSET: LOTE subject matter examination and no single subject matter preparation program available.

Recommended Action: For information only

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Strategic Plan Goal: 1

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

- ◆ Sustain high quality standards for the preparation and performance of professional educators and for the accreditation of credential programs.

Alternative Subject Matter Competency Assessment for Additional Less Commonly Taught Languages Other Than English (LOTE)

Introduction

This agenda item presents a proposed plan for an alternative assessment approach to meet candidate needs for establishing subject matter competency in those less commonly taught Languages Other Than English (LOTE) for which the Commission does not have a California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET) examination and for which there are no single subject matter preparation programs available. The item also raises some related questions for further discussion and stakeholder input.

Background

The Commission currently offers seventeen different CSET: LOTE subject matter competency examinations:

- American Sign Language
- Arabic (as of November 2007)
- Armenian (as of November 2007)
- Cantonese (as of November 2007)
- Farsi (as of November 2007)
- Filipino
- French
- German
- Hmong (as of November 2007)
- Japanese
- Khmer (as of November 2007)
- Korean
- Mandarin
- Punjabi
- Russian
- Spanish
- Vietnamese

Although the list is extensive, this set of language-related subject matter examinations as a whole does not cover the full range of languages taught in California public schools. Current and prospective Single Subject and/or bilingual teachers of these other languages (for example, Hindi, Turkish, and Italian) do not now have a means of establishing their subject matter competency. Without being able to establish subject matter competency, these individuals cannot either obtain an initial credential in this area of authorization or, if they already hold a valid California credential, cannot add the particular language authorization to that credential.

It is impractical and not fiscally feasible for the Commission to develop, validate, and maintain a CSET: LOTE examination for all of these less commonly taught languages. The number of candidates needing to establish subject matter competency in some of these languages may be less than ten on an annual statewide basis, and in some years there may be no candidates in a given less commonly taught language. Therefore, staff is suggesting an alternative assessment approach be used for these less commonly taught languages.

Education Code Section 44280 authorizes the Commission to establish and implement guidelines for alternative assessments for languages other than English performed by organizations that are expert in the language and culture assessed. It is important, however, that any alternative assessment process for subject matter competency be of the same rigor and cover the same content specifications for languages other than English that are assessed by the CSET: LOTE standardized examinations or covered within approved single subject matter preparation programs.

Proposed Alternative LOTE Subject Matter Competency Assessment Plan

The proposed alternative assessment plan would incorporate two types of candidate assessments: a standardized assessment adapted from current CSET: LOTE examination subtests, and an alternative assessment conducted by organizations expert in the target language and culture. Taken as a whole, these two complementary approaches will assure that candidates in the less commonly taught languages are assessed with the same rigor and to the same content specifications as all other Single Subject LOTE and/or bilingual authorization candidates who establish their subject matter competency via examination or by subject matter program completion.

A. Alternative LOTE Subject Matter Assessment Format

Part I: Standardized Assessment

The standardized assessment would use the “template” examination format already established for other less commonly taught languages other than English (e.g., Filipino, Khmer, and Arabic). The standardized assessment would include elements from the following CSET: LOTE examination subtests:

- Culture of the target language group (applicable generic questions from the CSET: LOTE Subtest I and/or the CSET: LOTE Subtest V)
- General Linguistics (from CSET: LOTE Subtest I)
- Literary and Cultural Texts, Traditions and Analysis (includes oral traditions in place of texts for nontext languages) (*includes applicable questions and some adaptation from the CSET: LOTE Subtest I for less commonly taught languages*)

Part II: Local Alternative Assessment for Target Language Skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing)

- Candidates’ target language skills in the four skills areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing would be assessed by qualified local personnel rather than by a standardized language assessment.

The local assessor would be required to be a faculty member at a college or university, or have the equivalent training and experience. The assessment must be based on guidelines provided by the Commission that are aligned with the ACTFL proficiency standards for that group of world languages. The assessor agency/organization would apply to the Commission for approval to administer the alternative language assessment, including in its application documentation of the qualifications of the specific assessor(s) for each language.

The assessor agency/organization would need to notify the Commission as to the status of examinees who passed the alternative language portion of the assessment. Candidates who passed both the standardized assessment described in Part I above plus the alternative assessment described in Part II would be deemed to have met the subject matter competency requirement by examination.

B. Benefits of this Approach:

- Allows for inclusion of an unlimited number of languages
- Relatively minimal cost to the Commission for a one-time development of review/adaptations to two CSET: LOTE subtests
- Is proactive on the part of the Commission rather than waiting for legislation or other requirements that could potentially lower the Commission's LOTE standards for certain candidates
- Is psychometrically defensible and relatively equal to the candidate requirements for languages for which there are CSET examinations

C. Proposed Modified Alternative Assessment Plan for Native American Languages

Native American languages present a special challenge for establishing candidate subject matter competency. The alternative process described in Parts I and II above will not necessarily work for these particular languages, given that many of the qualified individuals available to assess candidates' language skills would not necessarily be faculty members but would instead establish their expertise based on local training and/or experience and/or tribal status.

The Commission has already received a request from the Humboldt area for addressing the needs of teachers of three local Native American languages (including Yurok and Hoopa) who need to establish their subject matter competency for both credentialing and NCLB-related Highly Qualified Teacher purposes. Other states such as Idaho, New Mexico, and Washington have recognized the unique situation of Native American language groups by modifying their credentialing assessment requirements to better meet the needs of candidates from these language and cultural groups.

For the Native American languages group, therefore, staff is proposing a modified alternative assessment plan. Under the modified assessment plan, Native American candidate subject matter competency assessment would be done entirely through experts in the particular language and culture identified by the authorized tribal authority. The tribal authority, either alone or in collaboration with a local education agency, would identify the particular assessor(s) who were qualified to administer such an assessment, and would apply to the Commission for approval as the "expert organization" under Education Code Section 44280. Candidates who passed this

alternative assessment would be deemed to have met the subject matter competency requirement by examination for that particular Native American language.

Next Steps

This item will be brought back to the Commission for action at the December 2007 meeting. The proposed alternative assessment processes, if adopted by the Commission, would address the subject matter competency requirement for teacher candidates in the less commonly taught languages other than English for which a CSET: LOTE examination and a subject matter preparation program do not exist.

Further Issues for Discussion

Some related issues, however, remain for further discussion:

- **Candidate records**

Who would maintain candidate records of candidates who met the subject matter competency requirement through an alternative approach?

- **Lack of approved teacher preparation programs for the less commonly taught languages**

Currently there are no single subject matter preparation programs or single subject teacher preparation programs approved to work with candidates in these less commonly taught languages. There are also few to no teacher preparation programs approved to work with candidates in the seven new languages for which new CSET: LOTE examinations were required by the state Budget Act of 2006 and have already been implemented by the Commission between 2006-07. Once candidates pass any of these subject matter competency examinations, how would they then be able to complete a teacher preparation program for a single subject foreign language credential?

An example of this situation is that of ASL candidates. Once candidates pass the CSET: ASL examination, they do not have an approved teacher preparation program available to address their needs. Even if there were an approved teacher preparation program, program sponsors are unlikely to have staff members familiar with ASL as well as with others of the less commonly taught languages and their specialized foreign language methodology considerations.

- **Foreign language methodology for candidates who hold another type of credential but want to add an authorization for a less commonly taught language**

A related consideration to the issue of foreign language credentialing is that of the candidates' knowledge and ability to implement effective foreign language instruction that is aligned with the K-12 Foreign Language Framework. How could foreign language teaching methodology be addressed for candidates who have a credential in another area unrelated to language education who might qualify for an added foreign language authorization after passing an alternative less commonly taught languages other than English examination?

In order to better address these issues, staff requests that the Commission direct staff to obtain stakeholder input and report back to the Commission with recommendations for future action.