
3F

Information/Action

Fiscal Policy and Planning Committee of the Whole

Validity Study Process and Funding for the RICA Examination

REVISED VERSION

Executive Summary: Staff will present a rationale and description of the proposed RICA examination validation and funding processes.

Recommended Action: Staff seeks the approval to authorize implementation of the RICA Validity Study activities and funding for the study.

Presenters: Phyllis Jacobson, Administrator, Professional Services Division and Crista Hill, Division Director, Fiscal and Business Services Section

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.

Validity Study Process and Funding for the RICA Examination

Introduction

The Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) Examination was first implemented in 1998. The purpose of this examination is to ensure that candidates for the multiple subject credential and the Education Specialist credential have the knowledge, skills, and ability to provide effective reading instruction to California students. The content covered by the examination specifications was based on the most current set of reading frameworks and curriculum documents available at the time the exam was initially developed. These documents were, as specified in Education Code Section 44283(b), the state's reading curriculum framework adopted after July 1, 1996, and the Reading Program Advisory published by the California Department of Education in 1996.

The RICA examination has been in continuous use since 1998. Education Code Section 44283 (b)(2) requires the Commission to "initially and periodically analyze the validity and reliability of the content of the assessment." The validity and reliability of the content of the RICA assessment were analyzed at the time of its initial development eight years ago, and have not been reviewed since that time. Because the RICA is a high-stakes examination used by credential candidates to meet part of their credentialing requirements, it is time for the RICA assessment to be revalidated in light of the new, more current state reading framework and expectations in order to assure that California teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills to implement effective reading instruction in the classroom. Once the content of the RICA examination is revalidated, this content will remain constant even if ultimately the test structure of the RICA examination is changed through legislation.

Background

A. Test Validity Concepts Relevant to the RICA Examination

Tests used in high stakes contexts, such as the RICA, must be valid and reliable for the purposes for which they are being used. In California, the RICA is used to determine if a teacher candidate has the necessary knowledge and skills to provide effective reading instruction to California students. Test validity, however, is a matter of degree, and not an absolute. For example, a test that is valid for use in diagnosing a student's learning problems may not be valid for use in determining if that student has acquired the requisite knowledge and skills for high school graduation. Thus, since the RICA exam is used to assess the knowledge and skills of candidates relative to current reading instruction theory and methods, if the theory and methods of reading instruction change over time, then the RICA test must be revalidated to assure that the validity of the test is maintained.

A major aspect in revalidating a test concerns the test's content validity, as specified in the Education Code. "Content validity" refers to the degree to which the test's content contains a representative and appropriate sample of the topics that the test is intended to measure. A validation study of an examination such as RICA, therefore, looks at the entire domain of content relevant to the test (i.e., the teaching of reading) and makes informed judgments about the degree to which the test specifications reflect the most current knowledge in the field. "Test specifications" refer to the entire range of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by a beginning teacher in a particular field, in this case, the teaching of reading. "Test content" refers to the specific topics covered by items on the test that are derived from the broader range of the test specifications. If there is a discrepancy identified by the panel between the current RICA test specifications and the most current framework, standards and other appropriate references in the field, then the panel of content experts working on the validity study suggests recommendations as to revised test specifications that should be reflected, in turn, in the content of the revised RICA examination.

Not only must tests be validated for the purpose for which the scores are being used, but the examinees' test results must also be reliable. "Test reliability" refers to the degree to which the test provides a consistent measurement of the target knowledge and skills. For example, if an examinee were to repeatedly take the same test, consistent results should be obtained. When considering the reliability of a test, it is important to keep in mind that tests typically measure the performance of an examinee on a given day through a sample of items that represent the entire domain of the content knowledge needed for effective instruction in reading, for example. This sample of content knowledge and skills is used to make informed judgments, or inferences, about an examinee's ability to perform tasks or to apply knowledge that represent the larger or entire domain of reading instruction.

Both test reliability and test validity are required in order to use the test results to make accurate judgments about a candidate's skills or abilities in a high stakes context such as the RICA examination. While tests are typically revalidated after a five year interval, revalidation of a test might occur sooner or later than that time frame depending on how quickly or how much the field related to the test content changes. A typical trigger for an examination revalidation study such as that of RICA, therefore, would be if the content and/or philosophy of effective reading instruction has changed over time.

Since there is a new state framework for reading instruction, now is the appropriate time to perform a validation study on the RICA examination to assure that candidates have the most current knowledge and skills needed to provide effective reading instruction to California students in alignment with the new state framework. Although there is proposed legislation which considers including part or all of the current RICA content in other state examinations, this legislation calls for a feasibility study regarding RICA examination consolidation to be completed by July 1, 2009. Even if the feasibility study were to ultimately support consolidation of the RICA with another examination, it would take several years before a new consolidated examination would be in place for teacher candidates. In the meantime, the RICA examination will continue to be required of and given to all California multiple subject and Education Specialist candidates. Therefore, the RICA examination should be revalidated now to ensure the

continuing validity of this examination until such time as any changes are made regarding consolidation of the test.

B. Test Validation Timelines, Activities, and Responsibilities

Examination validity studies typically takes approximately eighteen months to accomplish because of the complex and detailed nature of the tasks and activities required. Because high stakes examinations such as the RICA need to be legally defensible, the validity process and any subsequent redesign of the examination must be conducted in accordance with rigorous standards for these types of processes.

Validity studies for Commission examinations are carried out by California educators under the Commission's supervision. The Commission's current examination contractor may serve as a facilitator of the planned validation activities. The Executive Director appoints a design team, or panel, of experts in the field, and these content experts are the ones who carry out each of the validation activities. The expert panel meetings are facilitated by the contractor in terms of making arrangements and other logistical support, and providing answers to technical questions posed by the panel. The Commission remains in charge of the entire validation process, receives a final report of the validation study from the contractor at the conclusion of the process, and takes appropriate action regarding the RICA test specification based on the results of the validation study. The Commission owns all of the test items developed for the RICA examination and for any revisions of the RICA examination, including those deriving from the RICA validity study.

At the present time, the Commission has requested, received and reviewed applications from the field to be on the RICA Design Team. Because the Commission did not take action to approve the implementation of the RICA validation study at the April 2006 meeting, the panel applicants have not been notified of their status and panel members have not been appointed by the Executive Director. The initial meeting of the design team that would have taken place in May has been postponed.

If the Commission approves the implementation of the RICA validation study, the Executive Director will appoint the members of the design team, and the revised meeting and activities schedule outlined below will be implemented. The next step in the process will be for the panel members to identify, review and compare the most current reading pedagogy framework, advisories, literature and research to the current RICA test specifications. The following chart indicates the entire process for performing the RICA examination validity study, including each activity, the party/parties responsible, and the current expected time frame.

RICA Examination Validation Study Design

Activity	Responsible	Time Frame
Establish the need for a validity study	CTC	October 2005
Determine the composition of the RICA Design Team	CTC	February 2006
Identify and appoint the Design Team members	CTC	June 2006
Design Team members identify most current knowledge and resources for the teaching of reading	CTC/NES	Summer 2006
Hold two focus groups for input from the field regarding current reading pedagogy, and perform a literature review	CTC/NES	Summer 2006
Meet with Design Team and Bias Review Committee to review possible test specifications	CTC/NES	September 2006
Develop preliminary RICA test specifications based on direction from the Design Team and input from the focus groups	NES	Late Fall 2006
Present focus group input, literature review findings, and preliminary draft test specs to the Design Team	CTC/NES	January 2007
Develop and distribute public input survey to verify validity of the initial draft test specifications	CTC/NES	January-March 2007
Compile public input survey results	CTC/NES	February-April 2007
Design Team revises draft test specifications based on input from public input survey and from review by the Bias Review Committee	CTC/NES	May 2007
Complete final report of the recommended test specifications	NES	August 2007
Commission agenda information item to review recommended RICA test specifications	CTC	August 2007
Commission agenda action item to approve RICA test specifications	CTC	October 2007
Align multiple subject and Education Specialist program standards with K-12 standards, framework and revised RICA test specifications	CTC	Fall 2007
Commission agenda information item to review revised program standards	CTC	February 2008
Commission agenda action item to approve revised program standards	CTC	April 2008
Multiple subject and Education Specialist programs develop, submit for approval, and implement revised courses	CTC	TBD
Initiate RICA item development based on revised test specifications and test structure ^{1/}	CTC/Test Contractor (new contract)	TBD
Revised courses available for at least one term before new RICA exam is initially administered, after which RICA standard setting will take place	CTC/Test Contractor (new contract)	TBD

^{1/} in light of pending legislation, the Commission may wish to revise the test structure of the RICA examination at a later time.

Funding for the RICA Examination Validity Study

The RICA examination was originally scheduled to be revalidated by May 2006. Prior to the current RICA contract, Commission procedure had been to conduct validity studies outside of the examination contract, using funds provided through a 1997 BCP that authorized a \$250,000 allocation within the TDAA account specifically earmarked to support ongoing validity work for Commission-owned examinations. The RICA contract was a pilot for trying out a different process that incorporated revalidation work into the examination contract.

According to the RICA contract, the contractor was to have retained an additional fee of \$5.30 per paid registrant for a period of several years in order to fund the validity study. (The \$5.30 amount would be deducted from the management fee due the commission.). The process of retaining the additional \$5.30 fee was to have begun in 2004-05 and continued through 2005-06. In 2003, however, Commission agenda item PERF-1, presented at the Commission meeting of August 13-14, 2003, proposed a plan for studying the consolidation of several Commission examinations, including the RICA. According to that agenda item, a plan for examining the consolidation of the CBEST, CSET and RICA was to have been presented to the Commission in January 2004 for review, and it was estimated that a revised examination would be ready for administration by January 2005. At that time, it was felt that consolidation of examinations would be on a relatively fast track and that the RICA examination might possibly be changed as early as 2005, thus eliminating the need for a validity study. The contractor was notified that the plans for a validity study were put on hold pending the outcome of the consolidation study and the additional \$5.30 to fund the study did not need to be retained because there was uncertainty regarding the need for a study.

At the present time, however, it is apparent that the potential consolidation and/or modification of the RICA examination will not take place in the immediate future. The potential consolidation of exams is included in Senate Bill 1209 (Scott) currently pending in the legislature which could further affect the timeline. The current RICA examination needs to be revalidated now in order to maintain its reliability and validity. The Commission's budget contains the funds necessary to conduct the RICA validity study within the TDAA earmarked allocation, an allocation which cannot be used for any other purpose than validation studies. However as a result of ongoing discussions with the contractor regarding the necessity of a validity study and the method of its funding, the contractor has agreed to fund the study by retaining the \$5.30 amount provided in the contract beginning with the next administration and will use the amounts retained as full payment for the cost of the validity study.

Recommendation

Staff recommend approval to proceed with the RICA validity study and to fund the study from the \$5.30 per exam amount retained by the Contractor for this purpose.

Staff is available to answer any questions that members of the Commission may have.