

Item 18:

Consider and Take Appropriate Action on Core Subjects EC-6 and Core Subjects 4-8 Certification Exams

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

SUMMARY: This item provides the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) an update on the new Core Subjects EC-6 and Core Subjects 4-8 certification exams that have been administered since January of 2015.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Statutory authority related to the Core Subjects exams is Texas Education Code (TEC) §§21.041(b)(1-5) and 21.048(a).

EFFECTIVE DATE: The new exams were administered for the first time in January 2015.

PREVIOUS BOARD ACTION: The SBEC approved the two-year overlap policy related to the transition from the current Generalist exams to the new Core Subjects exams at the February 2014 SBEC meeting.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:

House Bill 2012, 83rd Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, amended TEC 21.048 to require an assessment of performance in each core subject area for Generalist exams. In response to this legislation, Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff presented an item during the October 2013 meeting that discussed plans to assess only the four core subject areas (English Language Arts and Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies) on both of the new exams for grades EC-6 and grades 4-8. Concerns were expressed during the meeting about Health, Physical Education, and Fine Arts no longer being part of the EC-6 exam and the impact this would have on districts attempting to assign educators in elementary settings across the state. In response to testimony during that meeting, the SBEC instructed TEA staff to explore options to retain the fifth domain on the new EC-6 exam and to also find a way to retain passing performances on sections of both new exams to avoid candidates having to retake all sections at every testing event.

During the February 2014 meeting, TEA staff provided an update on the new exams and confirmed the fifth domain, Health, Physical Education, and Fine Arts, was added back into the EC-6 exam. TEA staff also confirmed once a section of the exam is passed, candidates would not be required to test in that subject area again. However, candidates will be required to take the full exam on their initial attempt for a fee of \$120. Any section not passed can then be retaken at a subsequent date for a fee of \$60 per subject area exam. The SBEC approved the two-year overlap policy related to the transition from the current Generalist exams to the new Core Subjects exams. Candidates pursuing one of the six current Generalist certificates in place (Generalist, Bilingual Generalist, and ESL Generalist at grades EC-6 and 4-8) would have until August 2017 to finish requirements and apply for issuance of the certificate by October 2017.

TEA staff and the testing company, Educational Testing Service, received feedback about the length of the new exams, the timed sections, and the fairness of this exam to candidates

pursuing certification. Educator Preparation Programs (EPP) expressed concerns about the January 2015 implementation date, as well as the timeline for availability of study materials and representative exams to assist with preparation for testing. There were also questions and concerns about candidate accessibility to alternative testing arrangements as needed and the impact of Core Subjects exam performance data on program accountability ratings and other relevant data.

TEA staff implemented the new exams in January 2015. However, in an effort to gather data on actual candidate exam performance, a pilot period was instituted where candidates were allowed to take the new exams at no cost to them. During the pilot period, candidates who pass the Core Subjects exams were allowed to use those results for issuance of certification pending completion of all requirements. During the data collection period, results of the Core Subjects exams were not included in the EPP accountability ratings. At the June and August 2015 SBEC meetings, staff will update the SBEC on exam performance data, and if needed, recommend additional changes.

Attachment II compares the format of the current Generalist exams to the new Core Subjects exams. Additional information will be provided to the SBEC at the June meeting.

FISCAL IMPACT: None

PUBLIC AND STUDENT BENEFIT: None

PROCEDURAL AND REPORTING IMPLICATIONS: None

LOCALLY MAINTAINED PAPERWORK REQUIREMENTS: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS: TEA staff continue to receive public comments and will update the SBEC accordingly.

ALTERNATIVES:

Staff Members Responsible: Tim Miller, Director
Educator Preparation Programs

Michael Vriesenga, Director
Data and Accountability

Attachments: I. Statutory Citations
II. Exam Design Comparison for Generalist and Core Subjects

ATTACHMENT: I**Statutory Citations Relating to Core Subjects EC-6 and Core Subjects 4-8 Exams****Texas Education Code, §21.041, Rules; Fees (excerpts):**

- (b) The board shall propose rules that:
- (1) provide for the regulation of educators and the general administration of this subchapter in a manner consistent with this subchapter;
 - (2) specify the classes of educator certificates to be issued, including emergency certificates;
 - (3) specify the period for which each class of educator certificate is valid;
 - (4) specify the requirements for the issuance and renewal of an educator certificate;
 - (5) provide for the issuance of an educator certificate to a person who holds a similar certificate issued by another state or foreign country, subject to Section 21.052;

Texas Education Code, §21.048, Certification Examinations (excerpts):

- (a) The board shall propose rules prescribing comprehensive examinations for each class of certificate issued by the board. The board shall determine the satisfactory level of performance required for each certification examination. For the issuance of a generalist certificate, the board shall require a satisfactory level of examination performance in each core subject covered by the examination.
- (a) The board shall propose rules prescribing comprehensive examinations for each class of certificate issued by the board. The commissioner shall determine the satisfactory level of performance required for each certification examination. For the issuance of a generalist certificate, the commissioner shall require a satisfactory level of examination performance in each core subject covered by the examination.

ATTACHMENT II

Exam Design Comparison for Generalist and Core Subjects

Generalist EC-6 and Core Subjects EC-6 Exam Comparison

Generalist EC-6			Core Subjects EC-6			
Allotted Time (*including instructional time)	5 Hours		5 Hours			
Number of Questions	140 Multiple-Choice Questions		267 Multiple-Choice Questions			
Exam Format	Computer-Administered Test (CAT)		Computer-Administered Test (CAT)			
Domains	Total Items	Approx. Percentage of Exam	Subject Exams	Total Items	Approx. Percentage of Exam	Section Time
ELAR	45	32%	ELAR/STR	75	28%	1 hr, 45 mins
Mathematics	26	19%	Mathematics	47	18%	60 mins
Social Studies	27	19%	Social Studies	41	16%	35 mins
Science	24	18%	Science	52	19%	40 mins
Fine Arts, Health and Physical Education	18	12%	Fine Arts, Health and Physical Education	52	19%	40 mins
TOTAL	140	100%	TOTAL	267	100%	4 hrs, 40 mins*

Generalist 4-8 and Core Subjects 4-8 Exam Comparison

Generalist 4-8			Core Subjects 4-8			
Allotted Time (*including instructional time)	5 Hours		5 Hours			
Number of Questions	130 Multiple-Choice Questions		200 Multiple-Choice Questions			
Exam Format	Computer-Administered Test (CAT)		Computer-Administered Test (CAT)			
Domains	Total Items	Approx. Percentage of Exam	Subject Exams	Total Items	Approx. Percentage of Exam	Section Time
ELAR	40	31%	ELAR	74	37%	1 hr, 55 mins
Mathematics	30	23%	Mathematics	42	21%	1 hr, 5 mins
Social Studies	30	23%	Social Studies	42	21%	50 mins
Science	30	23%	Science	42	21%	50 mins
TOTAL	130	100%	TOTAL	200	100%	4 hrs, 40 mins*