

Item 18: Consider and Take Appropriate Action on Certification Examination Fee Increases

DISCUSSION AND ACTION

SUMMARY: This item provides the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) the opportunity to review and approve implementation of increased fees for all certification examinations and related testing services effective September 1, 2015.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Texas Education Code §§21.041(c) and 21.048 (a).

EFFECTIVE DATE: September 1, 2015.

PREVIOUS BOARD ACTION: An examination fee of \$72 was originally approved in 1995. A fee increase from \$72 to \$82 was approved by the SBEC in August 2003. The last fee increase from \$82 to \$120 was approved by the SBEC in August 2008. This increase helped support the transition from paper-based testing to computer-based testing.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) currently contracts with Educational Testing Service (ETS) to provide certification examination development, registration, administration, and support. The certification testing program is funded and maintained solely by test registration and other ancillary testing fees. Since 2011, TEA and ETS have seen fluctuations in test registration numbers, which have directly impacted total revenue generated per contract year.

During the 2013 legislative session, the agency became responsible for implementation of the Core Subjects tests. Development and piloting of these assessments has resulted in revenue shortfalls that have impacted TEA and ETS. While test registration numbers have increased in the past two years, the agency and ETS are currently balancing the revenue necessary to maintain the testing program with the revenue forgone to obtain critical information during the data collection period the board approved for the new Core Subjects tests.

Bills recently passed during the 84th Legislature will also have a direct impact on testing revenue. Effective September 1, 2015, Senate Bill 807 eliminates examination and licensure fees paid by military service members, veterans, and their spouses, and House Bill 2205 establishes a maximum of five total attempts on any certification test, unless waived by the SBEC for good cause. The fiscal impact of SB 807 is unknown at this time, but implementation of HB 2205 has the potential to reduce future revenue.

Under the current fee structure, ETS receives \$110 for each \$120 certification examination fee and \$50 for each \$60 certification examination fee, while the TEA receives \$10 for each certification examination fee. TEA does not currently receive any revenue from the ancillary testing fees, which include changing test dates and locations, late and emergency registration fees, and test score reviews. The proposed certificate examination fee increase would raise the current \$120 fee to \$131 and the current \$60 fee to \$65. TEA would receive an additional dollar from each of the proposed certification examination fee increases. Ancillary testing fees would increase by \$5, with the exception of the test cancellation fee, which would increase from \$30 to

\$65. In accordance with the current testing contract structure, TEA would not receive any revenue from the ancillary fees.

Attachment II provides a comparison of the current and proposed certification testing fees and related ancillary fees.

FISCAL IMPACT: People taking certification examinations will incur higher costs.

PUBLIC AND STUDENT BENEFIT: Texas students, educators, and constituents benefit by having well-developed tests that accurately discern between unqualified and just-qualified teacher candidates.

PROCEDURAL AND REPORTING IMPLICATIONS: The vendor systems will reflect the increased fees. TEA will receive increased fees and the increase will be reflected in monthly invoices.

LOCALLY MAINTAINED PAPERWORK REQUIREMENTS: None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

ALTERNATIVES: No increase or a smaller increase in fees.

OTHER COMMENTS AND RELATED ISSUES: None.

ASSOCIATE COMMISSIONER'S RECOMMENDATION: I recommend that the State Board for Educator Certification:

Approve the recommended fees for certification tests and related testing services effective September 1, 2015.

Staff Members Responsible:

Tim Miller, Director
Educator Preparation Programs

Michael Vriesenga, Director
Data and Accountability

Becky McCoy, Manager
Educator Testing

Attachments:

I. Statutory Citations
II. Current and Proposed Certification Examination Fees

ATTACHMENT I
Statutory Citations

Texas Education Code, §21.041, Rules; Fees (excerpt):

(c) The board shall propose a rule adopting a fee for the issuance and maintenance of an educator certificate that, when combined with any fees imposed under Subsection (d), is adequate to cover the cost of administration of this subchapter.

Texas Education Code, §21.048, Certification Examinations:

(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
Current and Proposed Certification Examination Fees

Services	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Test fee (per test)	\$120	\$131
Test fee (per subject test) for test codes 801-809	\$60	\$65
International site fee	\$50	\$55
Test, test center, test date or test session change during regular or late registration period	\$15	\$20
Test, test center, test date or test session change during emergency registration period	\$75	\$80
Braille late registration fee	\$35	\$40
Braille emergency registration fee	\$75	\$80
Additional processing fee for DANTES requests	\$30	\$35
Selected-response score review	\$25	\$30
Written-response score review (including English Language Arts and Reading 7-12 and Braille written component)	\$35	\$40
Selected-response and written-response score review (Braille only)	\$60	\$65
BTLPT Spanish; LOTE French, German, Latin and Spanish EC-12 written/oral response score review	\$70	\$75
Test cancellation fee (if cancelled 3 days prior to the test)	\$30	\$65