

Item 12:

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 Core Subjects EC-6 and Core Subjects 4-8 certification exams that have been administered since January 2015. This item also provides the SBEC with an opportunity to provide Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff with guidance on possible changes to the exams.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: Texas Education Code (TEC), §21.041(b)(4) and §21.048(a).

PREVIOUS BOARD ACTION: The SBEC approved a two-year overlap policy to transition from the current Generalist exams to the new Core Subjects exams at the February 2014 SBEC meeting. The SBEC approved passing standards for the Core Subjects exams at the October 2014 SBEC meeting. The SBEC approved a modified passing standards for the Core Subjects exams at the June 2015 SBEC meeting. At the August 2015 SBEC meeting, the board directed Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff to continue collecting data and bring this item back at the October 2015 meeting for discussion and possible action.

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, 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 may have on districts and schools 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 a 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 (ETS), received feedback about the length of the new exams, the timed sections, and the fairness of these exams.

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 and the impact of Core Subjects exam performance data on EPP 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, the board approved a data collection period which was instituted where candidates were allowed to take the new exams at no cost to them. During the data collection period, candidates who passed 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 2015 SBEC meeting, TEA staff provided the SBEC with information from the data collection period. TEA staff informed the SBEC that the data collection period would end July 1, 2015 and recommended that the SBEC either make no changes to the Core Subjects exams or make a change to passing standards on the Core Subjects exams. The SBEC approved a modified passing standard for a period of one year beginning September 1, 2015 and directed TEA staff to bring back options for new test development at the August 2015 SBEC meeting.

At the August 2015 meeting, the board directed TEA staff to bring back data at the October 2015 meeting regarding the perception of speededness being a concern for the Core Subjects exams. TEA staff will be providing updates from the data collection period and relevant materials concerning the Core Subject exams prior to the October 2015 meeting for the board's consideration.

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: None.

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

Maintain the Core Subjects EC-6 exam as a single exam and maintain the Core Subjects 4-8 exam as a single exam.

Staff Members Responsible: Tim Miller, Director
Educator Preparation

Michael Vriesenga, Director
Data and Accountability

Becky McCoy, Manager
Educator Testing

Attachments: I. Statutory Citations

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

- (b) The board shall propose rules that:
 - (4) specify the requirements for the issuance and renewal of an educator certificate;

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

- (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.