



Center for Public
Research and Leadership

Monday, January 13, 2025

Connecticut Certification Board Meeting 3 Educator Minimum Content Knowledge

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Background

Certification Board's Statutory Obligation

- Public Act No. 24-41 § 13(a) - Certification Board shall:
 - “[R]eview the state's approach to assessing whether candidates for certification have demonstrated minimum content knowledge within their endorsement areas ... and ... develop recommendations as to whether alternative approaches should be offered.”
 - “Not later than January 31, 2025 ... submit a report on its findings, as well as any recommendations for legislation, to the State Board of Education and the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education.”

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Review of Connecticut's Current Approach

Becoming a Teacher in Connecticut

- In order to be initially certified as an educator in Connecticut, one must:
 - successfully complete an educator preparation program **and pass the appropriate State Board of Education-approved subject area assessment**; OR
 - successfully complete an alternate route to certification program **and pass the appropriate State Board of Education-approved subject area assessment**; OR
 - for educators from another state, meet Connecticut's requirements for out-of-state educators.

How Connecticut Currently Assesses Educator Minimum Content Knowledge

- For most certification areas, Connecticut relies on **Praxis II** to assess educator minimum content knowledge.
- Connecticut recently introduced an exception - the Educational Testing Service (“ETS”) Alternate Passing Option:
 - Eligibility: Candidates who have attempted any of the **Elementary Education** (Multiple Subjects) Praxis II subtests **and scored within 1 standard error of measurement** (“SEM”) of the passing score.
 - Alternative: Complete an **ETS professional learning module** - takes approximately 45 minutes to complete; untimed and asynchronous.
 - Cost: \$50, but candidates could apply the two free Praxis II retakes Connecticut currently offers to the ETS Alternate Passing Option.

Existing Research

- Praxis II/Standardized Content Assessments and Teaching Effectiveness:
 - ETS: Praxis II **not** purely a subject matter test, but a test of “applications of ... knowledge and skills to the kinds of decisions and evaluations a teacher must make ... that are critical for teaching.”
 - Clotfelter et. al. (2010): Found **practically negligible relationships** between Praxis II test scores and teaching effectiveness in math and biology, and even a negative relationship in English.
 - Wheelock Educational Policy Center (“WEPC”) Connecticut Study (2023): Found **practically negligible relationship** between Praxis II test scores and teaching effectiveness in English Language Arts (“ELA”) and math.

Existing Research

- Praxis II/Standardized Content Assessments and Teaching Effectiveness (Cont'd):
 - WEPC Massachusetts Study (2023): Found that emergency license holders (who were not required to take MTEL) are **comparable** to traditionally certified teachers (who were required to take MTEL) **in terms of teaching performance**.
- Praxis II and Educator Workforce Composition:
 - Goldhaber & Hansen (2010): Found **significant racial gap** between Praxis II test scores, with White candidates outperforming Black candidates on average.

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Alternative Approaches

National Landscape Scan

- **Growing national movement** away from exclusive or predominant reliance on Praxis II (and standardized testing more generally)
- **State-specific content area standardized assessments** instead of Praxis II (~10):
 - E.g. Florida (FTCE), Michigan (MTTC), New York (NYSTCE CST)
- **Alternatives for Barely Failing Candidates Only** (3):
 - E.g. Alabama (1 SEM), Arkansas (2 SEM), Connecticut (1 SEM - Elementary)
- **Multiple Measures for All Candidates/Certification Areas** (~10):
 - E.g. Arizona (subject degree, 3 years' teaching experience), Colorado (subject degree, coursework, portfolio), West Virginia (NBPTS certification, doctorate degree, master's degree with 5 years' related work experience)

National Landscape Scan

- **Hybrid Approaches:**
 - E.g. Massachusetts, which mostly relies on its own state-developed MTEL, but in 2020 started to pilot alternatives including EPP subject matter knowledge attestation (candidates must still take MTEL once to be eligible).
 - E.g. Washington, which mostly relies on its own state-developed WEST-E, but in 2020 introduced the “case-by-case exception” allowing EPPs to assess candidates’ content knowledge using multiple forms of evidence (candidates must still take WEST-E once to be eligible).
- **EPP Graduation Itself (~3):**
 - E.g. Iowa, Minnesota

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Example of An Alternative Approach in Connecticut

An Alternative Approach

- Design Principles: **Evidence** base, **Rigor** of assessment, **Feasibility** of implementation
- An Alternative Approach:
 - All candidates **must still attempt Praxis II at least once**.
 - Candidates who fail their first attempt will work with EPPs to determine the most appropriate course of action from the following options:
 - Retaking Praxis II (Existing);
 - ETS Alternate Passing Option - for Elementary Education if within 1 SEM (Existing);
 - **Relevant Subject Degree** - for Grades 4-12 Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, General Science, and Physics (New); or
 - **Portfolio** - for all certification areas (New).

Application of Design Principles to Alternative Approach

- Evidence Base:
 - Subject Degree Option:
 - Coenen et. al. (2018): **Positive correlation** between educator possession of subject-specific degrees and teaching effectiveness in **math and sciences**; **stronger than correlation between Praxis II and teaching effectiveness** in those same subjects.
 - Portfolio Option:
 - English & Lachlan-Haché (2015): Portfolios are capable of assessing a **wider range of skills** than standardized tests.
- Rigor:
 - New options still require candidates to demonstrate competency in the **same content categories** the relevant Praxis II test currently assesses—only in different ways.

Application of Design Principles to Alternative Approach

- Feasibility:
 - **Praxis II pass rates would still be readily available** for EPPs to use for CAEP reporting purposes.
 - Subject Degree Option limited to math and sciences, and **relatively easy to administer**.
 - Portfolio Option - in practice - serves as a “**fallback**” for those not eligible for other options.

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Effectuating Change

Effectuating Change

- Need for **legislative language**—replacing existing statutory provision(s)—that establishes the Certification Board’s authority to study, determine, and promulgate standards and evidence-based, rigorous, and feasible alternatives for candidates to demonstrate educator minimum content knowledge for purposes of initial certification.
- Need for **guidance** on the options available to candidates to demonstrate educator minimum content knowledge for purposes of initial certification.
- Need to engage in **ongoing data collection and analysis** to assess the efficacy of each option, and determine what changes (if any) should be made to how candidates demonstrate educator minimum content knowledge for purposes of initial certification.

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Questions?



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Thank you!

