

Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

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Assessment and Accountability

Teacher candidates in Minnesota are required to complete an array of assessments. In addition to assessments required for admission and continuing progress in teacher preparation programs, teacher candidates currently must complete at least three Minnesota Teacher Licensure Examination (MTLE) tests (Basic Skills, Pedagogy, and Content) and the edTPA (Teacher Performance Assessment). Although steps were taken during the 2014 legislative session to provide an alternative to the MTLE Basic Skills test, issues remain for students challenged to demonstrate on formal written assessments what they “know and can do.” While it is essential that candidates demonstrate that they have acquired the skills, knowledge, and dispositions articulated in the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice, an over-reliance on standardized assessments can keep fully qualified, committed, and effective candidates out of Minnesota classrooms.

Key Points:

- **Passing test scores need careful evaluation and piloting before results are used for high-stakes decision-making.** This needs to be an on-going process managed by the Board of Teaching with input from interested, knowledgeable, and committed parties.
- **A number of factors have significant impact on candidates as they seek to complete and pass all required tests.** Specifically:
 - **Access to appropriate and timely test supports are essential to an effective testing program.** In particular, specific information about the depth and breadth of knowledge covered in the tests and specific feedback to candidates and faculty is essential to offer needed and appropriate state-required remediation to candidates who do not achieve a passing score.
 - **Students must be able to take tests at convenient times and locations.** The testing system must take into account the “rhythm” of work and school.
 - **Timed tests pose a problem for many students.** In the absence of evidence of psychometric or educational value of time limits, adjustments need to be made to ensure that test scores measure skills and knowledge, not processing speed.
 - **Accommodations must be made for documented disabilities and non-native English speakers.** Too many requests for accommodations have been denied.
- **The possibility of cultural bias in tests must always be considered and addressed.** Students who are otherwise competent, especially those of color or who are not native English speakers, are often put at a disadvantage. This barrier is in direct conflict with the state’s need for a more diverse teaching force.
- **By adding ACT or SAT scores as an alternative to the current MTLE Basic Skills Test, legislators have recognized the need to respond to the challenges identified above and to begin to address the appropriate level of skills and knowledge to be assessed.** While this is an important first step, it still leaves in place limited, computer-based assessments as the primary means for students to demonstrate their readiness to begin practice as licensed teachers.

How Minnesota Should Respond:

- The BOT should continue to define multiple means by which teacher candidates can demonstrate proficiency. These should include alternatives to standardized tests.
- The Board of Teaching should continue to assess the purpose, costs, appropriate uses, reliability, and predictive validity of assessments as it develops and implements rules and requirements for teacher candidates, with particular attention to the appropriate uses of assessments used for consequential employment decisions related to licensure.