

Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

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MACTE Minute to the Board of Teaching Basic Skills Tests – Learning from Experience May 14, 2016

On July 1, 2016 pre-licensure education students in Minnesota will be required to take a new basic skills exam called the National Evaluation Services Essential Academic Skills Test. This exam replaces the Minnesota Teacher Licensure Exam Basic Skills Test. As with the MTLE Basic Skills, the NES Essential Academic Skills Test will have a cut score for passing, an item which is on today's BOT agenda.

The NES represents a return to a national exam with seven states currently using it in some form. Recently Pearson brought together a panel of educators to recommend cut scores. The panel had a broad representation of educators from K-12 schools, higher education teacher preparation programs, and the Board of Teaching. We appreciate the breadth of representation and the important viewpoints and understandings that are brought to the process.

However, there are three points of concern. First, will the cut scores recommended by Pearson, and based on the input from the review committee, be respected? The past history of cut scores for the MTLE suggest that they are not immune to changes based less on educational assessment and more on political perspectives. MACTE is appreciative of the BOT's work to rectify the MTLE cut issues for several MTLE content exams, and we ask that recommendations for the new cut scores be based on best practices for setting such scores and be accepted.

Second, as noted in the November 2015 MACTE Minute, cut scores affect particular subgroups of our teacher candidates, such as candidates of color and candidates from low socioeconomic groups, differently. MACTE continues to voice our commitment to having requirements of candidates that are fair, reliable, and valid for all who wish to become teachers. We recommend Pearson provide psychometric data on the pass rates for students of color and those from low SES groups for the NES test, so that we have assurances that it is in fact a better measure.

Finally, there are concerns about the effects of so many pathways to meeting the basic skills exam requirements (NES, Praxis, ACT+, SAT, and GRE) and how that might affect Title II reporting. For example, one can foresee entering students being advised by high school counselors to take the ACT+ to meet the requirements for admission to a university *and* a teacher prep program. If the "best" students take the ACT+ and are not in the group taking the NES, how will that affect the institution's reporting on the NES basic skills pass rate? MACTE recommends that the Board seek a solution to this issue so that all methods of demonstrating competence are counted in state reports.