

Item 16:

COVER PAGE

Type of Agenda Board Item:

- ✓ **Discussion Only:** TEA staff will present board items with an update, potential future items, and/or seek SBEC direction on potential future board action items. TEA staff will draft future action items from the board's discussion and direction.
- ☐ **Board Action:** SBEC members will take action on the agenda item and the effective date will be immediately upon board approval.

Summary:

This item allows the TEA staff to provide an update and report to the SBEC on the Core Subjects certification examinations. The board will be provided with performance data and two analysis of speededness prior to the board meeting. TEA staff will be seeking direction from the board for a possible action item in June concerning the current structure of the Core Subjects EC-6 certification examination.

Statutory Authority:

All of the relevant statutes, if applicable, pertaining to this item are listed for you on the agenda title page and the entire statutory language is on Attachment I. This is always helpful in referencing the law the TEA staff was working under when preparing this item.

Relevant SBEC Core Principles:

- *We believe well-prepared educators are essential.*
- *We believe high certification standards measured by rigorous and reliable assessments are essential.*
- *We believe stakeholder input is essential, and we are accountable to all Texas stakeholders.*
- *We believe we must continually improve our policies and processes in response to changing needs.*

Item 16:

Update on Core Subjects Early Childhood-Grade 6 and Core Subjects Grades 4-8 Certification Examinations

DISCUSSION

SUMMARY: This item provides the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) an update on the Core Subjects Early Childhood-Grade 6 and Core Subjects Grades 4-8 certification examinations.

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

PREVIOUS BOARD ACTION: The SBEC approved modified passing standards for the Core Subjects exams at the June 2015 SBEC meeting that became effective September 1, 2015. 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. During the October 2015 SBEC meeting, TEA staff provided the SBEC with an update on the Core Subjects examinations, that also included an analysis of examination results.

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, Core Subjects examinations were developed for Early Childhood through Grade 6 (EC-6) and Grades 4 through 8 (4-8). At the February 2014 SBEC meeting the board approved the current structure of the Core Subjects examinations.

The current structure of the Core Subjects EC-6 examination is comprised of five domains (four core subject areas and one with fine arts, health and physical education):

1. English Language Arts and Reading and the Science of Teaching Reading
2. Mathematics
3. Social Studies
4. Science
5. Fine Arts, Health, and Physical Education

The current structure of the Core Subjects 4-8 examination is comprised of four domains:

1. English Language Arts and Reading
2. Mathematics
3. Social Studies
4. Science

The Core Subjects examinations have had a lengthy history with the SBEC, and Attachment II, Core Subjects Examination Milestones, provides an overview of the agenda items presented to the board from October 2013 through October 2015.

After completing eight agenda items to date on Core Subjects examinations; reviewing statistics from the data collection period and ongoing performance data; participating in numerous conversations with the SBEC, educator preparation programs, school districts, certification candidates, and other key stakeholders; considering the impact of the five-time test limit, rules for the pre-admission content test (PACT), and candidate performance and impact on EPP accountability, TEA staff offer the following observations for consideration and feedback by the SBEC concerning the Core Subjects EC-6 examination:

1. In-depth preparation in and assessment of the four core subject areas is critical to educator preparation and student success, and any dilution of focus on these areas is likely to diminish the subject matter knowledge and preparation of prospective teachers and their effectiveness in student instruction.
2. Fine Arts, Health, and Physical Education are important components of students' education, and those individuals seeking certification in one of these subject areas should have a certification test focused solely on ensuring adequate knowledge and preparation to teach students in a particular area. Single-subject certification examinations for grades EC-12 are currently available for Art, Music, Theatre, Health, and Physical Education. There is also a certification examination for Dance, Grades 8-12.
3. The original format of the Core Subjects EC-6 examination presented by TEA staff in October 2013 proposed assessing only the four core subject areas (English Language Arts and Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies). This plan was changed to help districts satisfy federal highly qualified teacher requirements and to offer districts greater flexibility in the placement and assignment of teachers. With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), schools will no longer be required to comply with the highly qualified teacher requirements beginning with the 2016-2017 school year.
4. There has been an ongoing perception of "speededness" on the Core Subjects EC-6 examination since the first administration in January 2015, but TEA staff and the state's current certification testing contractor, Educational Testing Services (ETS), have reviewed the performance data, using two different analyses, and do not find any evidence of speededness on the current examinations.

TEA staff plan to present performance data on the Core Subjects examinations at the meeting. To ensure more focused and thorough preparation for new elementary educators, staff believe the best next step for the Core Subjects EC-6 examination is to remove the fifth domain (Fine Arts, Health, and Physical Education) from the test. This change will help ensure that elementary teachers who are teaching in the core subject areas (English Language Arts and Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies) as well as those teaching Fine Arts, Health, and Physical Education, are better prepared to instruct students and have demonstrated sufficient subject matter knowledge. Staff will present an item on changing the test format for the board's consideration in June. Redevelopment of the test will take at least a year, so until this step can be completed, TEA staff will be recommending the continued administration of the current Core Subjects EC-6 examination.

The agency is currently working through the procurement process to select the vendor for the next educator certification examination contract. Proposals were due February 25, 2016, and the timeline for award is tentatively scheduled for May 1, 2016.

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: None.

Staff Members Responsible:

- Tim Miller, Director
Educator Preparation
- Marilyn Cook, Director
Educator Certification and Testing
- Becky McCoy, Manager
Educator Testing

Attachments:

- I. Statutory Citations
- II. Core Subjects Examination Milestones

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.

ATTACHMENT II**Core Subjects Examination Milestones:****October 25, 2013, SBEC Agenda Item 11: Discuss New TExES Generalist EC-6 and Generalist 4-8 Examinations**

TEA staff presented original test development 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. The exclusion of Health, Physical Education, and Fine Arts from the EC-6 exam raised concerns about the impact this change 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.

February 14, 2014, SBEC Agenda Item 6: Discuss New TExES Generalist EC-6 and Generalist 4-8 Examinations and Approve Overlap Policy

TEA staff confirmed the fifth domain, Health, Physical Education, and Fine Arts, was added into the EC-6 exam and that once a section of the exam was passed, candidates would not be required to retest in that subject area. All candidates would be required to take the full exam on their initial attempt for a fee of \$120. Any sections not passed could 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 (EPPs) 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.

October 24, 2014, SBEC Agenda Item 12: Update and Discussion of Core Subjects EC-6 and Core Subjects 4-8 Tests and SBEC Agenda Item 13: Consider and Take Appropriate Action on Passing Standards for Core Subjects EC-6 and Core Subjects 4-8 Tests

TEA staff provided an update in item 12 on Core Subjects test development work and confirmed both of the new examinations would be administered for the first time in January 2015 as anticipated. TEA staff and the Board also discussed a comparison document of the test format for Generalist and Core Subjects. In an effort to gather data on actual candidate exam performance, a data collection period 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 and the results of the Core Subjects exams would not be included in the EPP accountability ratings. In item 13, TEA staff presented an overview of the work completed by the

standard setting committees and their recommended cut scores by subject area on the two test forms reviewed. SBEC approval of the passing standards for the new Core Subjects examinations was requested to allow scoring to be completed for tests being administered for the first time in January 2015 and beyond.

June 12, 2015, SBEC Agenda Item 18: Consider and Take Appropriate Action on Core Subjects EC-6 and Core Subjects 4-8 Certification Exams

At the June 2015 SBEC meeting, TEA staff provided the SBEC with information from the data collection period that began in January 2015. 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.

August 7, 2015, SBEC Agenda Item 17: Consider and Take Appropriate Action on Core Subjects EC-6 and Core Subjects 4-8 Certification Exams

At the August 2015 meeting, TEA staff presented the SBEC with several options for possible changes to the format of the Core Subjects examinations. The board directed TEA staff to bring back data at the October 2015 meeting regarding the perception of speededness being a concern for these new examinations.

October 16, 2015, SBEC Agenda Item 12: Consider and Take Appropriate Action on Core Subjects EC-6 and Core Subjects 4-8 Certification Exams

TEA staff provided an update to the SBEC on performance data since January 2015, which included results from the data collection period. TEA staff also reported that the speededness analysis (Level I) showed that the examinations were not speeded and that staff will conduct another analysis (Level II) and bring those results to the board as soon as there are enough participants to garner the results.