

TEACHER TESTING AND NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION**TEACHER TESTING**

The teacher competency testing movement is an outgrowth of an earlier movement which required students to meet minimum standards, primarily in basic skills, before being promoted to another grade or before receiving a high school diploma. Disenchantment with the publicity surrounding the dismal scores of many prospective high school graduates on these basic skills tests led the public to question the quality of instruction provided students as well as the competencies of their teachers.

One indicator of the public's mood was revealed in the 1979 Gallup Poll survey of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools. Eighty-five percent of the respondents felt that prospective teachers should be required to pass an exam demonstrating competence in subject areas and that experienced teachers and administrators should be tested every few years to see if they are keeping abreast of new developments in the field. Interestingly, the 1986 Gallup Poll Survey reaffirms these figures. The level of support for competency testing for experienced as well as beginning teachers remains at 85%.

In response to public opinion and the various reports calling for educational reform, many states' initial reform proposals were directed at teachers. State boards of education and state legislatures have mandated some form of competency assessment of teachers either before admission into a teacher education program, prior to certification, or both. In addition, a growing number of states and school districts also require prospective teachers to complete an internship program before initial certification is awarded. In 1980 fifteen states required prospective teachers to pass competency examinations for initial certification. By 1986, that number increased 200%--44 states now require competency exams for new teachers. And three states--Arkansas, Texas and Georgia--have implemented testing programs for experienced teachers.

In addition to widely publicized reports on the large numbers of prospective high school graduates failing the basic skills exam and earlier reports on declining test scores on the SAT, public and legislative concern was heightened by equally alarming reports that college students in general, and the more academically able ones in particular, were rejecting teaching as a profession. This is occurring at a time when serious teacher shortages are predicted by 1990 and are already appearing in some school districts in math, science, bilingual and special education.

With fewer and lesser qualified students entering the profession and the predicted teacher shortages by 1990, how will the nation respond to this impending crisis? Hopefully, the standards being proposed now for entry into teacher education programs or for initial certification will not be lowered to increase the supply of licensed teachers.

Problems with Current Assessment Methods

Most educators recognize that current teacher competency tests are woefully inadequate to assess the knowledge and skills required to be an effective teacher. Test items do not encompass a comprehensive understanding of educational theory and practice nor do they assess a candidate's ability to apply knowledge and judgement to real life situations.

In her content analysis of a sample test from the National Teacher Examinations Test of Professional Knowledge, Linda Darling-Hammond discovered that less than 10% of the questions required knowledge of theory, research, or facts pertaining to teaching and learning; and that 40% did not have a "right" answer. She also found that the questions relied on a simplistic view of teaching and were not adequate to assess what skilled and knowledgeable teachers should know.

Recognizing that certification requirements vary from state to state; that current tests, which require only factual recall and little (if any) professional judgement, do not adequately assess what teachers need to know; and that state licensing bodies tend to raise or lower standards or issue emergency certificates in response to teacher supply and demand, Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, advanced the idea of a national examination for teachers that would be developed, administered and controlled by the profession. This proposed examination would set a national standard for teachers that would measure competency in 1) subject-matter knowledge above minimum levels, 2) the ability to make and justify instructional decisions, and 3) verbal and mathematical reasoning ability.

NATIONAL BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS

An outgrowth of Shanker's call for a national examination for teachers and a major recommendation of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession's report, A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century, is the proposed creation of a National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. The Board will be a non-governmental body organized with a regional and state membership structure. It will be responsible for setting high standards for what teachers need to know and be able to do, and will certify teachers who meet that standard. Highly competent

teachers will comprise the majority membership of the Board; and the balance will consist of other education professionals, public officials, and lay persons.

In defining the function of the Board, the Carnegie Task Force provided the following guidelines:

A National Board for Professional Teaching Standards should be created to establish standards for high levels of competence in the teaching profession, to assess the qualifications of those seeking board certification, and to grant certificates to those who meet the standards.

1. The Board would grant Teacher's Certificates that attest to a high level of competence. It would also grant Advanced Teacher's Certificates that indicate outstanding teaching competence and demonstrated ability for school leadership.
2. In developing its standards, the Board should determine what teachers need to know and what they should be able to do.
3. The Board should work with institutions engaged in preparing prospective teachers to assist them in preparing candidates for certification.
4. A majority of the members of the National Board should be elected by Board-certified teachers.
5. Candidates for Board certification should be able to choose the means of preparation that best suits their needs.
6. The assessment of candidates for Board certification will require geographically decentralized administration. State or regional organizations of certified teachers should be created by the National Board to oversee Board functions at the regional and state level.

State licensing authorities, which will continue to be responsible for licensing teachers to practice, should strengthen their standards and involve teachers in designing these new standards.

1. Board certification initially would be voluntary. In time, the Board's standards should be incorporated in the structure of state standards.
2. Anticipating the availability of Board-certified teachers, state officials should draft plans to offer districts incentives to hire such teachers in

appropriate roles, and to provide for the equitable distribution of such teachers among districts of different tax capacity.

3. Licensure of participants in alternate route programs should meet a standard that is at least as high as that required of applicants from regular programs.

As post-graduate programs of teacher education are developed, the states and voluntary accreditation organizations should set and vigorously enforce high standards for such programs.

Appropriate state authorities should announce a date beyond which emergency licenses to teach will not be granted and licensed teachers will not be permitted to teach "out of subject."

The charge of the Board will be to define the professional knowledge base for teaching and develop standards for the profession based on this knowledge. It will also develop and administer a national assessment for the certification of new teachers and award advanced certificates for those experienced teachers who seek it.

This assessment process will not be trivialized by requiring only a paper and pencil, multiple choice test currently used in teacher certification tests. Instead the Board assessment will probably include a number of formats to assess general knowledge as well as subject matter and pedagogical knowledge. Teaching skills will be assessed independently or simultaneously with other demonstrations of pedagogical knowledge and skills. Although the Board's certification procedure is in the formative stage, it is proposed that the assessment process will include a variety of formats. For example, essay responses, video presentations, or computer simulations of actual classroom situations could be used and there probably would not be just one right answer. The purpose of these tests would be to assess the candidates' thought processes and decision-making skills based on known principles of effective practice. Objective tests to measure a teacher's knowledge of subject matter could also be included.

The following are the proposed categories of teacher knowledge upon which the national assessment will be based:

1. General/Liberal Education, including basic skills of reading, math, writing, and reasoning.
2. Content knowledge in the domains in which teaching will occur.
3. Content-Specific Pedagogical Knowledge--transformation of subject matter knowledge into knowledge for teaching.

4. General Knowledge of Pedagogical Principles and Practice--effective teaching concepts.
5. Curricular Knowledge--knowledge of curriculum materials or curricular alternatives for a given course or topic.
6. Understanding of Student Diversity and Individual Differences.
7. Performance Skills (including voice, manner, poise)
8. Foundations of Professional Understanding (including history and policy; philosophy and psychology; cultural and cross-cultural factors; professional ethics).

These are general categories and will be refined as the national assessment is developed.

Another part of the national assessment will be a clinical induction program in which beginning teachers will be given the opportunity to work with experienced teachers and will receive continuous review and assistance throughout the induction period. They will be evaluated on the basis of how well they work with students and their colleagues. An induction program such as this will give new teachers the time and opportunity to learn from experienced teachers.

The certification process will be voluntary. In addition to basic certification, those teachers who choose to do so can pursue advanced board certification. The new Board would issue two certificates--a Teacher's Certificate that would establish high entry level standards for beginning teachers and an Advanced Teacher's Certificate that would signify the highest levels of competence as a teacher. It also proposes to develop a code of ethics, maintain a register of Teachers and Advanced Teachers, and establish standards for recertification comparable to those in other professions.

The Carnegie Foundation has provided the initial funding for creation of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards and for development of a national assessment procedure. The Foundation recognizes that it will be a major task to create and implement an assessment program in a way that will be valid, equitable, economically and politically feasible, professionally responsible, and publicly accountable. Therefore, it has made a ten-year commitment to fund the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy to oversee the entire process.

Controversial Issues

Teacher Performance

Throughout the years there has been much opposition to testing teachers for certification and licensure. Opponents of testing argue that passing a paper and pencil test does not accurately predict future classroom performance. We agree. Passing a test should not be the only criterion used for hiring a teacher. But failing the test is sufficient reason not to hire someone. No other qualities matter if the prospective teacher lacks minimal skills.

Minority Representation in the Profession

Another criticism opponents of teacher competency testing make is its adverse impact on minority teachers. Studies show that Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans have a much higher failure rate than Whites on the National Teacher Examination and state competency tests. Data show that disproportionate numbers of minorities are being screened out of the teaching profession.

In 1970 Blacks made up 12% of the elementary and secondary teaching force. In 1985 the National Center for Educational Statistics reported that Blacks comprised only 8% of the teaching pool and projections indicate that, if pass rates do not improve and the decline in the numbers of black students choosing teaching as a career continue, the percentage of black teachers in this country will shrink to 5% of the teaching force by 1990. Projections for other minorities being well represented in the teaching force are not promising either. To give an idea of how Blacks, Hispanics and native Americans are fairing on certification examinations, some general pass rates for 1984 follow: 43% in Alabama; 26% in California; 36% in Florida, 34% in Georgia and 15% in Louisiana.

When you look at pass rate statistics and actual head count, the consequences are more devastating. In 1984 Cole researched the impact of testing policies on Blacks and reported the following:

In Florida, in 1981 approximately 200 black teachers out of a total 5,500 were certified--3.6 percent of the total population of certified teachers. In Louisiana since 1978 state institutions have produced approximately 55 black certified teachers per year. In Texas during the first two testing cycles in 1984, the first year of competency testing for teachers, only 55 black teachers were certified for all 1,200 school districts in the state.

In a review of teacher statistics in ten southern states a November, 1985 issue of Education Week found that the number of black teachers had fallen by 6.4%, while in the same period the total number of teachers had grown by 1%. This decrease in

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minorities in the teaching profession is occurring at a time when the American school-age population will soon be more than 30% minority and 23 out of the 25 largest school districts already have a majority of minority students enrolled. Unless an intervention mechanism is introduced, as current teachers grow older and retire, minority teachers--especially Blacks and Hispanics--are an "endangered species."

AFT believes the education community cannot ignore the fact that teacher competency testing will contribute to an even greater underrepresentation of minorities in the teaching profession. But we must recognize that, in addition to testing, the decline of minorities in the teaching pool is due to several other factors: the poor education of black and Hispanic students in this country at all levels; their declining participation in higher education in general; and, the expanding opportunities for minority professionals in other fields.

In order to understand and address the shortage of minority teachers in general, and black teachers in particular, we must plug the leaks in the educational pipeline that is responsible for producing teachers. Berryman (1983) cites the following data that demonstrates the problems within the education pipeline for Blacks: In 1972 black students represented 12.7% of the 18-year-olds, 10.5% of the high school graduates and only 8.7% of college freshman. In 1976, even though they were 12.3% of the 22-year-olds, black students were only 6.5% of the baccalaureate recipients. In 1982, black students were 15.1% of high school enrollment, 11.5% of high school graduates and 10.3% of college enrollments. In essence, the further along the pipeline, the greater the underrepresentation of Blacks in the education system.

Another factor contributing to the underrepresentation of minorities in the profession is the drop in the interest of minority undergraduates in education as a major. From 1966 to 1978 there was a 60% decline of black students selecting education as a major compared to a 30% decline for all undergraduates. Interest in business and health related majors increased for Blacks, as well as all students during this period.

In the long term the single most critical way to improve the teaching pool is to develop high school graduates with sufficient skills to perform well in college. A number of successful programs have been developed to attract minority elementary and secondary school students to careers in medicine, math and science and to strengthen their basic academic skills. Some of these exemplary programs could be expanded to include teaching and serve the needs of a broader group of disadvantaged minority students.

AFT believes a concerted effort must be made at the national, state and local levels to address issues of

recruitment and retention of minority teachers as an area of critical shortage. We must actively encourage bright minority students who have other opportunities available to them to consider teaching as a career. There should be programs at the high school and college levels to identify talented minority students who are potential teachers; diagnose their academic strengths and weaknesses; strengthen their general school performance; prepare them for college; and, while in college, prepare them to improve their performance on college-entry and teaching-entry tests. We support scholarships and loan programs at the state, local, and federal levels that designate funds for minorities, and we support targeting teacher recruitment and intern programs at institutions that attract significant numbers of minorities.

Programs designed to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession--better salaries, restructured work environments, more career opportunities within teaching--will attract more able minorities and whites to the profession.

AFT POSITIONS ON TEACHER COMPETENCY TESTING AND NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

A natural outgrowth of the movement to test new teachers is the call to test experienced teachers. We support testing new teachers as a screening device to keep those with obvious academic deficiencies out of the profession. However, a more reliable means of evaluating the performance of veteran teachers is by making ongoing classroom observations and developing equitable evaluation systems that give an adequate assessment of a teacher's subject-matter knowledge and instructional skills. Superior teachers should be encouraged; mediocre and poor teachers should be given assistance to help them improve; and those who remain unsatisfactory should be terminated.

AFT supports the need to assure continuing competence in the profession. This will not be accomplished by subjecting experienced teachers to trivial paper and pencil, multiple choice tests. It will only be accomplished by developing a comprehensive program which includes recruiting talented teacher candidates with a liberal arts background and at least one academic major; passing a rigorous examination for initial certification that assesses the knowledge and skills a professional teacher should possess, an induction program which includes a one-year internship under the supervision of an experienced, highly competent teacher; and a residency period with peer assistance and review in which progress would continuously be reviewed and assessed. Successful completion of such a comprehensive induction program provides a quality assurance measure to the public of the competence of new teachers entering the profession. Such quality control procedures build public confidence in teachers and will, in the future, eliminate the public's need to require superficial paper

and pencil testing of experienced teachers as an indicator of competence.

We are concerned about the lack of resources available to predominately black and Hispanic schools and the historically substandard educational opportunities which contribute to inadequate school and test performance by a disproportionate percentage of minorities. The solution to this problem is not to abandon tests or lower standards but to improve the quality of education minority students receive. ~~EP~~ The NEA, which has traditionally spearheaded the anti-testing forces in the past, changed its position at their 1985 convention and now supports competency testing for new teachers. +

Creation of a National Board for Professional Standards would disarm arguments opposing testing of teachers for certification. A rigorous comprehensive national teachers examination, similar to those required to medicine and law, would involve more than passing a paper and pencil test where a knowledge of test-taking skills is almost as important as content knowledge.

Certification by a National Professional Standards Board is a means by which teachers, proven to have achieved a level of expertise, can command salaries competitive with other highly skilled professionals. Board certification justifies giving teachers the direct responsibility for instructional and curriculum decisions, budgetary matters and professional evaluation at the local school site. A national professional standards board will also influence teacher preparation programs around the country.

