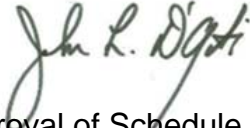




To: Higher Education Committee

From: John L. D'Agati 

Subject: Conceptual Approval of Schedule for New Certification Examinations for Teachers and School Leaders

Date: January 30, 2012

Authorizations:

SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

Should the Board of Regents approve changing the schedule for implementation of the new certification examinations for teachers and school leaders?

Reason(s) for Consideration

Review of Policy

Proposed Handling

The item is being presented to the Board of Regents for discussion and conceptual approval to proceed with implementation.

Background Information

At the November and December 2009 Board of Regents meetings, the Board approved a number of initiatives for the purpose of transforming teaching and learning and school leadership in New York State. One of those initiatives was to strengthen the assessments for the certification of teachers and school leaders. In May 2010, the Board reaffirmed the direction for the new exams, which includes the Academic Literacy Skills test, the Educating All Students test, the Teacher Performance Assessment, and the School Building Leader performance assessment, as well as revisions to the Content Specialty Tests. The new exams were described in New York's Race to the Top (RTTT) application and are part of New York's RTTT scope of work. At the Board's September 2011 meeting, Department staff presented background information on the exams.

Recent developments in education policy and research have necessitated significant revisions to New York's educator certification exams, to ensure that we are assessing the appropriate competencies:

- Researchers have identified certain educational practices and teacher knowledge that are associated with student achievement, some of which are not emphasized in New York's current assessments.
- New York adopted the NYS P-12 Common Core Learning Standards in Mathematics and in English Language Arts (ELA) and Literacy, which differ from New York's pre-existing learning standards. For example, the new mathematics standards emphasize coherence and deep understanding, and the new ELA/literacy standards emphasize text-based analysis using a mix of informational and literary texts.
- New York has raised performance expectations for students at all levels and, therefore, the performance expectations for New York's next generation of teachers and school leaders need to be reexamined to ensure they reflect the new, higher college- and career-readiness standards for students.

Over the past two years, the Department has been leading the development of the new exams - a process involving numerous partners and stages:

- Exam development committees made up of practicing New York State educators and faculty from teacher and leadership preparation programs have reviewed the exam designs and continue to provide detailed feedback. Their reviews have led to design revisions.
- To ensure that the revised exams are aligned with the Regents reform agenda, the Department has solicited additional input and guidance from experts in the Common Core standards, data-driven instruction, instructional leadership, and educator evaluation.
- Each assessment goes through a process of content validation, item review, and pilot/field testing, the results of which further inform their development.
- New York's educator certification test development contractor, Pearson Evaluation Systems, focuses on ensuring psychometric validity.

Each of the new exams is designed to reflect the Common Core "shifts," with more constructed-response items and a mix of informational and literary text-based prompts. The performance expectations for New York's next generation of teachers and school leaders will reflect the new, higher college- and career-readiness standards for students.

New York, like many states, faces persistent achievement gaps for English language learners, students with disabilities, and Black and Latino students. The new **Educating All Students** test is designed to ensure all teachers and school building leaders understand how to address the learning needs of diverse student populations.

The New York State Common Core learning standards in ELA/Literacy require teachers across the disciplines to be critical readers, to engage with informational texts, and to reason using evidence. Thus, a new **Academic Literacy Skills Test** will demand a high standard of reading comprehension and analysis, written expression, and written analysis.

The new **Content Specialty Tests** are being designed to assess new teachers' mastery of knowledge in content area they will be teaching. They will be aligned with the NYS Learning Standards, including the Common Core. Research demonstrates the link between teacher content knowledge in math and student achievement.¹ To ensure that elementary teachers have the content knowledge to effectively teach to the NYS Common Core learning standards, candidates will be required to separately pass each subtest of the multi-subject CST; these include the English language arts/literacy subtest, the mathematics subtest, and a third subtest covering the other academic subjects.

	CURRENT EXAMS	NEW EXAMS
TEACHER	Assessment of Teaching Skills – Written (ATS-W)	Teacher Performance Assessment (Portfolio)
		Educating All Students Test
	Liberal Arts And Science Test (LAST)	Academic Literacy Skills Test
	Content Specialty Tests (CST)	More Rigorous Content Specialty Tests
SCHOOL BUILDING LEADER	School Building Leader Exam (Written)	School Building Leader Exam (Including Performance Assessment)
		Educating All Students Test

¹ Heather Hill, Brian Rowan and Deborah Ball link elementary teacher mathematical content knowledge to elementary student achievement (American Educational Research Journal, 2005). Liping Ma's 1999 book, *Knowing and Teaching Elementary Mathematics*, documents gaps in math knowledge of elementary teachers in U.S. compared to China.

The new performance assessments for teachers and school building leaders will evaluate practice-based skills proven to have a positive impact on student achievement. The **Teacher Performance Assessment** is aligned with the NYS Teaching Standards and will require candidates to plan and deliver lessons consistent with the NYS Common Core learning standards. The **School Building Leader Performance Assessment**, grounded in the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium standards, will emphasize instructional leadership tasks. Candidates will be required to analyze student achievement data, observe classroom instruction, and provide teachers with feedback and support to improve their effectiveness at delivering Common Core-aligned lessons.

Consultation with the Field Regarding Implementation

In recent months, as we began the transition from development to implementation, the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner, along with members of the Board of Regents, have consulted with dozens of deans of education and other stakeholders from around the state regarding the new exams. We appreciate the thoughtful and constructive feedback we received on a variety of implementation issues.

The issue on which we seek the Board's direction today is the schedule for the new exams. While many deans of education have told us that their programs are already substantially aligned with the new requirements, others expressed concern about the May 2013 implementation date originally projected in New York's RTTT application.

Proposed Policy

Based on this input from the field, the Department recommends that the new exams not be required for May 2013 graduates. If the Board approves this proposal, the Department will submit an amendment to our Race to the Top Scope of Work to the U.S. Department of Education to reflect this change. The Department is proposing to implement the new exams for candidates applying for certification on or after May 1, 2014, which would still allow the Department to complete the assessment transition within the life of the grant. In the coming months, we will work with preparation program administrators and faculty to ensure that they are able to prepare candidates for the new exams on that schedule.²

Teacher Performance Assessment, Academic Literacy Skills Test, Educating All Students Test, and School Building Leader Performance Assessment

The new performance assessment for initial teacher certification, the Academic Literacy Skills Test, the Educating All Students test, and the new performance assessment for school building leader certification would be required for candidates applying for initial certification on or after May 1, 2014 (see below for a discussion of the new Content Specialty Tests). The Department recommends requiring LEAs and schools that accept student teachers to permit those teachers to complete the

² As explained in more detail below, we plan to phase in the new CSTs during the 2013-14 and 2014-15 academic years.

requirements of the performance assessment, including videos, in the context of their student teaching assignments.

Content Specialty Tests

The Department administers dozens of different Content Specialty Tests (CSTs) that correspond to various academic subjects, foreign languages, and other teaching specialties. These are being revised in batches, beginning with the Multi-Subject CSTs that are required for Early Childhood and Childhood certification. The Department will stop administering each old CST as soon as its replacement is available. Candidates who pass the old CST in a particular subject will be permitted to count it towards a certificate in that subject, even if the date on which they apply for the certificate is after the date that the new CST is available - a form of automatic "grandfathering."

The Department plans to publish a timetable in spring 2012 giving the date when each new CST will be available. We currently anticipate that many of the exams will be implemented during the 2013-14 academic year, and the remainder will be implemented during 2014-15. The framework for each new CST will be published well before the first administration date.

Transitional B Candidates

Candidates for certification via the Transitional B ("alternative") pathway would be subject to somewhat different requirements because of the way their programs are structured. Currently, these candidates must pass the LAST and CST during the introductory component of their program, prior to obtaining Transitional B certification and becoming teacher of record, and they must pass the ATS-W by the end of their program, prior to obtaining Initial certification. (Most Transitional B programs are two years, and some are three years.)

Consistent with the current approach, candidates would be required to pass the Academic Literacy Skills Test, the Educating All Students test, and the CST during the introductory component of their program (prior to obtaining Transitional B certification), and would be required to pass the performance assessment by the end of their program (prior to obtaining Initial certification).

Supporting the Transition to the New Exams

To enable program administrators and faculty to adjust their curricula and prepare their candidates to pass the new exams, the Department will post test frameworks that outline in detail the material that each test will cover, as well as the performance standards for each test. During the spring 2012 semester, we plan to post draft frameworks and scoring rubrics for the Teacher Performance Assessment, the Academic Literacy Skills test, the Educating All Students test, and the new School Building Leader exam. We plan to post frameworks for the new CSTs in batches, well before the new exams are required.

In December 2011, the Department posted the Field Test Instruction Manual for the Teacher Performance Assessment, lists of the IHEs whose faculty participated in the development of the new exams, and links to the resources on EngageNY.org.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Regents approve changing the schedule for implementation of the new certification examinations for teachers and school leaders.