

The Impact of Program Entrance Assessments on Aspiring Teachers and the Teacher-of-Color Pipeline

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education's Consortium for Research-Based and Equitable Assessments (CREA) seeks to address barriers that serve as a gateway into educator preparation programs, with a specific focus on entrance assessment cut scores (i.e., Praxis Core, state-developed basic skills assessments). To learn about the impact of entrance assessments on key stakeholder groups, the CREA project conducted focus groups with in-service teachers, teacher candidates of color, and faculty at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). This infographic depicts the key focus group findings.

What Teachers, Candidates, and Faculty Are Saying about Program Entrance Assessments

	FACULTY	TEACHERS	TEACHER CANDIDATES
TEST PREPARATION	Some institutions offer assessment prep course(s) for teacher candidates.	There is a lack of guidance and support provided to prepare for the exam.	Candidates expressed a lack of confidence in specific subject areas (i.e., math).
COST OF TEST	Assessment costs are creating barriers for candidates who want to become teachers.	There are additional costs for those who must retake the test multiple times if they do not meet the qualifying score.	Candidates were unaware of the fees they would incur for the tests and expressed the lack of aid provided to cover testing fees.
RELEVANCE OF TEST	Program entrance assessments should not be required if candidates meet the institution's admission testing requirements (i.e., SAT, ACT).	Entrance assessments do not address important pedagogical skills or measure them in a way that is authentic and realistic.	Entrance assessments do not address the skills that candidates need to teach in their specialty areas.
STRESS OF TESTING	The high stakes of the assessment impact students' anxiety and performance and contribute to a poor academic identity.	Lack of feedback on previous attempts leads to increased anxiety and an inability to study effectively.	Fear of being dissuaded from becoming a teacher if unable to pass the test.

Impact on Enrollment and Completion



- Student enrollment at participating educator preparation programs has declined by 50-60 % because students miss the cutoff scores by a few points.
- Fewer students are completing their program because they are unable to pass testing requirements.

We have a bit of a backlog of students who, for all intents and purposes, are prepared. They've taken all of their courses. They've fulfilled all of their required internship hours, so they are ready to student teach. However, it is the assessments that is getting in the way. And that is very unfortunate.

—Faculty

There was no feedback on what you got incorrect, it was just, you passed, or you didn't, and then the score. And so, that also added to the anxiety of whether or not I was going to be able to pass.

—K12 Teacher and Educator Preparation Program Alumni

It costs a lot for our students to take these tests. It is a financial hardship for a lot of students.

—Faculty

I'm a very good student with a GPA over 3.0, but it was very stressful. This is how it went. I took reading twice. I took my math seven times and I took my writing seven until I finally passed.

—Teacher Candidate

But for me, it ended up being kind of the moment that kept me from going into music ed for a couple of years, because I asked for a voucher to help pay for the test and the school refused. So, I just couldn't afford it.

—K12 Teacher and Educator Preparation Program Alumni

The three tests you have to take add up. Financially, where is all this money coming from [to take and retake the tests]? I'm a college student [already using student loans to survive].

—Teacher Candidate

Recommendations

- + Investigate and eliminate racial bias in the test.
- + Drop entrance assessments and offer multiple pathways to demonstrate competency.
- + Pass state legislation that rectifies the racial disparity problem in performance assessments by introducing legislation that promotes alternatives to Praxis Core and other basic skills tests required for program entry.
- + Develop assessments that are more aligned with what teachers are expected to demonstrate in the classroom.
- + Offer more test preparation in program courses.



Citation: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. (2022, March). The Impact of Program Entrance Assessments on Aspiring Teachers and the Teacher-of-Color Pipeline.

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Disclaimer: This infographic is based on research funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of AACTE and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.