



NEWS

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Online teacher certification testing takes off in Texas

AUSTIN – The popularity of online teacher certification testing in Texas is exploding with more than 50,000 tests being taken via the Internet in the past year, according to the State Board for Educator Certification.

Texas is leading the nation in moving toward online certification testing, which offers teachers their scores within seven days of taking the exams.

Currently, there are 13 tests available online and in September, seven additional tests will come online. By the 2010-2011 school year, 34 of all 78 certification tests will be available online.

“Texas is definitely on the cutting edge of online certification testing in the U.S.,” said Janet Cook of the Educational Testing Service, the state’s testing contractor. “Teachers in Texas are just finding it much more convenient.”

Online testing has been available in Texas since 2004-2005, when two exams were offered. ETS’ five-year contract with the state calls for the addition of seven new test titles each year.

“The whole purpose of this is accessibility for educators,” said Karen Loonam, deputy associate commissioner for Certification and Standards. “It’s the method of preference for most teachers. They like the quick scoring turnaround.”

The rapid availability of scores is a boost for school districts, too, as they make hiring decisions – especially in high demand subject areas such as science, math, special education and English as a second language. As a rule, districts do not offer hiring contracts to teachers who have not passed certification tests.

Online testing is doubly convenient because teachers can usually take tests at a time of their convenience. Secure online testing sites are located at universities, education service centers, community colleges, and Prometric testing centers.

Test takers have five hours to complete an exam, but the average completion time is between three and four hours. As part of the test-taking process, teachers create a secure account online and they can check for their scores by logging in to the ETS site.

Loonam said she expects that online testing will eventually be the sole method for certification in the future, but she doesn’t expect paper tests to disappear anytime soon. Paper and pencil tests – the same kind that have been offered since certification

examinations began in 1986 – are still available at certain times of the year for those who prefer them.

The following is a list of computer-administered tests currently available:

- Bilingual Education Supplemental
- English as a Second Language Supplemental
- Generalist EC*-4
- Generalist 4-8
- History 8-12
- Mathematics 8-12
- Music EC-12
- Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities EC-4
- Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities EC-12
- Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities 4-8
- Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities 8-12
- Physical Education EC-12
- Special Education EC-12

The following tests will be available online in September:

- English Language Arts and Reading 4–8
- Health EC–12
- Life Science
- Mathematics 4–8
- Science 4–8
- Science 8–12
- Social Studies 4–8

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