

REL Southwest Ask A REL Response

Educator Effectiveness

December 2018

Question:

What is known about best practices in supporting those taking teacher licensure exams (like the Praxis) in obtaining passing scores?

Response:

Thank you for the question you submitted to our REL Reference Desk. We have prepared the following memo with research references to help answer your question. For each reference, we provide an abstract, excerpt, or summary written by the study's author or publisher. Following an established Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest research protocol, we conducted a search for research reports as well as descriptive study articles on best practices in supporting those taking licensure exams in obtaining passing scores.

We have not evaluated the quality of references and the resources provided in this response. We offer them only for your reference. Also, we searched the references in the response from the most commonly used resources of research, but they are not comprehensive, and other relevant references and resources may exist. References provided are listed in alphabetical order, not necessarily in order of relevance. We do not include sources that are not freely available to the requestor.

Research References

Baker-Doyle, K. & Petchauer, E. (2015). Rumor has it: Investigating teacher licensure exam advice networks. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 42(3), 3–32.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1090424>

From the ERIC abstract: “In many countries, including the United States, England, Korea, Hong Kong, and Japan, individuals must pass some form of examination for entry into or completion of a teacher education program (Wang, Coleman, Coley, & Phelps, 2003). These exams are meant to act as gatekeeping mechanisms for teacher quality. In the majority of the countries mentioned previously, such exams are one part of a comprehensive set of evaluative criteria, usually developed by the certifying institution or country. However, in the United States, the exams are high-stakes, standardized tests developed and administered by private companies (Akiba, LeTendre, & Scribner, 2007).

In addition, many U.S. exams have been found to be limited measures of preservice teacher ability (Angrist & Guryan, 2008; Goodman et al., 2008). Outcomes on these exams are related to factors such as academic preparation, grade point average, major, and race (Gitomer et al., 2011). Given the relationship between race and the exam, many scholars have argued that these exams are culturally biased against preservice teachers of color (Bennett, McWhorter, & Kuykendall, 2006; Flippo, 2003; Grant, 2004) and decrease the racial diversity of the teaching profession (Flippo, 2003; Memory et al., 2003). Given the centrality of examinations to teacher certification and the previous scholarship that identified factors related to exam outcomes, this study examined a related social factor: social capital. This study examined the characteristics of the advice networks of 23 preservice teachers preparing for the basic skills teacher licensure exam in the United States, the most test-intensive country for teacher certification. Advice networks include the people whom an individual reaches out to regarding a particular problem or issue. In particular, the web of relationships that participants had that provided them advice and information regarding teacher licensure exams was examined. Ways in which advice networks related to preservice teachers' persistence in exam preparation and their success or failure in passing the exams were analyzed. Research questions were as follows: (1) How does social capital function in preparing preservice teachers for the licensure exam?; (2) What are the characteristics of preservice teachers' licensure exam advice networks as the preservice teachers prepare for the licensure exam?; and (3) Is there a relationship between any particular structural network characteristics and the pass rates and/or persistence in completing the exam for entry into their programs? Researchers employed a mixed methods approach to the study, which incorporated the use of social network analysis to analyze the characteristics of the structures and people in participants' licensure exam advice networks. The outcomes of this study offer implications for future research frameworks and for how institutions under similar professional testing mandates can support preservice teacher preparation for licensure exams.”

Brown, C. S. (2018). Teacher candidates perceptions of a course assignment designed to support a teacher performance assessment. *Higher Education Studies*, 8(2), 58–69.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1176189>

From the ERIC abstract: “To guide and support teacher candidates in developing the knowledge and skills they need in the classroom, teacher preparation programs must prepare students in acquiring the experience and expertise needed to demonstrate mastery of general knowledge in the specific subject or content area. In addition, teacher preparation programs must support candidates in maintaining knowledge of professional preparation and education competence that will guide student development. Therefore, faculty in teacher preparation programs are critical in supporting pre-service teachers in acquiring and developing the knowledge and skills in order to be effective and efficient in the classroom and to meet licensure requirements. To support the alignment of early childhood coursework in a teacher preparation program with a Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA), the purpose of this study was to determine the efficacy of a redesigned course assignment that was intended to support the edTPA. The findings

indicated that there are opportunities for candidates to develop their practice through course assignments that are aligned with the language and expectations of the edTPA.”

Burns, B. A., Henry, J. J., & Lindauer, J. R. (2015). Working together to foster candidate success on the edTPA. *Journal of Inquiry and Action in Education*, 6(2), 18–37. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1133506>

From the ERIC abstract: “This action research study examined the effectiveness of one model for supporting candidates in their work in preparing and submitting their edTPA portfolios. Surveys of student teachers and their cooperating teachers were administered and analyzed to determine how the model impacted their experiences with the edTPA. This data can inform implementation efforts at other campuses.”

Chizhik, E. W., Chizhik, A. W., Close, C., & Gallego, M. (2017). SMILE (Shared Mentoring in Instructional Learning Environments): Effectiveness of a lesson-study approach to student-teaching supervision on a teacher-education performance assessment. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 44(2), 27–47. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1140371>

From the ERIC abstract: “Student-teaching field placements play an important role in preparing teacher candidates, many of whom rate the practice as the most authentic and relevant learning experience associated with their teacher-education programs. As a part of these field experiences, teacher candidates have opportunities to learn instructional and class management strategies from mentor teachers. These placements also provide opportunities for teacher candidates to connect methodological and theoretical content taught at the university with actual practices at K-12 public schools. But what effects do field placements have on teacher performance? To help build a research base in the field of student-teacher development, this study examines how a lesson-study approach to student-teaching supervision, Shared Mentoring in Instructional Learning Environments (SMILE), affects teacher candidates' achievement on the edTPA, a performance-based assessment for teachers. SMILE established professional learning communities (PLCs) with two to three teacher candidates who are working at one site with students of similar ages (elementary schools), their mentor teachers, and a university supervisor. Thirty participants (teacher candidates) in the SMILE cohort were assigned to a mentor teacher in one of eight elementary schools. The comparison group included 30 participants (teacher candidates), each of whom experienced the traditional model of supervision by being assigned to a mentor teacher without SMILE PLCs at school sites. Four university liaisons worked with the 30 teacher candidates in the SMILE program and an additional four university supervisors implemented the traditional model of supervision with that cohort. Upon completion and submission of edTPAs, all participants were interviewed in focus groups. Findings show a trend toward higher quality planning for diverse learning needs and assessment analysis among teacher candidates who engaged in the SMILE model than among teacher candidates from the traditional cohort.”

Petchauer, E. (2018). I will not fail: How African American preservice teachers succeed on licensure exams after initially failing. *Educational Forum*, 82(4), 443–460. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/37517984/I_Will_Not_Fail_How_African_American_Preservice_Teachers_Succeed_on_Licensure_Exams_After_Initially_Failing

From the abstract: “Research indicates that preservice teachers who pass professional readiness exams through multiple retakes are less likely to pass content area exams. This qualitative study focused on three African American preservice teachers whose success cuts against this trend. Findings revealed participants engaged in targeted preparation, used a range of unconventional and test wiseness strategies, sought information and resources from their advice networks, and strategized for optimal test space and time between failing and passing the exam.”

Note: This article is available for free at the hyperlinked web address by signing up for an account with a valid email address.

Petchauer, E. (2012). Teacher licensure exams and Black teacher candidates: Toward new theory and promising practice. *Journal of Negro Education*, 81(3), 252–267. Retrieved from: https://www.academia.edu/3569301/Teacher_Licensure_Exams_and_Black_Teacher_Candidates_Toward_New_Theory_and_Promising_Practice

From the abstract: ““Basic skills’ teacher licensure exams such as Praxis are the first gatekeepers to the teaching profession. Fewer than half of the aspiring Black teachers who take these exams pass on their first attempt. While critiques of these exams are warranted, critiques alone will do little to help certify more Black teachers. This solution-oriented article makes both a theoretical and practical contribution to this area. First, it provides a selected overview of two theoretical areas that have relevance to understanding teacher licensure testing. These theoretical areas are self-efficacy and sociocultural theory. The article then draws from the author’s 6 years of preparing Black preservice teachers for licensure exams to illustrate how these theories can shape practice at both programmatic and classroom levels.”

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Additional Organizations to Consult

Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at American Institutes for Research – <http://www.gtlcenter.org/>

From the website: “The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center) is dedicated to supporting state education leaders in their efforts to grow, respect, and retain great

teachers and leaders for all students. The GTL Center continues the work of the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center) and expands its focus to provide technical assistance and online resources designed to build systems that:

- Support the implementation of college and career standards.
- Ensure the equitable access of effective teachers and leaders.
- Recruit, retain, reward, and support effective educators.
- Develop coherent human capital management systems.
- Create safe academic environments that increase student learning through positive behavior management and appropriate discipline.
- Use data to guide professional development and improve instruction.”

National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) – <http://www.nctq.org/siteHome.do>

From the website: “The National Council on Teacher Quality is led by this vision: every child deserves effective teachers and every teacher deserves the opportunity to become effective.”

“For far too many children and teachers, this vision is not the reality. That’s because all too often the policies and practices of those institutions with the most authority and influence over teachers and schools—45; be they state governments, teacher preparation programs, school districts, or teachers unions—fall short. NCTQ focuses on the changes these institutions must make to return the teaching profession to strong health, delivering to every child the education needed to ensure a bright and successful future.”

National Center for Teacher Effectiveness – <https://cepr.harvard.edu/ncte>

From the website: “With the goal of positioning ourselves as a national resource on teacher effectiveness research, we have partnered with four school districts on the east coast to conduct rigorous research, develop tools, and share best practices and lessons learned in teacher evaluation and professional development.

The National Center for Teacher Effectiveness is supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through [a grant] to the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University.”

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- “Best practices” AND “teacher licensure exams”
- “Alternative teacher certification” OR “teacher licens*”
- (“Alternative teacher certification” OR “teacher licens*”) AND support

- “Teacher certification” OR “teacher licens*”
- (“Teacher certification” OR “teacher licens*”) AND support
- Preparing candidates for teacher licensure exams
- How to prepare for teacher licensure exams
- Passing professional readiness exams
- Passing teacher licensure exams
- Passing the Praxis
- ("Preservice teachers" OR "preservice teacher education") AND "teacher certification" AND (exam OR test OR certification AND preparation)
- EdTPA

Databases and Resources

We searched [ERIC](#) for relevant, peer-reviewed research references. ERIC is a free online library of more than 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). Additionally, we searched the [What Works Clearinghouse](#).

Reference Search and Selection Criteria

When we were searching and reviewing resources, we considered the following criteria:

- *Date of the publication:* References and resources published from 2003 to present, were included in the search and review.
- *Search priorities of reference sources:* Search priority is given to study reports, briefs, and other documents that are published and/or reviewed by IES and other federal or federally funded organizations, academic databases, including ERIC, EBSCO databases, JSTOR database, PsychInfo, PsychArticle, and Google Scholar.
- *Methodology:* The following methodological priorities/considerations were given in the review and selection of the references: (a) study types—randomized control trials, quasi-experiments, correlational studies, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, mixed methods analyses, and so forth; (b) target population, samples (representativeness of the target population, sample size, volunteered or randomly selected, and so forth), study duration, and so forth; and (c) limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, and so forth.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by stakeholders in the Southwest Region (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest at AIR. This memorandum was prepared by REL Southwest under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-91990018C0002, administered by AIR. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.