

TEACHER LICENSURE EXAMS – MATHEMATICA POLICY RESEARCH

HOW DO ABCTE CERTIFICATION EXAMS COMPARE TO PRAXIS II EXAMS BASED ON A STUDY COMPLETED BY MATHEMATICA POLICY RESEARCH

Alternative teacher candidates seeking certification through ABCTE's Passport to Teaching program must demonstrate proficiency on ABCTE general pedagogy and content knowledge examinations. As part of a larger effort to determine the rigor of these exams, ABCTE commissioned an independent study to evaluate the exam rigor of ABCTE exams and the Praxis II series offered by Educational Testing Services. Thirty-five states use one or more of the Praxis II exams to award teacher licensure. Each of these states sets its own cut score on each Praxis exam, while each ABCTE exam has one national cut score.

Mathematica Policy Research (MPR) implemented a research study designed to estimate the correlation between scores on three ABCTE exams with scores on corresponding Praxis II exams. The research required that participants take both ABCTE and Praxis exams to compare the performance of each person on both exams. The researchers found that a correlation exists between participant performance on both exams. They also found that the ABCTE elementary content knowledge exam is harder to pass than the Praxis in every state. Further, teachers and prospective teachers had greater difficulty passing the ABCTE mathematics and pedagogy exams when compared to several state cut scores.

Results showing the difficulty of passing the ABCTE elementary are clear. Only 65% of teachers who passed the Praxis at the most stringent state cut score were able to pass the ABCTE exam. For the pedagogy exam, the study finds no statistically significant difference between the difficulty of passing the ABCTE exam and passing the Praxis exam at the highest state cut score.

Interpreting an absolute conclusion for the mathematics exam is more difficult. In many states, the ABCTE exam is at least as difficult to pass as the Praxis exam. The researchers find no evidence that the Praxis math test is harder to pass than the ABCTE math test except using the cut-point from Colorado, the state with the highest cut-point.

Although the study has a small sample size, the correlations between pairs of exams were statistically significant even after controlling for factors like age, gender, and education. These results indicate that the ABCTE exams are positively associated with the Praxis II exams, but a comparison between exams is not the best method to test the rigor or validity of the exams for predicting teacher performance. Two other ABCTE validity studies in elementary and mathematics certification found that current teachers who pass the ABCTE pedagogy and subject area exams have higher student learning gains than those who fail.

ABCTE is dedicated to continuous study of the rigor of the Passport to Teaching program through a variety of research. With a multitude of alternative certification options throughout the country, ABCTE will continue to be a leader in evaluating program effectiveness to ensure our certified teachers have the knowledge and skills to become great teachers.