

PESB Selects Contractor for Basic Skills Test for Prospective Teachers

September 25, 2001—Beginning in September 2002 prospective teachers will be required to demonstrate mastery of basic academic skills for admission to teacher preparation programs through successful completion of a basic skills test. Today in Olympia, the Washington State Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) selected National Evaluation Systems, Inc. of Amherst, Massachusetts as the contractor to develop and implement a basic skills test that all candidates will take, whether they attend, for example, the University of Washington, Central Washington, or Gonzaga University.

National Evaluation Systems (NES) has provided states with customized teacher certification testing programs for 25 years. Currently prospective teachers in eight states take basic skills tests that have been developed and administered by NES.

“We are very pleased to have National Evaluation Systems assisting the Board in implementing the basic skills test,” said Tom Charouhas, PESB Chair and science/technology teacher in Lake Washington School District. “We were fortunate to have a strong response to our request for proposals. After thorough review and deliberation by the board and a panel of experts, the board members decided that the proposal of NES best fits the needs of Washington State.”

“All 22 of our state’s teacher preparation programs currently have basic skills requirements for admission,” said Charouhas, “ but these requirements vary considerably. Our mission as a board is to maintain educator quality in the state. With the help of NES the board will fulfill its commitment to develop a uniform way to measure the basic skills competency of those teachers beginning their preparation for the classroom.”

The PESB was created by the Legislature in 2000. The Board is charged with responsibility for recommending policies related to recruitment, training, retention, and evaluation of educators. Legislation establishing the PESB requires the development and implementation of two tests for prospective teachers: a common basic skills test that higher education institutions will use for admissions to teacher preparation programs, and a knowledge test in the subject area the candidate is seeking certification to teach, such as secondary math or English. Teachers moving into Washington to accept positions within the state will also be required to pass the basic skills test.

Washington joins 45 other states in requiring teachers to pass a basic skills test prior to certification.

The law gives the PESB the authority to establish exceptions to this requirement, for example, individuals from other states who have demonstrated proficiency through a similar test. The PESB may permit other exceptions on a case-by-case basis.

The Board will contract with National Evaluation Systems in November to begin developing and piloting the basic skills test. In December, the Board will release a Request for Proposal (RFP) to begin work on the content area tests. The content area tests are scheduled to be piloted beginning in September 2002 and will be required for certification beginning in September 2003.

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