

New exam for teachers aims to prove competence

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United Press International
American folk wisdom holds: "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach; those who can't teach, teach teachers."

But folk wisdom has no place in the nation's classrooms or teachers' colleges, and there is a crisis of competence on the teaching front, as a result.

A newly revised National Teacher Examination is supposed to help solve the crisis, providing a kind of key guaranteeing that "those who can" get the teaching jobs and those who can't are kept out until they can meet high standards.

The test examines teacher candidates in reading, writing and arithmetic. It also tests general knowledge, including science.

Listening and other communication skills also are probed.

One would hope that new teachers know how to write and listen, but a number of teachers in recent years have not been schooled in such basics. That is the view recently expressed to the Education Testing Service by some 3,000 teachers, parents and administrators concerned with the quality of teaching.

The ETS in Princeton, N.J., administers the National Teacher Examination.

As a result, the NTE, given since 1950, has been revised top

to bottom for the first time. Some 10,000 college seniors, majoring in education, sat through the first administration of the new and tougher test Nov. 13.

Among other firsts in the history of the NTE, the teachers-to-be had to write an essay.

By year's end, all those headed for teaching jobs will have taken the harder test. Scores will help when they apply for a job — providing evidence they have the competence needed to function in today's complex schoolhouse.

A recent survey showed education majors have the lowest SAT verbal and math scores among 12 groups of college majors.

The essay comes in the communications skills "core battery" section of the test. Teacher candidates also were tested on their ability to listen to, comprehend, analyze and evaluate messages

about teacher-related and general topics.

The "core battery" test — three tests of two hours each — is in addition to tests that future teachers must take to prove competency in subjects they intend to teach.

Gregory R. Anrig, president of ETS, the outfit that also runs the Scholastic Aptitude Tests taken by more than 1 million high school students each year, said the NTE and 25 specialized subject area exams are used in six states for teacher certification.

These include Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. In addition, Anrig said, 25 states use the examination for other reasons including selection, licensure and program evaluation.

School districts making use of scores from one part or more of the NTE tests in selecting new teachers include Baltimore City, Md.; Jersey City, N.J.; Pittsburgh, Scranton, Philadelphia and Williamsport, Pennsylvania; Memphis, Tenn.; Fairfax County, Va.; and Milwaukee, Wis.

The NTE scores are accepted as an alternative to some requirements for regular certification in California, Colorado, Maine, New Hampshire, West

Virginia and Pennsylvania.

Anrig said the NTE Policy Committee's decision to expand the basic skills testing of new teachers is a spillover from public worries over poor basic skills of many high school graduates.

Anrig was asked if the better

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