

## Pass Rates - Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Why must applicants for teacher certification take any tests?

State law (22 Pa. Code § 49.18) requires that candidates for certification take part in an assessment program designed to assess their basic skills, professional knowledge and practice, and subject matter knowledge.

Also, candidates for elementary, K-12 instructional and early childhood certificates must also be assessed in the area of general knowledge (22 Pa. Code § 49.1). The following provides definitions of the required areas of assessment:

- **Assessment of basic skills:** Measuring of ability to communicate orally and in writing and to demonstrate proficiency in fundamental skills;
- **Assessment of general knowledge:** Measuring knowledge of literature, mathematics, the sciences and social studies;
- **Assessment of professional knowledge and practice :** Measuring knowledge of educational theory, principles of human growth and development, educational psychology and other subjects directly related to educational practice and their application/demonstration in school settings; and
- **Assessment of subject matter:** Measuring knowledge of an academic field or discipline to be taught in the public schools of this Commonwealth.

### 2. What does the pass rate indicate?

The pass rate indicates the percent of candidates from each college/university that took and passed the examinations. Note that some candidates take these examinations before they complete the educational program at the college or university which could affect the pass rate.

### 3. Why are so many tests required?

The tests assess different skill sets. Three of the tests are considered Pre-Professional Skills Tests (PPST). The PPST series is taken by teacher candidates prior to being accepted into the professional phase of a teacher education program.

According to the Educational Testing Service, the PPST series includes the following assessments:

- **Pre-Professional Skills Test in Reading** : “measures the ability to understand and to analyze and evaluate written messages;”
- **Pre-Professional Skills Test in Writing**: “assesses the ability to use grammar and language appropriately and the ability to communicate effectively in writing;” and
- **Pre-Professional Skills Test in Mathematics** : “measures those mathematical skills and concepts”, and “focuses on the key concepts of mathematics and on the ability to solve problems and to reason in a quantitative context.”

#### **4. Why are some pass rate fields blank?**

Some fields are blank for privacy concerns. Pass rates for any group or test in which there were fewer than 5 annual examinees are not reported to protect candidate privacy.

#### **5. Of the candidates included in this data, have they all attended a Pennsylvania teacher preparation college/university or completed a teacher preparation program?**

Not necessarily. Several groups of individuals could be included in the data on this website. The examinee could be any of the following:

- A current Pennsylvania teacher education candidate;
- An individual who may have been in a program at some time in the past and did not pass or did not take the tests but graduated from college. The college/university would no longer recognize these individuals as a candidate but the individual can continue to take the tests and may list the college/university as the attending institution;
- An individual from out of state who may have attended a college for undergraduate work, coming back through another route, such as a post-baccalaureate program. However, they would not be considered an actual candidate at the identified institution;
- An individual who chose an institution on the list but was not an actual candidate at that college. They could be at the identified college enrolled in something other than a teacher preparation program; and/or
- An individual attempting to become a candidate through basic skills exams but has not yet been accepted into the professional phase of a teacher preparation program. With the possibility of multiple test failure, they may never become a candidate. Test scores would only affect the PPST.

## 6. What is the composite score for the Pre-Professional Skills Tests (PPST)?

The Composite Score is one of two ways to successfully complete the PPST. The PPST test can be passed by meeting the required cut score listed for each test in the series.

Alternatively, the PPST can also be passed by use of a **Composite Score** which requires a candidate to obtain a minimum score in each of the three tests (Reading-171, Writing-170, Math-171), but the total of the three scores must be equal to a composite cut score of 521 for all three tests. The **Composite Score** provides an opportunity to pass the exams if the candidate excelled in one of the testing areas while meeting minimum scores for the other two areas.

## 7. Does the data on this website match the Title II reports?

No. The pass rates on this website are based on all examinees' self-reported scores. On the other hand, the pass rates in Title II reports consist of only "*program completers*" and "*partial completers*" identified by the Attending Institution.

## 8. What is Title II reporting?

Title II (Sections 207 and 208) of the Higher Education Act (HEA) requires that the U.S. Department of Education provide a clear and comprehensible public reporting system on state teacher licensure and the success of institutions of higher education in preparing teachers.

To fulfill this requirement, the U.S. Department of Education requires each state to annually report the pass rates for teacher preparation program completers and partial completers for each institution providing teacher preparation programs.

## 9. What does it mean if a candidate is a "partial completer" for Title II reporting?

According to the U.S. Department of Education sponsored website, <http://www.title2.org/FAQ.asp>, candidates are identified as partial completers for the following reasons:

- Failure of an exam, then not taking or delaying the remaining examinations until they are better prepared;
- Relocation after graduation to another state that may have different examination requirements; and/or
- Taking the exams (pass or fail) while still enrolled in the program, but decide for personal reasons after graduating either not to become a teacher or to delay doing so.

## 10. Why must “partial completers” be reported for Title II purposes?

Federal regulations require that “*partial completers*” be included in Title II reporting. According to the U.S. Department of Education: “Regardless of the reasons, if scores of partial completers are dropped from an Institute of Higher Education’s (IHE) reported pass rates, those rates would be skewed by the exclusion of scores from those who have failed to pass one or more examination. Moreover, eliminating partial completers from IHE pass rates is inconsistent with the congressional intent in section 207 of the HEA that the pass rates IHEs report provide the public a reasonable measure of how well *an entire cohort* of program completers does on their examinations.”

This clarification was made because many colleges/universities required that a candidate pass all of the examinations required for state teacher certification as a requisite for successful completion of and graduation from the teacher preparation program. This practice essentially guaranteed that the institution would have a 100% pass rate in the program, which does not provide a clear reporting of their performance in preparing teachers.

For information on Title II (Teacher Quality) of No Child Left Behind, please visit the [U.S. Department of Education website](#).

### Sources:

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<http://www.title2.org/FAQ.asp>, 2 /1/2001