

DISMANTLING CBEST AND RICA

STUDENT CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

TACKLING STANDARDIZED TEACHER TESTING

By: Miyuki Manzanedo



Currently, future teachers must take the CBEST, CSET, and RICA examinations to enter and eventually complete their credential programs. Two of those tests, CBEST and RICA, are outdated and expensive tests that, despite being high-stakes “standardized tests,” no longer reflect the actual undergraduate and credential program standards to which education is now held. The use of outdated multiple choice tests determines students’ test-taking skills -- not the critical content they’ve internalized. Ultimately, future educators live in a culture of over testing: a culture that charges a

multiple choice test with determining something as subjective and important as pedagogy. Common Core strategies seek to promote the idea that one answer can be found by multiple ways: the CBEST and RICA do not follow this same line of logic. If we advocate that our K-12 students should not be tested as heavily as they are, then we should advocate the same for our K-12

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teachers. We are living in a time of a teacher shortage. The dismantling of high stakes teacher tests like the CBEST and RICA -- tests that have, in part, perpetuated institutionalized racism -- will be a step towards solving the shortage and diversifying our profession. It is time for CTA to take a stand against CBEST and RICA: for the sake of all our students. Prospective teachers should not have to succumb to the greed and gall of privatized, high-stakes, out-of-date test-taking.

Aaron Barlin
English and Education
UC Irvine



“I plan on taking the English CSETs this summer. Looking at the CBEST and RICA’s pass rates for Asian Americans, I’m glad that those perpetuated odds for passing these teacher tests are racially in my favor. But it’s a goddamn shame that there are so many prospective teachers out there that--somehow because of their race--don’t get to say they enjoy that same peace of mind.”

CBEST AND RICA: THE UGLY NUMBERS

By: Aaron Barlin

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) has reported the passing rates for the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) and the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST).

Both reports illustrate that the RICA and the CBEST help perpetuate racial hierarchies among examinees, consistently passing larger percentages of Whites and Asians over Latinos and African Americans. Although individuals may have different levels of preparation, statistics from these reports speak to larger structural and institutional issues that negatively impact entire populations of examinees -- ultimately impeding diversity in California’s teacher workforce.

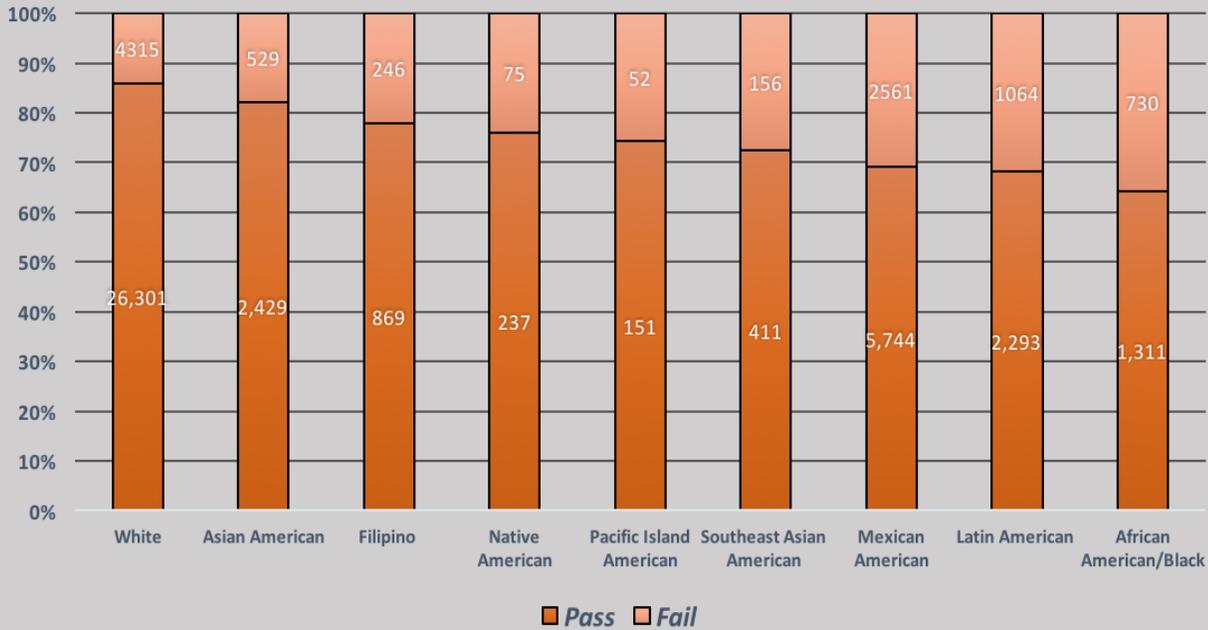
The CCTC’s reports comprise two types of passing rates: “first-time” and “cumulative.”

- The first-time passing rate comprises “the number of examinees who passed all sections or subsets of the examination the first time they took each, divided by the total first-time examinees who took all sections or subtests.”
- The cumulative passing rate comprises “the number of examinees who have passed the examination divided by the number of examinees who have taken all sections or subtests of the examination. Cumulative passing rate takes into account the fact that examinees can take the examination as many times as needed in order to pass.”

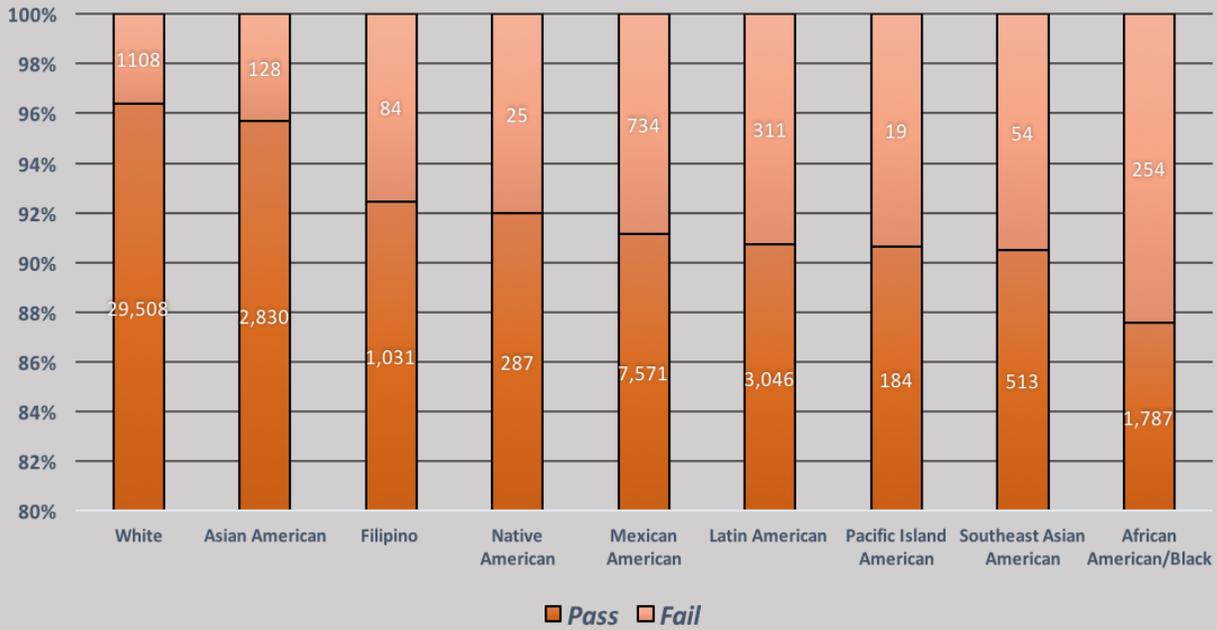
The following pages present the CCTC’s tables of statistics regarding the RICA and CBEST passing rates. SCTA has provided graphs that reify the CCTC’s data tables, better illuminating the stark racial inequities created by these teacher examinations. These hierarchies, per each examination and pass rate, are detailed in the table below. (Ethnic classifications vary per each examination/CCTC report.)

| Racial Hierarchies According to RICA and CBEST Passing Rates | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>RICA (2005–2010)</i> | | <i>CBEST (2008–2014)</i> | |
| First-Time | Cumulative | First-Time | Cumulative |
| 1. White | 1. White | 1. White | 1. White |
| 2. Asian American | 2. Asian American | 2. Native American | 2. Native American |
| 3. Filipino | 3. Filipino | 3. Asian American | 3. Asian American |
| 4. Native American | 4. Native American | 4. Filipino | 4. Filipino |
| 5. Pacific Island American | 5. Mexican American | 5. Pacific Islander | 5. Mexican American |
| 6. Southeast Asian American | 6. Latin American | 6. South East Asian | 6. Pacific Islander |
| 7. Mexican American | 7. Pacific Island American | 7. Latino | 7. Latino |
| 8. Latin American | 8. Southeast Asian American | 8. Mexican American | 8. South East Asian |
| 9. African American/Black | 9. African American/Black | 9. African American | 9. African American |

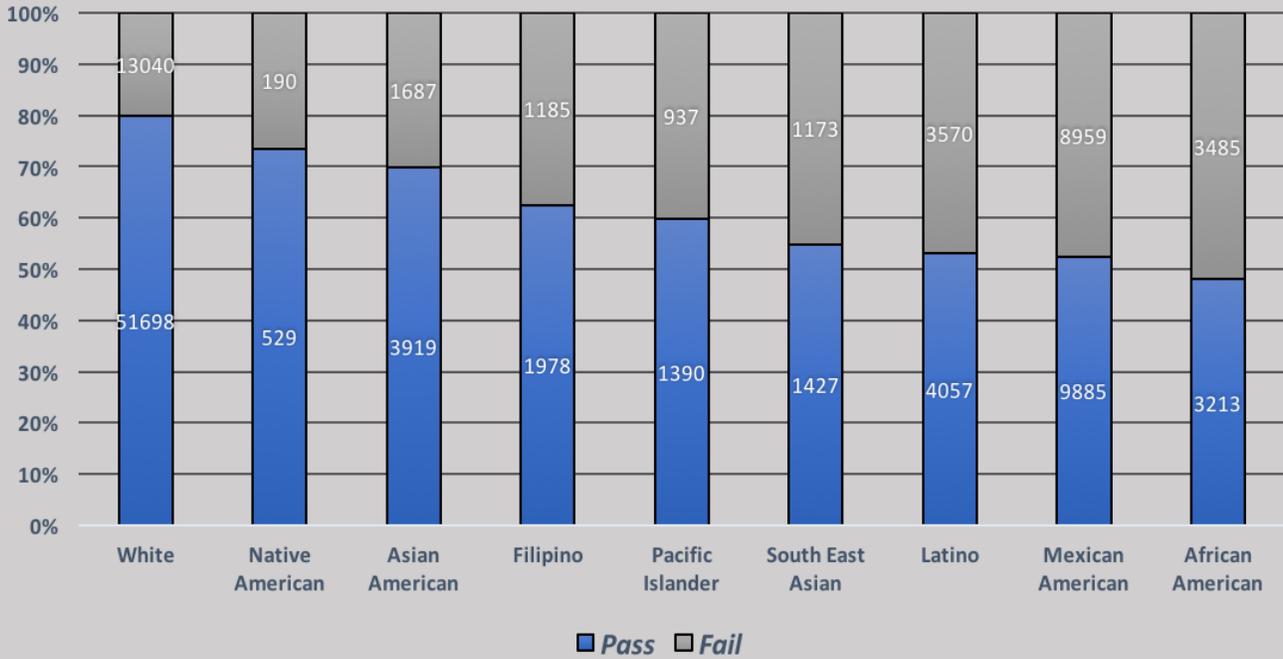
RICA First-Time Passing Rates by Ethnicity 2005–2010



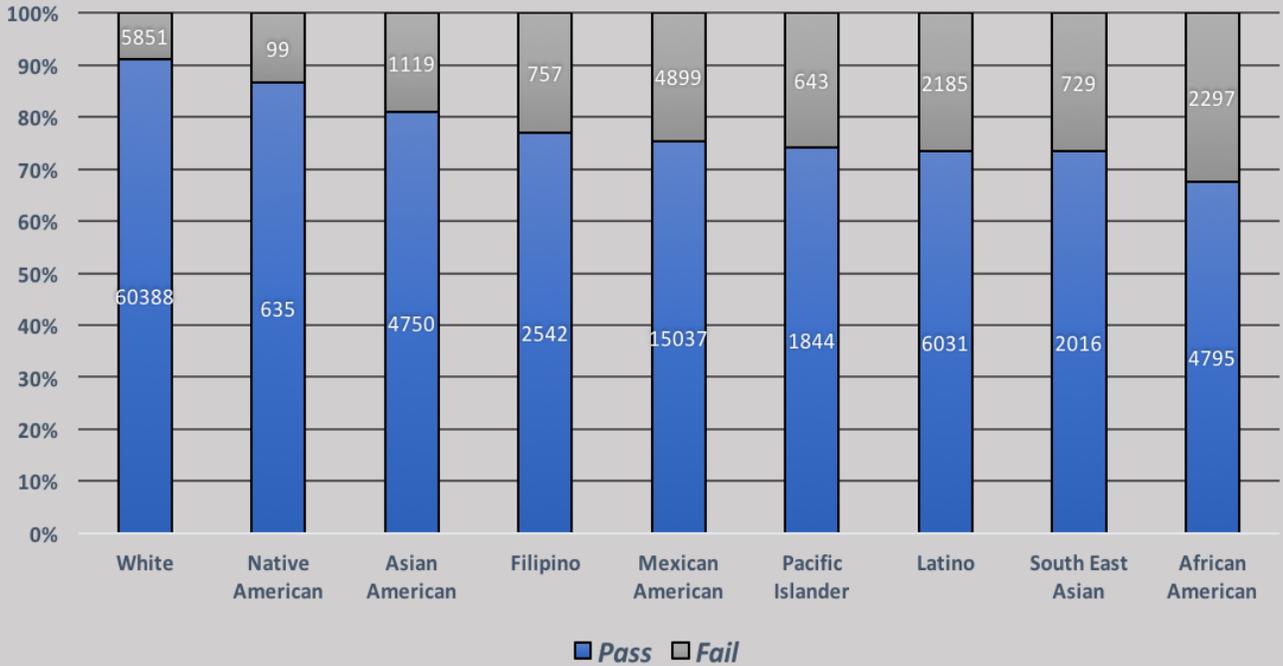
RICA Cumulative Passing Rates by Ethnicity 2005–2010



CBEST First-Time Passing Rates by Ethnicity
2008–2013



CBEST Cumulative Passing Rates by Ethnicity
2008–2013



NEW POLICIES, OLD TESTS - TIME FOR CHANGE?

By: Miyuki Manzanedo and Randi Rovetto

The main purpose of CBEST and RICA is supposed to ensure competency in a credential candidate prior to them starting and completing an accredited teaching credential program. This emphasis on competency was heightened in 2001 with the introduction of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) which ushered in the testing craze. Although the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing correlates the CBEST to NCLB, NCLB is no longer current federal policy.

On the other hand, RICA is also a required test that many teaching credential candidates must take in order to receive their preliminary credential. Legislatively implemented in the late 1990s, the RICA was updated in 2009 to reflect changes in the profession and curriculum. Despite this update, the test still fails to adequately measure what it is supposed to test.

The advent of the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) demonstrates that tests such as these are running on outdated models of education. The CBEST and RICA are seriously flawed with biased questions and a narrow window of subject knowledge validity. Multiple choice questions, of which both CBEST and RICA are comprised, do not necessarily require mastery or deep understanding of concepts: for what these tests *should* be testing. Ultimately, the CBEST and RICA too heavily depend on students' test taking skills (instead of content knowledge).

In California, there are various ways to fulfill CBEST requirements without taking the CBEST. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing explicitly states that "sections from different examination options may not be combined" meaning that "candidates must pass one option in its entirety". While this opens the door to many opportunities to fulfill the CBEST requirement, not all students have access to these opportunities.



Miyuki Manzanedo – International Relations – UC Davis

"I have always prided myself in doing well in school and in my coursework, however the thought of taking a multiple choice test terrifies me. When I took one of my tests at a Pearson Testing Center, never had I felt more scared to take a test. Taking multiple palm scans, being patted down, and having half a dozen cameras watching over my test taking made this experience the worst I could have ever imagined. Are those really the conditions we should be having our students take already stressful tests in?"

CSU, Chico – Liberal Studies – **Randi Rovetto**

"For years, saving money for the CSETs, CBEST, and the RICA has been a financial burden. There were many times when I would finally have enough money saved and then a more important cause would empty my bank account. For example, my car breaking down, tuition increases, textbooks, etc.. It seems almost impossible to find adequate funding for these exams."



Below is a table of alternative options to fulfill CBEST requirements. The prices will be disaggregated in the following section:

| Options for Alternative CBEST Testing | Limiting Factors for Students | The Cost Barrier |
|--|---|--|
| CSET Multiple Subject Subtests I, II, & III Plus CSET: Writing Skills | The cost of taking CSET: Writing Skills (1 subtest at \$63) vs CBEST (Paper-Based Test 3 subtests at \$41 registration) | Between \$462 - \$534 |
| CSU Early Assessment Program Demonstrating “College Ready” or “Exempt” in each section | Students who transfer from a community college might not need to take this exam. | Between: \$421 - \$471 |
| CSU English Placement Test (EPT) & Entry-Level Mathematics Test (ELM) Scoring: EPT minimum score of 151 ELM minimum score of 50 | Students who transfer from a community college might not need to take either of these exams due to transfer agreements, fulfilling CSU breadth, or IGETC prior to transferring. | Between: \$461 - \$511 |
| College Board SAT Examination Scoring: Minimum score of 500 on SAT English exam Minimum score of 550 on SAT Mathematics exam | <i>A high school student who:</i> - could not obtain a fee waiver - chose to not take the SAT due to decision to enroll in a Community College directly out of high school | With waiver: Between \$421 - \$471 Without waiver: Between \$466 - \$528 |
| ACT Examination Scoring Minimum score of at least 22 on ACT English exam Minimum score of at least 23 on ACT Mathematics exam | <i>A high school student who:</i> - could not obtain a fee waiver - chose not to take ACT because they took SAT - chose to not take the ACT due to decision to enroll in a Community College directly out of high school | With waiver: Between \$421 - \$471 Without Waiver Between \$463.50 - \$529.50 |
| College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Examinations | <i>A high school student who:</i> - did not have access to AP English and AP Calculus <i>or</i> AP Statistics at their school - could not afford the tests even with fee waivers | With waiver RICA: \$171 Without waiver |

| | | |
|--|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Scoring: Minimum score of 3 or higher on AP English Minimum score of 3 or higher on AP Calculus <i>or</i> AP Statistics exam | - could not obtain a fee waiver | Between: \$607 - \$657 |
|--|---------------------------------|------------------------|

While there are ways to fulfill CBEST requirements without having to take CBEST, there is no way to fulfill RICA’s requirement. Not all credential types are required to take RICA; below is a list of credential types that do and do not have to take RICA:

| Type of Candidate | Required to take RICA | Not required to take RICA |
|--|---|---|
| Multiple Subject Teaching Credential Applicants | - California candidates looking to obtain initial MS Credential in credential programs | - MS Credential candidates who received their credential in a different state - Obtained a MS credential prior to October 1998 |
| Education Specialist Instruction Credential Applicants | - California candidates looking to obtain initial Ed Specialist Instruction Credentials (preliminary, preliminary level I, or clear level II) | Applicants who: - already hold CA teaching credential w/ prep program that included student teaching and a BA/BS - received a special education credential in a different state - Those applying for Early Childhood Special Ed Credential - Obtained a Ed Specialist Instruction Credential prior to Jan 1, 2000 |
| Other Credential Applicants | -- | Applicants for/applying: - Single Subject - internship credentials and certificates - emergency permits and provisional internship permits -to teach an American Indian language only |

As with any multiple choice high-stakes test, the actual performance of a test taker can be affected by many different factors aside from lack of content mastery. Including, but not limited to:

- Poor test taking skills, particularly with multiple choice tests
- Test anxiety
- Failure to pass a specific section
- Lack of access to test practice materials
- Stereotype threat
- Biased test questions
- Lack of sleep
- Food and/or housing insecurity

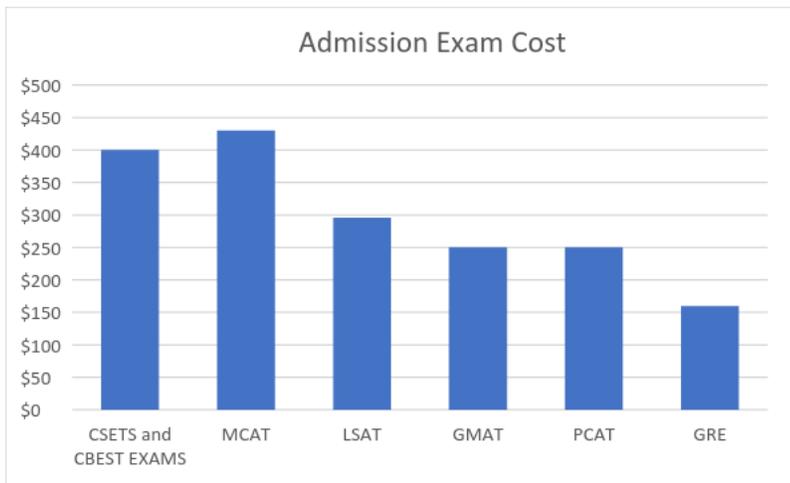
With CBEST being a test that tests basic skills, and RICA testing knowledge on teaching literacy, there are a couple points that students have begun to question:

- **If students must pass classes such as English Composition and basic algebra in order to eventually move on to upper divisions, why is the CBEST even necessary?**
- **Almost solely to help students pass the RICA, many credential programs require teacher candidates to take a RICA preparation course or a literacy course as part of their curriculum. An intrinsic yet arbitrary connection has developed between the RICA and graduate coursework. Shouldn't we be trusting our accredited programs to prepare teachers properly--rather than depending on students to take and to pay for the RICA?**

WHO CAN AFFORD TO BECOME AN EDUCATOR?

By: Autumn Crisantes

The cost to become a teacher has increased tremendously. Before even applying to a teacher preparation program, students must take high stakes-standardized tests. **These exams cost more than almost every other entrance exam and only cost slightly less than the Medical School Admissions Test.** In addition, some teachers have other exams during their teacher preparation programs, such as the RICA--which is \$171. All these exam fees are in addition to credential program fees. **There is no financial aid to help**



relieve the costs of these exams. For other professional programs, their respective boards of licensing offer partial or full fee waivers. However, the CCTC does not offer any waivers for future educators.

While the RICA has two testing options both at \$171, CBEST also has two testing options as well. The difference is that the computer based CBEST costs \$102 per registration versus the paper based test costing \$41 per registration. Below is a continuation of the table seen

in the previous section that disaggregates the **minimum** cost of exams taken throughout a teacher's credential program. It is important to notice that despite there being alternatives to fulfilling the CBEST requirement, they almost all involve taking equally expensive tests.

The Costs Add UP (Expanded)

| | |
|---|--|
| CSET Multiple Subject Subtests I, II, & III Plus CSET: Writing Skills | Between \$462 - \$534 CSET MS: \$250 - \$300 CSET Writing: \$63 RICA: \$171 |
| CSU Early Assessment Program | Between: \$421 - \$471 EAP: \$0 |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | CSET: \$250-\$300 RICA: \$171 | |
| CSU English Placement Test (EPT) & Entry-Level Mathematics Test (ELM) | Between: \$461 - \$511 CSET: ~\$250 - \$300 EPT: \$20 ELM: \$20 RICA: \$171 | |
| College Board SAT Examination | With waiver: Between \$421- \$471 SAT: 0 CSET \$250 - \$300 RICA: \$171 | Without waiver: Between \$466 - \$528 SAT: \$45 (without Essay section) or \$57 (with Essay section) CSET: \$250 - \$300 RICA: \$171 |
| ACT Examination | With waiver: Between \$421 - \$471 ACT: 0 CSET: \$250 - \$300 RICA: \$171 | Without Waiver Between \$463.50 - \$529.50 ACT (with writing) \$58.50 ACT (w/o writing) \$42.50 CSET: \$250 - \$300 RICA: \$171 |
| College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Examinations | With waiver Between: \$527 - \$577 AP English: \$53 AP Calc <i>or</i> Stats: \$53 CSET: \$250 - \$300 RICA: \$171 | Without waiver Between: \$607 - \$657 AP English: \$93 AP Calc <i>or</i> Stats: \$93 CSET: \$250 - \$300 RICA: \$171 |

* The cost of CSET for Multiple Subjects is \$100 per subtest for each of the three subtests for a total of \$300 or \$250 if all three subtests are taken at the same time. The cost of most CSET Single Subject tests tends to average \$300 for all subtests required. The total price reflected is a range of the potential minimum price.

Is Teach for America the only alternative?

The high costs of these exams are pushing students to pursue teaching through other means. Teach for America is sometimes the only viable option for students who cannot afford to pay back student loans from their undergraduate education *and* pay for a teacher preparation program. Teach for America allows individuals to teach in a classroom after minimal training. In addition, Teach for America offers its participants loan forgiveness and various scholarship opportunities after completing their program.



However, Teach for America's 2-year contract creates a high turnover rate in primarily urban, low socioeconomic communities of color that have contracted with them. These students deserve a high quality and stable teacher population while TFA teachers deserve a structured teaching credential program as much or more than other teachers. Additionally, TFA promotes privatization of public education and is anti-union.

Consequently, Teach for America's model of a two-year commitment period has contributed to the de-professionalization of teaching-- and the financial situations of teacher candidates render TFA their only visibly viable option.

TEACHING TO THE TEST

By: Irene Amezcua

Expensive study guides and prep classes

The CSET and RICA exams impedes teacher candidates with an economic inequality gap that keeps growing year after year. CSET subtests cost roughly \$99 each and the RICA totals at \$170 per attempt. This cost does not factor in the books, study guides, and prep classes many college students need in order to pass these high-stakes tests.

- Many times, students cannot complete or move on within their credential program without passing these tests, resulting in a semester off or spending more money to pass these exams multiple times.
- These exams do not measure the effectiveness of a teacher candidate in a classroom environment, as it is a timed multiple choice test.
- Many colleges and universities do not have voucher or scholarship programs that assist students with the costs of these tests.
- Most of the time, faculty are not concerned with assisting their students with passing these exams.



Little to no academic freedom within the credential program.

At times, faculty will shoehorn RICA preparation into their credential programs. This gives less time for the students to learn classroom tactics such as management, facilitation, and how to differentiate and scaffold within a lesson plan. This leads to a narrowed curriculum and “teach to the test” mentality.

The school-for-profit agenda

Pearson Vue perpetuates standards that deem individuals successful through the narrow lens of passing these exams. Testing has become a huge for-profit model; all while placing barriers for future educators to navigate and exacerbating racial inequalities. It’s also important to note that exams are not scored by public school teachers or credential/higher education professors. The employees that assess each test are not accountable regarding a set of standards that are not inclusive of and equitable for all teacher candidates.

WHO BENEFITS? WHO SUFFERS?

By: Abel Solano and Mackenzie Ramsay

Politicians routinely make public policy and then ignore its implementation and consequences. Viewed as a political symbol, the CBEST and its implementation served to legitimize other educational policy decisions and reinforce the belief that the legislature was acting on a perceived public problem. At the time of CBEST implementation, many California parents, whose children have to pass high-stakes tests, believed that teachers should have to pass a basic skills test themselves. In short, there was a loss of faith in teachers and a demand upon the State and schools to take action, even though they possessed very little hard evidence of actual teacher incompetence when it adopted the CBEST bill. The testing craze was in full force.

Possession of basic skills cannot be equated to good teaching, and the CBEST's legislation never intended to equate the two initially. Not surprisingly, there is no evidence today that the CBEST has improved teaching in California. Ultimately, the CBEST is a product of a corporate education reform agenda.

The California Teachers Association opposed the CBEST at the outset. Over the course of the bill's legislative history, CTA managed to eliminate some provisions that it found offensive. At that time, there was speculation that prospective teachers of color would be adversely affected by the passage of the CBEST legislation ("CTA President," 1981). Given the current data on pass rates, this has proven to be the case.

Now after all of this testing and collegiate coursework, future teachers will also have to complete Teacher Performance Assessments (TPA). The TPA ranges in pricing and is just another expense most people cannot afford. At this point, future educators

Irene Amezcua
 Liberal Studies
 CSU San Marcos



“Throughout these past few years, I have personally felt the economic burden that is brought on by high stakes testing. I will be spending at least an extra \$200 to complete certain sections of the CSET so that I can finally student teach full time in August. This ‘teacher preparation assessment’ does not fully take into account the extra mile I go for my students every day I am in the classroom. The RICA certainly does not measure the extra time and energy I give to my English Language Learners on an everyday basis.”

will have spent upwards of \$1,000; none of which goes towards public education. **Who benefits? Pearson Vue.**

Predictable outcome: Inequity

There is an expensive and convoluted maze of high-stakes tests that not only discourages, but prevents people from pursuing the teaching profession and results in lack of diversity. This continues the trend that students of color do not see themselves reflected in educators and may miss an opportunity to connect with someone and find a love of teaching. Lack of diversity also means lack of varying perspectives which are necessary to shape learning and the profession. High-stakes standardized tests bar minorities from the profession – the chance to do something they love.



Mackenzie Ramsay – Mathematics - UC Davis

“While I’m very lucky to be in the position of having high enough ACT scores to not take the CBEST and also trying for my single subject credential (which means no RICA either) it still took me a very long time to find all of this information out. Without SCTA I wouldn’t have even known about these tests, which would have caused a huge financial hardship for me. I wouldn’t have had enough time to navigate the very confusing websites to find alternatives to the tests. I honestly would have considered not becoming a teacher.”

CSU, Fullerton – History – Abel Solano

“In addition to not being a great test taker, I do not want to pay for such an expensive test. Because of this, I will be entering the Subject Matter Preparation Program that CSUF offers. Through successful completion of the required courses in the Program in Social Science, I will not be required to take CSET test. I believe this is a better alternative but transferring from a community college, I had no idea something like this existed!”



SUM IT UP

- High stakes, standardized tests do not evaluate whether a candidate will be a good teacher.
- The policy and practice of using these exams has institutionalized racial disparities and ensures lack of diversity within the profession.
- The excessive costs associated with taking these tests once – let alone twice – can inhibit many students from proceeding forward in the credentialing process.
- The complex maze of alternatives to these high-stakes standardized tests can be equally or more costly and time consuming.
- Students seek out alternatives, such as Teach for America, which supports the corporate education reform model.
- This only beneficiary to this system is Pearson Vue.

