*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:** | October 8, 2021 |
| **Subject:** | Annual Update on Pilot Alternative Assessments for Educator Licensure |

This memorandum to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) is the first annual progress update on the Pilot Alternative Assessments for Educator Licensure that the Board authorized in October 2020 through an amendment to the Educator Licensure Regulations, 603 CMR 7.00. As of October 2021, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) has approved nine and begun implementation of seven alternative assessments for educator licensure. These alternative assessments and the associated evaluation are described below. Future annual updates will be submitted in October 2022, October 2023, and after the pilot period ends on June 30, 2024.

**Background**

The Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) are grounded in the state statute on educator licensure (certification). The statute requires candidates for educator licensure to pass an assessment “established by the Board which shall consist of two parts: (A) a writing section which shall demonstrate the communication and literacy skills necessary for effective instruction and improved communication between school and parents; and (B) the subject matter knowledge for the certificate.” [Mass. General Laws chapter 71, section 38G](https://malegislature.gov/laws/generallaws/parti/titlexii/chapter71/section38g).

In October 2020, the Board approved the following regulatory amendment to allow for the piloting of alternative assessments for licensure:

The Department may conduct a pilot of alternative assessments identified or developed to satisfy the requirements of 603 CMR 7.04 (2) (a) (2) and (3), and 603 CMR 7.04 (2) (b) (2) and (3), and 603 CMR 1.06 (4) (a). Any alternative assessment identified or developed for this purpose shall be determined by the Commissioner to be comparable to the MTEL Communication and Literacy Skills test or subject matter knowledge test. The alternative assessment pilot period shall continue through June 30, 2024. Any candidate who passes an alternative assessment during that period will be deemed to have satisfied the requirements of 603 CMR 7.04 (2) (a) (2), or (a) (3), or 603 CMR 7.04 (2) (b) (2) or (b) (3), or 603 CMR 1.06 (4) (a), as applicable. During the period of the alternative assessment pilot, the Commissioner will report to the Board at least annually on any alternative assessments, including the number of candidates taking the alternative assessments, any evaluative information regarding these candidates, patterns of employment, and feedback from school districts and educator preparation programs. Prior to making any recommendations following the conclusion of the pilot, the Commissioner shall conduct or contract for an evaluation of the alternative assessment pilot.

603 CMR 7.04(2)(e)

**Currently Approved Alternative Assessments**

As of October 2021, the Department has approved nine and begun implementation of seven alternative assessments for licensure:

* *Communication and Literacy Skills MTEL Alternative Assessment*

Six approved; four have begun implementation

* *Subject Matter Knowledge Alternative Assessment (SMK-Alt)*

Three approved; all have begun implementation

*Communication and Literacy Skills MTEL Alternative Assessment*

Prior to the pilot, all educator licensure candidates (teachers, specialist teachers, administrators, and professional support personnel) had to pass the Communication and Literacy Skills Test (CLST), to satisfy part (A) of the statutory requirement quoted on page 1. Alternatives to the CLST are now available.

Information about the requirements for the CLST Alternative Assessments can be found through the Department’s associated [Request for Responses](https://www.commbuys.com/bso/external/bidDetail.sdo?docId=BD-21-1026-DOE02-DOE01-58665&external=true&parentUrl=close). Two vendors, Educational Testing Service (ETS) and Evaluations Systems Group (ES) of Pearson, are currently approved to provide six alternative assessments:

**ETS**

1. [Praxis Core (Massachusetts Communication and Literacy Praxis Test)](https://www.ets.org/praxis/ma)

The two required subtests are *Massachusetts Communication and Literacy Praxis Test: Reading* and *Massachusetts Communication and Literacy Praxis Test: Writing*. The Praxis Core Mathematics subtest is not required.   
Candidates were able to [register](https://www.ets.org/praxis/ma) for this test beginning on July 19, 2021.

**ES-Pearson**

1. [National Evaluation Series — Essential Academic Skills (NES-EAS).](http://www.mtel.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/NT001_TestPage.html" \o "External Link, Opens in New Window" \t "_blank)

The two required subtests are *NES-EAS: Reading* and *NES-EAS: Writing*. Candidates were able to [register](http://www.mtel.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/NT001_TestPage.html) for this test beginning on July 20, 2021.

1. [Missouri General Education Assessment (MoGEA)](http://www.mtel.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/MA866_TestPage.html)

The two required subtests are *MoGEA: Reading Comprehension and Interpretation* and *MoGEA: Writing*. Candidates were able to [register](http://www.mtel.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/MA866_TestPage.html) for this test beginning on September 13, 2021. MoGEA is only offered via online proctoring.

1. [Washington Educator Skills Tests (WEST-B)](http://www.mtel.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/MA895_TestPage.html)

The two required subtests are *WEST-B: Reading* and *WEST-B: Writing*.   
Candidates were able to [register](http://www.mtel.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/MA895_TestPage.html) for this test beginning on September 13, 2021.   
The WEST-B is offered via online proctoring only.

1. [Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA)](http://www.thea.nesinc.com/)

The two required subtests are *THEA: Reading* and *THEA: Writing*.   
Candidates will be notified when registration is available.

1. [Indiana Core Academic Skills Assessment (CASA)](https://www.in.nesinc.com/)

The two required subtests are *CASA: Reading* and *CASA: Writing*.

Candidates will be notified when registration is available.

*Subject Matter Knowledge Alternative Assessment (SMK-Alt)*

Prior to the pilot, all teacher candidates had to pass the subject matter knowledge (SMK) MTEL(s) that are required for their licensure field, to satisfy (B) of the statutory requirement quoted on page 1. The purpose of the SMK MTELs is to determine that newly licensed educators have the content knowledge necessary to provide effective instruction in their licensure area, aligned to the [Subject Matter Knowledge Guidelines](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/domains/instruction/smk-guidelines.docx). All proposed SMK Alternative Assessments must cover the test objectives of the associated SMK MTEL to ensure the continued alignment of state licensure assessments to the [Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html). Details about the format and objectives of specific tests can be found using the [MTEL Test Information Guides](http://www.mtel.nesinc.com/PageView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/GENRB_PrepStudyGuide.html), and more information about the requirements for the SMK Alternative Assessment can be found through the Department’s associated [Request for Responses](https://www.commbuys.com/bso/external/bidDetail.sdo?docId=BD-21-1026-DOE02-DOE01-59014&external=true&parentUrl=close).

Three SMK-Alt proposals are under consideration, but have not yet been approved at this time. The Department has also released a [Request for Proposals](https://www.commbuys.com/bso/external/bidDetail.sdo?docId=BD-22-1026-DOE02-DOE01-67088&external=true&parentUrl=close) to solicit further innovative assessment options via the Performance Review Program for Initial Licensure (PRPIL) route.

**Educator Preparation Subject Matter Attestation**

Under this pilot, approved educator preparation programs have the option to design subject matter attestations aligned to specific SMK MTEL(s) based on Department-issued Guidance for Educator Preparation Programs.

As of October 2021, four educator preparation programs have submitted proposals, and three have been approved:

**Westfield State University**  
*Foundations of Reading MTEL* for candidates in their Early Childhood, Elementary, and Teacher of Students with Moderate Disabilities preparation programs.

**Merrimack College**

*Foundations of Reading MTEL* for candidates in their Elementary preparation program, and *English as a Second Language (ESL) MTEL* for candidates in their ESL preparation program.

**Bridgewater State University**

*Foundations of Reading MTEL* for candidates in their Early Childhood, Elementary, and Teacher of Students with Moderate Disabilities preparation programs, *ESL MTEL* for candidates in their ESL preparation program, and *Music MTEL* for candidates in their Music preparation program.

**Candidate Eligibility**

*Candidate Eligibility for Communication and Literacy Skills (CLST) MTEL Alternative Assessment:*

All candidates required to take the CLST MTEL can take one of the Department-approved alternative assessments. Department-approved alternative assessments must be completed between pilot approval by BESE on October 20, 2020 and the end of the pilot on June 30, 2024.

*Candidate Eligibility for Educator Preparation Subject Matter Attestation:*

Educator preparation programs may only offer alternative assessments approved by the Department. Candidates must be enrolled in an approved initial licensure preparation program offering a Subject Matter Knowledge Attestation and must be in good standing with the program. Educator preparation programs may have additional eligibility requirements.

The following tests are **not currently eligible** for the SMK Attestation:

* Adult Basic Education
* Bilingual Education
* Communication and Literacy Skills Test
* Reading Specialist
* Sheltered English Immersion
* Vocational Technical Literacy Skills Test

**Pilot Evaluation Overview**

The Department has selected the [National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER)](https://www.air.org/centers/national-center-analysis-longitudinal-data-education-research-calder) at American Institutes for Research (AIR) as the external evaluator for this pilot. The evaluation team includes Dan Goldhaber, James Cowan, Roddy Theobald, and Bingjie Chen. The Department has partnered with these researchers in the past to evaluate licensure assessments and the impacts on our educator workforce.[[1]](#footnote-2) The timeline for this evaluation mirrors the timeline of the pilot and will be completed by June 30, 2024.

The evaluators plan to link cohorts of teachers participating in the pilot alternatives to Massachusetts data on student and teacher outcomes as well as additional data from structured interviews and survey responses. Relevant metrics include program completion, licensure, and employment, as well as measures of teaching effectiveness derived from student outcomes and performance evaluations.

Future updates will describe the participation, implementation, and outcomes of these pilot alternative assessments and additional detail about the associated methods, data collection, and analyses.

Table 1Anticipated Data Collection

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| **Academic Year** | **Cohort 1** | **Cohort 2** | **Cohort 3** |
| 2021–2022 | *In Pilot*  Surveys  Completion Outcomes |  |  |
| 2022–2023 | Employment Outcomes  Evaluation Ratings  Student Outcomes  Structured Interviews | *In Pilot*  Surveys  Completion Outcomes  Structured Interviews |  |
| 2023–2024 | Employment Outcomes\*  Evaluation Ratings\*  Student Outcomes\* | Employment Outcomes\*  Evaluation Ratings\*  Student Outcomes\* | *In Pilot*  Surveys  Completion Outcomes\* |

\* Employment, Student, and Completion Outcomes data that are available prior to June 30, 2024 can be included in the evaluation. Some outcome data, such as fall EPIMS data, are not available until winter 2024 and cannot be included.

1. [Sample publication](https://caldercenter.org/publications/teacher-licensure-tests-barrier-or-predictive-tool) from this partnership. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)