The Official Study Guide

Special Education: Core Knowledge and Mild to Moderate Applications

Test Code: 0543

- Study Topics
- Practice Questions Directly from the Test Makers
- Test-Taking Strategies

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Study Guide for the Special Education: Core Knowledge and Mild to Moderate Applications Test
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Chapter 1
Introduction to the Special Education: Core Knowledge and Mild to Moderate Applications Test and Suggestions for Using This Study Guide
CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Special Education: Core Knowledge and Mild to Moderate Applications Test

The Praxis Special Education: Core Knowledge and Mild to Moderate Applications test measures beginning teachers’ understanding and knowledge of job-related topics, including characteristics of learners, planning and the learning environment, instruction, assessment, foundations and professional responsibilities. ETS refers to current practices as specified by NCATE, CEC, and teacher education universities. In developing assessment material for these tests, ETS works in collaboration with teacher educators, higher education content specialists, and accomplished practicing teachers to keep the test updated and representative of current standards.

The Special Education: Core Knowledge and Mild to Moderate Applications test (0543) consists of 90 multiple-choice questions, 3 constructed responses, and covers 5 major field related areas, in the following proportions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Category</th>
<th>Approximate Number of Questions</th>
<th>Approximate Percentage of Examination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development and Characteristics of Learners</td>
<td>16–17</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and the Learning Environment</td>
<td>20–21</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>19–20</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>16–17</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundations and Professional Responsibilities</td>
<td>16–17</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Constructed Response Questions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Test takers have 2 hours to complete the test.

This test is intended to assess knowledge of teaching skills and fundamental knowledge in special education. The use of calculators on this test is prohibited.
Suggestions for using the “Study Topics” chapter of this study guide

This test is different from a final exam or other tests you may have taken for other courses because it is comprehensive—that is, it covers material you may have learned in several courses during your entire undergraduate program. It requires you to synthesize information you have learned from many sources and to understand the subject as a whole.

Therefore, you should review and prepare for it, rather than merely becoming familiar with the question formats. A thorough review of the material covered on the test will significantly increase your likelihood of success. Moreover, studying for your licensing exam is a great opportunity to reflect on and develop a deeper understanding of special education and pedagogical knowledge and methods before you begin to teach or to reflect on previous teaching experience. As you prepare to take the test, it may be particularly helpful for you to think about how you would apply the study topics and sample exercises to the field experience you completed during your teacher preparation program. Your student teaching experience will be especially relevant to your thinking about the materials in the study guide.

We recommend the following approach for using the “Study Topics” chapter to prepare for the test.

**Become familiar with the test content.** Learn what will be assessed in the test, which will be covered in chapter 6.

**Assess how well you know the content in each area.** After you learn what topics the test contains, you should assess your knowledge in each area. How well do you know the material? In which areas do you need to learn more before you take the test? It is possible that you may need to brush up on most or all of the areas.

**Develop a study plan.** Assess what you need to study and create a realistic plan for studying. You can develop your study plan in any way that works best for you. A “Study Plan” form is included in appendix A at the end of the book as a possible way to structure your planning. Remember that this is a licensure test and covers a great deal of material. Plan to review carefully. You will need to allow time to find the books and other materials, time to read the material and take notes, and time to go over your notes.

**Identify study materials.** Most of the material covered by the test is contained in standard introductory textbooks. If you do not own introductory texts that cover all the areas, you may want to borrow some from friends or from a library. You may also want to obtain a copy of your state’s standards and laws for teaching students with exceptionalities. (One way to find these standards quickly is to go to the Website for your state’s Department of Education.) The textbooks used in college courses may also prove useful to you, since they also present the material you need to know. Use standard school and college introductory textbooks and other reliable, professionally prepared materials. Don’t rely heavily on information provided by friends or from searching the Internet. Neither of these sources is as uniformly reliable as textbooks.

**Work through your study plan.** You may want to work alone, or you may find it more helpful to work with a group or with a mentor. Work through the topics and questions provided in chapter 6. Rather than memorizing definitions from books, be able to define and discuss the topics in your own words and understand the relationships between diverse topics and concepts. If you are working with a group or mentor, you can also try informal quizzes and questioning techniques.

**Proceed to the practice questions.** Once you have completed your review, you are ready to benefit from the “Practice Test” portion of this guide.
Suggestions for using the “Practice Questions,” “Right Answers and Explanations” and “Sample Responses and How They Were Scored” Chapters

Read chapter 3. This chapter will sharpen your skills in reading and answering multiple-choice questions. For you to succeed on multiple-choice questions, you must focus carefully on the question, avoid reading into the question, pay attention to details, and sift patiently and thoroughly through the answer choices.

Read chapter 4. This chapter will sharpen your skills in answering constructed-response questions.

Answer the practice questions in chapter 7. Work on the practice questions in a quiet place without distractions. Remember that the practice questions are only examples of the way the topics are covered in the test. The test will have different questions.

Score the practice questions. Go through the detailed answers in chapter 8 (“Right Answers and Explanations”) and mark the questions you answered correctly and the ones you missed. Look over the explanations of the questions you missed and see if you understand them.

Decide whether you need more review. After you have looked at your results, decide whether there are areas that you need to brush up on before taking the actual test. Go back to your textbooks and reference materials to see if the topics are covered there. You might also want to go over your questions with a friend or teacher who is familiar with the content.

Assess your readiness. Do you feel confident about your level of understanding in each of the areas? If not, where do you need more work? If you feel ready, complete the checklist in chapter 10 (“Are You Ready?”) to double-check that you’ve thought through the details. If you need more information about registration or the testing situation itself, use the resources in appendix B: “For More Information.”

Note: Every effort is made to provide the most recent information in this study guide. However, The Praxis Series tests are continually evaluated and updated. You will always find the most recent information about this test, including the topics covered, number of questions, and time allotted, in the Test at a Glance booklet available online at http://www.ets.org/praxis/prepare/materials.
Chapter 2
Background Information on The Praxis Series™ Assessments
What Are The Praxis Series™ Subject Assessments?

The Praxis Series™ Subject Assessments are designed by Educational Testing Service (ETS) to assess your knowledge and skills of specific content areas. They are a part of the licensing procedure in many states. This study guide covers the information that will be covered in the Special Education: Core Knowledge and Applications Test, which assesses your knowledge of the actual content you will be expected to teach once you are licensed. Your state has adopted The Praxis Series tests because it wants to confirm that you have achieved a specified level of mastery in special education before it grants you a license to teach in a classroom.

The Praxis Series tests are part of a national testing program, meaning that the test covered in this study guide is required in more than one state for licensure. The advantage of a national program is that if you want to move to another state, you can transfer your scores from one state to another. However, each state has specific test requirements and passing scores. If you are applying for a license in another state, you will want to verify the appropriate test and passing score requirements. This information is available online at www.ets.org/praxis/states or by calling ETS at 800-772-9476 or 609-771-7395.

What Is Licensure?

Licensure in any area—medicine, law, architecture, accounting, cosmetology—is an assurance to the public that the person holding the license possesses sufficient knowledge and skills to perform important occupational activities safely and effectively. In the case of teacher licensing, a license tells the public that the individual has met pre-defined competency standards for beginning teaching practice.

Because a license makes such a serious claim about its holder, licensure tests are usually quite demanding. In some fields, licensure tests have more than one part and last for more than one day. Candidates for licensure in all fields plan intensive study as part of their professional preparation: some join study groups, while others study alone. But preparing to take a licensure test is, in all cases, a professional activity. Because it assesses the entire body of knowledge for the field you are entering, preparing for a licensure exam takes planning, discipline, and sustained effort.

Why Does My State Require The Praxis Series Assessments?

Your state chose The Praxis Series Assessments because the tests assess the breadth and depth of content—called the “domain”—that your state wants its teachers to possess before they begin to teach. The level of content knowledge, reflected in the passing score, is based on recommendations of panels of teachers and teacher educators in each subject area. The state licensing agency and, in some states, the state legislature ratify the passing scores that have been recommended by panels of teachers.
CHAPTER 2

What Do the Tests Measure?

*The Praxis Series* Subject Assessments are tests of content knowledge. They measure your understanding and skills in a particular subject area. Multiple-choice tests measure a broad range of knowledge across your content area. Constructed-response tests measure your ability to provide in-depth explanations of a few essential topics in a given subject area. Content-specific pedagogy tests, most of which are constructed response, measure your understanding of how to teach certain fundamental concepts in a subject area. The tests do not measure your actual teaching ability, however. They measure your knowledge of a subject and how to teach it. The teachers in your field who help us design and write these tests, and the states that require them, do so in the belief that knowledge of your subject area is the first requirement for licensing. Teaching combines many complex skills, only some of which can be measured by a single test. While the test covered in this study guide measures content knowledge, your teaching ability is a skill that is typically measured in other ways; for example, through observation, videotaped practice, or portfolios.

How Were These Tests Developed?

ETS began the development of *The Praxis Series* Subject Assessments with a survey. For each subject, teachers around the country in various teaching situations were asked to judge which knowledge and skills a beginning teacher in that subject needs to possess. Professors in schools of education who prepare teachers were asked the same questions. These responses were ranked in order of importance and sent out to hundreds of teachers for review. All of the responses to these surveys (called “job analysis surveys”) were analyzed to summarize the judgments of these professionals. From their consensus, we developed guidelines, or specifications, for the multiple-choice and constructed-response tests. Each subject area had a committee of practicing teachers and teacher educators who wrote the specifications, which were reviewed and eventually approved by teachers. From the test specifications, groups of teachers and professional test developers created test questions that met content requirements and satisfied the *ETS Standards for Quality and Fairness.*

When your state adopted *The Praxis Series* Subject Assessments, local panels of practicing teachers and teacher educators in each subject area met to examine the tests and to evaluate each question for its relevance to beginning teachers in your state. This is called a “validity study” because local practicing teachers validate that the test content is relevant to the job. For the test to be adopted in your state, teachers in your state must judge that it is valid. During the validity study, the panel also provides a passing-score recommendation. This process includes a rigorous review to determine how many of the test questions a beginning teacher in that state would be able to answer correctly. Your state’s licensing agency then reviewed the panel’s recommendations and made a final determination of the passing-score requirement.

Throughout the development process, practitioners in the teaching field—teachers and teacher educators—participated in defining what *The Praxis Series* Subject Assessments would cover, which test would be used for licensure in your subject area, and what score would be needed to achieve licensure. This practice is consistent with how professional licensure works in most fields: those who are already licensed oversee the licensing of new practitioners. When you pass *The Praxis Series* Subject Assessments, you and the practitioners in your state will have evidence that you have the knowledge and skills required for beginning teaching practice.