



# Preparing to Pass the Physical Education Praxis-II Examination: Increasing Teacher Candidate Test-Wiseness, Self-Efficacy and Content Knowledge in the Era of Accountability

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The purpose of this paper is to discuss ideas related to test preparation. Specifically, the authors focus on physical education teacher preparation programs. The paper discusses the current high-stakes testing landscape that exists in teacher education, shares the *T.E.S.T.* model (Translate, Eliminate, Solve or Substitute, and (avoid) Tricks) for test preparation, examines how self-efficacy is related to test anxiety, and outlines several key curricular items to include in physical education teacher education programs in order to most effectively prepare teacher candidates. The authors recommend further research on test preparation programs and the relationship between self-efficacy, standardized test performance and effective teaching.

Anyone who educates and prepares future teachers has run into the teacher candidate who is hard-working and insightful yet scores poorly on standardized examinations. Perhaps he also shows common signs of nervousness, low self-efficacy, lack of confidence, and general anxiety with assessments. She may even be one of the better teachers you observe in the classroom field experience, possessing the ability to connect well with K-12 students. You question whether the candidate will make it through the teacher education program because

of poor test-taking skills. Is this preventable? Can we increase teacher candidate test-taking ability in order to assist talented teacher candidates in earning licensure? This article details the underpinnings of state and federal accountability processes, synthesizes available research on effective examination preparation programs, and offers a description of a model that can optimally prepare teacher candidates to gain confidence, improve test-taking skills and increase content knowledge.

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## **Standardized Testing Trends and Increasing State and Federal Accountability**

Standardized testing to assess teacher quality and teacher knowledge has been a major issue in educational policy, decision making, and in American society generally since the 1983 U.S. Department of Education report *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence, 1983). Some examples of the impact of educational accountability include federal legislation designed to increase teacher quality and teacher education program quality, including No Child Left Behind and recertification of Title II Programs.

### **Teacher Education as a Broken System**

Some critics of teacher education, notably Hess (2002, 2009) and Ballou and Podgursky (1998, 2001), describe teacher education as a broken system that needs to have its monopoly on the production and licensure of certified teachers ended. Widespread anti-teacher-education sentiment is increasing throughout American society, from Hollywood to the state capitols (Underwood & Mead, 2012). Spearheaded by the National Council of Teacher Quality (NCTQ), concerted efforts to end teacher education programs are now common. Underperforming teacher education programs are also shown in the film “Waiting for Superman”, with its depictions of poorly trained teachers in low-performing schools. Yet another criticism of teacher education programs comes from a respected voice within the academy. Levine (2006) depicts teacher education programs as degree-trading cash cows with low standards and quality. Such criticism has profound policy implications, including a significant accountability change, moving away from trust in the profession of teacher education. Faith in teacher education programs is being replaced by a pronounced emphasis on the testing of teachers, teacher candidates, and K-12 students (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Horn, 2003, 2005; Wakefield, 2003). Accountability has become synonymous with tests such as the PRAXIS-II.

Furthermore, some prospective teachers may avoid a traditional teacher education program altogether if they possess a degree and can pass an exam. An example of this is the American Board of Certification for Teacher Excellence (ABCTE), which has received more than \$35,000,000 in federal funds to prepare teachers without a teacher education program through

fast-tracked clinical experiences and abbreviated mentoring (ABCTE, 2006). What ABCTE offers is that all ABCTE program graduates pass a standardized examination of content knowledge similar in design and content to the PRAXIS-II examinations. Testing, the purported gold standard for teacher quality, continues to be paramount in teacher education despite vociferous criticism about testing from many angles (Orfield, Marin & Horn, 2005).

Such a national policy shift away from providing resources for traditional teacher education programs and towards the ability to earn licensure through programs such as ABCTE (ABCTE) and Teach for America has defined teacher education policy debates in the last few years. The debate has gained widespread traction with media and, more importantly, state and national policymakers, who may not fully realize the grave policy implications of ranking and sorting teacher education programs merely by calculating pass rates on PRAXIS-II style licensure examinations or counting syllabi (Steiner & Rozen, 2004).

Such measures may not adequately assess the quality of any teacher education program, but are especially problematic for programs preparing physical educators. In fact, exams alone cannot and will not determine the true effectiveness of the teacher candidate who graduates from the program and goes on to reach, teach and inspire K-12 learners (Blue, Newell, O’Grady & Toro, 2002; Wakefield, 2003). Yet we in the academy have been remiss in failing to provide assessments that pass the straight-face test. We have not satisfactorily demonstrated that teacher education programs are significantly better than, or even equal to, alternative routes to teacher education (Wall, 2009). Federal Title II reporting requirements for programs preparing teacher candidates require states to utilize examinations like the PRAXIS-II as a component of assessment systems to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher education programs (ETS, 2012). Congress has recently addressed this dilemma with massive federal funding incentives for states and programs to compete for grants to innovate and design better assessment and accountability systems.

### **Federal Funding Increases and Accountability in the Obama Administration**

Recently, Congress has released massive federal funds including Race to the Top (RTT) and American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) to improve teacher education and develop and utilize longitudinal data systems to assess teacher education program

effectiveness. Releasing hundreds of millions of dollars in education funding is, on the surface, a tremendous opportunity for teacher education programs. The money is an incentive to innovate and improve teacher education programs, whether traditional or alternative. There are three separate components to this increasing funding, and related accountability considerations as well.

### *Background to Federal Funding Policy Changes*

First, increased federal education funding (offered for reform or innovative programs) is a partial response to criticisms related to perceived poor quality of teacher education. It is also a by-product of the lack of information about valid and reliable measures of teacher candidate effectiveness. This relates to widespread criticism from reformers such as Hess, whose criticisms can be summarized by the oft-stated notions that teacher education is expensive, out-of-touch with the business world, ineffective, and an inefficient way to produce teachers for approximately 200,000 relatively similar jobs (Hess, 2010). Kumashiro (2010) describes such criticisms as troubling efforts to end teacher education. Standardized assessments such as the PRAXIS-II can be seen as a lever to rank, sort, rate, evaluate and close those programs deemed comparatively poor-performing. Second, federal funding increases are partially attributable to stimulus-grant funding as a principal component of the recession recovery. Third, the release of RTT and ARRA funds reveals the policy intentions of both the Obama administration and Education Secretary Duncan (2009), who would like to improve teacher education using a factory model of incentives and punishments for effective and ineffective teacher education programs.

Yet despite the increased funding, increasing accountability and assessment of teacher education program effectiveness still relies on one main measure: the percentage of teacher education program completers who successfully demonstrate their content knowledge on licensure examinations such as the PRAXIS-II. But what if the PRAXIS-II is not the best measure of teacher candidate knowledge? For physical education teacher candidates, in particular, should examination performance provide the principal determinations of the ability to reach, teach, and inspire future K-12 learners?

Finally, consider the Educational Testing Service (ETS), the non-profit testing company that developed and sells the PRAXIS-II examinations to states and is

responsible for ensuring that they are valid, reliable, and bias-free. In 1998, before unveiling the PRAXIS-II series, ETS expressly recommended that the PRAXIS-II examination not be utilized to rank and sort teacher education programs and assess 'quality' based on the number of completers who pass the exam (ETS, 1998). How can teacher education programs best deal with misused high-stakes assessments? Unfortunately, ranking and sorting programs through teacher candidate pass rates is precisely how teacher and program quality are defined in the era of high-stakes examinations and increased accountability. Standardized tests of teacher candidate content knowledge such as the PRAXIS-II series have become the foundation of assessment systems to gauge teacher candidate and program quality, as required by national accreditors like the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), where 80% of an accredited institution's teacher candidates must pass the state licensure examination (NCATE, 2012).

### **Accountability, Assessment Systems, and National Teacher Education Accreditation**

Accreditation and standards-based accountability in educator preparation programs is most often accomplished through the development and implementation of assessment systems. Such systems may allow for individual programmatic differences in field-experiences, diverse experiences, and coursework. However, according to both NCATE and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC), the dual national accrediting bodies currently merging as the accreditation agency for teacher education, one component remains the same for all teacher education programs per national mandate: standardized licensure examinations or tests of knowledge for teacher candidates (NCATE, 2008). While exams such as the PRAXIS-II are firmly in place as part of accreditation and accountability systems, there is a lack of evidence if these exams are, in fact, accurate predictors of teaching effectiveness. In effect, modern accreditation and accountability systems potentially misuse PRAXIS-II scores to evaluate teacher education programs, counter to the intended use of the PRAXIS-II series (ETS, 1998). This misuse has significant implications for teacher educators and the teacher candidates they serve, including increased stress for teacher candidates.

### *Accountability and Test Anxiety*

Many teacher candidates experience stress and anxiety before taking standardized licensure examinations such as the PRAXIS-II (Flippo, 1988; Gulek, 2003; Spielberger & Vagg, 1995; Wall, 2008). As high-stakes exams increase with increasing accountability from state and national stakeholders, teacher candidates face anxiety related to licensure exams. Tests and exams are still pervasive components of teacher education licensure, even though there are performance assessments already in use or being developed (for example, Performance Assessment of California Teachers (PACT), Pecheone & Chung, 2006). In spite of the pervasiveness of such tests, there is a gap in the knowledge of optimal methods to prepare teacher candidates for licensure examinations such as the PRAXIS-II.

### *Teaching to the Test in K-12 and Higher Education*

Assessment misuse turns into pressure from deans, provosts, and university presidents to ensure high teacher candidate pass rates in order to avoid being ranked at the bottom of teacher education programs in a competitive marketplace. Teacher educators are pressured to adjust curriculum to meet PRAXIS-II criteria, much as K-12 educators deal with the culture of teaching to the test. Both of these factors relate to the pressure of high-stakes examinations and state and federal reporting mandates about determining effective teaching using high-stakes examinations.

### *Summary of Accountability and Examination*

Educational researchers decry the widespread use of high-stakes assessments of content knowledge as the preeminent screening measure for teacher candidate fitness (Kohn, 2000; Perreault, 2000; Wakefield, 2002, 2003). Despite the misuse of large-scale, high-stakes assessments (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Johnson & Johnson, 2002; Kohn & Shannon, 2002; Orfield, Marin & Horn, 2005), teacher candidates must pass standardized exams in order to graduate and become licensed. Thus, teacher education programs must develop and share best practices in preparing teacher candidates for the PRAXIS-II examination. Additionally, programs must strive to meet the specific needs of physical education teacher candidates, whose preferred learning style is likely more hands-on and kinesthetic than optimal for successfully completing a two-hour multiple-choice exam such as the PRAXIS-II (Wall, 2008). Researchers including Gardner (2004)

have noted that some learners' preferred learning style includes kinesthetic learning through movement and activity, not just verbal-linguistic learning. For those learners, including many physical education teacher candidates, the PRAXIS-II series, and standardized examinations in general may cause undue stress, anxiety, and potentially impair test performance (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995). Licensure examinations like the PRAXIS-II are geared at non-kinesthetic preferred learning styles, since they offer no teacher candidates the chance to move creatively.

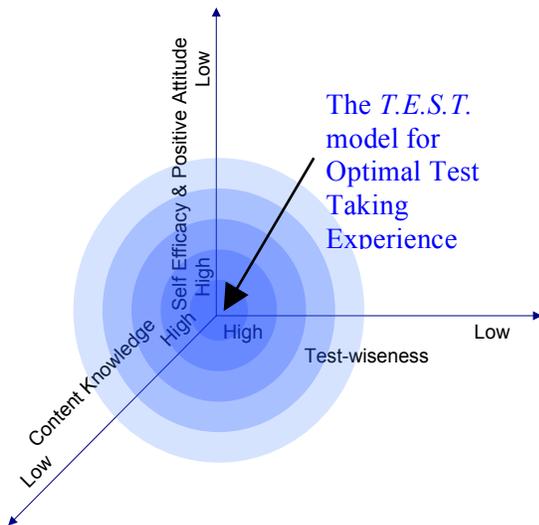
### **Physical Education Teacher Candidates and Standardized Assessments**

The dearth of effective test-preparation models is particularly notable in physical education, a discipline attracting hands-on, kinesthetic learners (Green, 1989; Gulek, 2003). Active learners do not generally thrive in the conditions concomitant with a two-hour, 120-question multiple choice examination such as the PRAXIS-II, which involves sitting at a desk and using just a pencil to demonstrate comprehension of key pieces of discrete knowledge deemed germane to being a physical educator. These teacher candidates prefer movement and activity to most effectively process information and demonstrate learning (Gardner, 2004). However, they must submit to a high-stakes evaluation process (PRAXIS-II) that resembles neither the way they are taught to instruct their students nor the manner in which they perform optimally.

We sought to develop a mechanism to increase activity, confidence, and content knowledge while boosting self-efficacy in students who need to "do" and "move" to perform optimally on assessments. A program was developed at two Midwestern, regional teacher education institutions by faculty who serve as physical education teacher educators and an assessment director for teacher education. These faculty also participate in assessment and accountability efforts for both state and NCATE accreditation.

The program was designed based on research on effective test-preparation programs in an effort to best prepare teacher candidates for the PRAXIS-II examination. Figure 1 depicts the goals of our test preparation workshop, known as *T.E.S.T.* (Translate, Eliminate, Solve or Substitute, and (avoid) Tricks). It visually depicts and synthesizes the three optimal areas of effective examination-preparation for physical education teacher candidates: increased test-wiseness, self-efficacy, and content knowledge.

One of the most important components of effective examination preparation is increasing teacher candidate test-wisness (Flippo, 1988). The next section chronicles the best practices for preparing teacher candidates for high-stakes examinations by increasing their test-wisness.



**Figure 1.** A visual representation of the goals of the T.E.S.T. exam preparation program. Optimal performance occurs when all three variables are very high.

## Increasing Teacher Candidate Test-Wisness, Self-Efficacy, and Content Knowledge

A review of the literature demonstrates that test-wisness, or test-taking ability, can be taught. Flippo (1988) states that improving one's innate testing ability is not only possible, it is probable, by improving one's test-wisness. Flippo (1988) asserts that test-wisness is developed most efficiently by test takers who actively participate in in-depth practice, receive helpful feedback, and make a concerted attempt to improve their test-taking skills. Furthermore, Wall (2008) notes that standardized teacher education exams such as the PRAXIS-II require disciplined reading and high levels of reading comprehension skill. This is particularly pertinent for the physical education teacher candidate, who must possess (or develop) her ability to decode complex test questions and confidently select a response. Additionally, a review of the extant literature revealed that teacher candidates must possess content

knowledge, test-taking strategies, and effectively utilize stress-reduction techniques to perform optimally. These three characteristics of effective test-preparation were defined to be components of effective examination preparation programs by Miyasaka (2000). But can examination preparation and test-wisness be taught to teacher candidates? In a word, yes. Those few examination preparation programs that have been evaluated do show an increase in student performance after attending examination preparation sessions (Mee, 2000; Taylor, 1992; Wall, 2008). However, Bryant (2002) notes that few teacher education programs offer examination preparation programs designed to prepare teacher candidates for licensure examinations. Such a program was developed and implemented in our physical education teacher education program, in order to reduce teacher candidate anxiety.

## Psychic Entropy and Examination Preparation

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defines the combination of unrelenting anxiety and inability to focus on a particular task as "psychic entropy" (p. 36), which can paralyze thought and action and make effective task concentration nearly impossible. This can be a terribly hurtful condition for teacher candidates who fear examinations such as the PRAXIS-II, and may account for less than optimal performance of certain teacher candidates. For instance, several teacher candidates with adequate or even superior classroom teaching skills and good grades do not realize their potential on the PRAXIS-II examinations. An effective examination preparation program must assist these teacher candidates and allow them to earn licensure despite test anxiety and psychic entropy (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1996). One way to reduce psychic entropy (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and learned helplessness is to offer calming strategies that enable physical education teacher candidates to increase focus and attention (Bandura, 1994; Eliot & Dweck, 2005).

### *Focus and Attention During Standardized Examinations*

Students with low self-efficacy are at-risk for poor performance on standardized examinations (Bandura, 1994). For students attempting to pass the high-stakes PRAXIS-II examinations, being unable to focus attention (a symptom of test anxiety) could be a byproduct of low self-efficacy. Lack of focus is based partially on the psychological phenomenon of learned helplessness (Bandura, 1994; Eliot & Dweck, 2005).

The *T.E.S.T.* examination preparation program offers several components that are research-based practices that have been determined to increase student performance on high-stakes examinations. These better practices include: (a) content knowledge information, (b) a toolbox of test-taking skills based on test-wise strategies and practices associated with excellent test-takers, and (c) mental skill strategies to calm teacher candidates experiencing psychic entropy (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Weinberg & Gould, 2003).

*Self-Efficacy, Anxiety and Optimal Experience*

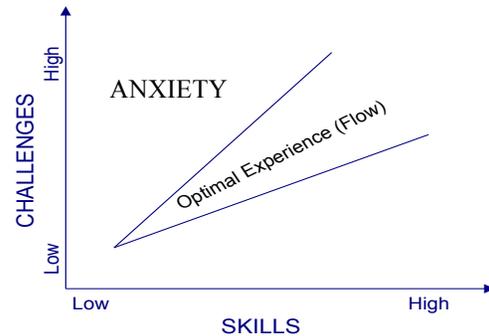
Some teacher education candidates demonstrate strong symptoms of test anxiety and the presence of low self-efficacy. They do not believe, whether true or not, that they possess ample capabilities to successfully accomplish a particular task (Bandura, 1994, 1997). Another way to describe self-efficacy is to say the maxim, “Whether you think that you can or you can’t, you’re right.” Students lacking confidence in their abilities are demonstrably less likely to perform at their best, denying them from what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) refers to as the optimal experience, commonly associated with the sports-related phrase, “being in the zone.” Our test preparation program was designed to enhance test-taking skills to match the significant challenge presented by the licensure exam.

Moreover, the symptoms of test anxiety can be pernicious (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995), including intense psychological (and often physiological) trauma, such as shaking, nervousness, sweating, and, as seen in the actions of the prospective test-taker in the introduction, an acute inability to focus on and concentrate on a particular task (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). These symptoms can be associated with high stakes testing. Physical education teacher candidates, who are often extraordinarily nervous about taking a two-hour, fill-in-the-bubble-sheet examination, exhibit anxiety and low self-efficacy, which can impair examination performance. Literature supports the effect that event importance can have on anxiety levels (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). Boosting self-efficacy is essential in order to assist teacher candidates to believe that they can do well on the PRAXIS-II examination. Note that physical education teacher candidates are more likely to concentrate and feel confident if they believe that they can pass the examination.

**T.E.S.T. Technique: An Interactive Examination Preparation Program**

The *T.E.S.T.* program offers strategies, skills, and attitudes conducive to increase student knowledge and increase “self-efficacy” (Bandura, 1997). The program was developed based on several components related to recommendations suggested by McCabe (2003) and Chittooran and Miles (2001) pertaining to high-stakes test preparation programs that increase content knowledge, decrease test anxiety, and boost test-taker self-efficacy. The goal of the *T.E.S.T.* program is to move teacher candidates into what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) calls “the flow”, (p. 71) so they perform optimally (p. 72) and improve performance on the physical education PRAXIS-II examinations.

The *T.E.S.T.* model is presented to students at the sophomore/junior level in a seminar forum. Figure 2 illustrates that developing a sense of self-efficacy (and an optimal exam experience) can help to prepare physical education teacher candidates for licensure tests.



**Figure 2.** *Optimal experiences occur when skills and challenges are both high.*  
 Note. Adapted from Csikszentmihalyi 1990.

The *T.E.S.T.* model was developed and implemented to boost teacher candidate confidence, test-wiseness, and content knowledge, so that students can have the optimal experience depicted above (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The model uses mixed-difficulty questions from sample examinations. This increases the ability of the teacher candidates to believe that they can solve the questions. Additionally, engaging the teacher candidates by encouraging and demonstrating how they can use a more active translation approach to exam questions yields better

results, including higher scores and more confidence (Wall, 2008). Providing hands-on, active strategies enables kinesthetic learners to thrive during high-stakes examinations that are stressful and alien to the preferred learning style of the physical education teacher candidate.

## The Mental Side of Test Preparation

Many physical education teacher candidates find themselves with content background and psychological skills often utilized in human performance in a physical sense. This psychological skill-set can be just as successfully applied to test preparation. Sport psychologists often prescribe anxiety management strategies to maximize performance in competitive situations. Similar to shooting a free-throw in the waning seconds of a basketball game, teacher candidates are attempting to accomplish a passing score on an entrance or licensure examination. Why, then, should we not employ the same strategies to increase the likelihood of success? Our contention is that we should. From the standpoint of self-efficacy, if the test taker enters an exam with sub-optimal confidence, the likelihood of achieving best performance is diminished. This test taking self-efficacy, also known as situation-specific self-confidence (Bandura, 1994), is essential for optimal performance in a high-stakes testing environment. The question then becomes, "What can we do to develop greater confidence during high stakes testing environments?"

### Prepare

Preparation includes a number of items. First, the test taker should put in the time studying content. The entire teacher education program should be viewed as a central part of a process designed for success on licensure exams and success in the classroom. Teacher educators can assist with this part of the preparation process by designing and implementing course examinations that resemble the question type and format of the licensure exam. Moreover, there are certain content areas that can be specifically reviewed by the test taker. For example, these areas include a need to focus on motor skill and movement activities, biomechanics, body and spatial awareness, exercise physiology, anatomy and physiology, and motor development (ETS, 2011). In many cases, courses focused on these areas have occurred earlier in the

preparation program while the PRAXIS-II exam occurs at or near the end of the teacher education program. Thus the teacher candidate would benefit by reviewing these materials. A thorough review also has confidence benefits. Preparation also includes focusing on basic human needs. These include a good night's sleep, eating a small meal prior to the exam, and arriving at the test site early to develop a comfort level. Just as the basketball player arrives to the gym early for a shoot-around, the test-taker should allow time to become familiar with the environment.

### Practice and Rehearsal

An important part of the mental side of test preparation is plenty of opportunities for practice, just as we would in the sport environment. These opportunities should include questions of the same type and style as the test being prepared for, practicing with time limits in place, and practicing in a similar environment. Just as football teams practice the two-minute offense, test takers should practice answering questions on-the-clock in a classroom environment, allowing one minute per question.

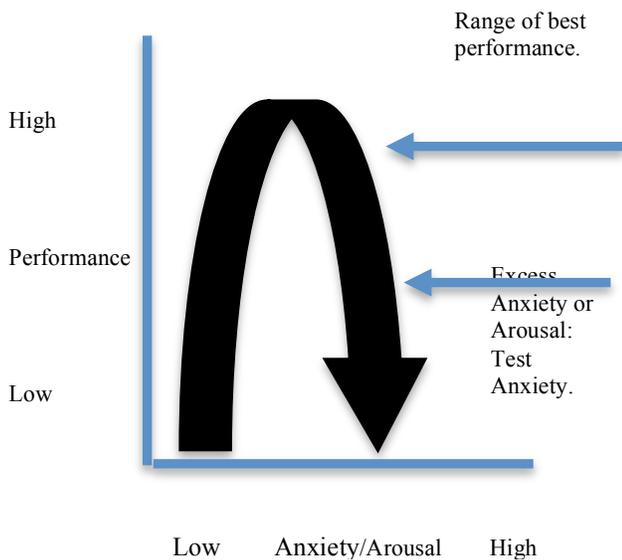
### Learn the Feeling of Best Performance

In sport, we often ask athletes how they feel when they perform their best. The purpose of this activity is that, if we learn how we feel when we perform our best, we are more likely to learn how to replicate those feelings prior to the next performance. An important part of this process is the realization that for most people in most situations, some level of anxiety is normal and actually will help us improve our performance. Heightened levels of arousal help us to focus, think clearly, and operate efficiently while under time constraints. It is, however, the excess anxiety or arousal levels (Weinberg & Gould, 2003) that are detrimental to best performance. We define this excess level of arousal and/or anxiety as test anxiety. This can be seen graphically in Figure 3.

### Establish a Timeline for Success

A prerequisite for solid mental preparation is that each individual should develop a timeline for success (Weinberg & Gould, 2003). The preparation we recommend does not just happen the night prior to examination. While for some students the preparation process may not require more than a week's worth of

time, for others—especially those with heightened test anxiety—the process should last much longer. Therefore we recommend that teacher education programs offer support systems that would benefit all test takers, not just individuals who need extra help. Furthermore, as results on standardized tests have become a measure for teacher education program success, institutions could benefit from providing the services that teacher candidates need. Ultimately, these services may allow institutions to focus more on the content in teacher preparation program as a conduit for developing the best teachers, not just the best test takers. We discuss physical education content in the following section.



**Figure 3.** *The Arousal/Anxiety and Performance Relationship. As arousal and anxiety increase to the optimal level, so does performance. However, arousal or anxiety increasing beyond the appropriate level leads to a dramatic decrease in performance (test anxiety).*

### Content Knowledge

Another important aspect of an effective licensure preparation program for physical educators includes a focus on essential content knowledge, pedagogical and assessment skills, and professional dispositions. This

section of the paper will focus on the requisite content knowledge for physical education teacher education (PETE) programs. We support the application of program standards in teacher preparation programs and believe that it is these types of standards upon which teacher candidates should be tested for licensure. According to the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) (2008), physical education teacher preparation programs should include the following components.

### Scientific and Theoretical Knowledge

Examples of this include crucial physiological and biomechanical concepts, applied motor learning principles, psychological/behavior theories, and pertinent historical, philosophical, and social perspectives. Additionally, teacher candidates should have a developed “coaching eye”, that is to analyze, correct, and provide timely feedback to improve motor skills (NASPE, 2008).

### Skill and Fitness Based Competence

Teacher candidates should be educated in physical skills and related dispositions. This includes maintaining a health-enhancing level of physical fitness, possessing competence in motor skills, and the ability to effectively demonstrate motor skills in a variety of movement related activities (NASPE, 2008).

### Planning and Implementation

Accountability in the classroom begins with the development of lesson plans. Qualified physical education teacher candidates identify and meet the needs of all students. Physical educators utilize state or national standards to develop appropriate instructional goals while successfully managing resources to best plan, modify, and adapt instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners. Furthermore, physical educators utilize and apply technology as a tool for learning (NASPE, 2008). Physical educators have a unique opportunity to differentiate and scaffold instruction for students via stations, self and peer assessment, small group activities, self-selected participation, and lead-up games.

## Instructional Delivery and Management

Proper delivery of instruction and classroom management is necessary to ensure that all students are able to meet the lesson objectives. Proper delivery includes effective verbal and non-verbal communication, for example providing students with appropriate and useful cues, prompts, and feedback that increase student learning and skill development. Moreover, good communication assists with motivation. Effective physical educators recognize changing classroom dynamics and make appropriate instructional adjustments based on student performances and responses. Finally, teacher candidates with a gift for instruction and management utilize rules, routines, and transitions to create and maintain a safe and effective learning environment while modeling responsible personal and social behaviors (NASPE, 2008).

Maximizing class time requires that teachers use transitions, such as movement from one place to another, or gathering equipment, to meet lesson objectives. Students should move with a purpose. They could stretch their arms while walking to the baseline to throw a ball at the secondary level, or act like their favorite animal as they move to midcourt for a general coordination lesson at the elementary level. Each of these moments can enhance the student's ability to meet the necessary objectives (Pangrazi & Beighle, 2010). Rapid transitions also allow the physical educator to better utilize limited classroom time. With a growing concern related to obesity and physical inactivity, every classroom moment should be utilized effectively.

## Impact on Student Learning

Effective teacher candidates utilize assessment and reflection to support student learning and inform instructional decisions. Furthermore, teacher candidates should design and implement appropriate assessments before, during, and after lessons that are linked to outcomes and standards and measure student achievement. Regular, deliberate assessment helps to improve both instruction and student learning.

## Professionalism

Professionalism is the foundation for effective teaching. Teacher candidates should demonstrate

professionalism by actively participating in collaborative activities leading to growth and development, exhibiting ethical behaviors, and conveying respect and sensitivity. Most importantly, quality teacher candidates demonstrate behaviors consistent with the belief that all students can become physically educated individuals (NASPE, 2008).

These standards provide a framework for licensure examinations. In contrast, the current national licensure examination (PRAXIS-II) for physical education teacher candidates is comprised of questions stemming from four major areas (ETS, 2011). The test composition is outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1. Composition of Physical Education Content Knowledge (0091) PRAXIS-II Licensure Examination**

Content Category	Approximate Percentage of the Exam
Content Knowledge and Student Growth and Development	30%
Management, Motivation, and Communication	25%
Planning, Instruction, and Student Assessment	25%
Collaboration, Reflection, and Technology	20%

Source: Educational Testing Service, *Test at a Glance*, <http://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/PRAXIS/pdf/0091.pdf>

While they contain some similar components, the standards prescribed by NASPE and those content categories included on the PRAXIS-II examination are not congruent. We support an examination focused on standards developed by the profession. In the meantime, to most effectively prepare teacher candidates, teacher educators must adequately address both the NASPE standards and the content areas included on the PRAXIS-II examination for physical education. For example, the PRAXIS-II exam contains few if any questions on professional dispositions. Additionally, the PRAXIS-II exam, as currently constructed, does not contain questions regarding the ability of teacher candidates to positively impact student learning. We agree with NASPE – these, and other components are essential for all good teachers and should be assessed to ensure high quality physical educators are entering schools.

## Conclusion

At the end of the day, PETE programs should be focused on placing effective educators in the classroom. In order to do so, PETE programs must design and implement programs that support teacher candidates through the high stakes testing process that exists in teacher education today. However, our recommendation is that this support system should be an enhancement to, rather than a focus of, programs. While we have explored what an effective test preparation program may look like, we realize that more research is needed to examine the effectiveness of test preparation programs.

Furthermore, we believe that part of the test preparation process—and ultimately, effective teaching—is encouraging and promoting the development of situation specific self-confidence (Bandura, 1994). This improved self-efficacy will improve the likelihood that teacher candidates will be prepared to succeed on required admission and certification exams. More importantly though, improved self-efficacy will enhance teacher effectiveness in the physical education classroom and lead to improved quality for physical education programs. The need exists, however, for further exploration of the effects of self-efficacy on standardized test performance and teacher effectiveness.

Our ultimate goal is to continue to work toward promoting healthy, active lifestyles for everyone by providing a positive physical education experience for all students. We believe this happens in teacher education programs that implement high standards for teachers and are focused on identifying and supporting well-rounded teacher candidates to navigate the high-stakes test environment. Finally, we also recommend that physical education programs include components of effective teaching like planning for instruction and assessment, professional dispositions, classroom management, and the utilization of benchmarks and standards in the curriculum in order to positively impact K-12 student learning. We believe this provides the best opportunity to put the best teacher in every classroom.

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