Case Study: Assessing Oregon Teacher Candidates with the NES® (National Evaluation Series™) from Pearson

Background: Preparing Quality Teachers

Student achievement and performance are deeply impacted by interactions with quality teachers. In Oregon, teacher candidates typically gain the knowledge needed for the profession in one of the state's teacher education programs, where the skills of a quality teacher are developed. After completing an educator program, a candidate must meet the state's requirements—including passing the appropriate licensure tests—to attain an initial license to teach.

The Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC), the licensing agency for Oregon educators, approves the teacher education programs offered by the state's colleges and universities and is responsible for selecting the testing program used for initial licensure. Seeking a licensure testing system that features current test content, improved access, and data support, the Oregon TSPC decided in 2010 to adopt the **NES® (National Evaluation Series™)** from Pearson.

Challenge: Find a modern teacher licensure testing program

The Oregon TSPC realized the state needed an advanced teacher licensure testing program—one that could be used as an instrument to measure the competencies needed to successfully teach in today's dynamic classrooms.

Teachers in Oregon must be prepared to teach and assess twenty-first-century content and skills that result in specific student outcomes. Such outcomes are aligned to updated academic standards that focus on critical thinking, innovation, problem solving, and technology.

As part of its teacher licensure testing program, Oregon was interested in administering a series of content tests that considered these new student outcomes. "The Commission heard from faculty for years of the need for new test content that measured candidate content knowledge, particularly in the specialty areas like reading and special education," says Vickie Chamberlain, Executive Director of the Oregon TSPC.

In addition, teacher candidates wanted more access to testing and faster score reporting. The higher education community was looking for a modern testing program that provided portability and supported the recruitment of candidates from other states.

Solution: The NES

The NES® (National Evaluation Series™) teacher licensure testing program provides the advanced features the Oregon TSPC was seeking. "Transitioning to the NES as Oregon's primary testing program for content areas met the state's articulated needs," says Chamberlain.

Contemporary Content. With test content covering an array of professional-knowledge and grade-level subject areas, the NES provides the state with a comprehensive testing tool. The NES is aligned to the most recent profession-accepted national subject-matter and pedagogy standards, including standards from the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC), the International Reading Association (IRA), and the Association for Childhood Education International (Elementary Education).

In 2010, Oregon adopted the Common Core State Standards, which establish clear learning expectations for K–12 students. The Common Core underscores additional expectations for teacher candidates—they must possess the ability to effectively teach the standards. A testament to its contemporary content, the NES test frameworks, which describe teacher competencies, support the content needed to teach the Common Core. A candidate's performance on the NES demonstrates his or her proficiency of current pedagogical and subject-matter knowledge.

Increased Access. The NES is 100 percent computer-based for all test fields. With continuous on-demand testing, candidates are no longer confined to a select number of dates and can decide when *they* want to test. Test centers are located across Oregon and nationwide, providing candidates with a choice of where to test.

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Expanded access enables out-of-state candidates to complete one of Oregon's licensure requirements before relocating. Increasing the out-of-state testing opportunities also increases the pool of potential teachers for the state's schools.

With computer-based tests, candidates have the opportunity to learn their score results upon completing the test. "The on-demand computer-based testing feature not only allows candidates to receive their scores on-site, but also helps candidates quickly add evidence of endorsement expertise in districts that are short-staffed," says Chamberlain. "These schools now have greater access to teachers who are licensed to teach high-need content areas."

Cost-Effectiveness. Oregon lowered its test fees by switching to the NES, reducing the cost to candidates by approximately 30 percent. Both the decrease in cost and the increase in program and preparation support were implemented at no cost to the state. Free, easy-to-access online study guides and faculty resources offer additional value to test-takers and teacher education programs. Immediate score reports are also provided at no extra cost, benefitting the Oregon TSPC, teacher education programs, and teacher candidates.

Innovative Data Support. The Oregon TSPC now has continuous online access to test data. The NES web-based data analysis tool *ResultsAnalyzer™* is available to both the Oregon TSPC and teacher education programs. Allowing users to generate self-designed reports, *ResultsAnalyzer™* can sort information by candidate demographics and display both aggregated and disaggregated test results.

"Separating data by individual candidate performance in the domains of a particular test allows programs to advise candidates more effectively, as well as to inform both instruction and program improvement," says Keith Menk, the TSPC's Deputy Director of Teacher Education Programs. "It is a dream advising tool—data at your fingertips."

Program Responsiveness. From the transition to the NES through its implementation, Pearson continues to provide the state with dedicated assistance through both a secure, accessible website and a committed team of individuals who are sensitive to the state's testing program priorities. The NES computer-based testing platform allows for immediate implementation, which contributed to the smooth conversion from the state's previous testing program to the NES. The ongoing success of the NES, along with the clear communication and staff training provided to the

Oregon TSPC, continues to support Oregon's educational priorities.

More information about the NES is available at **www.NEStest.com**.

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