

ILLINOIS CERTIFICATION TESTING SYSTEM

STUDY STRATEGIES AND TEST-TAKING SUGGESTIONS

Successful completion of the certification tests is one of the requirements for receiving an Illinois teaching certificate. The Illinois certification content test that you are required to pass assesses your knowledge of material that the State Board of Education has identified as necessary for teachers in your field.

Whether you are planning to take the content test for the first time or you are retaking a test, this document was written to help you...

- Understand what material is covered on the test;
- Identify your areas of strength and weakness;
- Identify resources that will help you prepare for the tests; and
- Provide you with test-taking suggestions.

To begin, you will need an Illinois Certification Testing System Study Guide for the test you will be taking. Single copies of study guides are available at no cost. The guides may be downloaded from the Internet or requested from National Evaluation Systems.

Study guides are available at www.icts.nesinc.com or may be requested from National Evaluation Systems by calling 800/239-8107.

The study guide is your best source of information about the content covered by the test. The following suggestions are offered to help you use the study guide most effectively.

USING THE STUDY GUIDE

- First, become familiar with the study guide.
 - The study guide contains general information about the tests, what to expect on the day of the test, and helpful test-taking suggestions. If you have not already taken a test, this information will help you prepare for the test day.

- Most importantly, the study guide contains essential information about the content covered by the test.
- Carefully read the section titled, "Sample Test Objectives and Questions."
 - This section will help you understand the relationships among the test objectives, the descriptive statements, and the questions that will be on the test.
 - The test objectives and descriptive statements describe the material on which the test items are based.
- Next, scan the entire set of test objectives and descriptive statements.
 - Notice that the test is broken down into subareas.
 - ✓ Each subarea consists of a set of related test objectives.
 - ✓ After you take the test, the score report you receive will provide you with important information about how you performed on each subarea.
 - Also note that the test objectives describe material you learned throughout your professional preparation program.
- Now, identify which of the test objectives may be most difficult for you. This is where you may wish to focus your study.
 - Because of the breadth of material covered, it is helpful to break this task into manageable components.
 - ✓ The subareas of the test may provide a useful means of grouping objectives to organize your study.

REMEMBER...

Each test question is related to one of the test objectives so it is important that you learn how to use the objectives to help focus your study.

- Start with the first subarea.
 - Read the first objective and its descriptive statements.
 - ✓ Remember, descriptive statements provide examples of content that may be covered on the test.

- Decide if you understand the content of that particular test objective and descriptive statements.
 - ✓ Ask yourself questions such as, "Do I understand the terminology used?" "Do I know the material it addresses?"
 - ✓ If, for example, the objective refers to major theories, can you list the major theories? Can you explain those theories?
- If you do not understand or are not familiar with the content of the first test objective—or if it has been some time since you took course work that addressed the content of the objective—make notes of what it is that you do not know or that you want to review.

KEEP IN MIND...

Your familiarity with the content of a particular test objective will depend to a large extent upon your background and experience. Perhaps it has been several years since you took course work covering the content, maybe you had difficulty with the course work when you took it, or maybe you never had a class that addressed the content of that particular objective.

- Read the next objective and follow the same procedure for assessing your knowledge.
 - ✓ Again, make note if you need to review material for that objective.
- Continue doing this self-assessment for each of the objectives in the first subarea of the test.
- After you complete your review of all the test objectives in the first subarea, go to the second subarea.
 - Repeat the process you used in the first subarea. Read each test objective and its descriptive statements and decide if you understand the content and whether you know the terminology used.
 - Systematically review all of the test objectives in the second subarea, and make notes about content that you want to review.
- Repeat this procedure for each subarea.

IDENTIFYING RESOURCES

- Once you have completed your review of the test objectives and descriptive statements in each of the subareas, from your notes you will have a good idea of what you need to study.
- Now, you need to identify resources that can help you.
 - If you are a student or a recent graduate of an Illinois college or university...
 - ✓ A good place to start is with textbooks and notes you have from classes you have taken in which the content of those objectives was covered.
 - ✓ Your university advisor is also an excellent source of help.
 - Share with your advisor the results of your review of the test objectives.
 - If you have previously taken the test, share your score report(s) with your advisor to identify test subareas that may be the focus of your study.
 - Ask your advisor to recommend resources, textbooks, or other materials that address the content of the objectives you have targeted for study.
 - You might also ask your advisor to tutor you or to recommend a tutor.
 - Your advisor might also know of a study group for you to join.

You know your strengths and weaknesses best so help your advisor help you. Share with your advisor the results of your review of the test objectives and also any score reports you may have.

- If you have been out of school for some time or if you are not affiliated with an Illinois college or university...
 - ✓ Visit the bookstore of a college that offers course work covering the content of the objectives you need to study.

- ✓ See which textbooks are currently in use for that particular course, and either purchase them or borrow them from a library.
- ✓ Use those books to review the content you need to study.
- In some cases it may be beneficial for you to take course work or audit a class, particularly if you have never been exposed to the material covered by the objectives.

REMEMBER...

The test assesses your knowledge of material covered over the course of your professional preparation. Preparing for the test takes time and commitment.

USING YOUR SCORE REPORTS

- If you have previously taken the test, your score report(s) may help you identify where you need to concentrate your study.
 - The subarea scores you receive on your score report are intended to help you identify your strengths and weaknesses.
 - ✓ There are no passing scores for subareas, but the scores can be very helpful if you must prepare to retake a test.
 - You may wish to target for extra study any subarea in which you received a score of less than 240. (All test scores are reported on a scale of 100-300.)
 - If you have taken the test more than once, compare your score reports to determine if your performance on a subarea changed from one test administration to another.
 - ✓ If you have scored consistently low in a subarea, you may wish to emphasize that subarea in your review.
 - ✓ If your subarea scores fluctuate from one test administration to the next...
 - Ask yourself if you are "second-guessing" yourself. That is, are you changing your answers based upon how you think you may have previously answered a question?

- Avoid second-guessing. Answer a question with what you believe is the correct response—regardless of how you think you may have previously answered a similar question in the past.
- Did you spend a considerable amount of time on one subarea and not devote sufficient time and attention to another subarea?
 - When taking the test, pace yourself and allow sufficient time and attention for all subareas.
- You might consider seeking help with test-taking skills.

DEVELOPING TEST-TAKING SKILLS

- If you have difficulty taking standardized tests, you may need help with test-taking skills.
 - Test-taking strategies may build your confidence in your ability to be successful on the exam. For help in this area...
 - ✓ Check with your college or university's office of student services to see if they offer this assistance.
 - ✓ Contact the study skills center of your local community college for help in developing test-taking skills.
 - ✓ Ask your college advisor if he or she can identify someone who might be available to tutor you.
- If you have a friend or former classmate who has recently taken the test, ask that person to help you study.
- Take only one certification test on the same day.
 - If in the past you have taken more than one certification test on the same day, when you retake the exams, take only one test on a day.
 - ✓ That way you may be able to focus your preparation and energy on one exam and lessen your anxiety level.

REQUESTING ALTERNATIVE TESTING ARRANGEMENTS

- If you have a disability or if English is not your first language, you may benefit from alternative testing arrangements.
- When a need is appropriately documented, a variety of alternative arrangements may be made. For example...
 - It may be that you need extra time when taking the test.
 - If you have a documented learning disability such as dyslexia, it may be that you need someone to read the test to you.
- All alternative testing arrangements...
 - ✓ Are based upon individual need.
 - ✓ Must be appropriately documented.
 - ✓ Must be requested and approved during the test registration process.
- For more information on how to request alternative testing arrangements, see the current ICTS registration bulletin—available at www.icts.nesinc.com or by calling 800/239-8107.

FOR INFORMATION ON...
***Certification and test requirements visit the Illinois State Board of Education's
Certification website at:***
www.isbe.net/certification