

**OFFICE OF CHIEF OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**  
**Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items**  
**June 16, 2016**

**OFFICE OF EDUCATOR LICENSURE**

08. Action: Revise *Licensure Guidelines K-12* to require eligible teachers in Elementary Alternate Route Programs to pass the *Foundations of Reading* assessment with a passing scale score of 229 for Endorsement Code 117 effective July 1, 2017 [Goal 4 – MBE Strategic Plan]  
(Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process with public comments)

Background Information: *Mississippi Code Annotated* § 37-3-2(5), as amended, grants authority for the State Board of Education to establish licensure requirements for licensed educators of Mississippi. Effective July 1, 2017, for initial elementary education licensure, a teacher candidate in an elementary alternate route program in Mississippi must earn a passing score on a rigorous test of scientifically research-based reading instruction and intervention and data-based decision making principles as approved by the State Board of Education. The purpose of the test is to ensure that each licensed educator has the subject matter knowledge essential for entry-level teaching in the field. The approval of this license supports the critical role of the classroom teacher in ensuring that students exit third grade reading on grade level.

The test measures proficiency in and depth of understanding of the subject of reading, reflects scientifically based reading research, conforms to the recommendations of the Mississippi Reading Panel, and is in alignment with *Mississippi's 2014 College – and Career – Ready Standards*. The Licensure Commission approved the recommendation for alternate route and supplemental elementary education certification candidates to maintain the consistency of the expectation of elementary educators in Mississippi.

This item references Goal 4 of the *Mississippi Board of Education 2016-2020 Strategic Plan*.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached

**THREE-YEAR ALTERNATE ROUTE LICENSE**  
**MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING**  
**117 ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (4-6 GRADES)**

All educators completing approved programs for elementary education must pass *Foundations of Reading* with a passing scale score of 229 in order to obtain an elementary education endorsement.

<b><u>License</u></b>	<b><u>Requirements</u></b>	<b><u>Validity</u></b>	<b><u>To Convert to a Five-Year Alternate Route Educator License</u></b>
<b><u>Class A</u></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Hold a bachelor's degree (non-education) from a regionally/nationally accredited institution of higher learning</u></li> <li>2. <u>Twenty-one (21) ACT equivalent or achieve the nationally recommended passing score on the Praxis CORE (Core Academic Skills for Educators); AND</u>   <u>No less than 2.75 GPA on content coursework in the requested area of certification or passing Praxis II scores at or above the national recommended score provided that the accepted cohort of candidates of the institution's teacher education program meets or exceeds a 3.0 GPA on pre-major coursework.</u></li> <li>3. <u>Praxis II (Specialty Area Test)</u></li> <li>4. <u>Foundations of Reading assessment score of 229 or higher.</u></li> <li>5. <u>Apply for entrance into MAT Program (See Appendix H for information)</u></li> <li>6. <u>Complete six (6) hours of pre-teaching courses in an approved MAT Program</u></li> <li>7. <u>* Secure Verification of Program Completion</u></li> <li>8. <u>Apply for a Three-Year Educator License –Alternate Route</u></li> </ol>	<b><u>3 years</u></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Secure a teaching position</u></li> <li>2. <u>Complete six (6) additional hours of coursework to include supervised internship</u></li> <li>3. <u>Secure Verification of Program Completion</u></li> <li>4. <u>Apply for a Five-Year Alternate Route License</u></li> </ol>

**\*This license requires an online recommendation from the alternate route program. Once the online recommendation is made, the educator should apply for the license online.**

# **PROPOSED REVISIONS TO LICENSURE GUIDELINES K-12: FOUNDATIONS OF READING TEST REQUIREMENT**

## **APA COMMENTS**

**May 6 – May 31, 2016**

**APA Comments Summary Chart**

Rule	Narrative of Rule	Topic	Comments		
			Supporting	Concerns	Total
<b>PART 4: LICENSURE GUIDELINES K-12</b>	The proposed revision will require eligible teachers in Elementary Alternate Route Programs to pass the Foundations of Reading Assessment with a passing scale score 229 for Endorsement Code 117 effective July 1, 2017	Revision to Part 4: Licensure Guidelines K-12 for Elementary Alternate Route Programs	1	5	6
	<b>TOTAL COMMENTS</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

## PROPOSED REVISIONS TO LICENSURE GUIDELINES K-12

### APA Comments Summary Chart

Role	Number of Commenters
Superintendents/Conservators	
Assistant Superintendents	
District School Board Members	
Teachers	3
Librarians/Media Specialists	
Federal Programs Directors	
Curriculum Directors	
Special Education Directors	
Principals	
Assistant Principals	
Vocational School Directors	
Other District Personnel	
Instructional Specialists/Academic Coaches	
Advocacy Groups	
MDE Offices	
Citizens (Parents)	
Unknown	
State Organizations	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>

Zero (0) school districts were represented through the APA comments received.

# **PROPOSED REVISIONS TO LICENSURE GUIDELINES K-12: FOUNDATIONS OF READING TEST REQUIREMENT**

## **APA COMMENTS**

**May 6 – May 31, 2016**

# BELHAVEN UNIVERSITY

Our Standard is Christ

## SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

DR. DAVID B. HAND  
DEAN

BELHAVEN UNIVERSITY  
1500 PEACHTREE STREET - BOX 315  
JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI 39202  
601.968.8703 dhand@belhaven.edu

### TEACHER AS SERVANT LEADER LEARNING TO TEACH - TEACHING TO SERVE

Mississippi Board of Education  
Mississippi Department of Education  
P.O. Box 771  
Jackson, MS 39205-0771

**TO: The Mississippi Board of Education Members**

**DATE: April 27, 2016**

**RE: APA – Approval to Revise Licensure Guidelines K-12 to require eligible teachers in Elementary Alternate Route Programs to pass the Foundations of Reading Test effective July 1, 2017.**

#### Members of the Board,

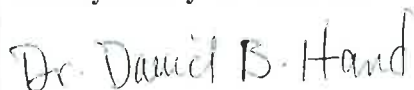
I wish to express my support to revise the guidelines by extending the requirement date for taking and passing *The Foundations of Reading Test* to July 1, 2017 for Alternate Route Elementary 4-6 Grade Level candidates already involved in a Master of Arts in Teaching Alt/Cert or other Alternate Teacher License Route programs in the state.

This would only be fair to the Alternate Route candidates who have been enrolled for over a year in our Master of Arts in Teaching: Alternate Mississippi Teacher Certification Route and who will be eligible to obtain their 5 year Class "A" License after completing their Mentor Observation year this next school year. These candidates were never informed or aware that *The Foundations of Reading Test* would even apply to them because at the time of their entrance into the program the state had not clarified that the statute was applicable to the Alt/Cert candidates. A "phase in year" would be a major help!

It is currently understood and realized that all new Elementary 4-6 Grade Alternate Route candidates now being admitted into our MAT Alt/Cert program will be required to take and pass *The Foundations of Reading Test* with a 229 or higher before they can apply for their 5 year Class "A" License. The Belhaven School of Education faculty are now communicating this and making it very clear by informing all new and incoming Alternate Route Teacher Candidates of this requirement for taking *The Foundations of Reading Test*.

The extension of one year for Alternate Route programs will give us, as an Educator Preparation Provider (EPP), the needed time to work with our newly admitted teacher candidates and help prepare them for *The Foundations of Reading Test*.

Thank you for your consideration by allowing a *phase in year*.



David B. Hand, Ed.D.  
Dean of the School of Education

## Veronica Barton

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**From:** Steward, Susan <SSteward@colled.msstate.edu>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 26, 2016 1:00 PM  
**To:** Licensure  
**Subject:** Foundations of Reading  
**Attachments:** Response to Foundations of Reading Test.pdf

I have attached comments for submission to the SBE regarding the Pearson Founds of Reading Test requirement for Middle Level Alternate Route applicants for a 3 year non-renewable license. Thank you.

Susan Steward  
Master of Arts in Teaching Coordinator  
Mississippi State University  
Allen Hall 315  
662.325.0527



## **Response to the Recommendation to Require Participants in Alternate Route Elementary Education (4-6) Programs to Earn Passing Scores on the Pearson Foundations of Reading Test**

As part of the Literacy Based Promotion Act, students earning the elementary education teaching license are required to demonstrate knowledge of reading by earning a passing score on the *Pearson Foundations of Reading* test. It makes sense that elementary teachers responsible for teaching students to read should be required to demonstrate knowledge of reading and reading instruction.

Currently, the State Board is considering whether to require teacher candidates who earn the alternate route license for grades 4-6 (5018) to also earn a passing score on the Foundations of Reading test.

I have several concerns about this requirement.

1. **The Pearson Foundations of Reading test is redundant:** The current alternate route licensing system requires that an individual must demonstrate knowledge of the content they are going to teach by passing the appropriate Praxis II content area test. For the Elementary Education (4-6) license, the required test is a test of candidates' content knowledge in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. The Praxis II: Elementary Education Content Knowledge 4-8 exam already assesses candidates' knowledge of reading appropriate for elementary education grades 4-8. At least 35% of the test focuses on knowledge of reading and language arts, including knowledge of the role of phonics and phonological awareness in literacy development. The reading components of this test assess knowledge of reading appropriate for individuals who will teach grades 4-8. Another test that covers much of the same content is not necessary and there is no evidence that requiring this test will improve either teaching or learning in grades 4 and above.
2. **The Pearson Foundations of Reading test is inappropriate for individuals earning the 4-6 license:** Individuals who earn the Elementary Education grades 4-6 alternate route license do not earn a general elementary education license. They are licensed to teach grades 4-6 and many also earn secondary licensure in a content area. At Mississippi State University, many of our middle level students go on to teach grades 7 and 8. The Pearson Foundations of Reading test focuses on content that is essential for someone teaching beginning reading—with a heavy focus on early reading such as phonemic awareness and phonics. Alternate Route teachers certified for grades 4-6 or 4-12 would need to understand how to foster reading and writing in the middle grades and how to support students who do not read at grade level but should not be expected to teach beginning readers how to read. Students with profound reading failure in grades 4 and beyond should be served by individuals with extensive training in reading and remediation, and not graduates of an alternate route licensure program.
3. **The Pearson Foundations of Reading test is expensive:** Currently, alternate route teachers must already pay over \$200 for the tests required to apply for admission to the alternate route licensure program, including \$90 dollars to take Praxis Core and \$120 dollars to take Praxis II. The Pearson Foundations of Reading tests would add an additional \$155 dollars to that cost. For individuals considering becoming a teacher, the testing costs may already be a barrier. Adding a third test will likely discourage new candidates from taking the test and becoming certified. In a time of teacher shortages and increasing reliance on programs like Teach for America, it is not wise to add additional requirements to certification that do not promise to improve practice or student outcomes.

4. **The test may exacerbate teacher shortages:** Because we have a shortage of middle grades teachers in many areas of the state, and in many content areas, it is unwise to add additional barriers to middle grades licensure.
5. **The test does not recognize the realities of alternate route licensure.** The current system for alternate route licensure requires that teachers must take two courses—one course on classroom management, and one course on assessment. There is no coursework in reading/literacy required to earn the 4-6 license. Applicants can earn the temporary 3-year license by completing these two courses, and can earn the renewable five-year license after completing six credits of internship. Several alternate route programs, including the MAT-Middle Level Education degree program at Mississippi State University require coursework in reading, however, these courses may be completed after the initial license is earned and in accordance with MDE's alternate route licensure requirements. Based on these requirements, it would be inappropriate to require the Pearson Foundation of Reading test for three-year licensure, prior to the time when participants in the program would have had any reading-specific coursework.
6. **The test is inconsistent with the premise of the Literacy Promotion Act.** The Literacy Promotion Act is intended to ensure that students do not pass third grade unless they can read at a third grade level. If the law works as intended, students who are not able to read will no longer be socially promoted to grades 4, 5, or 6. Because of this, it is not necessary to require teachers whose certification to grades 4 and above to pass the Foundations of Reading Test.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. **Do not impose the Foundations of Reading test as an initial licensure requirement for the alternate route 4-6 license:** Individuals seeking alternate route licensure for grades 4-6 should NOT be required to take and pass the Pearson Foundations of Reading Test
2. **Strengthen current testing requirements for alternate route 4-6 teachers:** As an alternative to requiring the Pearson Foundations of Reading test for alternate route 4-6 teacher licensure, consider establishing a cut score on the reading/language arts subscore of the Praxis II: Elementary Education (4-8) test. This would ensure that alternate route middle level teachers demonstrate knowledge of reading appropriate for middle grades teachers.
3. **Consider changing alternate route licensure requirements:** The State Board may want to consider requiring teacher candidates to complete coursework in reading and language arts. New middle grades teachers should have an understanding of evidence-based ways to teach reading and writing consistent with state standards and to support low-performing students.
4. **Apply requirements to all programs:** Requirements for all alternate route programs should be the same. If a test of reading is imposed for 4-6 licensure, it should be imposed equally for all alternate route programs including MAT and ABCTE/MAPQT, as well as non-licensure programs such as Teach for American and Mississippi Teacher Corps if those individuals can be hired to teach grades 4-6.
5. **If additional testing beyond the Praxis II is required, MDE should require such testing at the completion of the alternate route program or at the time of application for the 5-year renewable license, rather than its beginning.**

## Veronica Barton

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**From:** Miller, Nicole <ncm39@colled.msstate.edu>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 27, 2016 9:37 AM  
**To:** Licensure  
**Subject:** Comments - Pearson's Foundations of Reading  
**Attachments:** Response to Foundations of Reading Test.pdf

To whom it may concern:

Please see attached comments in reference to the approval for MAT- alternate elementary route requirement to take the Person Foundations of Reading Test.

As the faculty member most involved in the Mississippi State University Elementary Alternate Route program at MSU, the attached document reflects all the challenges of this additional exam on our students and the ramifications for schools.

While I encourage changes to the requirements for alternate route licensure such as requiring a methods course prior to entering the classroom, this particular test does not help prepare our students to be better teachers in the classroom.

Nicole C. Miller, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor, Middle Level Education  
Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Special Education  
Mississippi State University  
310 Allen Hall, Mailstop 9705  
Miss. St., MS 39762  
662.325.8282

## **Response to the Recommendation to Require Participants in Alternate Route Elementary Education (4-6) Programs to Earn Passing Scores on the Pearson Foundations of Reading Test**

As part of the Literacy Based Promotion Act, students earning the elementary education teaching license are required to demonstrate knowledge of reading by earning a passing score on the *Pearson Foundations of Reading* test. It makes sense that elementary teachers responsible for teaching students to read should be required to demonstrate knowledge of reading and reading instruction.

Currently, the State Board is considering whether to require teacher candidates who earn the alternate route license for grades 4-6 (5018) to also earn a passing score on the Foundations of Reading test.

I have several concerns about this requirement.

1. **The Pearson Foundations of Reading test is redundant:** The current alternate route licensing system requires that an individual must demonstrate knowledge of the content they are going to teach by passing the appropriate Praxis II content area test. For the Elementary Education (4-6) license, the required test is a test of candidates' content knowledge in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. The Praxis II: Elementary Education Content Knowledge 4-8 exam already assesses candidates' knowledge of reading appropriate for elementary education grades 4-8. At least 35% of the test focuses on knowledge of reading and language arts, including knowledge of the role of phonics and phonological awareness in literacy development. The reading components of this test assess knowledge of reading appropriate for individuals who will teach grades 4-8. Another test that covers much of the same content is not necessary and there is no evidence that requiring this test will improve either teaching or learning in grades 4 and above.
2. **The Pearson Foundations of Reading test is inappropriate for individuals earning the 4-6 license:** Individuals who earn the Elementary Education grades 4-6 alternate route license do not earn a general elementary education license. They are licensed to teach grades 4-6 and many also earn secondary licensure in a content area. At Mississippi State University, many of our middle level students go on to teach grades 7 and 8. The Pearson Foundations of Reading test focuses on content that is essential for someone teaching beginning reading—with a heavy focus on early reading such as phonemic awareness and phonics. Alternate Route teachers certified for grades 4-6 or 4-12 would need to understand how to foster reading and writing in the middle grades and how to support students who do not read at grade level but should not be expected to teach beginning readers how to read. Students with profound reading failure in grades 4 and beyond should be served by individuals with extensive training in reading and remediation, and not graduates of an alternate route licensure program.
3. **The Pearson Foundations of Reading test is expensive:** Currently, alternate route teachers must already pay over \$200 for the tests required to apply for admission to the alternate route licensure program, including \$90 dollars to take Praxis Core and \$120 dollars to take Praxis II. The Pearson Foundations of Reading tests would add an additional \$155 dollars to that cost. For individuals considering becoming a teacher, the testing costs may already be a barrier. Adding a third test will likely discourage new candidates from taking the test and becoming certified. In a time of teacher shortages and increasing reliance on programs like Teach for America, it is not wise to add additional requirements to certification that do not promise to improve practice or student outcomes.

4. **The test may exacerbate teacher shortages:** Because we have a shortage of middle grades teachers in many areas of the state, and in many content areas, it is unwise to add additional barriers to middle grades licensure.
5. **The test does not recognize the realities of alternate route licensure.** The current system for alternate route licensure requires that teachers must take two courses—one course on classroom management, and one course on assessment. There is no coursework in reading/literacy required to earn the 4-6 license. Applicants can earn the temporary 3-year license by completing these two courses, and can earn the renewable five-year license after completing six credits of internship. Several alternate route programs, including the MAT-Middle Level Education degree program at Mississippi State University require coursework in reading, however, these courses may be completed after the initial license is earned and in accordance with MDE's alternate route licensure requirements. Based on these requirements, it would be inappropriate to require the Pearson Foundation of Reading test for three-year licensure, prior to the time when participants in the program would have had any reading-specific coursework.
6. **The test is inconsistent with the premise of the Literacy Promotion Act.** The Literacy Promotion Act is intended to ensure that students do not pass third grade unless they can read at a third grade level. If the law works as intended, students who are not able to read will no longer be socially promoted to grades 4, 5, or 6. Because of this, it is not necessary to require teachers whose certification to grades 4 and above to pass the Foundations of Reading Test.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. **Do not impose the Foundations of Reading test as an initial licensure requirement for the alternate route 4-6 license:** Individuals seeking alternate route licensure for grades 4-6 should NOT be required to take and pass the Pearson Foundations of Reading Test
2. **Strengthen current testing requirements for alternate route 4-6 teachers:** As an alternative to requiring the Pearson Foundations of Reading test for alternate route 4-6 teacher licensure, consider establishing a cut score on the reading/language arts subscore of the Praxis II: Elementary Education (4-8) test. This would ensure that alternate route middle level teachers demonstrate knowledge of reading appropriate for middle grades teachers.
3. **Consider changing alternate route licensure requirements:** The State Board may want to consider requiring teacher candidates to complete coursework in reading and language arts. New middle grades teachers should have an understanding of evidence-based ways to teach reading and writing consistent with state standards and to support low-performing students.
4. **Apply requirements to all programs:** Requirements for all alternate route programs should be the same. If a test of reading is imposed for 4-6 licensure, it should be imposed equally for all alternate route programs including MAT and ABCTE/MAPQT, as well as non-licensure programs such as Teach for American and Mississippi Teacher Corps if those individuals can be hired to teach grades 4-6.
5. **If additional testing beyond the Praxis II is required, MDE should require such testing at the completion of the alternate route program or at the time of application for the 5-year renewable license, rather than its beginning.**

**Veronica Barton**

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**From:** Lindsey Marsac <lbm59@msstate.edu>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 27, 2016 4:26 PM  
**To:** Licensure  
**Subject:** Response to Foundations of Reading Test Recommendation  
**Attachments:** Response to State Board Recommendation.docx

Hi,

I am attaching my response to the State Board recommendation which states that alternate route candidates will have to take the Foundation of Reading Test before receiving the initial three year license.

Thank you,  
Lindsey Marsac

**Response to the Recommendation to Require Participants in Alternate Route Elementary Education (4-6) Programs to Earn Passing Scores on the Pearson Foundations of Reading Test**

This statement is in response to the State Board's recommendation that alternate route teacher candidates pass the Pearson Foundations of Reading test before receiving the initial 3-year license. As a current alternate route student in Mississippi State's MATM program, I have a few concerns with this recommendation. I recently completed the two required licensure courses, and was issued my non-renewable 3-year teaching license; therefore, this new requirement will not technically have an impact on me. However, it will potentially impact future students who are interested in the MATM program.

Before a candidate is accepted into the MATM program, he or she is required to pass the Praxis II exam in the content area that the candidate will be licensed to teach. For example, I had to pass the Praxis II: Elementary Education 4-8 exam to even be considered for the program. This exam tested my knowledge of reading and language arts as well as my understanding of literacy development; therefore, it would seem redundant to require students to also take an additional Foundations of Reading test. In addition, students pursuing the alternate route program are already responsible for the expense of taking the Praxis II and possibly the Praxis Core as well (depending upon ACT scores). Requiring candidates to take an additional \$155 test may possibly dissuade individuals from entering the program. Personally, it was tough trying to come up with the fees for the already required tests, fingerprints, and application fees. If I had to come up with another \$155 for an additional test, then I may have seriously reconsidered my decision to even pursue the alternate route program. I did well on the Praxis II, excelled in my first two licensure courses, and am about to begin my first year as a teacher. To think that I may have decided against entering the program because testing expenses were too high is extremely disheartening, because this will most likely be the case for many future candidates. Because of this, the teacher shortage in the middle grades will only continue to be a problem.

Furthermore, my license does not even allow me to teach any grades below grade 4; therefore, while I need to be able to support students who are not reading on grade level and enhance my students' reading and writing skills, I will not be teaching students who are beginning readers. I was under the impression that the Literacy Promotion Act was created to ensure that students who are not reading on a third grade level will not be allowed to move on to the fourth grade. Therefore, under this act, all students entering the fourth grade should be reading on at least a fourth grade reading level. Because of this, alternate route teachers who are certified in grades 4-6 or 4-12 would not need to take the Foundations of Reading Test.

I do agree with the importance of teachers understanding the foundations of literacy; however, I do not believe this additional test is the answer. One possible recommendation for ensuring that candidates are well-versed in the foundations of reading is to establish a cut score for the reading/language arts section of the Praxis II. Another possible solution is to require candidates to pass a literacy course *before* receiving their initial license. Either of these solutions would satisfy the need to ensure that teachers are skilled in reading/language arts without requiring an additional test.

Sincerely,

Lindsey Marsac

Mississippi State Master of Arts in Teaching Middle Level Education (MATM) student

## Veronica Barton

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**From:** Amy Chrestman <alc992@msstate.edu>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 31, 2016 9:22 AM  
**To:** Licensure  
**Subject:** Pearson's Foundation of Reading  
**Attachments:** FoundationsofReading.docx

To Whom It May Concern:

Please read the attached document when attempting to make the final decision concerning making the Foundation of Reading test necessary for MAT-M students. Please note that as I wrote the attached document, I did so with knots in my stomach that this test might become mandatory for me to complete my MAT-M degree, a degree that I am working so hard to complete as I work a full-time teaching job, raise my three sons, continue my worship with my church family, and make time for my husband and I to keep our marriage strong and secure.

THANK YOU!

--

**Amy L. Chrestman**  
**ALC Teacher-Lewisburg High School**  
**901-834-8868**



**From:** Ellen Waits <ewaitslpc@bellsouth.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 31, 2016 2:24 PM  
**To:** Licensure  
**Subject:** Re: Please remove Pearson Foundations of Reading Test for Alternate Route Elem Ed (4-6) Programs

Dear MDE staff,

I strongly agree with the following response to requiring the Pearson Foundations of Reading Test. This is an expensive test and does not really address what teachers in grades 4-6 teach. Cost is a factor for individuals applying to alternate route teacher programs. The Elementary Education Content Knowledge 4-8 Exam is very thorough regarding reading (and all of the other subjects). Please decline to add this additional test and burden!

**Response to the Recommendation to Require Participants in Alternate Route Elementary Education (4-6) Programs to Earn Passing Scores on the Pearson Foundations of Reading Test**

As part of the Literacy Based Promotion Act, students earning the elementary education teaching license are required to demonstrate knowledge of reading by earning a passing score on the *Pearson Foundations of Reading* test. It makes sense that elementary teachers responsible for teaching students to read should be required to demonstrate knowledge of reading and reading instruction. Currently, the State Board is considering whether to require teacher candidates who earn the alternate route license for grades 4-6 (5018) to also earn a passing score on the Foundations of Reading test.

I have several concerns about this requirement.

1. **The Pearson Foundations of Reading test is redundant:** The current alternate route licensing system requires that an individual must demonstrate knowledge of the content they are going to teach by passing the appropriate Praxis II content area test. For the Elementary Education (4-6) license, the required test is a test of candidates' content knowledge in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. The Praxis II: Elementary Education Content Knowledge 4-8 exam already assesses candidates' knowledge of reading appropriate for elementary education grades 4-8. At least 35% of the test focuses on knowledge of reading and language arts, including knowledge of the role of phonics and phonological awareness in literacy development. The reading components of this test assess knowledge of reading appropriate for individuals who will teach grades 4-8. Another test that covers much of the same content is not necessary and there is no evidence that requiring this test will improve either teaching or learning in grades 4 and above.
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served by individuals with extensive training in reading and remediation, and not graduates of an alternate route licensure program.

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4. **The test may exacerbate teacher shortages:** Because we have a shortage of middle grades teachers in many areas of the state, and in many content areas, it is unwise to add additional barriers to middle grades licensure.
5. **The test does not recognize the realities of alternate route licensure.** The current system for alternate route licensure requires that teachers must take two courses—one course on classroom management, and one course on assessment. There is no coursework in reading/literacy required to earn the 4-6 license. Applicants can earn the temporary 3-year license by completing these two courses, and can earn the renewable five-year license after completing six credits of internship. Several alternate route programs, including the MAT-Middle Level Education degree program at Mississippi State University require coursework in reading, however, these courses may be completed after the initial license is earned and in accordance with MDE's alternate route licensure requirements. Based on these requirements, it would be inappropriate to require the Pearson Foundation of Reading test for three-year licensure, prior to the time when participants in the program would have had any reading-specific coursework.
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#### **Recommendations:**

1. **Do not impose the Foundations of Reading test as an initial licensure requirement for the alternate route 4-6 license:** Individuals seeking alternate route licensure for grades 4-6 should NOT be required to take and pass the Pearson Foundations of Reading Test
2. **Strengthen current testing requirements for alternate route 4-6 teachers:** As an alternative to requiring the Pearson Foundations of Reading test for alternate route 4-6 teacher licensure, consider establishing a cut score on the reading/language arts subscore of the Praxis II: Elementary Education (4-8) test. This would ensure that alternate route middle level teachers demonstrate knowledge of reading appropriate for middle grades teachers.
3. **Consider changing alternate route licensure requirements:** The State Board may want to consider requiring teacher candidates to complete coursework in reading and language arts. New middle grades teachers should have an understanding of evidence-based ways to teach reading and writing consistent with state standards and to support low-performing students.
4. **Apply requirements to all programs:** Requirements for all alternate route programs should be the same. If a test of reading is imposed for 4-6 licensure, it should be imposed equally for all alternate route programs including MAT and ABCTE/MAPQT, as well as non-licensure programs such as Teach for American and Mississippi Teacher Corps if those individuals can be hired to teach grades 4-6.
5. **If additional testing beyond the Praxis II is required, MDE should require such testing at the completion of the alternate route program or at the time of application for the 5-year**

**renewable license, rather than its beginning.**

Sincerely,

Ellen Waits.  
(Mississippi State University - MAT-M program/alternate route program)