
States report some progress in moving toward certification of teachers on a competency basis, according to this recent study.

Competency-Based Certification: A New Reality?

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MUCH has been written recently concerning competency-based education. Apparently many states will soon be using competency-based certification requirements to certify all of its teachers. Movement now seems to be in this direction—or does it? Just how far have the states gone in developing competency-based certification programs? Will competency-based certification become simply a “pot of gold” at the end of the rainbow, or will it become a reality?

To answer some of these questions a letter was sent to each state department of education to request information on the status of competency-based teacher certification. Each department was asked to respond to the questionnaire shown in Figure 1.

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1. Presently using competency-based requirements? yes no
Information is being sent yes no
 2. Presently planning to go to competency-based certification requirements? yes no
Information is being sent yes no
 3. At present this state has made no plans or commitments in this direction
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Figure 1. Form Used in Study of Competency-Based Certification for Teachers

Responses were received from all 50 state departments after a follow-up letter was sent as a reminder to departments that did not respond to the first questionnaire. The following represents a summary of

where the various states are in using competency-based teacher certification requirements.

Only eight states indicated they are presently using some form of competency-based certification requirements. Twenty-two states indicated that they were planning to go to competency-based requirements for certification. Twenty states checked that there were no plans for having competency-based requirements. However, many of these states indicated that they were in the “study” stage or “we are looking at it as a possible way to certify teachers.”

Figure 2 indicates how each state responded to the questionnaire.

How Far Along?

From the responses to the questionnaire, it seems that most state departments have been giving competency-based certification some real thought. Even the states which have made no commitment or plans are busy studying this form of certification. In some state departments, frustration creeps in with the mad rush to move in this direction. An example of this would be the following comments on the questionnaire from one state department official: “We do not have a con-

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stitutional way it can be done as yet." "No, we have not made definite plans to go in this direction, but how can it be done?" "We are open to suggestions." "We are digging at it."

From this inquiry we may infer that few teachers have been or will in the near future be certified on the basis of their competencies. In states that have competency-based certification this is usually limited to a very few teaching areas, and these are serving as prototypes.

An interesting side note appeared when an attempt was made to find out what universities in the eight states were doing to meet their state competency requirements. In two of the universities that responded, no competency-based programs exist at this time, but these institutions indicated that they were working in that direction.

Although very few teachers are presently being certified on competency-based criteria, the movement seems to be in this direction. The main problems seem to be in finding a way to determine what competencies are necessary and then a feasible way to determine if these requirements have been met.

Texas seems to have one of the most vigorous moves in the direction of competency-based certification. There is an approved program approach, and all new programs for teacher education after September 1, 1972, will be competency/performance based. In addition, all presently approved programs must be converted to competency/performance-based programs by September 1, 1977. According to the returns of the questionnaires and the accompanying information, Texas should be the first state to move to a completely competency-based certification program. In addition to the timelines, standards have been set forth by the state department which indicate that the preparing institutions must present evidence that they are meeting these standards. It should be interesting to watch the kinds of programs that come from the colleges and universities in Texas as a result of these requirements.

Other states that indicated they are now on competency requirements did not seem

Presently Using Competency-Based Requirements

California	Texas
Minnesota	Vermont
North Carolina	Washington
Ohio	Wisconsin

Planning To Go to Competency-Based Certification Requirements

Alabama	Maryland
Alaska	Massachusetts
Arizona	Michigan
Connecticut	Montana
Florida	New Jersey
Georgia	New Mexico
Idaho	New York
Illinois	Oregon
Kansas	Pennsylvania
Kentucky	Utah
Maine	West Virginia

At Present, Plans or Commitments Have Not Been Made in This Direction

Arkansas	Nevada
Colorado	New Hampshire
Delaware	North Dakota
Hawaii	Oklahoma
Indiana	Rhode Island
Iowa	South Carolina
Louisiana	South Dakota
Mississippi	Tennessee
Missouri	Virginia
Nebraska	Wyoming

Figure 2. Report by States in Competency-Based Certification

to be as near to a complete changeover as did Texas. Their programs seem to be more along the line of pilot programs and specific areas of certification on a prototype basis.

New York is one state that checked that it is planning to go to competency-based certification programs. Of the states in this category, New York seems to be the one that is definitely committed to a complete change in this direction. This state has some definite guidelines that will supposedly lead to competency-based certification by 1980.

Although many other states have been working toward a competency-based certification program, complete changeover to this form of certification does not seem to be in the wind in the next few years.

It will be interesting to see if this form of certification will actually become a reality in most states or will fizzle out as disagreements over competencies needed and ways to measure them become overwhelming. Whether this form of certification becomes a reality or not, it is forcing teacher education institutions to take a look at what they are doing to prepare competent teachers. □

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