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From Matt Arthur: Additional Flexibility to Further Assist the Workforce

At the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC), we are committed to supporting a viable educator pipeline, with the guidance of stakeholders from the field. In addition, we remain greatly focused on multiple streamlining and enhancement initiatives and effective communication with those we serve, all to support the educator workforce.

Part of this charge is the implementation of multiple flexibility measures in response to COVID-19, one of which included extending most certificates through June 30, 2021. As a reminder, you may access the COVID-19 related policy and guidance adjustments [here](#).

While we did not anticipate additional COVID-19 flexibility measures past the substantive ones put in place in Spring 2020 and Summer 2020, we earlier shared with you we would continue to monitor the impact of this unprecedented challenge and adjust our policies as needed. We have since determined an additional measure is needed for Fall 2020 program completers.

We are also making two policy changes regarding the GACE Program Admission Assessment (PAA), scheduled to become effective July 1, 2021.

The purpose of this communication is two-fold:

- 1) To provide an update on COVID-19 flexibility measures put in place for Fall 2020 educator preparation program completers who were not able to complete the GACE content assessment requirement for certification.
- 2) To introduce two policy changes for the GACE Program Admission Assessment (PAA) regarding composite scoring and adjustments to the PAA Flexibility Option criteria, both effective July 1, 2021.

It is our hope these actions are of help to pre-service and in-service educators, educator preparation providers (EPPs), school districts, and schools. We remain committed to supporting an effective educator workforce, making decisions with great care and at the right time, seeking input, and working collaboratively with stakeholders. Please read the information carefully and share it with others as appropriate.

Thank you, again, for your ongoing input that has greatly informed our decisions here at GaPSC. Please know your work and dedication to your craft, the profession, and Georgia's children are appreciated.

We wish you a very happy and safe 2021. As always, please let us know how we can assist you.

Matt Arthur
Executive Secretary

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GACE Content Assessments

Fall 2020 Preparation Program Completers

One substantive adjustment for Spring 2020 and Summer 2020 was granting one-year certification extensions for teaching, leadership, and service candidates who were not able to complete assessment certification requirements by June 30, 2020, due to test site and school closures at that time.

Although all but one GACE test centers in the state are currently open with little wait time, we understand there are multiple reasons due to the pandemic why some Fall 2020 program completers were not able to meet the GACE content assessment requirement for certification.

Upon submission of all required documentation for certification, the GaPSC will issue a certificate valid through June 30, 2021, to Fall 2020 program completers who have not met the GACE content assessment requirement, giving them more time.

For test takers, information about GACE test center status and test center safety protocols is available [here](#). The regular GACE testing schedule is posted on the GACE website [here](#). The GaPSC and ETS, the GACE testing supplier, are in constant communication regarding test availability. If test takers have any difficulty in securing a testing slot or need any other assistance, they should contact ETS at gace_inquiries@ets.org.

Program Admission Assessment (PAA)

PAA Flexibility Option Increased for Educator Preparation Providers

Effective in Spring 2017, a Program Admission Assessment (PAA) Flexibility Option was introduced to educator preparation providers (EPPs) enabling them to admit a limited number of candidates to their programs who were not able to exempt the GACE PAA and had not passed all parts of the PAA. This flexibility measure was put in place to afford additional opportunities for candidates who struggle with entrance requirements yet, with support from their EPP and P-12 partner, can become effective P-12 educators.

For EPPs to issue this flexibility waiver, certain criteria were established and are still in place, which include the following:

- These potential candidates must pass two of the three parts of the GACE PAA, and attempt the one part not passed at least twice.
- These candidates must have a program admission GPA of at least 3.0.
- EPPs may grant these flexibility waivers for up to a total of 5% annually of its admission cohort(s). EPPs that admit annual cohorts of fewer than 60 students may have up to 3 exemptions per annual cohort.
- EPPs that grant these waivers must, during approval reviews, provide evidence of supporting the exempted candidates in the PAA test area not passed.
- EPPs that use this policy are also expected to monitor its impact to determine if the candidates admitted via the flexibility waiver are not unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged in their preparation.

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Included in this 2017 decision was a plan to examine this policy over time to determine its effectiveness. After recent discussions with diverse and representative groups, the GaPSC is continuing the PAA Flexibility Option and making the following adjustments to enhance flexibility:

Effective July 1, 2021:

- EPPs are allowed to grant PAA flexibility waivers for up to a total of 10% annually of an admitted cohort.
- Candidates awarded the exemption, in addition to meeting the existing criteria listed above, must have an admission GPA of at least 2.5 (previously 3.0).
- All other existing flexibility option criteria remain unchanged.

It is our intent these PAA Flexibility Option adjustments will allow EPPs to admit more candidates who have the potential to become effective educators and thereby further strengthen Georgia's educator workforce.

Please direct questions to your GaPSC Education Specialist.

PAA Composite Scoring Coming July 1, 2021

Currently, the minimum passing score is 250 on each of the three tests (reading, writing, and mathematics) within the GACE Program Admission Assessment (PAA). Each test taker who does not exempt the PAA or receive the EPP flexibility option must pass all three parts scoring at least 250 on each part to meet the PAA requirement.

After input from representative program providers and others, effective July 1, 2021, the GaPSC will accept a PAA composite score that allows a test taker to score less than 250 on one or more of the PAA tests and still meet the PAA requirement.

Essentially, a test taker who does not pass the PAA by scoring 250 or higher on each test will be able to combine the scores on all three tests within the PAA to meet the PAA requirement provided the combined score is 750 or higher. Therefore, a test taker can do well on one test(s) and less well on another test(s) within the PAA and potentially still satisfy the PAA requirement.

Following are important policy points regarding PAA Composite Scoring:

- The test taker must score a total of at least 750 on all three tests within PAA combined.
- The test taker may use scores from different administrations of the GACE PAA to reach the minimum 750 composite score. For example, the test taker can take the reading test in one administration and the writing and mathematics portion in another administration. These scores from each of the three tests, across administrations, can be combined. Retake scores can also be used to meet the minimum composite score of 750. For example, the test taker can use the score on a retake of a PAA test in one administration and other scores from a different administration to meet the 750 required minimum score to pass.
- The test taker may use prior PAA scores or a combination of prior and future PAA scores to meet the composite score as follows:
 - Only PAA tests administered by the current testing supplier, ETS, may be used to meet the composite score. Therefore, score reports dated prior to September 1, 2013, cannot be used to meet PAA composite scores.

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- If the test taker meets the composite score on tests taken prior to the effective date of July 1, 2021, the PAA requirement will be indicated as having been met no earlier than July 1, 2021.
- There is no minimum score for each test that test takers must meet, as long as the 750 composite score is met or exceeded.

It is also very important to note the following:

- This composite score policy only applies to the PAA.
- PAA score reports received by the test taker or program provider from the testing supplier, ETS, will not reflect composite scoring.
- GaPSC will determine if the PAA requirement was satisfied via the composite score. The test taker's certification record will reflect the PAA requirement has been met.
- As with all preparation program admission requirements, it is up to the individual program provider as to if the PAA composite score will be accepted for admission.

Again, with the aim of supporting the educator workforce, it is our intent these additional PAA adjustments, including the PAA flexibility option enhancements and the PAA composite scoring option, increase the number of candidates EPPs may admit who have the potential to become effective educators.

PAA Preparation Resources

Preparation for the PAA, as well as all state-approved certification assessments, is critically important to help ensure success.

Below are PAA resources to assist you:

- The free, Khan Academy resources are available [here](#).
- Short, informative, instructional videos that review math content for PAA are available [here](#).
- Other GACE PAA resources are available [here](#).

When using the Khan Academy, please note:

- Because the Khan Academy resource was built for the Praxis Core (reading, writing, and mathematics basic skills), you will see the words Praxis instead of GACE in the system. The Khan Academy resource is very applicable to the GACE PAA.
- In the Khan Academy resource, users are asked to enter their desired score, which customizes a study program for them. GACE PAA users will need to enter the following scores that calibrate with the GACE PAA passing score of 250:
 - For the PAA reading test, users will enter a score of **156** to equate to GACE passing score.
 - For the PAA writing test, users will enter a score of **154** to equate to a GACE passing score.
 - For the PAA math test, users will enter a score of **142** to equate to a GACE passing score.

For assistance with the Khan Academy or GACE PAA, please email gace_inquiries@ets.org.