

Representative Strinden's amendment #2332 examines a teacher's effectiveness and skills through a portfolio of work, rather than judging them solely on such standardized tests as the Praxis exam, which reveal nothing about whether a teacher will be successful in the classroom and only that they are capable of passing a test. Data from research has shown repeatedly that test scores alone are not a good indicator of a teacher's efficacy in the classroom. This statement will express support for Representative Strinden's amendment by examining it from two perspectives: economic and equality.

Looking at Amendment #2332 through an economic lens addresses such issues as teacher quality, cost of testing, and general salary information. There has been a vast push to improve both the quality of education and the quality of teachers through stricter licensure processes, including additional standardized exams. In support of Representative Strinden's amendment, researchers Joshua D. Angrist and Jonathon Guryan wrote a journal article entitled "Does Teacher Testing Raise Teacher Quality? Evidence From State Certification Requirements," in which they raise the important point: "The question of how to attract better teachers remains open. The evidence on the relationship between salaries and measures of teacher quality or performance has been mixed" (Figlio, 2002; Hunsheek, Kain, & Rivkin, 1999; Murane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991).

According to Salary.com, the average income for a K-12 teacher who has passed both the Praxis core and Praxis II exams in the state of North Dakota is \$55,291. This salary is relatively low in comparison to other professions that require a bachelor's degree and no testing requirements. The Praxis Core exam costs \$90 per individual subtest, or \$150 for combined testing. The Praxis prep course costs approximately \$399 at Kaplan, which is the most thorough

test prep exam available online. As cited in Angrist and Guryan (2007), Berger and Toma (1994) estimated the effects of teacher licensing requirements and found that SAT scores are lower in states that require teachers to have a Master's degree. The authors hypothesized that "this negative relationship may be evidence of a supply response by prospective teachers who view the education requirements as costly, particularly so for talented teachers with better alternatives" (Berger & Toma, 1994 as cited in Angrist & Guryan, 2007).

A related study by Kieiner and Petree (1988) links state licensing requirements with average teacher pay, student SAT and ACT scores, and high school graduation rates; their results show "no clear correlation between licensing and pupil achievement or teacher pay. There is a robust negative association between licensing and pupil/teacher ratios" (Adgrist, J. D., & Guryan, J., 2007).

Another perspective lending support to Amendment #2332 is a focus on inclusion and equality in the teacher certification process. These ideas are echoed by many talented teachers who are genuinely passionate about their job and their students and have also raised concerns about the effectiveness of the Praxis exam. Edwin Sorto, a teacher and Salvadoran immigrant, has found great success as a teacher—his students have been featured on Inside Edition, CBS, and more—but he states that the Praxis exam is discriminatory and does little to indicate a teacher's effectiveness:

The test is designed to be a challenge for someone like me. Since I didn't come to the United States until middle school, I missed the history and science classes that are foundational to standardized tests. And of course, since English isn't my first language, the tests took me much longer than the allotted time limit. . . I understand that we should have standards for who should become a teacher. But tests like the Praxis have nothing to do with teaching well. I've met teachers who are well educated, from a great university and pass the Praxis with flying colors, but still struggle to reach their students. It's one thing to pass a test, but can you stay a teacher and change lives? Instead of tests, we should look at how a teacher actually teaches. How are you delivering the curriculum?

How are you with your students? Are you making a difference? That matters so much more than your score on a test. (Sorto, 2020)

A recent study done by the National Council on Teacher Quality supports the idea that the Praxis exam can be a barrier for teachers who are legitimately talented, while passing teachers that may lack that same passion or knowledge, meaning that many teachers are not well-versed in the subjects they are supposed to teach:

This issue does not begin and end with licensing tests; even practicing teachers admit to struggling with the subject knowledge they are asked to teach. In surveys conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, two thirds of new teachers admit to not having a strong grasp of elementary subjects. Tests aside, too many teachers are left to learn on the fly, often barely covering content or omitting it altogether in their classrooms. Given that students' own ability to understand what they read depends on the breadth of the content knowledge to which they have been exposed, teachers' grasp of content knowledge is more than a matter of secondary importance. It is a top priority. (NCTQ, 2019)

Additionally, this study showed that the Praxis exam was biased, stating:

Already more likely to be disadvantaged by an inequitable system of K-12 education, only 38 percent of black teacher candidates and 57 percent of Hispanic teacher candidates pass the most widely used licensing test even after multiple attempts, compared to 75 percent of white candidates. (NCTQ, 2019)

Now more than ever, students need diverse teachers that are competent in the subjects they are teaching.

The research clearly shows that standardized test scores alone are not a reliable indicator of a teacher's effectiveness; it is clear that Representative Strinden's Amendment #2238, which will closely examine a teacher's portfolio of work rather than test scores alone, will be a better indicator of the quality of work that teachers will provide for their students and the community.

