



## Developing a National Praxis Exam for Dance Education

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# Developing a National Praxis Exam for Dance Education

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Most professional educators cannot believe there is no praxis exam in dance for arts education. As this report details, the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) is changing that just as rapidly as possible.

NDEO, in collaboration with the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education (SEADAE), is working to develop several iterations of an industry-endorsed, entry-level teacher's examination for K–12 education. The test will parallel the construction and rigor of the *National Standards for Dance Education* (1994), *Standards for Learning and Teaching Dance in the Arts: Ages 5–18* (2005), and the *Professional Teaching Standards for Dance Arts* (2005, 2009).

## WHAT IS THE PRAXIS EXAM?

A praxis exam is an assessment exam that is administered at the state level to entry-level teachers seeking K–12 certification. Some states may also use a praxis exam for determining highly qualified teacher (HQT) status. It is discipline-specific and demonstrates competency in the area of expertise in which the teacher is seeking certification. Over the years, Education Testing Service (ETS) has developed most entry-level teacher exams for national administration in other disciplines including music, theatre, visual arts as well as mathematics, literacy, science, and social studies. However, they have never developed one for dance because demand is insufficient to warrant the expense of production. Alternatively, states may independently commission ETS to develop a praxis exam, but the cost of development is so prohibitively expensive that no

states have done so. Thus, no nationally administered industry-standard dance praxis exam exists.

## WHY IS THE PRAXIS EXAM NEEDED?

Not having a praxis exam in dance means states have difficulty determining baseline competencies and attesting to the abilities of individual teachers seeking certification in dance art education. The ramifications of no exam have affected the field of dance for decades, especially since 1994 when the first set of dance standards emerged apart from physical education under the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994), and later reinforced under No Child Left Behind (2002) that required all teachers be “highly qualified.”

As a result, by 2010, 19 states were waiting for a praxis exam, or its equivalency, to be developed. This exam would help those states enforce state certification requirements in dance and, in some cases, allow these states to retain their existing state certification in dance which they will lose without an entry-level teacher's exam in place. Such states include, but are not delimited to: Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Kentucky, Florida, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Utah and Wisconsin.

Still in 2011, there are 14 states that do not yet offer dance certification: California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

Without a praxis exam, or its equivalency, it is difficult for state certification administrators to support state certification requirements. Without the proper state certification processes in place, it is nearly impossible to get dance specialists in schools. Many states will continue to hire by convenience instead of by “highly qualified teacher” status.

## DEVELOPING A PRAXIS FOR DANCE

A praxis exam in dance education must assess teacher competency in three areas: dance content, theory and methodology, and performance. The *Standards for Learning and Teaching Dance in the Arts* (2005), the *National Standards for Dance* (1994), and the *Professional Teaching Standards for Dance in the Arts* (2005, 2009) serve as base resources to identify and determine critical content, theory and methodology, and performance standards.

The national praxis exam for dance education will be executed in three phases.

### Phase I: Item Writing

Item writing involves developing a framework document that identifies the totality of the exam’s content, prioritizes content, weights the items, and determines disbursement of the items to be tested. Four test forms will be developed that require approximately 200 selected response items without stimulus materials and 40 selected response items with stimulus materials; and 16 short constructed response items requiring less than 10 minutes to complete, eight with and eight without stimulus materials. A taxonomy will be developed that describes the items and levels of rigor. In this item-writing phase, 15 additional items will be created and embedded in field tests to ensure perpetuation of items. These items will be scored but not calculated in the individual’s competency score.

In Phase I, NDEO will be hiring experts in assessment development that include a project manager, item writers, content reviewers, and technical reviewers. We anticipate Phase I will take 15 months and cost \$100,000, which will be funded with outside money.

### Phase II: Field Testing

In Phase II, NDEO and SEADAE will define the test population and administer the pilot to 100 entry-level educators. We will perform item analyses on each item, determine levels of reliability and validity and revise items based on their performance. There will be two cycles of field testing that include inter-rater reliability tests and Angoff’s method of determining

probability of correct responses from borderline candidates’ performance on each item. We anticipate Phase II will take 5 months and cost \$50,000, also funded with outside money.

### Phase III: Implementation and Sustainability

In Phase III, NDEO will develop the e-registration process with preidentified dates of administration. We are considering offering the praxis twice a year, June and January respectively beginning 2014. An administration fee will cover the extensive review process and also build in the perpetuation of items supporting sustainability of the exam over time. In the review process, each applicant will be rated by two experts and five teams, for a total of 10 reviewers; and, electronic scoring will be used as possible. Results should be known within 2½ weeks. Throughout this process, we will continue to develop a deep pool of items that perform similarly. We anticipate this phase will take 4 months and cost \$40,000, also funded with outside money.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT

Having an entry-level, industry-supported teacher’s exam in dance arts education will help schools and districts hire qualified educators to teach dance as an art form in education. States with certification will be able to retain certification, and those states without certification will have the additional support competency exam to institute certification. The praxis will impact professional preparation programs in postsecondary education and professional development at local, state, and national levels. Ultimately, this effort combined with state certification standards in dance will help our discipline get dance in schools, raise the caliber of dance taught in schools, clarify the channel of delivery for dance as a fine and performing art, and build infrastructure in states to support teaching and learning in and through dance arts education.

*For more information, please visit [www.ndeo.org/Standards](http://www.ndeo.org/Standards) and [www.seadae.org](http://www.seadae.org)*

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