



**New York State Teacher
Certification Examinations™**

Aligned Assessments for New York State



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Table of Contents

Introduction	ii
A New York State Program	1
The Test Development Process	6
The Test Administration Process	9
Avoidance of Test Bias	12
Ongoing Activities	14

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Introduction

This document provides information about the New York State Teacher Certification Examinations™ (NYSTCE®), which have been developed for candidates seeking educator certification in New York State. It describes activities relating to the design, development, and administration of the examination program.

The NYSTCE program addresses New York State Education Law and the Commissioner’s Regulations, which require prospective New York State educators to pass designated examinations as a requirement for receiving certification. These examinations measure a candidate’s knowledge and skills in the liberal arts and sciences, in teaching theory and practice, and in the content area of the candidate’s field of concentration.

The NYSTCE program was custom developed with the extensive involvement of New York State educators to meet unique New York State needs and specifications. The purpose of the NYSTCE is to help ensure that certified educators have the knowledge and skills important for an educator in New York State public schools.

The NYSTCE program consists of the following tests:

- Liberal Arts and Sciences Test (LAST)
- Assessment of Teaching Skills—Written (ATS–W), including separate elementary and secondary examinations
- Content Specialty Tests (CSTs)
- Bilingual Education Assessments (BEAs)
- Communication and Quantitative Skills Test (CQST)
- Assessment of Teaching Assistant Skills (ATAS)
- Assessment of Teaching Skills—Performance (ATS–P) (Video)

For further information regarding educator certification, please visit:

<http://ohe33.nysed.gov/tcert/>

Or you may contact:

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Albany, NY 12234
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For further information regarding NYSTCE test registration or administration, please visit:

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A New York State Program

The NYSTCE program reflects several key principles that help to ensure that New York State assessment goals are met. Some of these key principles are discussed in the following section.

Basis in New York State Law, Policy, and Practice

The NYSTCE program was created to meet legal and regulatory requirements and to fulfill policy initiatives in New York State relating to the preparation and certification of educators. The program derives from sections of New York State Education Law, Rules of the Board of Regents, and the Commissioner’s Regulations regarding educator certification.

The NYSTCE program was custom designed and developed under the direction of the New York State Education Department to meet New York State needs and requirements.

The development process for the program was designed to meet the specific needs and interests of New York State, as expressed in the Commissioner’s Regulations and policy statements of the Board of Regents. The NYSTCE program is responsive to and consistent with New York State regulations, New York State public school curriculum frameworks and standards, and New York State educator preparation programs. New York State regulations, guidelines, textbooks, and other instructional materials serve as the foundation for test content and ensure a demonstrable correlation between the regulations, standards, and programs and the NYSTCE tests.

The NYSTCE program is closely aligned with New York State educational law, policy, and practice. The program is designed to accommodate changes in the New York State standards and regulations and to adapt to new educational policies and emerging content directions.

The NYSTCE program was custom designed and developed under the direction of the New York State Education Department to meet New York State needs and requirements. New York State has ownership of the custom-created examination materials of the NYSTCE program. The State Education Department determines program policies, and changes in New York State policies are reflected in the program.

New York State Educator Involvement

The NYSTCE program was developed through a collaborative process involving the combined expertise of New York State classroom educators and administrators, educator preparation faculty, psychometric experts, researchers engaged in the study of teaching and learning, and State Education Department policy and program personnel.

Test Development Committees were established to recommend to the State Education Department the design, content, wording, and specifications for the examination program. In addition, a Bias Review Committee was formed to review testing materials for potential bias and to advise the State Education Department on issues pertaining to their review. The members of these committees were New York State educators selected through a nominating process that sought from colleagues, supervisors, and professional organizations the names of well-qualified public school educators and educator preparation faculty. New York State educators were involved in many other ways as well: as participants in the job analysis survey that helped to determine test content, as performance assignment scorers, and as members of standard setting panels.

An essential aspect of professionalism in education is the ability to set and monitor standards for membership in the profession. The substantive participation of New York State educators in the development, administration, and scoring of the NYSTCE helps to ensure that the assessments are reflective of the standards for New York State educators and the profession of teaching and its practice in New York State. New York State educators were centrally involved in designing the test frameworks upon which each test in the NYSTCE program was based, approving the content proposed for each test through participation in job analysis surveys, considering the format and nature of each examination (including the use of written and performance-based question formats), reviewing and modifying test question content, recommending scoring procedures for performance tasks, reviewing field test results, recommending passing standards, reviewing test administration policies and procedures, and participating in scoring activities.

A Comprehensive Assessment Program

The design of the NYSTCE program, in which three distinct areas of professional accomplishment (content area, pedagogy, and liberal arts and sciences) are tested, is itself a statement of high educational standards. The content of the tests, too, as defined and implemented with the involvement of New York State educators on Test Development Committees and the Bias Review Committee, embodies high standards of content area preparation, professional knowledge, and liberal arts and sciences understanding.

The Content Specialty Tests (CSTs) are substantial examinations of content area knowledge at a level of understanding required of educators. The elementary and secondary versions of the Assessment of Teaching Skills (ATS) evaluate the candidates' professional and pedagogical knowledge that is important to an educator's job. The Liberal Arts and Sciences Test (LAST) assesses the candidates' fundamental knowledge and skills related to science, mathematics, and technological processes; historical and social scientific awareness; artistic expression and the humanities; communication and research skills; and written analysis and expression. Other NYSTCE tests are required only of certain groups of educators. Among them are the Bilingual Education Assessments (BEAs) for candidates seeking a bilingual education extension to a certificate, the Communication and Quantitative Skills Test (CQST) for candidates seeking a non-degree certificate in career and technical education fields, the Assessment of Teaching

Assistant Skills (ATAS) for candidates seeking a teaching assistant certificate, and the Assessment of Teaching Skills—Performance (ATS–P) (Video) requiring candidates with a Provisional certificate and who are seeking a Permanent certificate in PreK–6, ESOL, or a secondary academic subject to present a self-selected videorecording of their classroom work for evaluation by qualified scorers.

Prevention of bias in the NYSTCE is a matter of equity and fairness, as well as a central aspect of test validity.

Cultural Diversity and Freedom From Bias

Prevention of bias in the NYSTCE is a matter of equity and fairness, as well as a central aspect of test validity. Guarding against bias involves the collaboration of many educators and reviewers, all focused on two aspects of preventing potential bias: excluding language, content, or perspectives that might disadvantage candidates; and including content, language, and perspectives that reflect the diversity of the New York State population.

Educators from diverse backgrounds were involved throughout the development of examination materials for the NYSTCE. The NYSTCE program benefited from their active, sustained, and significant participation; their rigorous attention to bias and equity issues; and their determination to make the examinations fair. The NYSTCE Bias Review Committee had an ongoing role during the development of examination materials. This committee continues to work on the program, performing periodic reviews of new assessment materials.

In addition to the Bias Review Committee, which was constituted for the primary purpose of addressing bias issues, members of the other groups involved in the development of test materials (e.g., Test Development Committees, respondents to the job analysis surveys) reflected the diversity found in New York State, and issues of bias and equity were considered in their work with test materials.

In addition to judgment-based methods of potential bias detection implemented during test development, statistics gathered as part of the development process (e.g., through field testing of test questions) were used, where appropriate, to support and inform professional judgments on equity matters.

Customized Assessment Formats

Test question formats in the NYSTCE range across a spectrum of testing methods, including multiple-choice test questions, written assignments and analyses, listening comprehension test questions, videorecorded test questions, oral expression test questions, extended written compositions, administration-based performance tasks, and videorecorded submissions of classroom performance.

Some test question formats involve the use of special materials and equipment, including color reproductions, scientific and graphing calculators, recorded music performances, videorecorded American Sign Language communication, Brailled test questions, and audio- and videorecording equipment to capture candidate performances.

New York State educators who were involved in the development of the program had the benefit of the expertise of State Education Department policy personnel, assessment specialists, and experienced psychometricians in determining the test question formats that would be used in each field. The chosen test question formats were judged to be appropriate for the test field and for the purpose of testing. Ultimately, the formats were selected to meet the goals and characteristics of the NYSTCE program.

As the program continues and developments emerge in the academic fields, in the profession of teaching and its practice in New York State, or in the psychometric methods that ensure technical quality, these changes will be reflected in the NYSTCE program.

Multiple Sources of Validity Evidence

The test development approach followed for the NYSTCE program attended to the central technical issue of validation by gathering validity evidence from a number of sources throughout the development of the program. For example, the content of the tests was grounded in New York State materials and resources that relate to the educator’s job in the public school. Review committees comprising New York State educators worked closely with draft objective statements to ensure that they were appropriate for the specific job of a New York State educator. The committee-approved objective statements were formatted into job analysis surveys and distributed to practicing New York State classroom educators and New York State educator preparation faculty for further validation.

Similarly, test questions underwent several reviews, including a review of field test data, to ensure their appropriateness as they relate to the knowledge and skills important for New York State educators. The multifaceted attention to validation is a hallmark of the NYSTCE program and reflects current professional thinking on the nature and practice of validation.

The multifaceted attention to validation is a hallmark of the NYSTCE program.

Professional Test Administration

The NYSTCE approach to test administration focuses on courteous, professional treatment of candidates. NYSTCE test administration procedures provide an equitable, standardized, and test-secure administration. Examinees experience a smooth and efficient test session. Activities are handled with attention to the security and fairness that must characterize an important professional testing program. The unique challenges of securely and equitably administering audio- and videorecorded performance exercises are met by using a systematic approach that includes having standardized procedures, well-trained staff, and due concern for examinees’ needs. After the test, the focus is on providing accurate and informative scoring, analysis, and reporting that can fulfill the important informational goals of the program.

State-of-the-Art Communication with Candidates and Institutions

The NYSTCE Web site is a state-of-the-art vehicle for communication with candidates and institutions.

The NYSTCE Web site is a state-of-the-art vehicle for communication with candidates and institutions, offering comprehensive information and services. The NYSTCE Web site integrates testing information, test preparation materials, and online services including test registration and score reporting, using a simple, user-friendly design that enables candidates and educator preparation institutions to access information in a way that meets their needs.

The *NYSTCE Registration Bulletin*, which is available on the NYSTCE Web site, describes the tests and provides necessary testing information to candidates and institutions. The preparation guides and test frameworks for each testing field and the ATS–P (Video) information guide can be downloaded free of charge from the NYSTCE Web site in a portable document format (pdf). The Web site offers additional services including checking registration status, adding a test, changing registration, and requesting a refund. Individualized responses to candidate questions are provided via the Web site in a prompt manner.

Assessment results are available to examinees and educator preparation institutions in a secure manner on the Internet. Examinees may access their test results on the NYSTCE Web site on the score report date, allowing quick and convenient access to this information prior to receiving the results by mail. Test administration reports are provided to institutions after each test administration via secure electronic transmittal. This system allows institutions to store, format, and manage their score reports and data electronically.

Continued Test Updating

A good examination program cannot remain static in a changing world.

A good examination program cannot remain static in a changing world and in a dynamic environment such as education. In particular, the NYSTCE program exists in an environment of reform in New York State that affects the classroom, the educator, and educator preparation institutions. Given the alignment that the NYSTCE program seeks with these elements of education in New York State, the program is designed to change, as needed. Built into the NYSTCE program is a process of reviews of assessment objectives, specifications, test questions, passing standards, and overall performance to ensure the continuing relevance and appropriateness of the system. The NYSTCE program has developed over time and will continue to change as needed to ensure its continued role in support of educational excellence in New York State.

The Test Development Process

The test development process for the examinations involved several steps, designed to ensure that the resulting examinations are consistent with New York State educational practices and curricula, reflective of knowledge and skills judged important for the educator’s job, accurate and valid, and free of bias. Establishing a sound basis in law or State Education Department policy is an important component of test validation for an examination program such as the NYSTCE. It is essential that the content of a licensing test be anchored in the State Education Department’s program and policy materials.

Program Planning

Planning by the State Education Department was initiated at the beginning of the program and has continued throughout its development and administration. State Education Department direction in planning and design issues was essential to the development and implementation of a program that fits the requirements and satisfies the needs of New York State. Policies, procedures, and materials for development and administration were designed to match New York State goals for its assessment system.

Development of Content Frameworks

An individual test framework, which organizes a field into subareas of content described by objectives, was developed for each field to serve as an explicit foundation for test content. The content frameworks were designed not only to guide test development but also to assist candidates in their preparation for the examinations. The text of the objectives was developed and approved for the program by New York State educators and the State Education Department. The objectives are made available to candidates and to educator preparation institutions.

For each field, education and policy materials used in New York State were consulted to develop the content frameworks and objectives in order to ensure that the frameworks reflected appropriate content. The materials consulted included New York State curriculum standards, program descriptions from New York State educator preparation programs that prepare candidates for each certificate, textbooks and other materials in use in New York State public schools and educator preparation institutions, relevant New York State statutes and regulations, professional literature, and similar documents.

- Preliminary reviews of the draft frameworks were conducted with New York State educators to ensure that the frameworks accurately captured the central elements of professional practice in New York State.
- The draft frameworks were reviewed and revised by the Bias Review Committee and the Test Development Committees of New York State educators.
- The proposed frameworks, as revised, were approved by the State Education Department.

The content frameworks were designed to guide test development and to assist candidates in their preparation for the examinations.

Assessment Specifications Development

Assessment specifications describing the design of each test were developed. Assessment specifications serve as a link between the objective statements and actual test questions.

- The draft specifications were reviewed and revised by the Bias Review Committee and the Test Development Committees.
- The proposed specifications, as revised, were approved by the State Education Department.

Job Analysis Study

To verify that the objectives on which the testing program was built reflected actual educational practice in New York State, a job analysis study was conducted.

Objectives that were found to be important to the job of a New York State educator were eligible to be measured by the examinations.

- Objectives in the test frameworks were correlated to relevant New York State public school curriculum standards and college program requirements to provide empirical evidence of the basis of the objectives in New York State policy and/or practice.
- The objectives from each content framework were formatted into two job analysis surveys per field: one for public school educators and the other for college faculty.
- Surveys for public school educators were distributed through New York State public schools. The college educator surveys were distributed through New York State institutions that prepare educators.
- Follow-up contacts were made to encourage participants to respond.
- Results from the job analysis study were analyzed, and only those objectives that were found to be important to the job of a New York State educator were eligible to be measured by the examinations.

Assessment Materials Development

For each field, test questions were developed that corresponded to the objectives approved for initial testing by the State Education Department. Materials included multiple-choice and constructed-response questions, as appropriate for each field.

Draft materials were developed by teams of people with combined expertise in the content of each field, in bias detection and prevention, in editorial development, and in psychometrics. Development teams were given training in the specific requirements affecting examination materials development for New York State, including orientation in the assessment specifications approved for the examinations and in the manual *Bias Issues in Test Development*.

Test Question Review Meetings

Draft test questions were reviewed by both the Bias Review Committee and the Test Development Committees at test question review meetings. The review of the questions was detailed; draft questions were open for revision, replacement, or deletion according to the consensus judgments of the committee members.

Field Testing

Test questions that were reviewed by the Bias Review Committee and the Test Development Committees and approved by the State Education Department were field-tested among students in New York State educator preparation programs and among volunteer examinees at operational administrations of the NYSTCE. The field tests were designed to gather information about the performance of test questions.

- The test questions were formatted into field test booklets. Training and support materials were provided for field test administrators.
- Volunteers to take field tests were recruited from the student populations of New York State educator preparation institutions and from examinees who registered for operational administrations of the NYSTCE. Special attention was given to representing the geographic and ethnic diversity of New York State among field test participants.
- After the field test was conducted, test questions were scored and results were analyzed to provide statistical information on the test questions. Analyses permitted consideration of the technical qualities of the test questions.
- Test questions warranting further review based on the field test were re-examined by the Bias Review Committee and the Test Development Committees. The committees considered the test questions in light of the results and recommended revisions accordingly.

Passing Score Review

Meetings were conducted with members of the Test Development Committees and additional New York State public school educators and educator preparation faculty in order to gather passing score recommendations for each test field. Following these meetings, passing score recommendations were compiled and presented to the State Education Department, which set the passing score for each test field.

The Test Administration Process

The goals of test administration are consonant with those of the development process: security, fairness, and support for candidates and institutions. The NYSTCE program was designed to meet these goals in its systems related to test registration, candidates' preparation for testing, test administration, test scoring, and score reporting.

Registering for the Test

Comprehensive information needed to register for the NYSTCE is available in an easy-to-use format on the NYSTCE Web site. Registration for NYSTCE tests is convenient and fast. Candidates may register on the Internet, by mail, or by telephone. Internet registration is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. The NYSTCE Web site offers additional services including checking registration status, making registration changes, and requesting a refund.

Candidates may register on the Internet, by mail, or by telephone. Internet registration is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Before the administration, registered examinees receive an admission ticket that provides directions to the test site, the time of the test session, a seat number, and other helpful information regarding the administration.

Examinee requests for alternative testing arrangements are responded to promptly and according to State Education Department-approved guidelines.

Preparing for the Test

The NYSTCE program assists candidates by providing information regarding the required knowledge and skills that form the foundation of each test. This information is provided through preparation guides, test frameworks, the ATS–P (Video) information guide, and other materials that are easily accessible on the NYSTCE Web site and available to candidates at no charge.

Preparation guides contain the test frameworks and objectives upon which the tests have been built and sample questions to familiarize candidates with test question formats and how each objective may be assessed. For constructed-response questions, a sample question is presented along with an example of a strong response, the scoring scale, and an evaluation of the strong response. Helpful information, such as how the test is administered and test-taking strategies, is included in the preparation guides.

Providing materials to institutions to facilitate their preparation of candidates is another part of the NYSTCE approach. Institutions receive information about test content so that they can offer courses and curricula that are related to the knowledge and skills that candidates are expected to demonstrate and so that they can advise students on appropriate courses of study to pursue.

Test Administration

The NYSTCE tests are administered multiple times per year at numerous sites in New York State as well as several out-of-state locations in the United States and Canada. Sites are carefully screened and selected based on predetermined criteria relating to test security, alternative testing arrangements, conditions conducive to testing, and examinee comfort. At each site and for each administration, examinees receive standardized instructions for taking the test.

Test administrators are carefully trained and provided with manuals that are designed to ensure a standardized, secure, efficient, and professional administration for all examinees.

Test Scoring

After each test administration is complete, NYSTCE tests are scored under secure conditions. Stringent quality control checks are undertaken to verify the accuracy of the test scores. Test results are produced for examinees and educator preparation programs within weeks of the test administration.

Qualified New York State scorers in the relevant content areas score responses to constructed-response questions following established industry standards for scoring procedures. Scorers are typically certified New York State public school educators or education preparation faculty who are trained to score examinee responses consistently, fairly, and in accordance with the scoring scale. Scorers must demonstrate this ability before being allowed to score actual examinee responses. The examinees' identities are not disclosed to scorers.

Procedures for scoring responses typically include the qualifying of scorers through the use of multiple "marker responses" (which illustrate by example the various scores that can be achieved), the use of multiple scorers working independently (with a standardized procedure for resolving discrepancies in scores), and the monitoring of scorers to ensure that their scores remain consistent with the marker responses and the scoring scale. The scoring process is based on performance characteristics that are communicated to candidates in advance of testing.

Qualified New York State scorers in the relevant content areas score responses to constructed-response questions.

Score Reporting

Assessment results are provided to examinees and educator preparation institutions in a clear, useful format. The results that examinees receive after testing are designed to provide more than notification of passing status. Score report feedback includes

Score report feedback includes designation of areas of strength and weakness relative to the objectives assessed.

designation of areas of strength and weakness relative to the objectives assessed. With this information, examinees can focus their additional preparation, if necessary, on objectives where their performance was less strong.

Test administration reports are distributed to institutions after each test administration. The purpose of the test administration reports is to provide information promptly to institutions to allow them to monitor the performance on the NYSTCE tests of individual examinees as well as the group of examinees affiliated with the institution. Institutions may use this information to improve the performance of individual students and to modify their programs to better meet educational needs.

Annual results reports are distributed at the end of each program year to New York State institutions that have approved educator preparation programs. These reports enable institutions to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of their programs as well as to meet federal reporting requirements as defined by Title II, Section 207, of the Higher Education Act.



Avoidance of Test Bias

Equity for candidates is a priority of the NYSTCE program. Equity in a certification testing program refers to wording, content, and policies that give the candidates the same opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of job-related content and skills regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, nationality, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability or their cultural, economic, or geographic background. Throughout the test development process, steps were taken to design and develop an equitable testing program.

Equity for candidates is a priority of the NYSTCE program.

The test development process incorporated reviews at multiple stages by qualified New York State educators who are experienced in reviewing educational materials for issues of equity. Experts in the content areas measured by the tests conducted separate reviews at multiple stages in the development process for both job-relatedness and potential bias. Statistics gathered as part of the development process (e.g., through the job analysis study) were used, where appropriate, to support and inform professional judgments on equity matters.

Under the supervision of the State Education Department, the following steps, among others, were taken by the test developers to ensure fairness and to guard against bias in the NYSTCE program.

Job-relatedness of Content

- The sources of information used in defining the content of each test were documents specifically related to the preparation and job content of public school educators in New York State.
- For each test field, a Test Development Committee reviewed the test objectives and questions to verify their job-relatedness and appropriateness.
- A job analysis study for each test field was used to establish an empirical link between test content and job content for candidates.

Equity Reviews

- Throughout the test development process, bias avoidance was a focus for persons involved in the test development and review processes. The manual *Bias Issues in Test Development* was used as a tool throughout test development.
- A Bias Review Committee was established for the primary purpose of reviewing NYSTCE materials to help ensure sensitivity and fairness. The Bias Review Committee was composed to represent individuals of diverse ethnicity, females and males, and individuals with disabilities. The Bias Review Committee reviewed the proposed test objectives and test questions, recommending revisions as appropriate to eliminate potential bias and also to help ensure inclusiveness of content.
- Additionally, one of the charges of the Test Development Committees was to review the proposed test objectives and questions for potential bias. Test Development Committees were chosen to reflect the racial, gender, ethnic, and regional diversity of New York State.

Field Testing and Statistical Analyses

- Field testing policies and procedures were designed to support the prevention of bias in the NYSTCE.
- Special attention was given to include field test participants who represented the racial, gender, ethnic, and regional diversity of New York State.
- Statistical analyses were conducted to detect potential bias in the test questions that were field-tested, where adequate data were available.
- An additional review of questions that were identified by the statistical analysis was conducted by the Bias Review Committee to eliminate any potential bias.

Support for Candidates

- Publicly available test objectives, which were reviewed for potential bias by New York State educators, define the content upon which each test is based.
- To help ensure fair measurement of candidates' knowledge and skills, preparation guides, which include test objectives, sample multiple-choice and constructed-response questions, sample strong responses to constructed-response questions, and other useful information, are available to candidates on the Internet at no charge.

Test Administration and Scoring

Consistent, standardized administration procedures ensure an equitable and fair administration for all examinees.

- Policies relating to NYSTCE test administration and scoring are designed to ensure uniform and bias-free procedures.
 - Alternative testing arrangements are available to examinees who may not be able to take the test under standard conditions.
 - Alternative testing dates are available to examinees whose religious convictions prohibit testing on Saturday.
 - Testing sites are carefully selected to ensure accessibility for all examinees.
- Consistent, standardized administration procedures ensure an equitable and fair administration for all examinees.
 - During test administrations, examinees have the opportunity to make comments about the wording or content of individual test questions.
 - Qualified scorers are trained to score responses to constructed-response assignments consistently, fairly, and in accordance with the scoring scale. Scorers are unaware of the identity of examinees whose responses they score.
 - To enable examinees to understand their performance in relation to the test content, the test results that are distributed to examinees after the administration provide feedback relative to the test frameworks. Examinees who do not pass a test may retake it as often as necessary until a passing score is achieved.

Ongoing Activities

The State Education Department has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring that the NYSTCE program reflects current New York State and national student learning standards and classroom curricula by conducting timely reviews of the program.

As New York State regulations for preparing, testing, and certifying educators have changed, there have been corresponding changes to the NYSTCE program. Both the redevelopment of existing test fields and the development of new test fields have occurred within the NYSTCE program. This has included test framework revisions and development; numerous meetings of the Bias Review Committee and Test Development Committees; job analysis surveys; additional question development, including expansion of additional constructed-response components; and establishment of revised passing scores. In this way, the NYSTCE program continues to meet the specific interests of New York State.





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