

## APPENDIX B

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### INFORMATIONAL HANDOUTS

Frequently Asked Questions  
Developing a Study Plan  
Test-Taking Strategies



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## **What are the Arizona Educator Proficiency Assessments (AEPA™)?**

The purpose of the AEPA is to ensure that each certified educator has the necessary knowledge to practice effectively in Arizona public schools. The Arizona Department of Education (ADE), in conjunction with National Evaluation Systems, Inc. (NES®), has developed tests in 34 fields as part of the AEPA program. The tests in the AEPA program address areas covered by the Arizona Academic (K–12) Standards, the Arizona Professional Teaching Standards, and the Arizona Professional Administrative Standards.

Below are some answers to frequently asked questions.

## **General Questions**

### **Who is required to take an AEPA test?**

Every person seeking educator certification in Arizona is required to take and pass one or more comprehensive tests of subject and/or professional knowledge. The AEPA program has been designed to meet this requirement.

ADE rules require that applicants for teaching certificates take tests of professional knowledge and subject knowledge, and demonstrate an understanding of the United States and Arizona Constitutions. The purpose of the AEPA program is to ensure that each certified teacher has the necessary knowledge to teach in Arizona public schools.

Applicants for administrator certification must take the appropriate test for the Superintendent, Principal, or Supervisor certificate and demonstrate an understanding of the United States and Arizona Constitutions.

Applicants for Career and Technical Education certification must take the Professional Knowledge—Secondary test and demonstrate an understanding of the United States and Arizona Constitutions.

### **Where did the content of the AEPA tests come from?**

The AEPA tests are based on the Arizona Professional Teaching Standards and the Arizona Professional Administrative Standards. These standards are aligned with the state-mandated student curriculum, the Arizona Academic (K–12) Standards.

### **What kinds of AEPA tests are there?**

Basically, there are four kinds of AEPA tests: subject knowledge tests (i.e., those that match a particular Arizona certificate), administrator tests (Superintendent, Principal, Supervisor), professional knowledge tests, and the test on the Constitutions of the United States and Arizona. Most candidates for certification must take one or more subject knowledge tests. In addition, with the exception of those seeking administrator certification, candidates for certification must take an AEPA Professional Knowledge test.

### **How many questions are on the AEPA tests?**

The number of questions varies from test to test. In general, the subject knowledge tests include approximately 100 selected-response questions and one written performance assignment. Subject knowledge tests for French, German, and Spanish contain approximately 55 selected-response questions that include questions assessing reading and listening comprehension, a written expression performance assignment, and an oral expression performance assignment.

The three Administrator tests—Superintendent, Principal, and Supervisor—each include approximately 100 selected-response questions. The Superintendent and Principal tests also include four written expression performance assignments—two relating to a case study, one on an education issue, and one a work product assignment. The Supervisor test includes one written expression performance assignment.

The Constitutions of the United States and Arizona test includes approximately 100 selected-response questions. It does not include a performance assignment.

The individual test study guides provided at [www.aepa.nesinc.com](http://www.aepa.nesinc.com) and the overviews of each test as part of Appendix C of this guide contain this information.

## **Questions That Candidates Ask About the Registration Process**

### **How do I register for a test?**

There are a number of ways to register for an AEPA test. You may register online at the AEPA Web site ([www.aepa.nesinc.com](http://www.aepa.nesinc.com)) or you may obtain the current copy of the AEPA Registration Bulletin, which contains instructions for registering by mail or by telephone. Registration bulletins are available from the AEPA Web site, from education departments at Arizona colleges and universities, from alternative certification program offices, and from NES, at (800) 239-8105.

### **Can I fax my registration form to NES?**

No. Registration forms are scanned electronically by NES, and the original form must be sent. Candidates may use Internet registration as an alternative to registration by mail.

### **If my Internet connection disconnects before I finish registering online, will my information still be processed?**

No. If a registration session is terminated before an e-mail acknowledgment is generated and sent to you, your information is lost and you must begin again.

### **I tried registering via the Internet on a public computer but could not complete the registration. What went wrong?**

Some public computers are configured not to allow transmittal of secure information (e.g., credit card numbers). Contact the system administrator to change the computer's settings or try using a different computer.

**How many tests may I take at one test administration?**

There is one morning test session and one afternoon test session on each test date. You are permitted to register for only one test per session. This means that, on a single test date, you may take up to two tests (e.g., a Professional Knowledge test and a subject knowledge test).

The morning session reporting time is 8:00 A.M. and ending time is approximately 12:30 P.M. The afternoon session reporting time is 1:00 P.M. and ending time is approximately 5:30 P.M. Examinees will be assigned to one or both test sessions, according to the tests for which they have registered.

The registration bulletin contains a table of all AEPA tests.

**How long do I have to take the tests?**

Both the morning and afternoon test sessions are four hours long.

**Can I choose to take my AEPA tests during one morning or afternoon session?**

The Professional Knowledge tests are administered only during the morning test session. Subject knowledge tests, the Supervisor test, and the Constitutions of the United States and Arizona test are administered only during the afternoon session. The Superintendent and Principal tests are full-day (two-session) tests.

**What forms of payment can I use to pay for the test?**

The method of payment depends on when and how you register, as indicated in the table below.

REGISTRATION PERIOD	VIA INTERNET	BY MAIL	BY PHONE
Regular Registration	MasterCard or VISA	Check or Money Order	Not Applicable
Late Registration	MasterCard or VISA	Check or Money Order	Not Applicable
Emergency Registration	MasterCard or VISA	Not Applicable	MasterCard or VISA

**How do I obtain a study guide for the test that I am taking?**

Study guides are available at [www.aepa.nesinc.com](http://www.aepa.nesinc.com).

**Whom do I contact if I have questions about my registration?**

If you have questions about your registration, contact:

AEPA Program  
 National Evaluation Systems, Inc.  
 Post Office Box 660  
 Amherst, MA 01004-9011  
 Telephone: (800) 239-8105 (Automated Information System available 24 hours daily.)  
 Telecommunications Device for the Deaf: (413) 256-8032  
 Web site: [www.aepa.nesinc.com](http://www.aepa.nesinc.com)

**I have registered for a test but want to make a change in my registration. What do I do?**

Refer to the current version of the AEPA Registration Bulletin and complete and mail in the Change of Registration Request Form, or use the online form found at [www.aepa.nesinc.com](http://www.aepa.nesinc.com). Information about deadlines for making such changes is provided in the bulletin and on the Web site.

**I have a disability. How do I request alternative testing arrangements?**

Refer to the current version of the AEPA Registration Bulletin and complete and mail in the Alternative Testing Arrangements Request Form at the same time that you send in your registration form. If you have any questions about making alternative testing arrangements, call NES at (800) 239-8105.

**I have a religious conviction that prohibits me from testing on Saturday. Can I test on an alternative date?**

Refer to the current version of the AEPA Registration Bulletin and complete and mail in the Alternative Testing Arrangements Request Form at the same time that you send in your registration form. If you have any questions about making alternative testing arrangements, call NES at (800) 239-8105.

**How many times may I retake a test?**

There is no limit to the number of times you may take a test.

**Questions That Candidates Ask About Their Scores**

**When will my test scores be available?**

Official score reports will be mailed approximately four weeks after the test date. Unofficial score reports will be available on the Internet by 5:00 P.M. mountain time on the score report mailing date for each test administration. Only an official score report can be used for certification purposes with the ADE.

Refer to the AEPA Registration Bulletin for test dates and score report dates.

**How are the AEPA tests scored?**

Scores for the AEPA tests are based on the number of questions answered correctly and performance on the performance assignments. Scores are reported on a scale of 100 to 300, with a minimum passing score of 240.

**How many questions do I have to answer correctly to pass an AEPA test?**

The number of questions you have to answer correctly to pass the AEPA tests varies across test fields and may vary slightly across test dates. For this reason, the total test score is reported as a scaled score.

**Why are scaled scores used?**

AEPA tests are not scored by the percentage of questions answered correctly. Rather, the raw score (the number of questions answered correctly) is converted to a scaled score by placing each administered form of the test on a scale common to all forms of that AEPA test.

Examinee performance on a test form is placed on a common scale because each test form may differ from other forms of an AEPA test. While efforts are made to create test forms that have the same overall level of difficulty as the original form of the test (on which the passing standard was set), there are often minor differences in overall difficulty from test form to test form. The total scaled score adjusts for these differences.

Each test form is statistically equated back to the original form of the test. Therefore, in order to maintain fairness to all candidates, a candidate who takes a slightly more difficult form of a test may be required to answer one or two fewer questions correctly in order to achieve the scaled passing score of 240 than a candidate who takes a slightly less difficult form of the test. Conversely, a candidate who takes a slightly less difficult form of the test may be required to answer one or two more questions correctly.

**How is the passing score determined?**

When the original form of a test in any field is administered, committees of Arizona technical and content experts and educators in that field meet to review the questions on that test form.

Committees recommend a passing standard to the ADE and the Arizona State Board of Education (ABE). The ABE makes the final determination of the passing standard and periodically reviews the standards on all tests in the AEPA program.

**Why are total test scores not presented for examinees who pass the AEPA tests?**

By recommendation of the AEPA Technical Advisory Committee, total test scores are presented only for examinees who do not pass the tests. This is to prevent the scores of those who pass from being misused, for example, to rank examinees for purposes other than credentialing, such as for employment or assignment. Scores are presented for those who do not pass to help them prepare to retake the tests.

# DEVELOPING A STUDY PLAN

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The following suggestions are designed to help you develop a study plan in preparation for the Arizona Educator Proficiency Assessments (AEPA™).

- ✓ **Study the objectives.** The first step in preparing for an AEPA test is to identify what information the test will cover by reviewing the objectives for your field. A complete, up-to-date list of the objectives is included in the study guide for each test field.

Objectives are organized into groups known as subareas. The subareas define the major content areas of the test. You will find a list of subareas at the beginning of each objective list. The number of objectives within each subarea typically reflects the emphasis given to that subarea on the test. In general, subareas with greater numbers of objectives will receive more coverage on the test.

Once you have a broad picture of what the examination includes, read each objective and its descriptive statements carefully to get a more specific idea of the knowledge you will be required to demonstrate on the examination. When you have become familiar with the objectives, make a list of those objectives about which you feel you know the least. Use this review of the objectives to set priorities for your study time. The objectives are the core of the testing program and a helpful study tool. Read them carefully to determine the areas of strength and need in your content knowledge.

- ✓ **Focus your studies.** Use your review of the objectives to focus your study time on those objectives containing knowledge and skills with which you are less familiar. You should leave yourself time to review the content of all objectives, both the familiar and the less familiar ones, but the focus of your preparation time and priority in your studying should be placed upon those objectives about which you are least confident.
- ✓ **Identify resources.** After you have identified the objectives on which you will focus your time, consider the resources you may use in studying the content of those objectives. The most appropriate resources may well be textbooks from courses you have taken. You may also wish to consult your class notes. This is especially important for courses you took more than a year ago. Talk with other students who have taken those courses more recently. Meet with your advisor or the professors who teach these courses. They may be able to provide you with some guidelines for reviewing your notes and textbooks. You may also wish to review other materials and publications from local, state, and national professional education organizations.
- ✓ **Review the sample test questions.** After you have become familiar with the objectives, you may want to review the sample test directions and the test question formats and suggested approaches contained in the appropriate AEPA study guide. Then try to answer the sample selected-response questions for the test you are taking. If your test includes one or more performance assignments, you should try to respond to the sample assignment(s) as well.

Next, review the correct responses and explanations for the sample selected-response questions. If your test includes one or more performance assignments, you should review the sample response(s) or the description of the assignment that is provided.



- ✓ **If you are retaking a test, use the information on your score report.** Your subarea performance as indicated on your official score report can help you identify possible areas on which to focus your studies. However, this information may be based on comparatively few test questions, and you should use it cautiously. You may wish to focus your initial studies on the subareas in which you did least well. You may also wish to concentrate your studies on those subareas or sections of the test that include the greatest number of test items and that count the most toward your total test score.
- ✓ **Take additional courses.** Consult with your advisor about whether you have completed sufficient coursework to prepare for the test. Your advisor may be able to identify specific courses that may cover content you have not yet studied.
- ✓ **Form or join a study group.** Joining a study group can be effective for reviewing test-related content. You may gain the most from participation in a study group if you have already identified the objectives with which you are less familiar and that you may need to review more. If you have a specific need or area of weakness, a study group that focuses on that need or area may be best for you.
- ✓ **Avoid cramming during the last few days before the test.** A gradual study pattern will be more effective for learning unfamiliar or difficult content. In the last few days before the test, take time to review the content with which you feel more comfortable and avoid trying to learn new material.

# TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES

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The following suggestions may help you develop strategies to use when you are taking the Arizona Educator Proficiency Assessments (AEPA™).

- ✓ **Follow directions.** It is very important to listen to and follow all test directions. This includes the oral directions that will be read by the test administrators and any written directions in the test booklet.
- ✓ **Pace yourself.** You will be assigned to one or both test sessions depending on the number and types (full-day or half-day) of tests you register for. Each test session is four hours in length. The time it takes test administrators to read the directions at the beginning of the test session is not included in the four hours. You may wish to flip through the test booklet when you are given the signal to begin testing. This may give you an idea of how to pace yourself while taking the test. Remember to leave enough time to respond to the performance assignment(s), if applicable.
- ✓ **Read carefully.** Do not try to speed up by skimming directions or by reading the test questions too quickly. You may miss important information and instructions.
- ✓ **Determine the “best answer.”** Your response to each selected-response question should be the best of the response options provided. Read and evaluate all choices before deciding which one is best.
- ✓ **Guess wisely.** Your test score will be at least partially based on the number of selected-response questions that you answer correctly. You will not be penalized for guessing. If you are unsure about a question, use your knowledge in the content area to eliminate as many of the options as possible, then guess among the remaining choices.
- ✓ **Mark your answers carefully.** Your responses to the selected-response questions will be scored electronically. It is critical for you to mark your answers carefully and to erase any stray marks completely. If you skip a question, be sure that you skip the corresponding row of answer choices on the answer sheet.
- ✓ **Check your accuracy.** Use any remaining time at the end of the test session to check the accuracy of your work. Make sure that you have filled in the appropriate bubbles on the answer sheet and that you have completely erased any stray marks.
- ✓ **Review the performance assignment(s), if applicable, carefully and write legibly.** Be sure to read and respond to each part of the assignment(s). Your response(s) to the assignment(s) will be evaluated by at least two qualified scorers. It is important for the scorers to be able to read your response(s). Also, make sure that you have recorded your response(s) to the assignment(s) on the appropriate answer document(s) in the appropriate space.