

## Studying for the Assessment Center

### Getting Organized

1. Set up an Assessment Center binder with 6 tabs: 1 tab for each area given for your certificate area.
2. Behind each tab, put in the following:
  - Summary: summarize the knowledge you are asked to show
  - Study resources: generate a list of study resources you can use to study the content
  - Sample questions: generate 3-4 sample questions you might be asked.
  - Units: list generic activities and lessons for a unit to teach in that area (all units can have pair work, cooperative learning, predicting, into-through-beyond activities and assessment)
  - Standards: identify the standards that pertain to the area
  - Language from the standards: identify the language from the standards that you can use as you respond to each area

**REMEMBER:** You **cannot** bring your notes into the Assessment Center, so keep them brief!

### Preparation Tips

Most NBCT's recommend that you do not begin significant preparation for the Assessment Center until you have completed the portfolio (depending on your calendar schedule). However, there are several activities you can start early:

- Make sure you have experience with the targeted grade level(s) – if not, visit classrooms, review curriculum texts and talk with colleagues.
- Collect articles about the age group/developmental age span covered in the certification area.
- Read professional journal articles that address curriculum and pedagogy. Try to identify some of the “big issues” in the certification area.
- Be familiar with the rubrics used for the Assessment Center exercises contained in the NBPTS Scoring Guide.

### Strategies for “Attacking” the Test

1. Understand that each sub question is linked to the scoring criteria given at the beginning of each section.
2. Practice your pacing. Each section is timed for 30 minutes; therefore, if there are three scoring criteria, there will most likely be three subsections. This gives you approximately eight minutes for each subsection and six minutes to read the prompts.
3. To make sure you score points for each subsection: start by writing a topic sentence-short answer to each mini-section. Then go back and fill each section in with more thoroughness. This way you will give the assessors a chance to know your main ideas for each subsection in case you don't finish in time!
4. After your topic sentence, feel free to use bullets and lists as well as sentences to elaborate your answers. This isn't an essay test!

## **How to Create Mock Assessment Questions**

Whatever the certificate area, the assessment exercises generally ask the candidate to:

- Read and interpret student profiles
- Analyze and evaluate students' work
- Plan developmentally appropriate instruction for students' pedagogic growth

The Assessment Center questions are often implied in the exercise descriptions. For example, the prompt for Exercise 3 for Early Adolescence/English Language Arts is listed below:

Teachers will show their knowledge of the reading process and ability to analyze student reading. They will be asked to read a passage, a student prompt, and a student response, and to determine the reasons for the misconceptions in the reading. They will also provide strategies to correct the misconceptions.

Possible questions could include:

- What are some misconceptions you see in the student's response?
- What is the evidence of these misconceptions?
- What are some reasons the student misunderstood the passage?
- What are some strategies you would use to correct these misconceptions?

Another useful source for questions is the Scoring Guide, available online under the Assessment Center section. Look for the Rubric 4 criteria for your certificate and exercise number.

### ***Question Practice:***

- Try to write 4 possible questions for each of these prompts:

#### ***Middle Childhood/Generalist (Exercise 5-Understanding Health)***

Teachers will demonstrate their ability to identify and address health-related needs of a given student. Teachers will be asked to read a student profile and determine the particular health issues related to the identified student and provide steps and resources to address the student's needs.

#### ***Early Adolescence/Social Science-History (Exercise 5-Social Movements/Political Science & U.S. or World History)***

Teachers will explain historical circumstances precipitating a specific social movement, identify a specific strategy and how it was used to draw attention to the social movement and/or effect change, and analyze societal changes resulting from the movement.

## Assessment Center

Remember that assessors are looking for depth and quality in your responses, not quantity of response. For example, if a prompt requests that you provide two examples of appropriate actions to take in a given educational situation, only the first two examples you provide will be evaluated by assessors during scoring.

### **EC/Gen Mock Assessment Center Exercise**

#### **Exercise 3: Science**

##### Stimulus

Mrs. Cornejo's second graders have shown interest in clouds since this year there has been much more rain and many more cloudy days than usual. They have been asking Mrs. Cornejo where clouds come from. Mrs. Cornejo would like to plan an inquiry lesson to help her students understand more about clouds, knowing that her students have not previously studied the water cycle.

##### Prompts

1. Describe the science concept involved in the above stimulus and its relation to a "big idea" in science.
2. What will be an appropriate learning goal for these students at this time?
3. Describe an inquiry activity that would further the students' understanding of the concept and "big idea."
4. What tools, technology, and/or materials would be needed to further the students' understanding of the concept and its relation to the "big idea?" Provide a rationale for your choice tools, technology, and/or materials.

**EC/Gen Mock Assessment Center Exercise**  
**Exercise 4: Social Studies**

Stimulus

Mrs. Chute's kindergarten class has just taken a trip to the supermarket. While on the trip, the students began asking questions about how the food gets to the store, who decides how much things will cost, and who puts the money in the cashiers' cash registers. After the field trip, Mrs. Chute decided to check the students' understanding of basic economics by asking them to draw a picture to show how food gets from the farmer's field to their own pantries and fridges. The drawings showed that some students thought their families bought their food directly from the farmers, while others seemed to know that a truck brought the food to the market. Still other students weren't sure just what to draw and so they drew something unrelated to the prompt.

Prompts

1. Describe the social studies concept involved in the above stimulus and three learning objectives appropriate to these students at this time.
2. Describe a learning sequence and give a rationale to explain why this learning sequence will lead to the students' increased mastery of the learning objectives.
3. What materials/resources will you use to help the students develop their understanding of the concept? Explain why these materials/resources are appropriate.
4. Describe your method for assessing student understanding of the concept and learning objectives.