



Welcome to the Wonderful World of Teaching!

Many of you have read and used my *Passing the Principal TExES Exam: Keys to Certification and School Leadership* (2003). Since its initial publication, people have so graciously said how much they liked it, how it made the competencies seem so real, and how it helped them pass the Principal (68) TExES exam. Some people said they had been unsuccessful in passing the test until they read my book. Since the publication of my 2010 *Passing the Superintendent TExES Exam: Keys to Certification and District Leadership*, the same reactions have held true. Obviously the model is working. Why mess with success?

Based on the success of both previous TExES preparation books, students, universities, and Regional Education Service Centers began to ask for the same preparation guide for the teacher Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (PPR) TExES exam. Surely, with the dramatic shortage of teachers as well as administrators, a book to explain and clarify the teacher PPR standards, domains, and competencies was also needed. In response to that demand, today you are beginning to read *Passing the PPR TExES Exam for EC–12 Teachers: Keys to Certification and Ethical Teaching*. To those of you who have heard good things about the administrator TExES preparation books, this one will read and be done in the same ways. It will use the same format and, of course, it will still utilize the same “voice” of teaching by using real-life examples. Just as you have previously transitioned to “thinking” like a student teacher or intern, you will now learn to think and apply standards as the actual teacher in charge. You are now the ultimate person responsible for facilitating teaching, leading, and learning in your classroom. That is a huge task. Will you have the moral core to stand tall ethically and withstand the external pressures that fall on all teachers? These are the things we will be discussing in *Passing the PPR TExES Exam: Keys to Certification and Ethical Teaching*.

There is one significant difference between this and the previous principal and superintendent TExES preparation books. I have added a beloved coauthor, Dr. Amy Burkman. Dr. Burkman received her doctor of education degree from Texas Christian University. She has previously served as a teacher, school librarian, assistant principal, and principal on both the elementary and middle school levels. She is now serving with us as an assistant professor of educational leadership at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin. Just as we are delighted to have Amy with us at UTPB, her diverse and extensive public school teaching and leadership experience make her a

valuable asset to this book. On top of that, she's great to work with, so, Welcome Dr. Burkman! All of us are delighted to have you with us!

To those of you who are from out of state, let me explain what the test and its background are all about. In the state of Texas, as in many other states, there is a rigorous certification examination that potential educators must pass before becoming eligible for certification in each area. In Texas this test is called the TExES (Texas Examinations of Educator Standards) exam. We have a TExES exam for everything from initial teacher certification to the superintendency. There is tremendous pressure on candidates to pass this test. Without it, no one can become certified. There is also tremendous pressure on preparation programs for their students to do well. Potential test-takers from both inside and outside the state are looking for tools to help them achieve their goals of getting certified and becoming a world-changing Texas teacher.

Universities and alternative preparation programs continue to work hard to address the knowledge, skills, and dispositions upon which the various TExES exams are formed. The PPR exam is built upon a framework of four learner-centered standards, which are subsequently subdivided into various and diverse domains and competencies. Each learner-centered standard will be thoroughly explained in this book. As with the previous principal and superintendent texts, an in-depth discussion of each domain and competency, extensive test-taking strategies, suggestions, and a References and Suggested Further Reading section are provided.

It is assumed that PPR test-takers have received the appropriate knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary through their educational providers. This book will supply needed supplemental resources to support that base, but it is not intended to substitute for your actual degree or alternative certification program. It will focus, however, on the philosophy necessary to “think” like a learner-centered teacher. There is a deficit in students making the transition from *thinking* like a student teacher or intern to *thinking, reflecting, reacting, and responding* like a certified Texas teacher. All of the knowledge in the world is useless if a test-taker cannot “think” in the way the test was developed. *Passing the PPR TExES Exam for EC–12 Teachers: Keys to Certification and Ethical Teaching* addresses the philosophy as well as the skills teachers must have within each of the learner-centered standards. The book further provides test-taking tips for before, during, and after the exam. Specific attention is given to in-state and out-of-state test-takers. Each learner-centered standard and its various domains and competencies has its own chapter that explains it both in detail and with examples. The end of the book concludes with additional resources that will be helpful to students as they develop their knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to pass the test and pursue careers as lifelong leaders of learners.

As with all my books, this one is written in an informal voice. There are real-life stories and competency-based applications integrated to help you connect abstract concepts to today's reality. It is absolutely necessary that you learn how to integrate your knowledge and skills into application for success both on the test and as a world-changing teacher. Amy's and my goal is for *Passing the PPR TExES Exam for EC–12 Teachers: Keys to Certification and Ethical Teaching* to be helpful and friendly. It was not designed to be stuffy or aloof, but to actually help you understand exactly what the standards mean and how to apply them in real life as well as on the PPR TExES exam.

THE STANDARDS

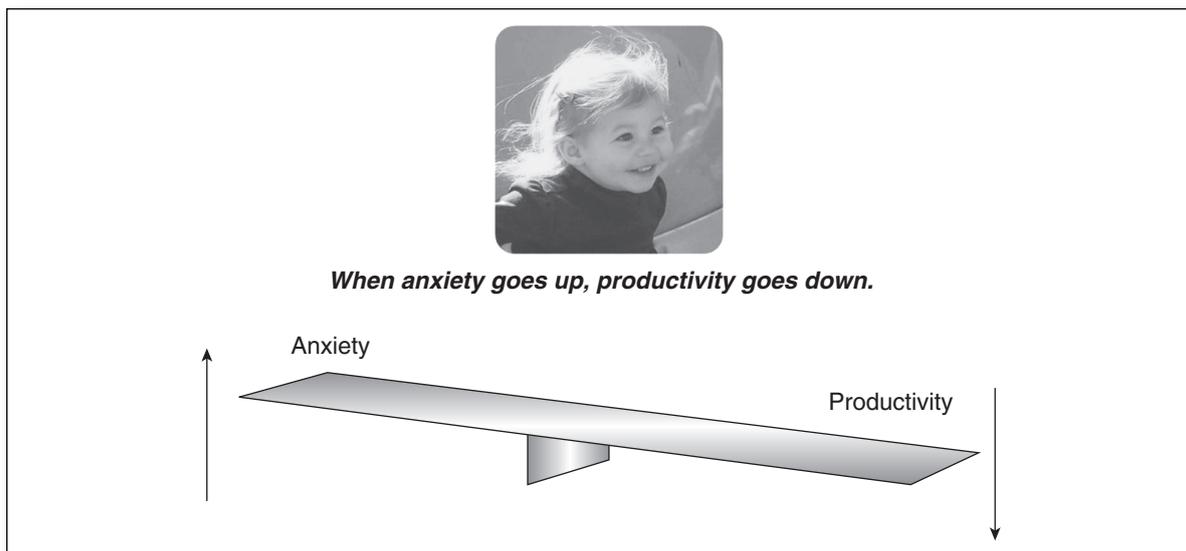
The teacher TExES PPR examination is divided into four standards. These are

- *Standard I.* The teacher designs instruction appropriate for all students that reflects an understanding of relevant content and is based on continuous and appropriate assessment.

- *Standard II.* The teacher creates a classroom environment of respect and rapport that fosters a positive climate for learning, equity, and excellence.
- *Standard III.* The teacher promotes student learning by providing responsive instruction that makes use of effective communication techniques; instructional strategies that actively engage students in the learning process; and timely, high-quality feedback.
- *Standard IV.* The teacher fulfills professional roles and responsibilities and adheres to legal and ethical requirements of the profession.

There are no absolute numbers of questions per competency or domain. Our goal is for *all* of you to get *all* the questions correct regardless of which domain or competency they come from. However, a student does *not* have to score 100% to pass the test. For many students, just realizing they do not have to make a *perfect* score on the test helps take the pressure off. This is a good thing because half the battle of passing this test is a mind game. In other words, psychologically you must know you *can and will succeed*. It is our intention for all of you to win the mind game. You should walk into the testing center *cool, calm, collected, confident, and almost downright cocky*. This mental attitude is necessary to keep your stress level down. When your stress level goes up, your productivity goes down. We don't want you to do that. As shown in Figure 1.1, we want your stress level down and your productivity way up. Therefore, you should be cool, calm, collected, confident, and almost downright cocky throughout your preparation and test-taking experience so you will be prepared to do likewise during the test. Practice now for what you are going to do then. Make this behavior a habit.

Figure 1.1 Anxiety and productivity are counterproductive; when anxiety goes up, productivity goes down.



Many people put great emphasis into trying to determine exactly which competency each question addresses. Although we will discuss this strategy, it will not receive undue attention. Remember, if our goal is to get *every* question correct, why do we care which competency the question came from? We do not. We want to get *all* the questions right. However, upon becoming thoroughly familiar with each of the competencies, as you will in Chapters 3 through 15, you will recognize key words and concepts that will guide your selection of the appropriate answers to get *all* the questions right . . . or at least enough to pass.

In addition, there is significant overlap of key themes within the competencies. Since the test is largely a timed mind game, why would you want to stress yourself out with the clock ticking, worrying if a question is addressing Competency 001 or 003? Who cares? The important thing is to understand, integrate, and *live* the competencies. Make them your Teacher's Bible. Beginning this minute, let your walk match your talk in modeling these competencies in your daily life. Then, on the day of the test, walk in there and ace the TExES because you are already living the philosophy upon which it is built.

If you think there was a lot going on as you came through your degree or alternative preparation program, you haven't seen anything yet. Think of leading a school district as orchestrating a really good jazz band. As the musicians practice before a performance, they individually sound like a whole lot of *noise*. Everyone is doing his or her own thing, warming up, and getting ready for the concert or gig. But once it gets going, everything comes together. The musicians play as a team. They are great musicians who have worked hard, practiced together, and have the common goal of producing really awesome music. Because they have done those things, the concert begins and their *practiced skills* turn into a true art form as they blend together, bending and flowing with the ebb, the crescendos and decrescendos, the tempo, and the dynamics of the music to produce something truly beautiful.

We have never had a greater need for good teachers than today. We need you to lead the jazz band, to bring all the different parts of the system together into one melodious whole. We do not want or need noise such as when we were practicing to get where we are. We need *jazz*. We need to knock the world dead through the integration of the 13 competencies and skills we will be studying together here. Today's society needs and deserves teachers who can orchestrate districts like a smooth jazz band. As long as everyone in the district is doing her or his own thing, independent of each other, all we will get is noise. We can probably all agree that we have had enough noise coming out of our schools. Now it is time for jazz, and you are the one leading it. We want, we need, and we will have beautiful music. You will be a great teacher. You will be a learner-centered leader of learners who has the passion, vision, and purpose to lead your classroom to win a Grammy, or at least be at the top of the list of successful district classrooms regarding student performance and measurement as stipulated by No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Every child deserves to be a part of a classroom that is focused on success for every facet of his or her life. Every child, every teacher, every support staff member, every administrator deserves to be a winner.

For too many students today, there is little hope for the future. We want *you* to be the best teacher any district–jazz band ever had. *You* will be the teacher who does what is right instead of what is easy or politically expedient. *You* will be the teacher who facilitates a classroom vision with a solid purpose built on identified campus-shared goals and values. *You* will be the one to change the world . . . or at least your classroom. *You* will become an *awesome teacher*, or we will come back and haunt you.

But first you must pass this test. Are you ready to get started?

GETTING STARTED

Section II of this book includes Chapters 2 through 15. Chapter 2, "It's All Good," will give you the global view of how you will achieve your goal of passing the test. This test is merely a gatekeeper designed to see that you have a specific learner-centered philosophy of teaching as portrayed in the domains and competencies. It portrays *entry-level* teaching skills and expectations. It is a passable test. *You will* pass this test. There is absolutely no reason for you not to, because, after all, you are studying from *our* book. We teach leadership and research at the University of Texas

of the Permian Basin. I also teach TExES preparation classes all over the state, and Amy is my greatly loved and appreciated protégé. She “gets it” and does a great job teaching from the same philosophical framework that drives both my life and my teaching. Like peanut butter and jelly, Amy, this framework, and I stick together. You can’t have one without the other.

It brings both of us great joy when students let me know they passed their respective TExES exams. I get quite excited! After all, that means there is one more human out there ready to join our journey, our quest, our passion toward improving the world. In the rare instance someone is unsuccessful in his or her testing attempt, it grieves my heart. So follow the directions we provide in this book. Even if they don’t make sense to you, do them anyway. They have worked for zillions of people before you, and they will work for you. To borrow from the fine folks at Nike, *Just do it!*

In both *Passing the Principal TExES Exam: Keys to Certification and School Leadership* (2003) and *Passing the Superintendent TExES Exam: Keys to Certification and District Leadership* (2010), I encouraged people to let me know when they passed the test. I also told them that I have a strong preference for pink roses and chocolate. My favorites are Blue Bell ice cream, of course, and Hershey bars, plain with no nuts. There are already enough nuts in education. We do not need any more. They seem to propagate just fine on their own without our help. Therefore, when you pass the test, we do have a tradition to maintain here. Remember Hershey’s, Blue Bell, and pink roses.

You would be amazed how many Hershey bars and roses I have received through the years. Sometimes a student will send one Hershey. Others have sent nine, one for each of the nine competencies they passed on the Principal TExES exam. And believe it or not, I do get roses. I love me some pink roses! In fact, roses have followed me across the state. A few years back, I moved from a wonderful 5 years at Dallas Baptist University to the University of Texas of the Permian Basin. When I got back from Spring Break I had a dozen pink roses waiting for me in the Certification Office. All of the staff was waiting for me to return to see who the roses were from. They thought I had a secret admirer. I did! It was another wonderful person I did not even know, but who read my book and passed the Principal TExES exam. She went to the extra effort to track me down completely across the state to show her appreciation through the roses. Although, in truth, roses, chocolate, and ice cream are not prerequisites for you to pass the exam, they also never fail to touch my heart and to remind me how blessed I am to get to teach such great students. You truly do not have to send Amy or me gifts.

But, it can’t hurt. . . .

Chapters 3 through 15 provide detailed attention to each of the learner-centered standards, domains, and competencies. If you have never even *heard* of them up to this point, that is all right. By the time we get through with you, you will be *living and breathing* them. You are going to know those competencies inside out. You will be reciting them to your families and friends. If you do not have a family or friends, we strongly suggest finding some. They will be a great support system to celebrate with *when you pass the test!*

The next component, Section III, addresses the integration and application of all you have learned in Section II. You will become skilled at comprehending exactly what the competencies mean, learn specific test-taking strategies, and create your very own Personal Success Plan as you prepare for the test and afterwards. Last, in Section IV, we will discuss the final logistical tasks you need to take to actually become certified as a teacher in the great state of Texas. We will then tie it all together in Chapter 18, “That’s What I’m Talking About!” By the time you walk in to take your TExES exam, you will be so prepared that all you will want to do is go in there and pass it so you can move forward to improve the world and eat more chocolate. This test is just a headache to get in your way. So, let’s get rid of it by *passing the test the first time!* Why bother having to take it again? So, are you ready? Let’s go!