

Michigan Tests for Teacher Certification (MTTC)
Data Review Report 2007-2008
History/ Social Studies
Submitted October 19, 2008

This report is a data analysis of Northern Michigan University's Secondary History/Social Studies teacher candidates' MTTC test scores. The information is culled from four testing dates in 2007-2008. Content test scores are from the academic disciplines of history, geography, economics, political science, and social studies.

There are two sets of data for the disciplines of history, political science, and social studies. This stems from some test completers not indicating that they currently attend NMU. This means that fifteen additional test results were not included in the Yearly Results total, except for one candidate in history, who failed, yet was included in the final tabulations. In any case, following each discipline's Yearly Results analysis, there is an additional aggregation that includes scores from those test completers who did not indicate that they were currently attending NMU but did list NMU as their institution.

History majors and minors continue to be one of the largest numbers of test completers out of the programs. During this past academic year thirty eight students completed the test and thirty successfully passed. This gives NMU a 78.9% pass rate, which is slightly higher than the state's average of 73.9%. When the omitted test completer is included, thirty nine candidates completed the test, rather than the original thirty eight as reported in the Yearly Results. This additional candidate passed the test and further improved NMU's average to 79.4% compared to the state average of 73.9%.

An examination of the test completers provides insight to our students' ability to pass the test and an evaluation of the History Education major and minor degrees. In all but one of the eight failed exams, the students were minors. Five were English majors, one was a Special Education major, and the other was an Elementary Education major. Further, the break down shows one student attempted and failed to pass the test three times and is no longer eligible to take it again. One other student also exhausted the opportunities at passing the test since this past failure combines with two failures from the previous period. Three others attempted and failed the test on their initial attempt. Thus far they have yet to retake it. The one History major, who failed the test, passed it on the second attempt.

The History MTTC has four content areas that comprise the test perimeters. They are: a) United States History, b) World History, c) Connections among Social Science Disciplines, d) Social Science Perspectives and Skills.

An examination of sub-scores indicates the U.S. History content area is especially problematic. This is an issue commented on in last year's report. Specifically, nearly half of the U.S. History questions derive from "pre-contact" to 1877. This corresponds with NMU's HS 126 course, which is not a requirement for the Secondary Education History minor. A second area of weakness focused on the social science connections. This is also an expected weakness since history minors only have five courses to fully appreciate the inter-disciplinary aspects history shares with the other social sciences. Conversely, history majors did well in these categories. This suggests a History major, rather than a minor, more fully prepares future history teachers.

This past semester the History Department in collaboration with the School of Education revised the Secondary Education History minor to include HS 126. This proposal will soon be

submitted to Committee for Undergraduate Programs. A second initiative involved the HS 350 and cross-discipline Methods course. The instructor required all history minors to construct a two week teaching unit that examined an era covered in the HS 126 course. A third initiative in the class emphasized the inter-discipline aspects of the social sciences by developing additional lessons to meet this component.

These measures seem to be modestly successful since our test completers' passing rate improved from 69.4% in 2006-2007 to 78.9% (79.4% when the omitted score is included) in 2007-2008. This bettered last year's scores by nearly 10% and exceeded the state average of 73.9%. With the eventual enhancement to the minor, scores should further improve.

Three **Geography** majors/minors completed their content test in 2007-2008. Each successfully passed for a 100% rating compared to the state average of 81.5%. There were no additional Geography test completers other than those counted. The test examines five areas: a) Foundations of Geography, b) World Process, c) World Regions and Events, d) History, Civic and Economic Perspectives, e) Inquiry, Public Discussion and Decision Making. Most of the geography students demonstrated academic excellence in each subject category excepting (d), which reflected a slightly lower score. The Certification Programs compliments the Geography Department on its continual academic excellence.

Economics had eleven test completers in 2007-2008. Six or 54.5% passed compared to a state average of 61.8%. There were no additional Economic test completers other than those counted. The five failed attempts retook the test the following quarter(s). One candidate passed it on the second attempt; another passed it on the third attempt. The final candidate has taken it twice and will have one more opportunity to pass. Only one failed test completer was a minor, the other two were majors.

The Economics MTTC test focuses on: a) Individual and Household Economics, b) Business Economics, c) Macroeconomics and International Economics, d) History, Geography, and Political Science Perspectives, e) Inquiry, Information Processing, and Issue Analysis. Categories (c) and (d) were most problematic for the failed test takers. Also of note, this is a newly designed test that has an additional category than the previous Economics MTTC test. The Economic Department is aware of this change and is considering redesigning the Secondary Education Economics minor. Another sample from the upcoming year should provide a more complete understanding of how to proceed.

Political Science had eleven test completers. Six or 54.5% passed, which is below the state average of 66.2%. One additional test completer passed the Political Science MTTC test beyond the Yearly Results total. This raises the program's score to 58.3% compared to the state average of 66.2%. One of the five failed test completers took the test again and passed the following try. Conversely, one failed on the second attempt. The other two have not yet retaken the test.

Four areas make up the Political Science MTTC test, they are: a) Foundations of Political Science, b) U.S. Government, c) History, Economics, and Geography, d) Social Science Perspectives and Skills. The result breakdowns indicate each category presented problems for the failed test completers. So there are no noticeable test patterns here. The Political Science Department is aware of this score and redesigned the Secondary Education Political Science major by replacing Constitutional Law with Civil Rights and Liberties. This change will go into effect with the upcoming Bulletin. Additionally, Dr. Ruth Watry has joined the state team that designs the Political Science MTTC test. She foresees these change increasing scores. The Certification Program's welcome her expertise and contributions.

The final category, **Social Studies**, is also one of the University's most popular education majors. Thirty students attempted the test and twenty four or 80% passed. This compares to the state's 63.4% average passing rate. This category had the largest number of test completers that did not identify themselves as currently attending NMU. When their numbers are included, a total of forty three students completed the test. Of these thirty two passed. This slightly lowers NMU's passing statistic to 74.4%, yet it is still above the state average of 63.4%.

Five areas denote the social studies test, these include: a) Historical Awareness, b) Geographical Perspective, c) Civic Perspective, d) Economic Perspective, e) Inquiry and Public Discourse and Decision Making. Analysis of the categories indicates a mixed bag. Students who did not successfully pass the test struggled with each category in each testing quarter.

Statistically, this MTTC test is also one of the most challenging. Of the eleven who failed, seven have yet to re-take it. Two failed it on their second attempt. One additional piece of evidence indicates that of the eleven failed test completers, three were secondary and six were elementary; the two who retook the test a second time fall into the latter category.

NMU's History/Social Studies Programs have areas for improvements. One of the most pressing is determining how to fully count or not to count those students who do not indicate whether or not they are currently attending NMU. Surely there is a way to ascertain if these people are NMU's products or simply test completers from other institutions who list NMU as their school. Also, clarification that indicates in the initial report the test completers' major, minor, and whether s/he is in the secondary or elementary degree program, would greatly expedite an analysis of the Yearly Result data.

Nonetheless, NMU's two largest secondary programs, History and Social Studies, showed improved test scores of nearly 10% in the former and nearly 20% in the latter compared to the

previous year. NMU also scored higher than state averages in most of the analyzed categories. Furthermore, the combined disciplines' 108 test completers are the most of the Universities' Certification Programs. It is a positive testament to the vitality, academic rigor, and intellectual demands of the social studies and an affirmative reflection of the quality educators NMU recommends for certification.

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