

We have designed each "White Paper" to explore a fundamental educational principle and key issues engaging the education community we serve. It is our goal to partner with our readers as they meet the challenges they face.



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## Teacher Certification & Castle Learning Online

When the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released the results of the state teacher licensing test administered in March 2009 to 600 potential teachers, nearly 70% of the candidates failed the elementary school mathematics section, which included knowledge of geometry, statistics, and probability. The Commissioner of Education, Mitchell Chester, was quoted in the *Boston Globe* that these results indicate many students are not receiving an adequate mathematics education.

The fallout of these results, if they are replicated in any other state, has education leaders concerned, as described in the May 2009 *Boston Globe* article, that "too many elementary classroom and special education teachers do not have a strong background in math and are in many ways responsible for poor student achievement in the subject, even in middle and high schools." It continues by stating the obvious, that "elementary school teachers, including those in charge of first-grade classrooms, are considered the front line of math instruction, providing the building blocks of computation and mathematical reasoning that students must master before tackling algebra, trigonometry, and calculus later in their academic lives." Tom Scott, the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, concluded that "if you look at transcripts of some applicants for elementary school teaching positions, it's possible you could see a transcript without anything math related. Someone could have last taken a math class in high school."

What can an aspiring young teacher do to overcome any deficiency in his/her academic preparation before taking a state licensing test? *Castle Learning Online* provided the solution for one very determined teacher preparing for academic testing when her creativity was combined with a core of intensive high school content questions. An educator from the Liberty, NY, area wrote that to upgrade her Teacher Assistant status from Level 1 to Level 2, a friend advised her to circumvent time consuming classes by taking the **CLEP (College Level Exam Program)** tests at the local community college. With *Castle Learning Online* in hand, she completed an English Regents assessment and discovered her areas of weakness. Continuing with the *Castle Learning Online* ELA units and sections, focusing on the weaknesses, she took and passed the Freshman Comp CLEP test. Her last comment was that "I was so excited I checked to see what other courses were available through *Castle Learning*. I am coming up on another CLEP Test for United States History. Thank you to all of you who helped to make *Castle Learning Online* available."

The **NYSTCE (NYS Teacher Certification Exam)** program measures a teacher 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 certification. Before taking this teacher preparation exam, the core content areas of *Castle Learning Online*, with over 50,000 questions, hints, reasons, defined vocabulary and assessment tools, can guide a teacher who seeks certification through any preparation necessary for tests in the **Sciences** (Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science and Physics), **Foreign Language** (French, Spanish), as well as areas of **Social Studies** and **Mathematics**.

With *Castle Learning Online*, a tool designed to supplement the classroom experience for students has now been redefined by the adult users to help them address their need to grow in their profession.