

Memorandum

TO: All Chiefs, Sheriffs and Agency Heads

FROM: Hubert F. Harrell
South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy

DATE: April 19, 2010

RE: Nelson/Denny Reading Level Pilot Testing Results for
Basic Law Enforcement, Basic Jail and E911 candidates (FY 2008-2009).

The SCCJA conducted a pilot study in FY 2008-2009 to determine the reading levels for incoming candidates in *Basic Law Enforcement*, *Basic Jail*, and *E911 (BTOT)* training programs. Incoming candidates were required to take the Nelson/Denny reading test at the beginning of their training cycle. We are providing these data to your agency so they can be used in determining candidates who may be in need of reading remediation prior to attending the CJA. The results were as follows (all reading levels are expressed as grade equivalent or years):

Basic Law Enforcement (Special Basic & Limited Duty excluded)

- * A total of **845** candidates took the Nelson Denny test and the average reading level for all of these candidates was **13.4**.
- * The average reading level for those who passed all BLE written tests was **14.2**.
- * The average reading level for all those who ultimately failed a written test was **9.4**.
- * The average overall reading level for the BLE curriculum is **10.6**. Note that some subsections, such as legals (**12.7**) have higher averages.
- * Overall, over **42%** of candidates who read below a **10th** grade level subsequently failed an Academy written test. For those reading below a **9th** grade level, the failure rate increased to **52%**.

Basic Jail

- * A total of **468** candidates took the Nelson Denny test and the average reading level for all of these candidates was **11.6**.
- * The average reading level for those who passed all BJT written tests was **12.4**.
- * The average reading level for all those who ultimately failed a written test was **8.0**.
- * The average overall reading level for the BJT curriculum is **11.1**. Note that some subsections, such as legals (**11.8**) have higher averages.
- * Overall, **43%** of candidates who read below a **10th** grade level subsequently failed an Academy written test. For those reading below a **9th** grade level, the failure rate increased to **50%**.

Memorandum

Chiefs, Sheriffs and Agency Heads

RE: Nelson-Denny Testing Results

April 19, 2010

E911 (BTOT)

- * A total of **207** candidates took the Nelson Denny test and the average reading level for all of these candidates was **13.2**.
- * The average reading level for those who passed the E911 written test was **13.3**.
- * The average reading level for all those who ultimately failed the written test was **8.0**.
- * The average overall reading level for the E911 curriculum is **11.5**.

- * Overall, over **7%** of candidates who read below a **10th** grade level subsequently failed an Academy written test. For those reading below a **9th** grade level, the failure rate increased slightly to **8%**.

Agencies should be aware that reading and comprehending are an important part of learning and more specifically, an important component of the Academy learning process. In addition, the ability to read independently and comprehensively is a job-function that is essential to adequate performance, at the very least, in the profession of law enforcement.

Knowing that candidates are less likely to be successful when they read at lower levels, it is, therefore, suggest that potential candidates receive a reading level assessment to be administered by the department (e.g., *Nelson-Denny*, *TABE*, Stanard & Associates *POST*) to determine respective candidate's reading level, or reading grade level equivalent. This can help to determine those candidates who are in need of remediation prior to entry into the Academy.

Should additional information be required, please do not hesitate to contact Bill Floyd, Instructional Standards & Support Manager (803.896.7724) or Donald Noe, Academic Testing Manager (803.896.7956).

HFH/DFN/WAF