A Performance-Based Approach to Assessing New Teachers

States and teacher preparation programs are looking for new ways to develop and evaluate teacher effectiveness. Increasingly, they are focusing on authentic assessments of how teacher candidates develop and evaluate student learning. edTPA™, formerly the Teacher Performance Assessment, represents this historic shift as the first nationally available, research- and standards-based tool that can serve as a common and independent measure of candidate performance.

edTPA complements existing entry-level assessments used by states that focus on basic skills or subject-matter knowledge. Designed by teachers and teacher educators, edTPA, which is available in 27 initial licensure areas, can be used for teacher licensure and to support state and national program accreditation. It is comparable to other fields that require applications of skills to enter the profession, such as the bar exam in law, the medical licensing exams, or the architectural registration exam.

edTPA provides meaningful data that teacher education programs can use to evaluate, reflect on, and continually improve their programs to ensure relevant and integrated curriculum.

How Does It Work?

The edTPA process is built around three to five continuous days of subject-specific classroom instruction delivered by a candidate, typically at the end of the student teaching or internship experience.

The centerpiece is a portfolio – built and submitted by the candidate – that addresses planning, instruction, assessment, analyzing teaching, and academic language. It includes an unedited video of the candidate teaching and examples of teaching materials that demonstrate how the candidate planned instruction, adapted it for diverse learners – attending both to content and the development of academic language – and assessed student work.

Each assessment is scored by qualified and trained teachers and teacher educators who are subject-matter experts with experience supporting beginning teachers. Scorers are recruited from participating teacher education program faculty and P-12 partners, including National Board Certified teachers.

The assessment draws from experience gained over a 25-year history developing performance-based assessments of teaching, including the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and aligns with the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards, Common Core State Standards and NCATE Standards.

Where is edTPA now?

edTPA has been available nationally since the beginning of the 2012 academic year. In June 2012, edTPA achieved an exciting milestone as more than 7,000 teacher candidates in 22 states participated in a national field test. The field test data showed that edTPA is a rigorous, valid assessment that can be scored reliably.

Information from the field test is being used to fine tune assessment tasks and scoring rubrics and to set a recommended edTPA national passing standard. Teacher educators and accomplished teachers will score the assessments. Pearson provides the necessary technical infrastructure, as it currently also does for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards assessment.

A number of states have already adopted or are considering edTPA for statewide use to license new teachers and/or to review teacher preparation programs. Institutions of higher education in some states have worked with policymakers to position edTPA candidate results to support program approval or have implemented edTPA as a program-based requirement.
Helping to Meet Education’s Top Priority

The most important thing we can do to help students is to provide a well-qualified and effective teacher in every classroom. But the growing number of new teachers and high rate of teacher turnover make this increasingly challenging.

The nation’s teaching force is younger than it has been in decades. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in the 2007-08 school year 17 percent of teachers had three or fewer years of experience. The number of teachers entering the profession each year has been at its highest in recent history. Preparing these new teachers for success is more important than ever.

edTPA is an educative process that builds on the latest research on teacher effectiveness to determine how to help preparation programs increase their focus on teaching quality and classroom practice on the skills and professional habits that improve teaching and student performance.

“Teaching is action work. You have to make a lot of things happen in a classroom with a lot of kids, effectively. You cannot just have book learning. It is not enough to pass a paper-and-pencil test, or even to have taken a bunch of classes in an education program. You have to be able to demonstrate whether you can actually teach.”

-Linda Darling-Hammond,
Charles E. Ducommun
Professor of Teaching and Teacher Education
Stanford University

Supporting Change in Teacher Preparation

edTPA has the capacity to enhance state licensure systems by creating a common threshold for individual performance in the classroom. Until now, state teacher preparation program approval relied primarily upon seat time in coursework and the results of basic skills and subject-matter assessments.

And while many states may have taken into account the results of professional accreditation decisions, accredited programs historically have developed home-grown assessments, most of which are not comparable across institutions. As program models have evolved, with a range of approaches at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, along with alternative certification programs and new on-line delivery systems, it has been difficult for states to maintain a credentialing system that represents a common standard of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

edTPA offers an effective measure of entry-level teaching skills and readiness for the classroom – regardless of the path candidates take to teaching – that can be used across programs, focusing attention on the capacity to teach rather than seat time or program format. This new initiative can meet the needs of educators and policymakers for robust and reliable data on candidate effectiveness to guide and inform preparation, credentialing, and program improvement.

Members of the Teacher Performance Assessment Consortium that helped develop edTPA:

- Colorado
- Connecticut
- Delaware
- District of Columbia
- Georgia
- Hawaii
- Idaho
- Illinois
- Iowa
- Indiana
- Maryland
- Massachusetts
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- New York
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Oregon
- South Carolina
- Tennessee
- Virginia
- Washington
- Wisconsin
- Wyoming
- Western Governors University

For more information about edTPA, visit: edtpa.aacte.org

For registration, candidate resource materials, and portfolio submission information, visit: edTPA.com