edTPA Implementation and Teacher Education Curriculum

Frequently Asked Questions[1]

Q) Will the edTPA replace our current assessments?

A) This is a program specific decision. Parts of the edTPA resemble current commonly used assessments in programs such as grading lesson plans, making observations of teacher candidates, assignments about assessing student learning in a course about assessment practices, and reflective writing prompts used throughout a program. We recommend that programs look at their current assessments and identify which ones best align to the edTPA. Then map out the sequence that would allow candidates to practice their teaching skills (planning, instruction, assessment, academic language support) using the program's embedded assessments as scaffolds toward the edTPA as the culminating assessment closer to the end of the program. Assessments that currently do not align to the edTPA will then need to be examined to determine if they are assessing something highly valued in the program that edTPA misses and should be kept, or if they are redundant to the scaffolded sequence for assessing teaching skills. Some programs around the nation have reported that this curriculum review process has helped them to identify stronger links within their existing programs through performance assessment, that ideas taught in different parts of the program (foundations and methods courses) have been reinforced by aligning their assessments, and that they have been able to reduce candidate workload by eliminating or revising redundant assignments across their multiple courses.

Q) Will the adoption of the edTPA detract from other important parts of our program?

There is no question that the edTPA takes time . . . time to introduce it to candidates, time for them to prepare for the assessment through formative practices of viewing and analyzing their own video, learning how to analyze the work of their students on an assessment, time for them to write and reflect on the effectiveness of their own teaching. The strategic decisions that need to be made within a program will be how to embed the edTPA by linking it to <u>existing</u> course and clinical assignments. For example, when teaching candidates about constructing a lesson plan, the context for learning description and Planning Commentary prompts can be embedded in courses on multi-cultural education in order to highlight how classroom diversity matters for instructional planning. When teaching candidates about assessment, they can practice whole class analysis of an assessment in order to learn how to disaggregate whole class data and see their student performance through various lenses of analysis. When

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[1] SCALE thanks edTPA national design team member Mistilina Sato (University of Minnesota) for developing this FAQ with the staff at SCALE.

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demonstrating to candidates how they will be observed during their student teaching placements, the program can use candidate (when appropriate parent/guardian permissions are granted) or publicly available video to illustrate the expectations of teaching performance on the programs observation protocols. A final example might be to use the rubrics for overall reflection on teaching for other reflection assignments in the program so that there is a focus on student learning and instructional effectiveness.

Q) Will we have to redirect resources from other curriculum to be able to support the edTPA?

Questions about resources are very program-specific and decisions must be made locally. We anticipate that resources will be needed for video. Nationally, the majority of teacher education programs are already using video in their programs and there is a solid research base that points to productive professional earning opportunities through the use of video analysis. Therefore, we see the implementation of video analysis in programs that are not currently using video to be a positive step in program development. If programs cannot afford video equipment, we encourage stronger partnerships with P-12 to use the video equipment that is typically available in schools. We also anticipate administrative costs for ensuring faculty and candidates oriented to what edTPA is and for ensuring candidate completion of the edTPA. We are seeing nationally that these responsibilities are falling within the clinical preparation portion of programs and clinical coordinators are producing handouts for candidates and schools, convening candidates and cooperating teachers. Many resources of this type are available on the edTPA.aacte.org website. We are also seeing that programs using on-line portfolio or assessment systems are drawing on their assessment or data coordinators for technical support and assistance with the submission of edTPAs.

Q) How do we avoid the dreaded idea of "teaching to the test"?

So many times when assessments for P-12 students are introduced they are multiple choice exams that randomly select questions about a narrow subset of a subject matter domain. Doing review questions and practice problems feels mechanistic and what the students are learning feels so reduced. It is understandable to have a reaction to an assessment that is against teaching to the test—especially in the United States at this time.

We encourage programs (faculty and candidates) to look at edTPA tasks in small groups. Ask the group to go through each task and ask the question: "Is this task worth teaching to"?

Hundreds of teacher educators and teachers have done this exercise throughout the development process and the resulting assessment represents the consensus from these members of the teaching field about what knowledge and skills matter for a beginning teacher's performance. We also examined in-service teacher observation instruments and assessments (e.g., the Charlotte Danielson Framework, the InTASC Standards, and the National

Board for Professional Teaching Standards) and it appears that the field accepts these activities as fundamental aspects of teaching.

No one on the edTPA development team at Stanford or nationally supports the idea of reducing a teaching assessment to items that do not fundamentally reflect the complexity of teaching itself. This is why the edTPA is built on core aspects of teaching—planning for instruction, engaging students in learning, assessing learning, and supporting academic language development—and requires them to be linked together to show the full cycle of teaching. This is also why the assessment requires real artifacts from teaching—lesson plans, video and student work samples—in order to show the complexity of the local teaching context and the way the candidate responds to real students when trying to teach them in a real setting. Fundamentally, our argument as assessment developers is that alignment between what you want students to learn and the design of the assessment is critical in order to ensure that teaching to the test is a worthwhile activity. In other words, if the assessment is measuring practices that teacher candidates should be expected to know how to do, then teaching to the assessment is not necessarily a bad thing.

Q) Won't the edTPA lead teacher education toward a standardized curriculum to which all institutions will have to conform?

Teacher education program alignment with professional standards is a common practice across the nation for purposes of state approval and national accreditation. Within this standards-based framework, variation across programs is very high, with programs designed using a variety of course structures, program-specific assessments, instructor-driven assignments, and innovative clinical models. This phenomenon is a good example of having national standards without standardizing the program curriculum.

edTPA is a performance assessment based on fundamental knowledge and skills of teaching that have consensus in our field – planning for instruction, engaging students in learning, assessing learning, and supporting academic language development. The edTPA has been carefully aligned with the InTASC standards from which most states then derive their professional teaching standards for program review. Across the nation, programs currently support the development of these skills in program-specific ways. Programs continue to support candidates for edTPA through varied experiences already embedded within the programs. edTPA does not prescribe a curriculum for teacher education, but rather maintains a focus on the candidate's performance of pedagogical skills necessary to support student learning. The design and architecture of edTPA allows preparation programs to support candidates toward the common expectation of performance via multiple approaches to support candidates' development of teaching knowledge and skills.

Q) What is the underlying conception of teaching of the edTPA? What is the assessment aiming to measure about teaching?

The edTPA is built within a conceptual framing of teaching as a professional endeavor not only for the individual teacher candidate, but for the field of teacher education. The assessment is built on the premise that teaching is a process in which the teacher is responsible for selecting worthwhile learning goals for his or her students and then orchestrating learning activities for the group of students in an effort to support them toward achieving those learning goals. The approach to teaching and the selection of the activities by the teacher candidate are guided predominantly by a conception of constructivist learning.

Lee Shulman (2008) argued that "the idea of a "profession" describes a special set of circumstances for deep understanding, complex practice, ethical conduct, higher-order learning, circumstances that define the complexity of the enterprise and explain the difficulties of prescribing both policies and curriculum in this area" (p. 515). His work helps us understand the structure of teaching as an activity taken up by a group of people. This conception of teaching moves us farther away from the classroom activities and closer to an argument for why edTPA can even attempt to overlay a standardized assessment on a complex practice such as teaching.

Shulman, L. S. (1998). Theory, practice, and the education of professionals. *The Elementary School Journal*, *98*(5), 511-26.

Q) How does the edTPA represent "authentic teaching practices"?

The edTPA is designed to align with the authentic teaching practice of the teacher candidate. First, the tasks are integrated (that is, the learning goals, the instruction, and the student assessment are linked together) as they would be in the authentic work of a teacher. Second, each edTPA task requires the candidates to collect and submit direct evidence from the actual work of teaching, for example student work samples or video recording of the candidates engaged in instruction and interacting with students around the content learning goals. Third, the tasks represent not only the behaviors of the teacher, but also include the impact of the instruction on student learning as demonstrated through an analysis of student learning. And fourth, the instructional tasks are considered within the context of the subject matter content and learning goals. Given that the structure of teacher licensing in each state uses subject matter discipline or content specific categories, teacher candidates are seeking a license in a particular content field. Thus, this criterion aligns with the authentic work of teaching within a specific content-area.

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