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Maria Hyler

Assistant Professor of Education
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The University of Maryland Expands Use of edTPA for Students and Faculty

Though edTPA™ became nationally available this academic year, teacher educators at dozens of institutions of higher learning across the nation have participated in pilot and field tests of edTPA, formerly the Teacher Performance Assessment, for several years.

These early adopters have helped develop and refine edTPA as a performance-based assessment process for aspiring teachers that is educative, meaning that it can be used to gauge the effectiveness of their own programs as well as to prepare teacher candidates.

At the University of Maryland College of Education, Assistant Professor of Education Maria Hyler has seen interest and use of edTPA grow significantly. Four years ago, she worked with four students who volunteered to go through the process. Today, all of the education programs at her campus are participating in some manner in planning for or using the edTPA and more than 250 students must demonstrate a successful level of performance on edTPA to graduate.

As a high school English teacher in California, she went through a similar process to become a National Board Certified Teacher in 2000. “This [edTPA] was something I was committed to because I saw the power of the process,” Maria says. “I saw how it would be useful to our candidates and our preparation of teachers. I saw the potential for it to be helpful for teacher educators.”

The university introduced edTPA as part of a process to revamp teacher preparation. That effort included looking for an alternative to the varied assessments then in use by each program within the College of Education. The rigor and research base of the assessments was mixed and there was no common language to talk about teacher readiness.

“You think about this and all the variability that existed in one college of education, and then the state and the nation. It doesn’t make sense,” she says. “There is a body of knowledge and skills that can help make us more effective. Shouldn’t we be looking for that and using it?”

edTPA is an assessment process that requires candidates to submit a portfolio that documents teaching and learning in a 3-to-5 day learning segment with a class of students. That portfolio includes an unedited video of the candidate delivering instruction as well as examples of teaching materials that address planning, instruction, assessment, analyzing teaching and academic language.

The University of Maryland College of Education has 101 tenured or tenure-track faculty members serving 1,941 candidates in its graduate and undergraduate programs. Each year, about 350-400 teacher candidates complete initial certification programs, almost half of them at the graduate level.

Transitioning to the new assessment with such a large group hasn't always been easy, but faculty support grows after instructors see the value of a common and educative tool that sharpens the focus on how students demonstrate teaching skills in real situations.

And changes are being made.

For example, Hyler says that through the edTPA process, instructors are helping students focus less on the logistics and timing of a lesson plan and more on the instructional value of a lesson and assessing whether or not students are learning – areas critical to student progress.

Maryland instructors also are taking a closer look at equipping teacher candidates with the skills to teach academic language. “This was a real eye-opener for us. There was a lot we were not doing, or doing differently,” Hyler adds. “The importance of having all P-12 students have access to language demands is critical. So we looked more at how we support teacher candidates and an identified area of learning and growth.”

Even Hyler, a veteran educator, is tweaking her adolescent learning course as a result of what she's learned through the edTPA process. Her primary learning tool had been a case study exploring how a student learns. Hyler said she saw that her students needed more assistance through prompts that help them learn more about their students and their knowledge. “It's helped me refine my teaching around those issues that were lacking before,” she said.

Outside of her own classroom, Hyler sees edTPA as a way to address inequities in student outcomes that have plagued public schools. She notes that this assessment reveals teachers' expectations for their students and their range of strategies for moving students with diverse needs forward.

“My research and area of interest is equity. I'm not going to support an assessment that continues to perpetuate inequities in classrooms and teachers,” Hyler adds. “The spirit of the edTPA is to prepare quality teachers for all students.”

University of Maryland College of Education

Facts & Figures

1,941

Enrollment (2011-2012)

876

Undergraduate majors

1,065

Graduate majors

101

Full-time tenure/tenure-track faculty

41,320

Alumni

Over **30** Degree programs and specializations at the Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral levels

SCALE

Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, & Equity



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