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# CERTIFICATION EXAMS FOR EDUCATOR LICENSURE

*The Texas State Teachers Association offers the following comments to the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) regarding agenda item #25: Discussion of edTPA as a Certification Exam for Standard Teacher Certification*

The Educative Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA) is a relatively new system of assessment that is being proposed for use in Texas to determine whether an individual can obtain a teaching license. We agree that there is utility in using performance tasks and portfolio assessments as tools to support and develop educators throughout their career, but we have concerns both with this particular instrument as well as the manner in which staff is proposing it be used. Adopting the edTPA as a certification exam in Texas will have significant consequences for individuals who aspire to become teachers and for school systems who depend on high quality educator training.

## **edTPA is not a valid or reliable instrument**

The intended high-stakes use of edTPA fundamentally requires a robust body of evidence that the scores produced, and the highly consequential decisions based on those scores, are technically defensible. Reliability of data ultimately bears on the generalizability or dependability of scores and the consistency of classifications of individuals derived from the scores. To the extent that they are not consistent across testing replications, their potential for prediction of criteria and examinee diagnosis is limited.

Some of the nation's leading teacher evaluation researchers have raised serious concerns regarding edTPA's validity and reliability and have called for a moratorium on using the instrument for consequential decisions such as licensure. The concerns are important because the makers of the test report high reliability, and nontechnical readers will extrapolate the reporting to mean that it is sufficient for dependable measurement and consequential inferences about teacher candidates. In truth, the calculations used are inappropriate statistics according to the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing and so essentially are void of meaning.

## **Performance assessments are not designed to be used to make high-stakes decisions**

The conceptual structure of the performance assessment has many strengths and potentials for use to develop quality teaching personnel. The edTPA instrument was initially conceptualized and used as a formative assessment tool to support the development of better and more consistent teaching practices, and more generally to inform efforts to improve teacher education programs.

Literature shows positive effects on teaching practice when teachers participate in reflective and analytical processes. This coaching cycle method was built on the work of the National Board teaching standards and is attractive to educators due to its formative nature and the growth mindset inherent in the design. The value of the assessment hinges on error because this creates an opportunity for reflection and adjustment, which matches the reality of a classroom. Use as a high-stakes sorting mechanism is counter-productive and a fundamental misuse of the test.

TSTA agrees that there is utility in using performance assessment instruments to prepare educators, and we support maintaining rigorous expectations for job-entry, but edTPA should not be adopted as a certification exam in Texas because the instrument itself is inadequate and the mode of assessment would be misplaced.