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Preparing the Next Generation of Teachers:
WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT THE edTPA?

The Latino Policy Forum has a long history of studying and evaluating issues that affect its constituencies. These efforts are usually followed by a set of recommendations that ensure a greater positive impact on the promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity. New teachers and how they are prepared for the classroom is a topic that needs the Forum's attention.

Throughout the U.S. the number of school-age children from immigrant families is expected to grow from 12.3 million in 2005 to 17.9 million by 2020; this will account for all the projected growth in student population.[1] These linguistically and culturally diverse children, particularly English Learners (ELs), need opportunities to learn high-levels of academic content and language. With this demographic growth, it is reasonable to expect that all teachers are equipped with the specialized skills to address their needs. The amplified language and literacy demands of the College and Career Readiness Standards intensify this imperative. Promoting linguistically and culturally responsive teacher preparation and assessment is vital.

This document provides background information on a new performance-based assessment for teacher candidates, recommendations for making it more linguistically and culturally responsive, and a plan for implementation.

2014-2015

BACKGROUND

edTPA is a teacher performance assessment used by educator preparation programs and states as part of a multiple measures assessment system to determine if and when an individual is ready to become a teacher. It was created by Stanford University staff and faculty at the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) with extensive input from teachers and teacher educators over a four year development process. The assessment is endorsed by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education which acts as a partner to support edTPA implementation.

The assessment was nationally field tested with 12,000 teacher candidates during 2013-14 and 2014-2015 school years. Currently, institutions in 34 states and the District of Columbia are using the assessment at different levels; Illinois is included in this number and mandates it statewide beginning in September 1, 2015. Over 15,000 portfolios were scored in the first operational year (2013-14).

The effectiveness of the edTPA is open to debate. Many educators find it a high-quality, educative way to determine when an individual is ready to enter the classroom as a fully prepared teacher. Others are concerned with the efficacy of using the assessment as the final determinant of eligibility for a career in education.

Many content area experts believe it ensures that teachers are well-grounded in subject specific pedagogies (math, science, social studies, etc.). Still others raise concerns that native language instruction is not fully addressed. Studies regarding the validity and reliability of edTPA have been conducted. However, there remains deep concern none have explicitly addressed candidates who are instructing in a language other than English and/ or in a bilingual setting.

SCALE—edTPA DEVELOPERS FROM STANFORD UNIVERSITY

An important part of SCALE's mission is: "to improve instruction and learning through the design and development of innovative, educative, state-of-the-art performance assessments."

Stanford University is the creator, author, and owner of the edTPA. SCALE faculty and staff have been working on educational evaluation and assessment tools for more than 25 years. "The design and review teams have included over 200 university faculty, national subject-matter organization representatives (e.g., NCTM, NCTE, NSTA, etc.), and K-12 teachers." SCALE offers technical support to schools and districts that are using the edTPA.[2]

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edTPA

WHAT IS IT?

The edTPA is a national, subject-specific, portfolio-based assessment of teaching performance that is completed by teacher-candidates to demonstrate their readiness for a full-time classroom position.

DOES EVERY TEACHER HAVE TO COMPLETE IT IN ORDER TO RECEIVE A CLASSROOM ASSIGNMENT?

In states where edTPA is mandated, all prospective teachers must complete the assessment with a passing score before being licensed. However, states with alternative routes to entering the teaching profession, some with pre-service training as short as five weeks, take edTPA after one year of teaching under their provisional license requirements.

WHAT ARE ITS COMPONENTS?

edTPA is subject/content-specific. Each licensure area has its own handbook for completion. Those responsible for scoring candidate portfolios represent subject specific teachers or teacher educators. The assessment covers 27 subjects/content areas and includes pre-school, kindergarten, elementary, middle, and secondary aged children. Some of its elements and requirements are listed below.

▶ Candidates develop three to five lesson plans for the subject/content specific (math, reading, science, etc.) unit they will teach.

▶ Plans are based on state and local standards including the College and Career Readiness Standards if applicable.

▶ Candidates record videos of themselves teaching their own students using the lessons they have planned based on students' strengths and needs.

▶ Candidates provide other documentation (including lesson plans, instructional materials, samples of student work and reflective commentaries) to demonstrate their ability to effectively teach their content area.

▶ Candidates must upload their portfolio for review using the Pearson platform and pay a fee.[3]

▶ Prospective teachers are evaluated by training and calibrated by subject specific *scorers* across five areas: planning, instruction, assessment, analyzing teaching, and academic language.

While content specific knowledge and pedagogy are vital to effective teaching, so are other kinds of knowledge, especially understanding for how language and culture mediate the learning process. Explicit educational strategies to incorporate language and cultural difference carry great weight in teaching effectiveness and yet are not salient to the edTPA conceptual framework.[4]

edTPA also stands to have a great influence on the future pool of linguistically diverse teachers, a subset of the profession already in deep demand. Given these concerns, the Latino Policy Forum convened a group of advisors to consider ways in which it could be more sensitive to candidates who teach in a language other than English. The next section reviews that process followed by an implementation plan.

THE ROLE OF THE LATINO POLICY FORUM

The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in Illinois that facilitates the involvement of Latinos at all levels of public decision-making. The Forum strives to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies, and

engage diverse sectors of the community. It advances its mission by conducting analysis to inform, influence, and lead, with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future.

In response to the growing concern in the educational arena around equity in teacher preparation, throughout the spring and summer of 2014, the Forum held stakeholder meetings of more than forty attendees inclusive of educators, policy experts, and philanthropic leaders with extensive experience in language education and pre-service and/or in-service preparation. The agendas included: opportunities to learn more about edTPA from various experts associated with Stanford University; in-depth discussions of the implications of the assessment for preparing candidates to teach linguistically and culturally diverse students; and the development of recommendations to make the assessment and its implementation more responsive to these children.

As a result of these meetings, recommendations were developed in regards to the assessment, evaluation process, and Illinois-specific implementation policies. The recommendations are listed below followed by more in-depth considerations for how they might be implemented.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING A MORE LINGUISTICALLY AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE edTPA

The following four recommendations are the results of discussions held during the spring and summer of 2014 with the stakeholder group convened by the Latino Policy Forum. The first two recommendations address concerns related to the validity and reliability of the assessment instrument and evaluation process, with particular concern for bilingual teacher candidates who teach in multilingual/multicultural settings. The last two recommendations address concerns with edTPA implementation particular to Illinois policies on the assessment, teacher licensure and program requirements.

▶ **Develop and implement a bilingual handbook for edTPA informed by a national group of experts on native language instruction.** *Various subject specific handbooks have been developed for edTPA, but none address native language instruction and/or teaching in bilingual settings.*

▶ **Modify current evaluation instruments and scorer training for edTPA to be more linguistically and culturally responsive; conduct a secondary field test on these measures.** *Currently linguistic and cultural responsiveness are not sufficiently addressed within evaluation instruments and the training to use them.*

▶ **Incorporate additional criteria along with a revised edTPA, as requested above, so it is not the only high stakes final determinant for candidate licensure.** *In some states, including Illinois, edTPA is used as the final determinant. Other considerations should include coursework, GPA, recommendations, practice teaching, and other related experience.*

▶ **Require that all candidates — including those from alternative certification programs — successfully pass a revised versio of the edTPA, as requested above.** *The revised edTPA would be used along with the other criteria listed above to determine teacher licensure.*

IMPLEMENTING AN edTPA THAT IS MORE RESPONSIVE TO LINGUISTICALLY AND CULTURALLY DIVERSE CHILDREN

Listed below are the suggestions and recommendations resulting from the distinguished advisors who participated in the stakeholder meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: **Develop and implement a bilingual handbook for edTPA informed by a national group of experts on native language instruction.** *Various subject specific handbooks have been developed for edTPA, but none address native language instruction and/or teaching in bilingual settings.*

The bilingual handbook might include:

▶ Theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical considerations for effective multilingual instruction that includes languages of instruction in addition to English.

▶ Differentiation of performance that account for various perspectives of language learning: general education contexts inclusive of ELs, parent refusals and recently reclassified English Learners, Transitional Bilingual Education, Transitional Program of Instruction, dual language, heritage language, foreign language immersion, etc.[5]

▶ Diversity in experience within the student population and how this can shape language development and academic achievement: oral and literary proficiencies in the home language and English; familiarity with formal schooling experience (including Students with Interrupted Formal Education or SIFEs); ethnic and cultural background; subject matter expertise corresponding to grade-level expectations; developmental characteristics; duration in the U.S.; immigration status and reason for immigration; parental education levels; and socioeconomic status.

▶ Linguistic development considerations within grade spans. This might include: differentiated teaching to meet children's needs (emergent versus sequential bilingual students); understanding the relationships between language, cognition, and learning; the unique strengths and challenges associated with growing up speaking two languages; and the vital preparation required of educators to meet these needs.

▶ Linguistically and culturally diverse students with special needs.

▶ Reconsideration for how academic language is conceptualized in all the handbooks to include the use of multiple languages for content instruction. This addition might include an account for linguistic and cultural complexities, multilingual instructional contexts (i.e. funds of knowledge)[6], definitions of key constructs, and how language is practiced in the content areas.

The process for implementing the handbook could include:

▶ Convening a national group of stakeholders with expertise in various models of Transitional Bilingual Educational and additive bilingual instruction.

▶ Piloting and field-testing the handbook in states that endorse various models of native language instruction and represent diverse languages within their student population.

▶ Incorporating a sample of bilingual candidates who student-teach across the PreK-12th grade spans and scoring portfolios that include bilingual classroom evidence.

▶ Establishing opportunities for representatives from edTPA to dialogue with stakeholders at state-level bilingual conferences; these conversations might include the design and implementation of a linguistically responsive edTPA.

▶ Including bilingual education experts within state-level stakeholder implementation committees.

▶ Developing a plan to conduct ongoing adverse impact studies to monitor how edTPA influences candidates whose first or home language is not English along with candidates who seek the bilingual endorsement.

▶ Further considerations for the waiver process:

- Are waivers available in languages that reflect the local state population?

- Are there plans to establish the process for how the edTPA will be explained to parents of students?

RECOMMENDATION: Modify current evaluation instruments and scorer training for edTPA to be more linguistically and culturally responsive; conduct a secondary field test on these measures. *Currently linguistic and cultural responsiveness are not sufficiently addressed within evaluation instruments and the training to use them.*

Evaluator instruments could include more specific culturally and linguistically relevant criteria for all candidates regardless of the program they are in, such as:

▶ Linguistically and culturally inclusive competencies at all levels of the evaluation instrument (i.e. levels 1-5).

▶ More specificity for candidate's ability to connect students' linguistic and cultural background with content being taught.

Training modules for scorers specific to bilingual instruction might include:

▶ Minimizing misconceptions about bilingual education, candidates who speak with an accent, or those who might, at times, use of language variations of English as a technique for instruction to meet higher levels of academic language.

▶ A change of orientation from treating English as the only language of instruction to an orientation that takes into account and promotes multilingual classroom instruction.

▶ Information about state-specific rules and regulations regarding ELs and other language learners (e.g. use of standards for English Language Development, Spanish Language Arts, Early Spanish Language Development, Bilingual or ESL, *et al.*)

▶ Scorers with additional languages skills (e.g., Spanish, Polish, Urdu, Korean, to name a few) that correspond to state-specific linguistic diversity.

▶ A public awareness plan for how edTPA will determine the quality and qualification of bilingual candidate scorers, this includes considerations for non-standard forms of English and "accented" English.

RECOMMENDATION: Incorporate additional criteria along with a revised edTPA, as requested above, so it is not the only high stakes final determinant for candidate licensure. *In some states, including Illinois, edTPA is used as the final determinant. Other considerations should include coursework, GPA, recommendations, practice teaching, and other related experience.*

In May 2013, The Council of Chicago Area Deans produced a set of recommendations which are synthesized below.

▶ If a candidate for certification fails to meet or exceed established edTPA passing scores, other evidence of satisfactory performance may be submitted by the candidate's college or university. Performance assessments administered by the institutions may be used as evidence of teaching competency.

▶ Institutions would be allowed to use multiple requirements to determine if a candidate would receive certification – they would include measures that were already approved by the state when it authorized these institutions' teacher preparation programs.

This provision to the current policy would help ensure that edTPA does not disproportionately limit linguistically and culturally diverse candidates.

It is acknowledged that edTPA implementation policies are under the purview of each state. SCALE has always maintained that edTPA is designed to be one of multiple measures for determining candidate readiness to teach. Unfortunately, in Illinois, under the current policy, edTPA is high stakes as the ultimate determining assessment for granting licensure.

We recommend the following:

1 Scorers with additional languages skills (e.g., Spanish, Polish, Urdu, Korean, to name a few) that correspond to state-specific linguistic diversity.

2 The Illinois State Board of Education reconsider its current policy on the use of edTPA to meet licensure requirements.

RECOMMENDATION: Require that all candidates—including those from alternative certification programs—successfully pass a revised version of the edTPA, as requested above. *The revised edTPA would be used along with the other criteria listed above to determine teacher licensure.*

Clearly, all teacher preparation programs include comprehensive, up-to-date information, techniques, and methods for teaching students from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Questions, however, arise with some alternative licensure programs: Is five weeks of pre-service training long enough? Have the skills needed to teach linguistically diverse children been taught? Recent studies are reporting that, in some alternative programs, appropriate pedagogical strategies to support language and content knowledge development is scant.[7]

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FOOTNOTES

1 Fry, R. (2008). The Role of Schools in English Language Learner Achievement Gap. Washington, D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center. Available at http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/89.pdf

2 June 2014. https://scale.stanford.edu/teaching/edtpa

3 At time of press fee was $300.

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5 English Learners in Illinois are generally placed in two types of instructional programs: (1) Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE), when 20 or more ELs of the same language classification are enrolled in the same class or center, instruction is offered in the student's home language with additional English as a Second Language instruction. (2) Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI), when 19 or less ELs of one or more native languages are in a classroom instruction is offered in English but assistance is offered in the native language as determined by the student's level of English proficiency.

6 González, Norma, Luis C. Moll, and Cathy Amanti. Funds of Knowledge: Theorizing Practice in Households, Communities, and Classrooms. Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 2005. Print.

7 Hopkins, Megan and Amy J. Heineke (2013). "Teach For America and English Language Learners: Shortcomings of the Organization's Training Model," Critical Education.

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