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## **LRA Policy Update - Teacher Performance Assessment Systems**

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Why Is Policy about Teacher Performance Assessment Important to literacy educators and research?**

Teacher Performance Assessment (also sometimes called Educator Evaluation, Observational Evaluation, Teacher Observation Assessments, and other names) is important to literacy educators and researchers because it is shaping K-12 literacy instruction, being used to rate literacy educators, and becoming part of teacher education systems across the nation. Proponents see Teacher Performance Assessment as a way to substantiate and improve the quality of the teaching profession. High quality Teacher Performance Assessments would allow for consistent, repeatable, sustainable measures of teacher quality that provide multiple measures and clear criteria for the teaching profession.

Teacher performance assessments will likely be on the federal and state legislative dockets this spring and summer. This policy alert provides information and recommendations about how policies relating to teacher performance assessments can contribute to improving education. The goal of this informational document is to inform membership

about teacher performance assessment policies that are currently under development and alert LRA members to the possible impact that they may have on their teacher education programs and institutions. Based on research, recommendations for and against certain practices are provided.

Teacher performance assessments usually consist of observations of classroom instruction and may include teachers' plans, instruction-related documents, and reflections. Teacher performance assessments come in many shapes and sizes—some consisting of brief observational protocols focused on specific tasks or objectives of the teacher performance and others consisting of complex collection of multiple data points to assess the overall teaching and learning cycle in instruction.

Teacher performance assessments can be used in new teacher induction conducted by individual states. These assessments can also be used in evaluations of veteran educators by individual states and school districts. This policy update relates to formal, standardized teacher performance assessments for new teacher induction that are being developed and mandated as opposed to the less formal, locally constructed observational protocols that have informed teachers and teacher educators in the past.

The **edTPA** is one prominent teacher performance assessment developed by Stanford University in collaboration with Pearson and is specifically used with new teachers. Created by Stanford researchers Linda Darling-Hammond, Ray Pecheone, and colleagues, this performance assessment has been endorsed by the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Additionally the most recent issue of *The New Educator* (Volume 9, Number 1) published research articles specifically about the Performance Assessment of California Teachers (PACT). The PACT has been revised and is now the edTPA.

### **What Does the Research Say?**

Teacher performance assessments have risen in popularity as an additional means for assessing and accounting for high-quality teacher preparation and effectiveness. Previous proposals to use measures of student achievement as a sole means of evaluating teachers and teacher preparation programs (and, similarly, merit pay based on these scores) have been questioned by researchers as unreliable and invalid (Committee on Incentives and Test-Based Accountability in Education of the National Research Council, 2011; Floden, 2012; Gansle, Noell, & Burns, 2012; Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008; Goe&Holdheide, 2011; Goldhaber, Brewer, & Anderson, 1999; Baker et al., 2010). Rather than simply use standardized student scores to evaluate teachers, teacher performance assessments use teachers' instructional behaviors captured by observation and/or video, plans, reflections,

and student learning outcomes (usually not standardized) as a way to more robustly evaluate teachers.

If implemented thoughtfully, teacher performance assessments can also provide teachers with a means to analyze and improve instructional practices and support student learning (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2006; Okhremtochouk, Seiki, Gilliland, Ateh, Wallace, & Kato, 2009; Porter, Youngs, & Odden, 2001).

However, researchers have indicated concerns about observer-rater reliability (Praetorius, Lenske, & Helmke, 2012; Sandholtz & Shea, 2011), predictive validity (Gimbert & Chesley, 2009), school context factors (Okhremtochouk, Seiki, Gilliland, Ateh, Wallace, & Kato, 2009); and educational equity (Rennert-Ariev, 2008) related to the implementation of TPAs. Researchers have also warned against the turn toward a practice-only lens when looking for teacher quality (e.g., Zeichner, 2012).

## **POLICY CLIMATE**

### **Federal Level Climate**

Federal level policies are likely to address teacher performance assessments as part of a broader push to address accountability at the higher education level and in teacher preparation. Federal policy consultants have indicated that, at least at the federal level, policy makers are unlikely to adopt a single test or metric for teacher evaluation and assessment. They will likely create policies that require assessment programs with various metrics. Given the national popularity of the edTPA, and the endorsement of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE), federal policy makers are likely to include many of the characteristics of the edTPA; although they probably won't call it by name.

1. Federal legislators will be working on re-authorizing **Title ii of the Higher Education Act** which expires at the end of 2013. "Teacher preparation" is already part of the institutional program report card system (IPRC). See elements addressed here: <http://title2.ed.gov/Title2IPRC/Pages/IPRCMANUAL2012.pdf> Early predictions are that any reauthorization of Title ii of the Higher Education Act will include teacher performance assessment as part of the new law for undergraduate and preservice teacher education programs.

2. Federal legislators may include teacher performance assessment in any reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESEA, currently called "No Child Left Behind"). **Title IIA of ESEA** currently addresses teacher quality by providing funds for districts to provide professional development and requiring "highly qualified" teachers and leaders. Any reauthorization will likely abandon the current designation of

“highly qualified” based solely on certification and will likely use teacher performance assessments to evaluate teacher performance in schools.

3. Federal legislators are also likely to address the federally funded Head Start pre-school program (and Early Head Start) due to budget threats to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Republicans in the House have suggested cutting funding since a report by the Department in 2011 (“Head Start Impact”) pointed out some limitations of the program. Currently, section **684A of the Head Start Act** addresses teacher preparation, requiring all teachers to have Associate’s degrees in a related field by 2013 and at least half to have Bachelor’s degrees. However, some studies have questioned whether degrees are predictive of quality in early childhood education (e.g., Henry, et al., 2012). Any revision of the Head Start program likely would address teacher performance as part of program evaluation, in addition to other program changes.

### **State Level Climate**

Several states have already adopted teacher performance assessment programs to evaluate current teachers. These go by various names and are of varying quality. A review of these state programs is beyond the scope of this update; however, we focus on the edTPA because it is sweeping through states as a means to assess new teachers and teacher preparation programs.

Many states have, or are creating, policies requiring colleges and universities to incorporate teacher performance assessments into teacher preparation licensure and program evaluation and are naming the edTPA as the preferred assessment. These trends suggest that the edTPA will become “the” national model for performance assessment of new teachers in the next couple years.

Currently states are adopting the edTPA one by one. This widespread adoption is in large part due to the assessment being endorsed by the AACTE and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. While Stanford has maintained all intellectual property rights to the assessment program, Pearson Publishing has rights to the operational delivery system. The assessment includes written reflections, documentation of a series of lessons, and video samples of teaching. Pearson currently charges \$300 to score each teacher’s assessment. Given this cost and the cost of other required certification tests, the costs could become prohibitive for many teachers.

More information about the edTPA can be found at <http://edtpa.aacte.org/> or <http://www.edtpa.com/>

As of the drafting of this statement, twenty-four states and the District of Columbia have either formally adopted or are considering adopting the edTPA. See this link for the states in the process of adopting edTPA: <http://edtpa.aacte.org/state-policy>

Some of the questions that states are grappling with are:

- Can a state’s legislative body mandate the use of teacher performance assessments or is this a state department or governor’s office or district decision?
- Should teacher performance assessments be used for teacher certification, hiring, merit pay, and/or retention decisions?
- Who should have ownership and access to teacher performance assessment documents, rubric results, and scores?
- Should teacher performance assessment documents and results be accessible to hiring districts/schools?
- How many teacher performance assessments should be implemented if a teacher is certified and/or endorsed (or is seeking either) across multiple content and instructional areas (e.g., English Language Arts? special education? English Learner specialists?)
- Who is responsible for paying the cost of data collection and scoring for teachers’ performance assessments?
- Who is responsible for FERPA protections for students who might be filmed (including P-12 and university students) and whose work samples might be collected as part of teacher performance assessments?
- Are teacher performance assessment videos allowed to be edited? If so, how much and by whom?
- What training and expertise are included in the members of the scoring panel for teacher assessments (e.g., the edTPA)?
- What metrics are in place to ensure that scoring is common and reliable across scorers on teacher assessments?

### **Policy Recommendations Relating to Teacher Performance Assessments**

Based on research about teacher performance assessments, we have the following recommendations for LRA members to present to policy-makers:

#### **Recommend:**

1. Multiple assessments of teacher performance should be used to evaluate teachers, as opposed to using student test data and/or one observation protocol as a sole metric.
2. Teacher performance assessments should include comprehensive indicators of high-quality teaching adapted from research on teacher quality and effectiveness (e.g., the edTPA aligns with InTASC 2012 and National Board Standards for Professional Teaching). These indicators should be valid and reliably scored.

3. Teacher performance assessments should be coordinated with adopted curricular standards for all areas of instruction.
4. Scorers must have proven pedagogical content knowledge in the area that they are scoring a teacher performance assessment.
5. Video samples of instructional events in real classrooms should be reviewed and reflected upon by the teachers who are being assessed. These videos will also require valid and reliable scoring.
6. Scoring criteria should be clear to the assessors and to the teachers being assessed.
7. The costs of teacher performance assessment, especially for new teachers seeking entry into the field, should be subsidized by the state and/or federal government through needs-based grants to individuals.
8. If a teacher is certified and/or seeking certification in several areas, he/she should select a primary certification area and participate in only one assessment.

**Recommend Against:**

1. Releasing any personally identifiable teacher performance assessment data to media, districts, and schools, especially when those assessments are used for aggregated program evaluation reports.
2. Mandating how teacher performance assessments should connect to specific content area preparation courses and program requirements.
3. Requiring teachers to participate in more than one teacher performance assessment (such as the edTPA) annually.
4. Mandating literacy and math or “generic” teacher performance assessments to the exclusion of other content areas, especially at the elementary level.

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