

Policy Brief

Pre-service Performance Assessments

AS MORE THAN 200,000 NEW TEACHERS prepare to enter the nation's classrooms every year, NEA urges its more than three million members to work collaboratively to ensure that novice teachers engage in purposeful learning experiences through preparation program courses and PreK-12 clinical classrooms to ensure they are profession ready upon entering their first classrooms. Teacher preparation program (TPP) faculty, cooperating teachers, mentors, and teacher candidates share the responsibility of ensuring that future educators are effective practitioners.

While teaching has always been a demanding profession, the focus on teacher quality has increased significantly over the past decade. Novice teachers are often expected to perform at the same level as their more experienced colleagues. Teacher performance is judged not only by observations of practice and examinations of professional artifacts such as lesson and unit plans, but also by student outcomes as measured by classroom-based, standardized, and common assessments. The increased attention to teacher quality, professional practice, and student learning provides practicing educators an opportunity to intentionally engage in the preparation and development of the next generation of educators.

PROFESSION-READY TEACHERS

Profession-ready teachers are fully qualified on day one to address the learning needs of their PreK-12 students. Given the responsibilities of preparing engaged citizens and educating a diverse student population, the profession does not have the luxury of having candidates unprepared for classroom challenges becoming teachers-of-record.

Profession-ready teachers understand subject matter content knowledge, instructional strategies, child and adolescent development, and curriculum and assessment practices promoting student learning and success. Although profession-ready teachers have not yet achieved the status of fully accomplished educators, they are capable of meeting the instructional needs of student learners. Having successfully completed a classroom-based pre-service performance assessment (PSPA),

profession-ready teachers have demonstrated classroom readiness through multiple opportunities to observe, implement, and reflect on quality teaching and learning.

PRE-SERVICE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS

A PSPA is a comprehensive diagnostic process providing teacher candidates and TPP faculty with feedback on a candidate's profession readiness. PSPAs allow teacher-candidates to demonstrate the knowledge and skills acquired through preparation program coursework and classroom clinical experiences. Well-designed PSPAs provide teacher-candidates with uniform tasks guided by rubrics that allow them to demonstrate the profession-ready knowledge and skills, regardless of the preparation pathway taken. Many states incorporate PSPAs into their preparation program requirements and full state licensure process.

PRE-SERVICE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT EXAMPLES

► California Teaching Performance Assessment

This is a classroom-based PSPA portfolio that assures teacher-candidates have the knowledge, skills, and abilities required of a beginning teacher in California public schools. Candidates complete four performance tasks, each with increasing complexity. The first task, subject-specific pedagogy, is based on case studies provided to the candidate. The three other tasks are based on the candidate's classroom experience with K-12 students: designing instruction, assessing learning, and culminating teaching experience. The candidate uses teacher artifacts, student work, and reflective analysis guided by a professional practice rubric to complete each task. Resources are available online for teacher candidates and preparation program sponsors. Developed by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. **Registration Fee: \$100.**

► edTPA

This is a classroom-based PSPA portfolio process built around three to five continuous days of the candidate's subject-specific classroom instruction that typically occurs at the end of the student teaching or internship

experience. edTPA focuses on the act of teaching and complements existing entry-level basic skills and subject-matter knowledge assessments. edTPA includes a portfolio of teaching artifacts and student work, recorded classroom instruction, and reflective practice analysis guided by a professional performance rubrics. edTPA focuses on five critical dimensions of teaching: planning instruction and assessment; instructing and engaging students in learning; assessing student learning; analysis of teaching effectiveness; and academic language development. Preparation programs, Stanford Center for Assessment Learning and Equity (SCALE), and the Evaluation Systems Group of Pearson have developed resources to assist candidates with edTPA. Developed by SCALE at Stanford University. **Registration Fee:** \$300.

► **PPAT Assessment**

This is a classroom-based PSPA portfolio that allows teacher-candidates to demonstrate what they know and are able to do. Candidates complete four performance tasks. The first—knowledge of students and the learning environment—is a formative assessment. All others are summative: assessment and data collection to measure and inform student learning; designing instruction for student learning; and implementing and analyzing instruction to promote student learning. For all, the candidate uses teacher artifacts, student work, and reflective analysis guided by a rubric based on the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards. Resources are available online for teacher candidates and preparation program sponsors. Developed by ETS as part of their Praxis series. **Registration Fee:** \$275.

SUPPORTING TEACHER CANDIDATES

Clinical classrooms become laboratories of learning for pre-service teachers where they engage students with a wide array of learning styles, needs, gifts, and challenges. Cooperating teachers are the link between the TPP and classroom practice. Preparation program faculty and PreK-12 teachers work together to provide the candidate with teaching and learning experiences that enable the candidate to become profession ready.

Cooperating teachers should be highly effective, skilled practitioners able to work effectively with teacher-candidates as mentors and guides. Allowing candidates to begin their practice in classrooms where learning is central—for both student and adults—is essential. Teacher preparation faculty must understand this connection and

emphasize that teaching is not judged solely by what the teacher knows and does but also by how students perform on various assessments, often required by the school, district, or state.

As states across the country incorporate the successful completion of a PSPA into program completion and licensure requirements, the cooperating teacher's role is expanding to assist teacher candidates in preparing to complete pre-service performance assessments.

NEA PSPA TASK FORCE

At the 2014 Representative Assembly, New Business Item 5 established the NEA Performance Assessments for Pre-service Candidates Task Force. The 11-member task force consisted of K-12 teachers and higher education faculty. The Task Force charge was to “explore the use of teacher performance assessments for pre-service teacher candidates.”

The Task Force's 2015 report articulates two basic principles:

1. No PSPA can ever substitute for the professional training, appropriate pay, and professional working conditions that educators need to fulfill the promise of public education.
2. No PSPA should be implemented without the full participation of educators.

The Task Force acknowledges the legitimate concerns about the corporate influence on the PSPA process. However, the inability to educate and engage educators about pre-service performance assessments is not a flaw of the assessment. Rather, it is a flaw of those tasked with the pilot, adoption, and implementation of these assessments. To ensure high professional standards for entry into PreK-12 teaching, education professionals must take on the leadership responsibilities of defining, creating, and assessing PSPAs. The Task Force developed five key principles to guide this leadership:

1. PSPAs should be part of providing a candidate with a full teaching credential, along with the candidate developing content knowledge and other educational competencies.
2. PSPAs should be designed, implemented, evaluated and supervised by educators—both within TPPs and the participating school districts—with minimum influence from private industry and political organizations.

3. PSPAs should be one of multiple measures of demonstrating teaching ability. Evidence from university faculty and cooperating teachers should also be key factors in determining the candidate's readiness to teach.
4. PSPAs should have formative assessments as a key element that allows candidates the opportunity to develop and demonstrate the ability to teach the content of the area of expertise.
5. PSPAs should not be a single, high-stakes assessment, and candidates should be given opportunities to retake the assessment and/or its components, if needed.

PRE-SERVICE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

As states across the country require that candidates successfully complete PSPAs, a shared architecture across these assessments must exist. This architecture creates the space for shared dialogue about teaching and learning across the range of preparation programs and state lines. Additionally, a shared architecture eliminates the need for candidates to take multiple performance assessments if the location of his/her first teaching assignment is not in the state where they learned to teach. States in the process of developing, adopting, or implementing PSPAs should incorporate the following 11 criteria into their assessment architecture.

1. Demonstration of the candidate's ability to plan, implement, assess, reflect, and analyze data.
2. Multiple and continued forms of observation and assessment of the classroom experience through lesson planning, teacher-student interactions, pedagogical practice, content knowledge, and impact on student learning.
3. Demonstration of knowledge beyond current trends in pedagogical practices, research, and theories in education, and the ability to articulate application to the classroom.
4. Demonstration of knowledge and ability to adapt and teach diverse student populations.
5. Exhibition of cultural competence.
6. The active involvement of preparation program faculty, PreK-12 teachers, and teacher candidates in the development and implementation of a PSPA.
7. Opportunities for local scoring by experienced

teacher preparation program faculty and school-based teaching professionals.

8. Formative feedback provided to candidates and faculty.
9. Strengths and areas for improvement communicated candidates and faculty.
10. Administration of the assessment over a developmentally appropriate period.
11. Data from the pre-assessment tool that measures attitudes and dispositions.

CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For years, individuals have been allowed to enter the teaching profession by successfully completing a standardized assessment of their content knowledge, but have not demonstrated their ability to plan, teach, assess and analyze student learning.

Our students deserve knowledgeable, skillful teachers steeped in subject matter content and instructional practices that promote student learning and success. In a profession that struggles to explain the complexities of teaching to the public and policymakers, uneven and inconsistent application and use of pre-service performance assessments may undermine a seamless PreK-16 professional continuum. Recognizing that the failure to effectively implement the assessments may cause more harm than good to the profession we are committed to strengthening, NEA calls on:

POLICYMAKERS TO FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING:

- ☑ **SCORING:** PreK-12 teachers, cooperating teachers, and preparation program faculty must score PSPAs. State-based teachers and faculty must score at least some PSPAs.
- ☑ **ADVERSE IMPACT/RECRUITMENT:** PSPAs must be developed so as not to disadvantage candidates of color, which has been found in existing content-only exams.
- ☑ **PROGRAM APPROVAL:** PSPA outcomes should not be used for removing preparation program approval, cutting funding, or eliminating teaching programs. PSPAs should provide formative feedback to the preparation program to guide redesign practices.
- ☑ **COST:** PSPA costs should be incorporated into the tuition and fees paid by teacher candidates to the preparation program sponsor.

TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS TO FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING:

- ☑ **ACCOUNTABILITY:** Holding the PSPA developers and vendors accountable for implementation missteps that may occur.
- ☑ **TRANSPARENCY:** Calling on PSPA vendors to annually report scorer demographics and compensation to ensure that classroom teachers and preparation program faculty score the assessments with appropriate compensation.
- ☑ **DUPLICATION:** Asking states to eliminate the duplication of assessments for teacher-candidates.
- ☑ **HIGHER EDUCATION VOICE:** Advocating for state adoption and implementation plans that mandate the engagement of higher education faculty and PreK-12 partners before PSPA results become consequential.
- ☑ **PSPA SCHOLARSHIPS:** Encouraging states to establish PSPA scholarships for candidates who demonstrate financial need when having to pay for the registration fee.

COOPERATING TEACHERS TO FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING:

SUPPORTING:

- ☑ Understanding the PSPA requirements and reviewing materials.
- ☑ Attending information sessions offered by preparation programs.
- ☑ Discussing candidate's progress with preparation program supervisors.
- ☑ Educating school administrators about PSPA requirements.

CLARIFYING:

- ☑ Explaining the purpose of recording to parents.
- ☑ Troubleshooting for the candidate if barriers to this requirement arise.

RESOURCES

National Education Association

- NEA policy brief: Profession-ready teachers. Washington: NEA. Available at <https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Profession-Ready-Teachers.pdf>

California Teaching Performance Assessment

- General information, available at <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/TPA-files/CalTPA-general-info.pdf>
- Frequently asked questions, available at https://www.puc.edu/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/38323/TPA-FAQs.pdf
- Program sponsor information and materials, available at <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/TPA-California-program-sponsors.html>
- Teacher candidate information and materials, available at <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/TPA-California-candidates.html>

edTPA

- General information, available at <http://www.edtpa.com>
- Frequently asked questions, available at http://www.edtpa.com/PageView.aspx?f=GEN_FAQ.html
- Candidate information, available at http://www.edtpa.com/PageView.aspx?f=GEN_Candidates.html
- Preparation program information, available at http://www.edtpa.com/PageView.aspx?f=GEN_Faculty.html

PPAT Assessment

- General information, available at <https://www.ets.org/ppa/test-takers/teachers/about>
- Candidate preparation for PPAT Assessment, available at <https://www.ets.org/ppa/test-takers/teachers/prepare/>

Special thanks to the members of the NEA Performance Assessments for Pre-service Candidates Task Force for their insight and recommendations.