



## **Policy Meets Practice in New York State**

### **Understanding Early edTPA Implementation Through Preservice Candidates' Eyes**

**Christine D. Clayton**

#### **Abstract**

Over 30 states have adopted the edTPA as a performance assessment for pre-service teachers. While many have adopted the edTPA as a program requirement, few require the edTPA for licensure of individual teacher candidates, but many states are poised to do so. While the edTPA is grounded on experiences with advanced certification and program level uses of teacher performance assessments, the research in these areas has focused on program implementation. Little research features student teacher voices and the impact of the assessment on the student teaching experience. The purpose of this article is to describe the perspectives of the first rounds of teacher candidates who completed the edTPA as a licensure exam while student teaching in multiple initial certification programs within a single School of Education. In addition to score results and student work, in-depth interviews and survey responses were the primary data collected and analyzed. In spite of pass rates over 80% with 35% at mastery levels across programs during the first two cohorts of implementation, candidate perceptions revealed contradictory views of the edTPA and its impact on candidate learning and the student teaching

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experience. These experiences are discussed in consideration of four themes that explore the edTPA as a reflective, educative, mandated, and subtractive experience. In light of the use of the edTPA as a high-stakes test for individual licensure, important considerations and cautions for teacher educators, policymakers, and administrators poised to phase in full-scale implementation of this assessment for high-stakes purposes are raised.

## **Introduction**

The edTPA, a teacher performance assessment (TPA) for preservice teachers, has been adopted widely as a measure of preservice teacher quality. On the basis of similar assessments for novice teachers instituted in California and Connecticut, more than 700 preparation programs in 38 states participate in the edTPA. In 2016, 12 states had policies in place and 3 additional states were moving toward policies that would allow or require the edTPA to be used as an assessment for individual licensure and/or program accreditation (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity [SCALE], 2016; see also edPTA website, n.d.).

Among the four states (Georgia, Tennessee, Washington, New York) that utilize the edTPA as part of the licensure decision at the time of this study, New York stands out in its use of the assessment as a high-stakes requirement for individual teaching candidates (SCALE, 2016). There is no ambiguity in the policy implementation in New York where edTPA national cut-scores were adopted with no phase-in period and, after just 1 year of field testing, the policy was applied to all initial certification candidates. In contrast to other states that conducted at least 4 years of field testing (Reagan, Schram, McCurdy, Chang, & Evans, 2016), such rapid implementation in New York led to years of “safety nets” to allow those who failed the edTPA to demonstrate some proficiency on old tests and achieve certification. These safety nets are now set to expire on June 30, 2018.

This case is important to consider because it has high-stakes consequences not only for individual teaching candidates but also for the profession. To date, the evidence base for the edTPA offers a limited view of the impacts of this kind of high-stakes assessment on the experience of learning to become a teacher. Much of the research has focused on articulating the impact on candidate learning, program change, and professionalization of the field (Darling-Hammond, Newton, & Wei, 2010; Pecheone & Chung, 2006). The previous research, however, has not revealed the student teacher’s voice, nor has it explored the impact of the particular placement of this type of assessment during student teaching.

It is the particular policy of the edTPA as a high-stakes assessment in New York that makes this case important. In requiring the edTPA as a test to measure teacher quality for entry into the profession, policy makers transform the performance assessment and its rubrics by imbuing it with important symbolic and practical power (Clayton, 2017). What are the consequences of such a move for student teachers

and student teaching? This study aims to describe the perspectives of the first two rounds of teaching candidates who experienced the edTPA as a licensure exam while student teaching in different initial certification programs within a single school of education in New York State.

## **Literature Review**

The edTPA, first and foremost, claims to measure teacher quality. Therefore a thorough review of the previous research on the evaluation of teachers, particularly novices, is necessary to understand the constructs on which the edTPA is based. Additionally, research on the experience of student teaching provides a context for understanding TPAs at this particular stage in teacher development. Taken together, the existing research suggests that use of TPAs at this moment in teacher development and for accountability purposes is based on a limited line of inquiry.

### **Teacher Evaluation and TPAs**

Current policy efforts to improve teacher evaluation have focused on outcome measurements of student learning through standardized achievement tests. Among teacher educators, who often do not write state and federal regulations, considerable scholarly attention has focused on articulating teacher quality to develop a “grammar of practice” (Hollins, 2011) to assist, not just assess, teachers who are learning over time. The edTPA is really the result of both forces that have influenced work in teacher evaluation (Clayton, 2014).

Within teacher education, the development of TPAs has its roots in the form of portfolios that have been used by teacher education faculty to document candidate growth and foster program improvement. Portfolios, which often involve classroom artifacts, student work, extensive writing, and sometimes videotape, aim to showcase and honor the complexity of teaching and learning to teach (Wei & Pecheone, 2010; Wolf & Dietz, 1998). Some researchers have questioned the benefits realized given that costs of time and other resources are high in order to implement portfolio assessments. Persistent critics have also raised questions about whether portfolios measure writing and presentation skills rather than actual teaching skill performance (Meeus, Van Petegem, & Engels, 2009).

Given its extensive, if contested, uses in preservice teacher education, it is not surprising that portfolio assessment has led to further development of TPAs for a variety of purposes and participants. The National Board process for advanced certification promotes the learning and recognition of master teachers through a structured portfolio with video, an analysis of student work, and reflective commentary in addition to a content knowledge test. As with the teacher portfolio assessment research, questions abound about whether the assessment measures expert teaching or the ability to write well about teaching (Burroughs, Schwartz,

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& Hendricks-Lee, 2000; Van Driel, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2001), although research has generally shown enhanced teacher development (Sato, Hyler, & Monte-Sano, 2002; Whitman, 2002) and that such teachers have effects on student test scores (Cavalluzzo, 2004; Goldhaber, Perry, & Anthony, 2004; Vandervoort, Amrein-Beardsley, & Berliner, 2004).

Similar to the process used to establish National Board certification, the edTPA was influenced by policies in California and Connecticut that established a preservice program performance assessment (the Performance Assessment for California Teachers [PACT]) and advanced licensure for pretenure teachers (the Beginning Educator Support and Training Program [BEST]). Research on these assessments has consistently shown that utilizing performance assessment, with thoughtful care to proper implementation, has positive impacts on teacher learning and program change (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Pecheone & Chung, 2006).

However, researchers also have raised concerns about the use of TPAs when mandated for specific purposes with preservice teachers. In one instance where the PACT was a program requirement, Okhremtchouk, Newell, and Rosa (2013) concluded that there were a “noteworthy number of unintended consequences,” such as extra requisite time, altered teacher education course work, and a reduction in classroom duties exhibited by the candidates as they were learning to teach. In a more recent validation study of PACT, the authors cautioned limited use of the performance assessment for licensure while raising some questions about the construct validity of particular conceptual categories, such as academic language (Duckor, Castellano, Tellez, Wihardini, & Wilson, 2014). In their work examining the impacts of the edTPA in one teacher education program in New York, Ledwell and Oyler (2016) noted that much of this body of research was conducted on the use of TPAs in contexts where the consequences were not for individual teaching candidates, which creates possibly different kinds of pressures and distortions in implementation.

Building on the successful use of earlier TPAs, the edTPA was created to be an assessment “for the profession, by the profession” that would be an “authentic, subject-specific, performance based support and assessment system of a candidate’s initial readiness to teach” (SCALE, 2015b, p. 4). In a recent annotated bibliography to provide research justification for the edTPA’s design (SCALE, 2015a), just 6 of 19 cited articles focused on performance assessment at the preservice level. A follow-up literature review held the same pattern (SCALE, 2015c), signaling how the research base for the edTPA is grounded more in the context of in-service teachers. Where the focus is on licensure and certification, more experienced in-service teachers or expert teachers getting advanced certifications such as the National Board are the subjects of the research cited; where the focus is on preservice teachers, such performance assessments were program requirements, not requirements for individual initial certification. These are key differences that are revealed by the developers of the edTPA in the research they cite as justification

for its effectiveness with the preservice population. In an effort to provide a tool to “support and assess” preservice teachers, SCALE has offered research justifications for the edTPA’s educative support in low-stakes environments, but the research presented does not reveal how high-stakes TPAs work alongside the intention to support candidates as they learn to teach.

### ***The Student Teaching Experience and TPAs***

Student teaching has long been considered a critical component of traditional pathways in preservice teacher education (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Zeichner, 2002). Researchers have concluded that student teaching can change beliefs and attitudes as well as practices within specific contexts—in both progressive ways that favor supporting inclusive practices for students and regressive ways that reinforce prejudices and deficit thinking about students and communities (Anderson & Stillman, 2011). Working with children and youths in school settings often provides an “experiential base” for university course concepts and theories (Clift, 2005). In recognition of that value, calls for improving clinical practice (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2013; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010) have focused on improving the quality of those experiences beyond university classrooms. Consistently, research has pointed to a gap between university course work and K–12 classroom realities (Hammerness, 2006; Torrez & Krebs, 2012), once termed the two-worlds pitfall (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1983). For better or worse, student teaching is the moment in teacher education when these two worlds come together.

Introducing TPAs into student teaching with varying degrees of consequences for programs and, eventually, as in New York, for individuals has led to additional research. Sandholtz and Shea (2012) compared university supervisors’ predictions and teacher candidates’ scores on the PACT in California. They found that there was some inconsistency, particularly among those at the high and low performance levels. In a subsequent study, Sandholz (2012) examined this discrepancy but could not explain its cause. This raises questions about whether the portrait captured in the assessment presents a contextualized or a segmented, stilted perspective of the candidate that may be more narrowly testing writing ability rather than actual teaching performance. Sandholz (2012) corroborated earlier concerns (Chung, 2008), speculating that the stakes of the assessment may mediate how teaching candidates engage with that assessment by hiding weaknesses or prioritizing completion of the assessment over their daily classroom teaching.

In their examination of national assessments for student teachers, Margolis and Doring (2013) examined the “lived experience” of the classic triad—candidate, university supervisor, and classroom mentor—during a national pilot implementation of a TPA that preceded, but mirrored, the edTPA. Even though the stakes were relatively low in this pilot implementation, the researchers found that, despite

reported benefits by candidates, there seemed to be a “tipping point” where too many requirements and not enough supports burdened student teachers.

In a study of high- and low-performance submissions of the edTPA, Denton (2013) showed that successful candidates utilized strategies disassociated from educational theories to manage the edTPA as a test. Examples included maximizing page lengths, “scripted interactions” in lessons aligned with rubric descriptions, and utilizing the lesson segment assessment as the student work sample. Coloma’s (2015) survey of candidates in Ohio who took the edTPA as a requirement for program completion found that respondents reported an overwhelmingly negative impact on their student teaching experience, questioning the feedback and judgment of scorers distant from their mentors and field supervisors as well as the nature of the teaching represented by the exam itself.

Specific to New York, Greenblatt and O’Hara (2015) reported several concerns, including the narrowing of the student teaching experience for test preparation and implementation with the edTPA, while at the same time questioning whether the high language and technological demands skew what the assessment measures. In a study of both New York and Washington candidates, Meuwissen and Choppin (2015) discussed support, representative, and agency tensions experienced during student teaching while taking the edTPA as a licensure exam. Although they reported how candidates mediated the tensions, the researchers concluded that, at that moment, the tensions were “not necessarily productive towards the ends of improving teaching and student learning” (p. 19). Ledwell and Oyler (2016) studied the implementation of the edTPA at Teachers College across several programs from the perspective of faculty and concluded that the edTPA, as other high-stakes exams, had a narrowing effect on the curriculum of multiple teacher education programs within the college.

These initial studies raise questions about what the edTPA actually assesses within contexts where it is used for different purposes. They also suggest that we do not know if the benefits of TPAs, as documented in previous contexts and for different purposes, such as with the PACT, BEST, and National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), translate when the edTPA becomes a commercial licensure exam required for initial certification. Most of the research has provided limited information about teaching candidates’ perspectives of their experience of the edTPA as a high-stakes requirement for certification while also student teaching. This focused case study, which prioritizes the perspectives of student teachers who are subject to a particular use of the edTPA as an individual licensure requirement, aims to contribute unique insights about such policy.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Constructivist theories of learning suggest that new knowledge builds from prior knowledge (Bruner, 1960). Applying the theory to teacher learning means focusing less on the knowledge about teaching or content that candidates acquire

and more on the meanings they make through experience and how they draw on those understandings in their application for practice. Understanding the experiences of teachers as they enact curricular experiences with students represents a constructivist application of learning to teach that frames the study's purpose and methods (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992).

Within the larger constructivist learning theory, specific scholars' insights on teacher learning inform this study. Feiman-Nemser's (2001) representation of teacher learning as ongoing, iterative, and extending beyond the formal experience of university teacher education is a lens that frames the assumptions of the study. In particular, such a developmental perspective on learning to teach shapes why the context of student teaching is of such critical importance to examine in terms of the implementation of a high-stakes accountability performance assessment. Following from this view of learning to teach along a continuum of formal and informal experiences that span university teacher education into the professional years, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999, 2009) produced scholarship on inquiry that characterized teacher learning as uncertain and fragile, sometimes contradictory, and rarely linear. Their work suggested that learning to teach is broader than acquiring knowledge of its technical tasks. They wrote that teacher learning is characterized "more with uncertainty than certainty, more with posing problems and dilemmas than with solving them" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 294), and that it is more about "forming and re-forming frameworks for understanding practice" (pp. 290–291). This perspective on learning to teach informs assumptions about student teaching and the experience of the edTPA as a potential learning process for teachers.

These views posit a different vision of learning to teach that potentially conflicts with assumptions undergirding the use of the edTPA as a high-stakes licensure exam. Feiman-Nemser (2001) and Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999, 2009) suggested a longer term, nonlinear development of beliefs and understandings related to practice as teachers and teaching candidates construct meaning through an iterative process. The edTPA as an accountability measure, in contrast, posits certainty about teacher quality and, because of its ties to individual certification requirements, requires on-demand demonstration of quality where such performance is linked directly to an assertion that candidates are ready to teach. Taken together, these conceptions frame the purpose and methods of this study to gather teacher candidates' perspectives of their unique experience of the edTPA as an individual accountability measure of teacher quality. In so doing, the study fills a gap on what we know about the experience of learning to teach while participating in a TPA with high-stakes consequences as that policy unfolds.

## **Methods**

Consequently, the purpose of this study is to describe the perspectives of teacher candidates who experienced the first two rounds of implementation of the edTPA



as an individual exam for licensure in New York State. The study is guided by this exploratory question: How do student teachers experience the edTPA during its implementation as an individual exam for initial certification?

### **Study Design and Context**

Conducted within one university with three initial certification programs in inclusive early childhood (birth to kindergarten), childhood (Grades 1–6), and adolescent (Grades 7–12) education, this case study (Merriam, 1998) utilized a sequential mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2014); that is, an initial survey of the total participant pool in the case led to solicitation of willing candidates to be interviewed. The author is a faculty member of the School of Education who possesses knowledge of program goals and edTPA implementation during this period but had no responsibilities directly related to student teaching or the edTPA during the period under study. Although the author may have worked directly with some adolescent education candidates in earlier course work prior to student teaching, the author was not working in any capacity with these candidates during the final semester of student teaching, when the edTPA was completed.

In addition to different program areas, participants included teacher candidates in graduate and undergraduate initial certification programs. State regulations require 100 hours of observation for both groups prior to a student teaching experience in at least two settings over the course of 14 weeks. The student teaching placement, during which the edTPA is completed, is similar for both groups, but the fieldwork prior to student teaching is more substantial and organized for undergraduates. For most graduate candidates, fieldwork is loosely arranged and supervised prior to student teaching, meaning that student teaching is potentially the first time they are performing significant and sustained tasks of teaching with autonomy.

### **Data Collection**

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected over a period of two semesters during the initial implementation of the edTPA as a licensure exam in New York. Data sources included candidate survey responses as well as score results and sample work provided by the school of education. Interviews of a smaller sample were also conducted.

First, an electronic survey was created and administered to all eligible student teaching candidates over two semesters; confidentiality was ensured though tracking completed surveys was important to ensure maximum response. The survey consisted of 50 selected-response questions that included 3- and 4-point Likert scale questions and two open-ended questions.

Survey questions were developed from an examination of research literature and in conjunction with three pilot focus group conversations with the first cohort of student teachers engaged in taking the edTPA. Emergent themes were mapped to the goals



of the study to become three content categories for Likert scale questions: nature of student teaching placement (3 questions), knowledge and experience with the edTPA (21 questions), and relationships with mentor teachers and students (19 questions). In the final section, 15 questions were ultimately utilized when a reliability test was conducted, as detailed in the following pages. Seven additional selected-response questions concerned demographic information and a solicitation to participate in the follow-up interview. Finally, two simple open-ended questions asked, broadly, about how the edTPA impacted opportunities to plan, teach, and assess as well as how the candidate's score impacted the perception of his or her experience.

First, the draft survey was reviewed by two doctorally trained colleagues with experience in assessment and teacher education. The first, a faculty member, worked

**Table 1**  
**Survey Respondents in Relation to Total Population of Initial Certification Candidates**

	<i>Total sample</i>		<i>First semester (spring 2014)</i>		<i>Second semester (fall 2014)</i>	
	<i>Total initial certification population</i>	<i>Overall survey respon- dents (response rate)</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Survey respon- dents (response rate)</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Survey respon- dents (response rate)</i>
Inclusive early childhood (birth to kindergarten)	21	6	21 (8 no score)	6	0	0
Childhood (Grades 1–6)	58	19	40 (10 no score)	13	18 (2 no scores)	6
Adolescent (Grades 7–12)	30	11	18 (3 no scores)	6	12 (2 no scores)	5
All initial certification programs	109 (25 no score, so 84 comple- ters)	36 (33% response rate; 43% adjusted response rate)	79 (21 no scores, so 58 completers)	25 (32% response rate; 43% adjusted response rate)	30 (4 no scores, so 26 comple- ters)	11 (37% response rate; 43% adjusted response rate)

Note. No scores indicate that some candidates did not submit edTPAs to Pearson or that some have not yet received a score. Candidates have up to 1 year to submit the edTPA. The edTPA is a certification requirement but not a requirement of graduation. They were solicited for a survey response and interview participation. The adjusted response rate is the rate of survey response when calculated among the total edTPA completers rather than the total initial certification population, which includes those for whom no edTPA scores have been received.

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with surveys and was familiar with the edTPA as well as program curriculum, fieldwork, and structures. The second, an assessment director, designed surveys and was well versed in content relating to accreditation, TPA, and certification and, specifically, the edTPA. She was also knowledgeable in survey design. The feedback obtained helped to ensure that questions assessed the content categories identified. Finally, the draft survey was piloted with a current student who had not yet taken the edTPA solely for the purpose of improving clarity. Appendix A details the specific input from these reviewers to improve survey validity, resulting in revisions made prior to implementation with candidates.

Among 109 possible participants over two semesters, 36 teaching candidates responded to the survey, with an overall response rate of 33%. However, 25 candidates' scores were not reported and accessible for research so that only 84 completers represent the total population, with an adjusted response rate of 43% (see Table 1). In New York and this program, the edTPA is a requirement for individual certification and not a requirement for program completion; candidates also have 1 year to file a submission. This may, in part, explain missing reported scores.

Second, all survey respondents were solicited in the initial survey to participate in follow-up interviews. Six teaching candidates participated in a 1-hour interview and their edTPA submissions were reviewed (see Table 2). The interviews consisted of nine main questions that probed items that had come up in the pilot focus group and

**Table 2**  
**Description of Teaching Candidates Interviewed**

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Program level and cohort<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Program description</i>	<i>Student teaching placement</i>	<i>Overall score</i>
1 (White male)	Undergraduate first semester	Adolescent Education in Social Studies	Suburban	Mastery
2 (White female)	Graduate first semester	Childhood Education	Suburban	Mastery
3 (White female)	Graduate first semester	Adolescent Education in Science	Suburban	Pass
4 (African American female)	Graduate second semester	Childhood Education	Urban	Fail
5 (White female)	Graduate second semester	Adolescent Education in Science	Suburban	Mastery
6 (White male)	Graduate second semester	Adolescent Education in Science	Urban	Fail

<sup>a</sup>First semester = spring 2014. Second semester = fall 2014.

in the first implementation of the survey. These themes mirrored survey categories but were designed to probe for further elaboration on the following: the nature of participants' student teaching placements and edTPA experiences, relationships during student teaching, discussion of their edTPA submission and scores, and, finally, reflection on personal learning from the experience (see Appendix B). Open-ended interview questions were designed to leverage the unique opportunities inherent in in-depth interviewing (Seidman, 2006). Only those interviews of candidates of childhood and adolescent education are discussed here as they provided multiple samples for examination in response to the solicitation of interviews.

Finally, edTPA submissions for the interviewed candidates were reviewed to confirm interview statements and researcher impressions. Program documents, including aggregated and individual score reports of interviewed candidates, were also reviewed to provide clarity in relation to survey or interview comments.

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative analysis was conducted on the survey to produce a description of the overall sample. First, Cronbach's alpha test for reliability was conducted to ensure that survey items were consistently interpreted and applied. Across the 43 questions on the survey content (excluding demographic questions), the scale's alpha reliability was .72. Of these 43 questions, 4 questions used a different 3-point scale. Additional and separate Cronbach reliability analyses were run on the 39 4-point questions and 4 3-point questions, yielding alpha reliability measures of .77 and .39, respectively. This analysis led to the exclusion of the four questions deemed unreliable from the test. Moreover, an analysis of the three content categories yielded these results for alpha reliability: nature of student teaching placement (.80), knowledge and experience with the edTPA (.82), and relationships with mentor teachers and studies without the 4 3-point questions deemed unreliable (.79). Generally, measures above .70 indicate reliability.

These data were also disaggregated by program and semester to note discrepancies and trends. Because the larger sample was small, numbers for any one program during each semester were even smaller. In addition, the semester groups drew from unequal population sizes, as more teaching candidates engaged in student teaching and the edTPA in the first semester during the spring than in the second semester during the fall. As a result, an analysis by program or semester with this data set proved not to be representative enough to draw conclusions. The power of the sample itself limits review of these quantitative data to descriptive analyses of the overall sample, with the qualitative data providing a complementary perspective that, ultimately, was of more value in interpreting results relative to the research question.

The process of analyzing qualitative data on the surveys and, particularly, on the interviews involved multiple readings, regroupings of these data, and identification of themes to identify emergent codes (Glaser, 1992). The coding process

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was followed by analytic memo writing (Lempert, 2012) to raise questions for additional readings of the data. Qualitative responses on the surveys were grouped by semester and, eventually, by program to discern patterns related to these categories, anticipating how edTPA implementation might change over time or how program contexts might relate to candidates' perceptions of their experiences. This analysis process resulted in the identification of emergent codes, which were then applied to interview transcripts. Moreover, interview transcripts were read according to semester of edTPA administration to ascertain any noticeable differences in implementation over time. Each review of transcripts also included analytical memo writing that highlighted key phrases, key ideas, and key questions raised by that particular interview.

For this study, program documents—most particularly, edTPA results and edTPA submissions of interviewed candidates—were reviewed to verify and clarify the experiences of the candidates and results of assessments.

## **Results**

The overall edTPA pass rate (scores taken from two semesters) for participants across all programs stands at 83%, with 35% achieving the mastery-level distinction. These figures exceed the state pass rate, which hovers near 80% (Meuwissen & Choppin, 2015). Whereas survey responses were generally positive about the student teaching experience and candidates' preparation for it, responses discussing the edTPA experience—especially as revealed in written responses—were not. Interviews generally revealed more subtle nuances. After an initial discussion of candidate views regarding placements and candidates' preparation for the edTPA and student teaching, four key themes are presented to characterize how candidates perceived the edTPA during student teaching as a reflective, educative, mandated, and subtractive experience.

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**Table 3**  
**Survey Results:**  
**Nature of the Student Teaching Placement, 3 Selected-Response Questions**

<i>Question</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I regularly taught full-length lessons during my student teaching placement.	36	1.69	.98
I felt prepared by my program to teach students in my placement.	36	1.83	.81
The amount of teaching I did satisfied my expectations toward student teaching.	36	1.83	.91

Note. Three selected-response questions on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree).

### **Student Teachers on Placements and Preparation**

Teaching candidates who responded to the survey generally expressed that they felt prepared for student teaching, while their feelings about preparation for the edTPA, though lower, improved over time. Eighty-one percent reported that they felt prepared to teach by the program, and 83% were satisfied with the amount of teaching they did, with 81% reporting that they regularly taught full lessons during student teaching. Just 28% agreed that they were given more opportunities to teach as a result of participating in the edTPA (Table 3).

In terms of preparation for the edTPA, 51% of the overall sample agreed that they were well prepared, while disaggregated analysis showed that this percentage increased from 48% among first semester respondents to 60% among second semester respondents. Overall, 49% noted that they had not heard of the edTPA before the student teaching semester; this decreased over time from 60% to just 20% during the second semester of implementation. Finally, some survey responses indicated mixed reviews about program alignment with the edTPA. While 69% indicated that the edTPA allowed respondents to exhibit skills and knowledge acquired in the program, 56% said their scores were consistent with feedback received from mentors and supervisors, and only 53% felt their scores were consistent with previous performance in course work. These results suggest that, although implementation of the edTPA may have improved so that respondents felt more prepared during the second semester, questions remain about the alignment between respondents' perceptions of the feedback provided by the edTPA, the field, and their university course work (Table 4).

These perceptions existed within the context of how teaching candidates reported they experienced the edTPA during student teaching; in this respect, four key experiences surfaced in the results, particularly in the qualitative responses, and are reviewed next.

#### **The edTPA as a Reflective Experience: "The edTPA Really Opened My Eyes"**

With the analysis of teaching threaded through all three tasks of the edTPA, it would be expected that taking the edTPA would be a reflective experience for student teachers. Although some candidates shared that the experience was reflective for them, results indicate that there were conflicting feelings about the degree to which the edTPA focused the reflection on *teaching*.

In general, survey responses that were most positive about the edTPA as a reflective experience indicated that respondents learned about themselves as professional educators. Sixty-three percent of respondents reported that the edTPA helped them better understand teacher roles and how the respondents were developing as teachers, whereas 53% reported that the edTPA helped them better understand what they needed to do to continue their professional growth as educators (see Table 4).

Open-ended survey responses and interviews better reveal the edTPA as a

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**Table 4**  
**Survey Results: Knowledge and Experience With the edTPA**

<i>Question</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Because of the edTPA, I was given more opportunities to teach than I had expected. <sup>a</sup>	36	3.06	.92
I hadn't heard of the edTPA until my student teaching semester. <sup>a</sup>	35	2.51	1.15
I was well prepared for the edTPA by my program. <sup>a</sup>	35	2.51	1.07
The edTPA allowed me to exhibit the skills and knowledge I had acquired through my program. <sup>a</sup>	35	2.23	.84
The edTPA score I received was consistent with the feedback I had received from either my mentor teacher and/or my clinical supervisor. <sup>a</sup>	34	2.32	1.04
The edTPA score I received was consistent with my previous performance in program coursework. <sup>a</sup>	34	2.41	1.10
Completing the edTPA helped me to refine my understanding of how I am developing as a teacher. <sup>a</sup>	35	2.46	1.01
Completing the edTPA helped me refine my understanding of teacher roles, in general. <sup>a</sup>	35	2.43	.98
Completing the edTPA helped me refine my understanding of the content taught in the classroom. <sup>a</sup>	35	2.60	1.09
Completing the edTPA helped me refine my understanding of students' needs and interests. <sup>a</sup>	35	2.46	1.01
Completing the edTPA helped me refine my understanding of how students learn. <sup>a</sup>	35	2.51	1.01
Completing the edTPA helped me refine my understanding of the context of learning. <sup>a</sup>	34	2.68	1.04
Completing the edTPA helped me refine my understanding of curriculum design. <sup>a</sup>	35	2.46	.95
Completing the edTPA helped me refine my understanding of the professional preparation required to become a teacher. <sup>a</sup>	34	2.50	.86
Completing the edTPA helped me refine my understanding of the steps I need to take to continue my professional growth as an educator. <sup>a</sup>	34	2.41	.86
Completing the edTPA helped me refine my understanding of how I will be evaluated as a new teacher in the future. <sup>a</sup>	34	2.71	.84
How well prepared were you for the planning component of the edTPA? <sup>b</sup>	35	2.66	.94
How well prepared were you for the instruction component of the edTPA? <sup>b</sup>	35	2.63	.84
How well prepared were you for the assessment component of the edTPA? <sup>b</sup>	35	2.06	.76
How well prepared were you to analyze teaching in your edTPA? <sup>b</sup>	35	2.43	.81
How well prepared were you to address the academic language demands of students in your edTPA? <sup>b</sup>	35	2.34	.73

Note. Twenty-one selected-response questions.

<sup>a</sup>Responses were on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree).

<sup>b</sup>Responses were on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (unprepared) to 4 (very well prepared).

reflective experience. In response to a question about how the edTPA impacted opportunities to plan, teach, and assess, one graduate childhood education candidate from the second semester discussed how her failing edTPA score revealed where she needed to work. She said,

The edTPA really opened my eyes to how I can assess my students better, so that it makes it better for me for when I am planning the next lessons. Doing the edTPA really had me think about how I am planning so that all students can learn. It had me look at myself and see what I do well and what I can improve on.

In a follow-up interview, however, this same candidate shared that she did not have time to reflect on her teaching because “you have to go home and do edTPA.” These contradictory comments from the same candidate reveal that, at times, reflection on teaching is constrained by having to complete the edTPA.

A graduate adolescent education candidate, also from the second semester, shared her “mixed thoughts” about the edTPA as a tool for reflection. In the survey, she wrote that planning for the edTPA caused her to differentiate more than she had before. At the same, she wrote that she got caught up in thinking about “where the best footage was coming from” so that she had “less time to actually learn and reflect from my student teaching experience because I was so caught up in this test.” During a follow-up interview, Candidate 5 clarified her statement to some degree. She talked about how a focus on individual needs was addressed less in the high school where she did her edTPA and how she appreciated being required to think about it in that placement. However, she said that she learned more about differentiation from planning with the middle school teachers in her second placement. Months after her experience taking the edTPA, she reported,

If I was [*sic*] talking to you during the edTPA, I’d say this was horrible and would be super stressed. . . . Now that it’s over . . . it gave me a lot to think about and to write about. . . . It was a good reflection practice.

Another graduate adolescent education candidate, this time from the first semester, also shared, in the survey, that the “edTPA was mainly valuable as a tool for reflection.” In a follow-up interview, Candidate 3 talked about the reflective benefits of the video in particular. She valued that the video helped her with “seeing things I didn’t know,” and she envisioned continuing to use video to improve her future teaching.

Some of this enthusiasm was dampened when she received a score of 1 on classroom community, which she suspected had to do with her video, which revealed a student making an inappropriate remark that she did not notice while teaching. Despite this, Candidate 3 decided to use the clip because of other examples of successful practice and classroom community in the remaining segment. She reflected on the student’s behavior in her commentary and took appropriate disciplinary action. She shared,



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The fact that I saw it afterwards and handled it afterwards . . . I did reflect on it. . . . I didn't ignore it. I addressed it. And it didn't make a difference. I still got dinged. . . . Isn't that a good demonstration? When you have a kid act out in class and you handle that. Isn't that part of teaching? . . . It doesn't sit well with me to say, here, put on a show. Teaching is not a show.

This candidate felt her hours of videotaping—beyond the requirements for the edTPA—caused her to reflect on her teaching in positive ways. However, the clip, the reflective commentary, and the score she received for her edTPA cast doubt on that experience.

#### ***The edTPA as an Educative Experience: “The Nitty Gritty About Where to Go With Students”***

Supporters of the edTPA have long contended that it has the potential to be an educative experience that will improve the profession (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2013). Because TPAs engage candidates in core activities of teaching, they have the potential to help candidates fine-tune such practices (Pechone & Chung, 2006).

In general, survey results tended to suggest that the educative potential of the edTPA is subsumed by its import as a certifying exam. Respondents reported that the edTPA helped them learn about students' needs and interests (60%), how students learn (60%), and the context of learning (74%). Additionally, 54% reported that the edTPA helped them better understand curriculum design, with 51% reporting that they refined their understanding of how content should be taught (see Table 4). One graduate early childhood education candidate from the first semester wrote that the edTPA “taught me many new ways to assess my teaching and not just the students' learning.” A graduate childhood education candidate from the second semester shared that “completing the edTPA allowed me to plan, teach, and assess students. . . . It allowed me to create clear lesson plans, the video give [*sic*] an opportunity to see yourself teaching and adjust how you implement your instruction.”

These more positive responses, however, were infrequent and overshadowed by comments such as the following by an undergraduate childhood education candidate from the first semester: “It was more of a burden to get done than a learning experience to grow from student interactions and responses.” Other candidates talked about the edTPA using words such as “anxiety” and “extreme stress” that “ruined my experience.” These comments do not speak directly to the edTPA as a learning experience; however, they raise some concern about the potential for learning under such circumstances.

While the interviews reflected these tensions as well, some stories from candidates illustrated ways that the experience of the edTPA helped them learn new assessment practices and differentiated planning that were less applied through previous course work and aided in better understanding student interests and learning needs.

For example, a graduate adolescent education candidate from the second

semester identified assessment as the thing she most learned through the edTPA process. Candidate 5 shared that this truly enhanced her practice because it added something different than what she had focused on in course work. She shared,

I don't think we really focused as much on assessments as we could have or maybe should have. . . . It was just hard for me to think about. . . . Automatically, I think of a test or quiz but . . . that's not really what the assessment is all about. That's not what any assessment should be all about.

Whereas her program instructed her to backward plan (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), doing the assessment task for the edTPA was what really helped her understand that curricular design process in practice. She shared how she kept changing her lesson plans as she refined her assessment, which was to be a lab. She credited the edTPA's emphasis on analyzing student learning and the practice of providing feedback as important to the ways in which she refined her practice during the process. While some assignments that required her to analyze learning had been done during her course work, she admitted that analyzing the learning that resulted from her instruction with real students was an experience through which she most grew as a developing teacher.

Another teaching candidate spoke in detailed ways about how the edTPA experience particularly forced her to rethink and deepen her ideas about planning. This graduate childhood education candidate from the second semester shared how the detailed requirements of the tasks required her to think about next steps with all her children. Candidate 4 reported, "It taught me how to get into the nitty gritty about where to go with students." She also referenced her exposure to backward planning in her course work as a "written form" but that the edTPA "helped her to put it into action." She concluded that the "edTPA is getting you to really think about how you are reaching all of these students." She acknowledged that this learning was from both the edTPA and student teaching; at the moment, they appeared to be one and the same.

### ***The edTPA as a Mandate: "Working Around the Words"***

Unsurprisingly, respondents discussed the experience of the edTPA as a requirement. Candidates reported that their "main focus" was on "meeting the requirements" or "completing the edTPA." Candidate 2, a graduate childhood education student from the first semester complained, "i [sic] was unable to really throw myself into the classroom and teaching because i [sic] was too busy worrying about completing templates." Sixty-four percent of respondents reported that completing the edTPA became a central focus of conversation with mentors, while 92% of candidates claimed that their mentors lacked knowledge of the edTPA (see Table 5). Some discussed their work with the video editing and "endless write-ups" as indicators of the edTPA as a requirement. Some set up the work on the edTPA in opposition to student teaching. Said one graduate adolescent math candidate from the second

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semester, “The entire experience of student teaching was too much about writing the edTPA and it really hurt the entire experience of teaching.”

Others talked about how a particular focus required by the edTPA assumed importance over other aspects of student teaching. One graduate childhood education candidate from the second semester talked about the assessment’s emphasis on language function, language demand, and accompanying instructional supports. Finally, another graduate childhood education candidate, this time from the second semester, suggested that the edTPA’s emphasis on planning and assessment for literacy and mathematics at the elementary school level left little time for practicing the tasks of planning and assessing other subjects.

One graduate adolescent education candidate from the second semester claimed that the edTPA “forces a proscribed framework upon the nature of the lessons, the means of presenting the lessons, and the natural and reflective scope of the unit and

**Table 5**  
**Survey Results: Relationships With Mentor Teachers and Students**

<i>Question</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
My mentor teacher modeled effective teaching.	36	1.44	.61
My mentor teacher allowed me to develop my own teaching style.	36	1.64	.83
My mentor teacher discussed and/or advised me on lesson plans I was preparing and implementing.	36	1.53	.65
My mentor teacher discussed and/or advised me on other aspects of being a professional teacher and running a classroom.	36	1.44	.77
My mentor teacher allowed me to assume full-time teaching responsibility during my student teaching experience.	36	1.67	.89
My mentor teacher discussed student learning, assessment, and feedback for students with me.	36	1.78	.63
My mentor teacher observed my teaching regularly.	36	1.5	.85
My mentor teacher provided frequent feedback on my teaching practice.	36	1.5	.77
My mentor teacher allowed me to try out new strategies in the classroom.	36	1.75	.84
My mentor teacher helped me reflect and gain insights on my own teaching practice.	36	1.58	.77
Completing the edTPA became the central focus of my interaction with my mentor teacher.	36	2.11	1.14
My mentor teacher lacked knowledge of the edTPA	35	1.51	.74
I built relationships with my students over the course of the semester.	36	1.22	.48
I was able, with assistance, to meet the needs of the students in my placement.	36	1.44	.5
Completing the edTPA helped me to understand students’ needs and interests in my placement.	36	2.58	1.05

Note. Fifteen selected-response questions on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree).

lesson plan.” Working in an urban living environment high school classroom structured around a particular teaching model used by his mentor that encompassed mini-lessons and self-directed student work, Candidate 6 explained in a follow-up interview that he found himself “trying to shoehorn in . . . instruction that would meet the requirements of the prompts in the edTPA into an existing curriculum and find something to talk about.” Because, for much of the time, students were working independently, he had to figure out how to structure group work and whole-group instruction where he could also demonstrate feedback for the benefit of creating video footage.

An undergraduate adolescent education candidate talked about how the edTPA was “a lot of working around the words.” Candidate 1 talked about spending “countless hours just changing paragraphs and sentences even.” He shared that, at one point, he took a few days off from student teaching and went to the library, where he worked primarily on writing the edTPA. He acknowledged that this was not “just an assignment.” Its status as a test of his performance was somewhat appealing as a challenge for this candidate, who was also a competitive athlete. While he revealed a good sense of what the edTPA rubrics and tasks required of him, he stressed that it came down to “the wording part” and a focus on “strategy.” His efforts gave the examiners what they wanted and resulted in the highest score of mastery the unit has seen so far, at 74 out of 75.

#### ***The edTPA as a Subtractive Experience: “100 Hours It Took Away”***

Several candidates echoed a sentiment shared by Candidate 1, who expressed that the experience of the edTPA was one that “took away from my student teaching experience.” This sense of loss was not always well explicated across the data, especially in the surveys, but it was a recurring pattern. Although these candidates had never experienced student teaching before, they still had a sense that the time spent on their edTPA was time taken away from other experiences perceived as more valuable during student teaching.

There was some indication in the previously reported survey responses and in subsequent interviews that relationships were altered in concerning ways. For example, several candidates revealed in the survey and subsequent interviews that they became translators of the edTPA for mentors, who the candidates claimed were not knowledgeable enough about the edTPA, when clinical supervisors would not or could not assume that role. This shifted and sometimes strained the role dynamics of the traditional student teaching triad. In terms of students, respondents nearly unanimously felt that they built relationships with students and that they were able to meet students’ needs, with assistance, yet only half thought the experience of the edTPA helped them understand students’ needs and interests better (see Table 5). Some candidates, like this graduate early childhood candidate from the first semester, shared that the edTPA “took some focus away from the students,” who were not the subject class of the assessment. Others reported that they had less time for planning

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lessons or finding the resources to create richer lessons and that the planning the edTPA required was not how one would “naturally” do it. One graduate childhood education candidate from the second semester reported that the edTPA “took away the enjoyment of the experience because I was always thinking about what I needed to say or complete with the students in order for the lesson to be a success.”

One graduate childhood education candidate from the first semester, in her survey response, charged that the edTPA had “completely ruined the student teaching experience for me.” In a follow-up interview, Candidate 2 shared that she sometimes sat in the back of the elementary school classroom and wrote her edTPA, released by her mentor teacher to do so. She characterized the edTPA in this placement, which was with a very supportive mentor, as casting a “shadow” over her student teaching. She was always worried about what she could get out of the kids for the benefit of completing the assessment. When she moved into her second placement in a different classroom, after her edTPA was submitted, she felt a “weight off her shoulders.” She talked about connecting with the kids more and that it was “not so much about myself” as she had felt when doing the edTPA.

One undergraduate adolescent education candidate wrote that the edTPA experience “added an extra level of stress that took away from my student teaching experience.” In a follow-up interview, Candidate 1 expressed that it was “frustrating to spend so much time on something that seemed irrelevant. . . . I shouldn’t be spending about 7 hours a week rewriting paragraphs and sentences just to make sure the wording is right when I could be using that to read about new methods of teaching, possibly implement them, and find . . . not find . . . but to create new lessons.” Like Candidate 2, Candidate 1 received a mastery score but still reported the edTPA experience as one that took away from his learning experience.

Candidate 6 reported that he learned “very little” from the edTPA process, whereas he learned “a ton” from student teaching. He reported that time spent “writing and planning and preparing for this test took away from this experience, did not add to it.” He estimated that writing the edTPA took “100 hours,” which “took away from the planning I could have been doing to make my student teaching assignment richer.” After submitting the edTPA, he was “relieved” and confident that he would pass. He reported being able to spend the rest of his placement on what mattered to him and his learning—working with the students and mentors to try out new classroom practices and receive feedback in a supervised environment so he could figure out “who I was going to be as a teacher.”

Receiving a failing grade on the edTPA was “demoralizing,” and the candidate reported that the feedback he received on his score report provided “nothing” that he could use with confidence to get a different result on a retake. Toward the end of the interview, the candidate spoke about the benefits of his student teaching and his relationship with the students. Even after completing the placement and graduating from the program in December, he continued to visit the classroom and teach lessons for the Advanced Placement Environmental Science classroom as he completed his

certification requirements and looked for jobs. He ended the conversation sharing one of many notes from students who praised his teaching. “Despite the feedback that I’m not qualified to be a teacher,” referring to his edTPA score, he hoped that he would “still be effective enough to change some lives in the process.”

## **Discussion**

This study reveals that there were mixed ways that student teachers in the first two semesters of implementation of the edTPA as a high-stakes assessment experienced this exam as they learned to teach. Whereas survey and interview data revealed some of the contrasting perceptions student teachers held toward the experience, the interviews revealed in greater detail evidence of particular instances of the edTPA as a reflective, educative, mandated, and subtractive experience. It was possible, and quite likely, that any single student teacher experienced the edTPA in more than one way and sometimes in ways that were in opposition. Just as Meuwissen and Choppin (2015) found in their revelation of tensions negotiated during the edTPA, it is possible that the edTPA may offer less a clear picture of a candidate’s ability to be an effective teacher and more the candidate’s capacity to negotiate these varied and sometimes conflicting experiences of the edTPA during student teaching.

### ***Benefits Overshadowed by the Mandate***

These results suggest that teaching candidates experienced the edTPA in ways that they perceived narrowed the scope of their learning. While the edTPA as a reflective and educative experience was acknowledged, the emphasis on the requirement seemed to overshadow these benefits. More than any other of the four themes, candidates reported experiencing the edTPA as a mandate. This reflects a caution offered by lead edTPA researchers when they suggested that the designs of TPAs can create positive outcomes for candidates if the policy context creates those conditions for programs to align and support candidates (Wei & Pecheone, 2010). Similarly, Cochran-Smith, Piazza, and Power (2013) noted that TPAs can reduce the complexity of ambitious teaching by trivializing teaching. More recently, Cochran-Smith et al. (2016) noted specifically that edTPA implementation in New York was “problematic” and did not meet basic conditions for the edTPA to lead to learning for candidates and programs. Given the limited pilot and policy context in New York, these results are not necessarily surprising.

Although many candidates lauded the goal of increasing the expectations for those who enter teaching, particular ways the edTPA impacted their lived experiences as a high-stakes assessment appeared to get in the way of reported benefits. This resonates with Okhremtchouk et al. (2013), who noted unintended impacts on personal time, program course work, and classroom duties among teacher candidates

experiencing PACT, while noting similar benefits found here in differentiation, assessment, and reflection in action.

***Split Talk About Student Teaching and the edTPA:  
New Divides in Learning to Teach***

Student teachers' responses mirror some of what is known about student teaching, yet they also signal some different ideas worth exploring. Student teachers get deep satisfaction from their student teaching experience (Anderson & Stillman, 2011), even though they may sometimes wonder about their preparation for it. Although there is some evidence of the two-worlds pitfall (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1983) between university course work and life in classrooms, results here seem to indicate an additional divide between the proximal—or local—context of program and placement and the distant, as represented by the edTPA as a national, standardized assessment of teaching performance. Such an observation mirrors Coloma's (2015) discussion of the impact that distant evaluators had on candidates taking the edTPA in a less consequential environment than New York.

Furthermore, the study reveals a curious split in how teaching candidates talked about student teaching and their edTPA. Many times they talked about these experiences as distinct from one another and in opposition, saying, for example, that the edTPA was not reflective but their student teaching was. Where they reported negative feelings about the edTPA, they often constructed this split. When they talked about benefits of the edTPA experience—even if it was the same candidate—the distinction between student teaching and the edTPA closed.

***Future Considerations for Program Improvement***

Certainly programs like this one should use results from candidates to align program tasks with edTPA tasks that do have some research-based support as good practice. As the gap is reduced between what the edTPA requires and what the program develops through course work and field experiences, we can anticipate that some amount of stress for candidates should be reduced and that performance will increase over time.

Moreover, this study contributes to calls for enhanced clinical practice throughout programs. All student teachers in this study completed their edTPA work during their first placement, within the first 7 weeks they were in the school as a full-time student teacher. For the vast majority, especially graduate students, this was the first time they were executing practices they had been taught, to greater and lesser degrees, in program course work with real students. Thus, they were implementing practices for a high-stakes assessment that would determine their licensure as initially certified teachers for the first time in many instances. This observation calls for a continued focus on how we can enhance clinical practice *prior* to student teaching so that TPAs, more broadly, reflect a better assessment of what candidates have actually learned through their programs.



***Lingering Concerns and Questions for a Way Forward***

This study is about a particular policy usage of the edTPA in one school of education within one state where limited pilots and poor policy context for implementation have been noted by outside experts and researchers. However, the questions and concerns the study raises bear consideration in the way forward on using TPAs within programs at the particular developmental moment represented by preservice student teaching.

In particular, the study calls for teacher educators and policy makers to wonder if some of the value of a performance assessment diminishes when that assessment takes on the characteristics of a national, standardized exam. The distance of evaluators, the lack of individualized feedback, and constrained faculty assistance may impact the degree to which the assessment accurately assesses and assists student teachers. To be sure, the edTPA is a rich task requiring many components, but would it benefit learning and individual practice more if it could be utilized more explicitly as a formative assessment tool for individual candidates, even if state reporting continued for program evaluation purposes? Would everyone—and most especially student teachers—learn more as a result, increasing the experience of the edTPA as a reflective and educative tool?

Moreover, the study calls us to consider whether it is fair and appropriate to put the stakes on individual teaching candidates who are learning to teach. Are the expectations for passing appropriate for the developmental nature of novice teaching candidates? Are the expectations, perhaps, premature, even if program alignment improves over time? When attaching high stakes to individual teaching candidates, do we diminish the learning potential of the edTPA beyond where we can recapture it? Are we asking candidates to do more than they can do within the relatively short time they have to develop classroom community in another teacher's room and to practice and execute things that they learned about and may have only practiced in more artificial situations? Are we assured of the measurement validity to such a degree that local judgments are of less value? Is the assessment distorting the experience of student teaching?

On this last question, the study suggests that the edTPA is certainly having some kind of impact, the nature of which only time will discern. This study, however, does suggest that early implementation of the edTPA as a licensure requirement for individual teaching candidates in initial certification programs, in this case, did constrict the potential for learning to teach during student teaching. Further research as well as program and policy adjustments should be thoughtfully considered based on this work.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Survey Validity**

Items on the survey, including the three content categories, were validated as constructs through the use of consultant experts. Each expert contributed unique knowledge to the evaluation of the draft survey.

The first, a faculty member, was familiar with the edTPA as the lead teacher educator charged with knowledge of program curriculum, fieldwork, structures, and accreditation. As a teacher educator, she was knowledgeable about the edTPA, its constructs, and its relationship to the field of teacher education. She was also knowledgeable about teacher performance assessments and had been following information about the PACT, the precursor to the edTPA. Her feedback focused on all content categories, as she was knowledgeable about both the edTPA and the nature of student teaching given her role not only as a faculty member but also as a program coordinator and clinical supervisor.

The second, the unit's assessment director, designed surveys and was well versed in content relating to accreditation, teacher performance assessment, certification, and, specifically, the edTPA. She was also knowledgeable about survey design. Her feedback focused on ensuring that items related to identified content categories and on formatting. Her familiarity with the edTPA enabled her also to ensure that intended assumptions about the edTPA and teacher professionalism were addressed.

The third, a current student who had not yet completed the edTPA, provided feedback on the clarity of the questions.

Reviewer feedback helped to ensure that questions assessed the identified content categories and were clearly conveyed to potential respondents. The reviewers made very specific recommendations, as outlined herein.

First, the reviewers provided recommendations about the formatting of several questions. In particular, five questions about what candidates discussed with mentor teachers were changed from a continuum scale to a 3-point scale response that was believed to be more consistent with the rest of the survey format. Additionally, discussion with the faculty member and assessment director resulted in changing the majority of the survey items from a 5-point to a 4-point Likert scale response to force respondents to make a choice.

Second, the assessment director encouraged incorporating more prompts to assess the contributions of the edTPA and student teaching to professionalizing teaching. This led to adding the following prompts: (a) "My mentor teacher discussed and/or advised me on other aspects of being a professional teacher and running a classroom" and (b) "Completing the edTPA helped refine my understanding of how I will be evaluated as a new teacher in the future." The feedback also resulted in eliminating a prompt that included the phrase "the knowledge base of the teaching profession," which was deemed too vague and unclear to preservice candidates.

Third, both the faculty member and assessment director urged adding prompts that would elicit understanding of the link between the edTPA and typical elements of the program. In this sense, I revised prompts that initially discussed "classroom dynamics" and "curriculum practice." For the former, I eliminated the phrase, opting instead to use the phrase "context for learning," which comes directly from the edTPA itself. Additionally, I revised the latter to read "Completing the edTPA helped me refine my understanding of curriculum design," because students would be more familiar with such phrasing. Finally, I was encouraged to add a prompt to complement others in the draft that more specifically assessed program

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alignment in the edTPA experience of candidates: “The edTPA allowed me to exhibit the skills and knowledge I had acquired through my program.”

Fourth, reviewers encouraged the elimination of prompts that were unnecessarily redundant or leading to reduce survey fatigue. For example, two questions were nearly opposite ideas about completing the edTPA and understanding students. One was dropped and the other was revised to get at students’ needs and interests: “Completing the edTPA helped me to understand students’ needs and interests in my placement.” Additionally, prompts that discussed “freedom to try new strategies” and “being receptive to my ideas, opinions, and concerns” were viewed as too value laden and replaced with a clearer, more focused statement of the intent: “My mentor teacher allowed me to try out new strategies in the classroom.” Another example included prompts designed to measure whether candidates got “ample time to teach” and completed a “takeover of responsibility for teaching.” This language was replaced with prompts such as “I regularly taught full-length lessons during my student teaching placement” and “The amount of teaching I did satisfied my expectations toward student teaching.”

Fifth, reviewers helped with improving the general clarity and focus of questions. For example, I took out language like “pupil evaluation and feedback” to increase clarity by including the prompt “My mentor teacher discussed student learning, assessment, and feedback for students with me.” In another instance, a prompt that sought to understand how knowledgeable candidates were of the edTPA included the phrase “relatively knowledgeable” of the edTPA requirement. This was replaced with more focused prompts, such as “I hadn’t heard of the edTPA until my student teaching semester” and “I was well prepared for the edTPA by my program.” Finally, a prompt that queried whether the edTPA helped candidates understand “the learning process” was replaced with a more focused prompt: “Completing the edTPA helped me refine my understanding of how students learn.”

Last, the assessment director encouraged me to ask additional demographic questions than the two I had initially proposed regarding undergraduate or graduate level as well as initial certification program. These additional demographic questions gathered information about gender and ethnicity. They also verified the grade levels of the classrooms in which candidates completed the edTPA in case there were any inconsistencies between placements and certification requirements.

## **Appendix B** ***Interview Protocol***

*Research Question:* How do student teachers experience the edTPA during its implementation as an individual exam for initial certification?

<i>Interview question</i>	<i>Link to survey categories</i>	<i>Additional elaboration</i>
1. So, according to my records, you student taught at _____ and _____ in [subject area]. Please tell me what your student teaching experience was like. Additional probes: highs and lows, mostly positive/ mostly negative?	Nature of the student teaching placement	Open with no deliberate mention of edTPA

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<p>2. Some people talk about the triad of relationships (student teacher–clinical supervisor–mentor teacher) in student teaching with students at the center. [Share diagram]. Tell me about these relationships during student teaching and how they helped and hindered your learning.</p>	<p>Relationships with mentor teachers and students</p>	<p>Open with no deliberate mention of edTPA</p>
<p>3. Did you feel prepared for student teaching? Additional probes: If so, in what ways? If not, why not?</p>	<p>Nature of the student teaching placement</p>	<p>Open with no deliberate mention of edTPA</p>
<p>4. In terms of the edTPA, I understand that you did your edTPA in [which placement]? Please tell me what completing the edTPA was like. Additional probes: highs and lows, mostly positive/mostly negative?</p>	<p>Knowledge and experience with the edTPA</p>	
<p>5. Did you feel prepared for the edTPA? Additional probes: If so, in what ways? If not, why not?</p>	<p>Knowledge and experience with the edTPA</p>	
<p>6. Tell me about your edTPA submission. Listen and probe that these items are addressed if they need clarification after a review of the submission prior to the interview: focus of edTPA submission, rationale for focus, most difficult tasks, assembling the submission.</p>	<p>Knowledge and experience with the edTPA</p>	
<p>You’ve had some distance now from the edTPA. What would you say you learned from doing the edTPA, if anything? Listen and probe for the following: things relating to planning, instruction, assessment, analysis of teaching, and academic language.</p>	<p>Knowledge and experience with the edTPA</p>	<p>Focus on personal learning</p>
<p>8. Submitting your edTPA and receiving your score:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you submitted, how did you feel about your edTPA submission?</li> <li>• How did you feel about your score? Any surprises?</li> <li>• How did seeing your score change your perception of doing the edTPA?</li> </ul>	<p>Knowledge and experience with the edTPA</p>	
<p>9. As you look ahead, what about your student teaching experience has most prepared you for full-time teaching?</p>	<p>Nature of the student teaching placement</p>	<p>Open with no deliberate mention of edTPA; focus on personal learning</p>

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