

Teacher Certification and Licensure Assessments

Tamra S. Davis
Illinois State University
Normal, IL

Kathy J. Mountjoy
Illinois State University
Normal, IL

On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This law reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. One policy change that has come about because of ESSA is the reduction of federal intervention into state education policies “The new law does not give ‘carte blanche’ to the states, but it does give significantly increased flexibility” (Martin and Hunt, 2016, p. 1). One of the major areas where states have regained control is in determining teacher qualifications. As a result, many states are implementing reform policies that hold institutions of teacher education more accountable by requiring a performance-based assessment of their graduates that includes both content knowledge and pedagogy (Reagan, Schram, McCurdy, Change, and Evans, 2016).

According to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE, n.d.), 40 states and the District of Columbia and more than 600 teacher education programs are using an educational teacher performance assessment (edTPA). The assessment is a performance- and standards-based assessment available nationally that utilizes a rigorous process where teacher education candidates demonstrate classroom skills needed for a beginning teacher. The edTPA complements other subject specific assessments such as content knowledge exams.

This chapter discusses various certification/licensure requirements, assessment for preservice teachers and the assessment of certified classroom teachers

SUMMARY OF CERTIFICATION/LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS

Teacher certification/licensure requirements have been evolving and changing for many years. Testing requirements for teachers vary on a state-by-state basis as each individual state has the authority to establish its own certification/licensure requirements. States have the responsibility for selecting the assessment to be used for both certification and licensure as well as for determining the minimum passing score (DeMonte, 2015). As McDonald, LaBonty, and Lacy (2007) observed, “Describing how all business education candidates are assessed would be an extensive task” (p. 172).

In general, business teacher education certification or licensure includes a subject-specific assessment and a performance-based assessment. Although alternative paths exist, this chapter focuses on traditional teacher-preparation programs. Teacher preparation programs should ensure that aspiring teachers have the requisite knowledge and skills to be effective in the classroom (National Business Education Association, 2015). Nearly all states require that preservice teachers pass one or more standardized tests to demonstrate their mastery of content (Teacher Certification Degrees, 2016c).

Goals to improve the quality of teacher education candidates can be traced back in the history of teacher education. In a report titled, *Tomorrow's Teachers* (The Holmes Group, 1986), a group of 100 deans of schools of education identified five goals to improve teacher training. One of those goals was to create standards for entry into the profession of teaching. Because each state is responsible for deciding how these standards of entry will be met, many states use assessments as both a threshold to enter teacher preparation programs as well as a capstone to demonstrate that preservice teachers are ready to become competent classroom teachers (Teacher Certification Degrees, 2016c).

According to the National Council on Teacher Quality (2016), teacher education candidates should have an average or above average ACT or SAT score. Some institutions, such as Fort Hayes State University (2016) in Kansas, accept an ACT score as part of their admission criteria for acceptance into a teacher-education program. Because the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP formerly known as the Basic Skills test) is required in Illinois (Illinois State Board of Education, 2014), this assessment is also used by some Illinois universities as a gateway for admission into teacher education programs. The TAP covers reading comprehension, language arts (grammar and writing), mathematics, and a constructed-response writing assignment. The Illinois State Board of Education allows certain ACT and SAT scores to be substituted for the TAP (Illinois State Board of Education, 2014).

In Illinois, to become a certified classroom teacher, all candidates must complete a process called “Entitlement.” The process includes completing a bachelor’s degree in a teaching preparation program approved by the Illinois State Board of Education, successfully completing a student-teaching experience, and passing three assessments: a

basic skills test, a content-specific test, and an edTPA (Teacher Certification Degrees, 2016b). In New York State, for a first initial teaching certificate in most certificate areas, candidates must achieve passing scores on the Educating All Students test, the Academic Literacy Skills Test, edTPA, and the Content Specialty Test(s) in their area of certification (New York State Education, 2015)

Many states use one or more of the Praxis Series tests developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS, 2016b). The Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators measures academic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. The Praxis Subject Assessments (formerly the Praxis II tests) measure subject-specific content knowledge, as well as general and subject-specific teaching skills that are needed by preservice teachers. The Praxis Content Knowledge for Teaching Assessments measures subject-specific content knowledge, with a focus on specialized content knowledge used in K–12 teaching (ETS, 2016a).

In Tennessee, teachers begin with a Practitioner License and transition to a Professional License. The initial Practitioner License is valid for three years and can be renewed once. While holding a Practitioner License, the teacher completes professional development units. To advance to the next level of licensure, the teacher needs 30 professional development units and a minimum of three years of experience. To qualify for and receive initial Practitioner License, a teacher candidate must have a bachelor's degree from an approved teacher education preparation program and pass the Praxis II: Principles for Teaching and Learning exam, a basic skills exam, and the Praxis II: Content-Specific exam (Teacher Certification Degrees, 2016d). According to the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE, 2016), as of September 2013, teacher candidates may substitute a passing score on the edTPA for the Praxis II: Principles for Teaching and Learning.

In California, teacher-education candidates must hold a bachelor's degree and complete a teacher-preparation program. In addition, the testing requirements include the California Basic Educational Skills Test; the California Subject Examinations for Teachers (including a basic writing test); the California State University Early Assessment Program or the university's Placement Exam (Teacher Certification Degrees, 2016a). The edTPA is an acceptable assessment to replace the placement exam (SCALE, 2016a).

In Missouri, teacher candidates must pass the Missouri Educator Gateway Assessments, which is a series of assessments taken in the course of the student's academic career. These assessments include the General Education Assessment, the Missouri Content Assessments, and the Missouri Performance Assessment (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016).

Regardless of the state, the National Association for Business Teacher Education (National Business Education Association, 2015) has provided specific standards and guidelines to form a solid foundation for all business education programs in its pub-

lication *Business Teacher Education Curriculum Guide and Program Standards* The standards address all areas of business teacher preparation, including professionalism, curriculum development, instruction, assessment, classroom environment, student organizations, professional communication, stakeholders, career development, and subject competencies. In addition, the guidelines provide standards for preparatory programs and advanced programs (National Business Education Association, 2015).

A TEACHER PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

In addition to the various assessments used to enter a teacher-education program and the content-based exams used to demonstrate mastery of subject matter, many states are using a teacher performance assessment (Pecheone & Whittaker, 2016). SCALE (2016a) developed the edTPA as a set of standards that could be used to measure the preparation of teaching candidates. Currently 696 educator preparation programs in about 40 states and the District of Columbia participate in edTPA (AACTE, n.d.). The edTPA is a portfolio-based assessment requiring “aspiring teachers [to] prepare a portfolio of materials during their student teaching clinical experience” (Pecheone and Whittaker, 2016, p. 9).

Through completion of edTPA, teacher candidates are challenged not only to plan, teach, and assess but also to reflect upon the process and to use data from teaching to improve overall quality of teaching (AACTE, n.d.). “Business teacher educators should be at the forefront of integrating assessment into their curriculum and in preparing business teacher candidates to shine” (Smith, 2014, p. 37).

An assessment handbook for each content area details what is required for the candidate. Business education has a dedicated handbook from SCALE—*Business Education Assessment Handbook*—which is divided into three categories/tasks numbered as (1) planning, (2) instruction and engagement, and (3) assessment. Each task is evaluated using five different rubrics, and each rubric is a 5-point scale for a 75-point assessment. The scores do not translate into percentages; instead, a 3 on a rubric is considered “meets proficient standards.” A 4 or 5 “exceeds proficient standards,” and a 1 or 2 is “below proficient standards” (E. Palmer, personal communication, August 17, 2016).

Task 1 of the edTPA focuses on the planning phase of instruction. Within this task, teacher education candidates create a learning unit and provide a complete set of instructional resources to be used in planning and teaching the unit. In addition, the candidates provide a written justification to explain the selection of each resource. Candidates must plan business instruction that includes conceptual understanding of a business concept, technical skill, and problem solving. Teacher-education candidates must plan for the varied learning needs of students in the classroom as they create appropriate instructional supports and activities. Additionally, the unique needs and backgrounds of the students should be considered in all planning. As part of the planning, a teacher candidate must incorporate the academic language of business into the lessons. Furthermore, the candidate plans formative and/or summative assessments for each learning objective created in Task 1 (SCALE, 2016a).

Instruction and student engagement are the focal points for Task 2. Within this task, teacher candidates provide video evidence of quality teaching. In addition to creating a video, each candidate must provide written justification for each area of instruction. Candidates will use video evidence and a written summary to demonstrate a positive and respectful learning environment that engages the students in the learning process. The video and commentary must also include evidence that the candidate has demonstrated proper questioning techniques to deepen student learning and problem-solving skills related to business concepts. In addition, the candidates reflect upon their effectiveness in delivering the unit and planning changes to future teaching based upon the evidence presented in the videos (SCALE, 2016a).

Task 3 in edTPA is the assessment of student learning. The teacher candidates describe and justify the assessments and feedback used in this task. The candidates must analyze a specific assessment for student learning. As part of this process, each candidate provides feedback that identifies where the students went wrong on the assignment and what they did well, and also provides guidance on future assignments. Part of the written commentary for Task 3 includes a description of how well the students used the academic language planned in Task 1. Lastly, the teacher candidate analyzes what changes need to be made in the teaching process based upon his or her analysis of student learning (SCALE, 2016a).

Each state sets its own minimum score for the edTPA (SCALE, 2016b). Most states started with a minimum score of 35 when the edTPA was first implemented. At full implementation, the minimum cut scores vary by state. Alabama, Georgia, and Washington will require 37, 38, and 40, respectively, by 2018. New York currently requires a minimum score 41, and Illinois will begin requiring the same score in 2020. New York also designated 48 as a “mastery” score. New Jersey, Oregon, and Wisconsin are in the early stages of implementation and have not yet released minimum scores. Arkansas and Tennessee have set a minimum score of 37; Delaware’s minimum score is 38; and California and Iowa have set the minimum score at 41. Hawaii, Minnesota, and West Virginia will set minimum scores by 2017. Eight additional states have designated the edTPA as one of the options for demonstrating teaching readiness. (SCALE, 2016b).

According to Peck, Singer-Gabella, Sloan, & Lin (2014), “Contemporary policy discourse in teacher education is dominated by concerns, and in many cases outright skepticism, about the efficacy of programs designed to prepare new teachers” (p. 8). Through assessments such as edTPA, concrete and actionable feedback about candidates can be provided to faculty, the candidates, and potential employers.

ASSESSMENT OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Assessment of classroom teachers serves two purposes. The first is to satisfy the need of the public to be confident that public resources are being used effectively. The second is to provide professional development of the classroom teacher (Danielson, 2011). This section discusses two of the most common assessment systems, Framework for Teaching and National Board Certification.

Framework for Teaching

First published in 1996, the research-based Framework for Teaching is used to assess the skills of both novice and experienced teachers. The framework covers 22 components and has gained acceptance by teachers, administrators, policy makers, and academicians (Danielson, 2013). The Framework for Teaching is one standard used in classroom teacher evaluations. According to the Illinois State Board of Education's Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (2016b), "the new evaluation systems in Illinois school districts will combine multiple measures of student growth and professional practice" (p. 2). If a school district does not designate a specific evaluation system, the framework is the state default that must be used (Illinois State Board of Education, 2016b).

Within the framework, four domains are used:

- **Domain 1: Planning and Preparation.** Classroom teachers are expected to demonstrate content knowledge and pedagogy, demonstrate knowledge of students and resources, set instructional outcomes, design coherent instruction, and design student assessments that align with instructional outcomes. Domain 1 aligns closely with Task 1 of the edTPA.
- **Domain 2: Classroom Environment.** Teachers are to create an environment that is respectful and to develop a rapport with the educational setting. Additionally, the teacher is to establish a culture for learning, manage classroom procedures and student behavior, and organize the physical space for safety and accessibility. Task 2 of edTPA partially aligns with Domain 2 from the framework. Task 2 and Task 3 of the edTPA partially align with Domain 3 below.
- **Domain 3: Instruction.** The teacher communicates with students using questioning and discussion techniques, engages the student in learning, uses assessments to monitor student learning, and demonstrates flexibility and responsiveness to student needs based upon the responses of students to the assessments.
- **Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities.** The classroom teacher reflects upon teaching, maintains accurate records, communicates with families, participates in a professional community, grows as a professional, and exhibits professionalism (Danielson, 2007).

At Illinois State University, the framework is used by clinical faculty to evaluate students' clinical experiences. Students are expected to perform at the basic level during pre-student teaching experiences and at the basic to proficient level during student teaching. By expecting student teachers to perform at a basic or proficient level on the framework, students are better prepared for their first professional teacher evaluation as a practicing classroom teacher (Elisa Palmer, personal communication, August 17, 2016).

National Board Certification

Per the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, 2016a), National Board Certification has become known as the “gold standard” in teacher certification; the board’s mantra is “Higher standards for teachers mean better learning for students” (p. 1). This voluntary, advanced teaching credential goes beyond state licensure to help ensure teacher quality. Since its inception in 1987, more than 112,000 teachers in all 50 states and the District of Columbia have achieved National Board Certification (NBPTS, 2016a). To apply for National Board Certification, teachers must have a bachelor’s degree, at least three years of teaching experience, and a valid teaching license. Teachers can complete the certification process in one year, but they also have the option of completing it over several years if that fits better into their schedules (NBPTS, 2016a).

In 2015 the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards revised the standards for career and technical education. The “Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood/ Career and Technical Education” certificate is designed for those who teach career and technical information subjects and who know industry-specific subject matter (2016b). It includes a path for business, marketing, and financial services. According to the NBPTS (2016b) website, “Teachers in this path focus on education for, and about, business.” (p. 3).

The assessment process for National Board Certification requires practicing classroom teachers to collect standards-based evidence of their teaching, create three portfolios, and complete a computer-based assessment (NBPTS, 2016a). The first portfolio primarily comprises student work samples along with a written commentary by the teacher. The second portfolio requires video recordings of interactions between the teacher and students. The third portfolio gives teachers the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of assessment and assessment practices and how this information can be used to impact student learning. The computer-based assessment gives teachers the opportunity to demonstrate both content knowledge and pedagogical practices in their content areas (NBPTS, 2016a).

A multiyear study by Cowan and Goldhaber (2015) found that “performance on the National Board assessments predicts student achievement” (p. 22). Their findings further suggest Board-certified teachers produce three to five weeks of student learning gains. When examining state average scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the areas of reading and mathematics, Belson and Husted (2015) concluded that a larger percentage of Nationally Board Certified Teachers leads to higher state average scores on the NAEP exam.

SUMMARY

Each state has a commitment to ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to be effective in their classrooms. One part of meeting this commitment is to use assessments to identify capable preservice teachers, to license proficient classroom teachers, and to recognize classroom teachers who excel at their craft.

Various assessments such as the ACT, SAT, and TAP are used by institutions of higher learning as gateways for admission to teacher-education programs. Although assessments for preservice teachers vary from state to state, generally business teacher education certification/licensure includes both a subject-specific assessment and a performance-based assessment. As part of the certification process, many states require one or more of the Praxis Series tests that measure academic skills, subject-specific skills, and pedagogy.

Many teacher-preparation programs require a capstone student-teacher performance assessment. The edTPA developed by SCALE is a portfolio-based assessment that teacher candidates prepare during their student teaching experiences. An assessment handbook, prepared by SCALE, defines what is required for successful completion of the edTPA portfolio, and rubrics are used by Pearson Publishing for scoring each candidate's portfolio.

After preservice teachers become certified classroom teachers, assessment of their teaching continues and can take many different forms. One assessment that is commonly used is the Framework for Teaching. It covers 22 different components and is often used by academicians because it can be used for evaluation of beginning as well as experienced teachers.

National Board certification is an assessment that classroom teachers may aspire to complete. It is a voluntary, advanced teaching credential that goes beyond certification/licensure, and it allows practicing classroom teachers to demonstrate their classroom expertise. The Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood / Career and Technical Education National Board Certificate includes a path for "Business, Marketing, and Financial Services."

REFERENCES

- American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). (n.d.). FAQ. Retrieved from <http://edtpa.aacte.org/faq#51>
- Belson, S. I., & Husted, T. A. (2015). Impact of national board for the professional teaching standards certification on student achievement. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 23(91).
- Cowan, J., Goldhaber, D., & Center for Education Data & Research (2015). National board certification and teacher effectiveness: Evidence from Washington. *CEDR Working Paper* (WP #2015-3). Seattle, WA: Center for Education Data & Research.
- Danielson, C. (2007). *Enhancing professional practice: A framework for teaching*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Danielson, C. (2011). Evaluations that help teachers learn. *The Effective Educator*, 68(4), 35–39.
- Danielson, C. (2013). *The Framework for Teaching evaluation instrument*. Retrieved from <https://www.danielsongroup.org/framework>
- DeMonte, J. (2015). A million new teachers are coming: Will they be ready to teach? [Policy brief]. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.

- Education Testing Service. (2016a). About the Praxis tests. Retrieved from <https://www.ets.org/praxis/about>
- Educational Testing Service (ETS). (2016b). State requirements. Retrieved from <https://www.ets.org/praxis/states>
- Fort Hayes State University. (2016). Admission to teacher education program. <https://www.fhsu.edu/cert/admission-to-teacher-education>
- Illinois State Board of Education. (2014). ACT plus writing or SAT score in lieu of the test of academic proficiency (TAP). Retrieved from <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/act-sat-testing-in-lieu-of-tap.pdf#search=ACT%20plus%20writing%20or%20SAT%20score>
- Illinois State Board of Education. (2016a). Illinois licensure, endorsement, and approval requirements. Retrieved from https://www.isbe.net/Documents/endsmt_struct.pdf#search=licensure%2C%20endorsement%2C%20and%20approval
- Illinois State Board of Education. (2016b). Joint committee guidebook: Implementing the student growth component in teacher and principal evaluation systems (Guidance Document 14-04). Performance Evaluation Advisory Council. Springfield and Chicago, IL: Illinois State Board of Education. Retrieved from <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/14-4-student-growth-component.pdf>
- Illinois State Board of Education. (2016c). Requirements for professional educator license (PEL) teaching endorsements. Retrieved from <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/oos-pel-end.pdf#search=requirements%20for%20professional%20educator%20license%20teaching%20endorsements>
- Martin, M., & Hunt, I. (2016, August). School accountability systems and the Every Student Succeeds Act. *Re:VISION*. Durham, NC: The Hunt Institute. Retrieved from ERIC database. ERIC Document 569952.
- McDonald, M. L., LaBonty, D. & Lacy, R. C. (2007). Assessment of teacher certification/licensure. In M. L. Bush, & K. A. Schultz (Eds.). *Assessment for an evolving business education curriculum* (NBEA Yearbook, No. 45, pp. 172–185). Reston, VA: National Business Education Association.
- Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2016). Routes to certification. Retrieved from <https://dese.mo.gov/educator-quality/certification/routes-certification>
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards v1.6 (2016a). *Guide to national board certification*. Arlington, VA: Author. Retrieved from http://files.uft.org/chapter-leader/Guide_to_NB_Certification.pdf
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). (2016b). *Career and technical education standards*. Arlington, VA: Author.
- National Business Education Association (NBEA). (2015). *Business Teacher Education Curriculum Guide and Program Standards*. Reston, VA: Author.
- National Council on Teacher Quality (2016). *Understanding our selection criteria standard*. Retrieved from https://nctq.org/dmsView/Standard_Book_1
- New York State Education. (2015). *Certification*. Retrieved from <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/certexam.html>
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. 107–110, § 115, Stat. 1425 (2002).

- Pecheone, R. L. & Whittaker, A. (2016). Well-prepared teachers inspire student learning. *Kappan*, 97(7), 8–13.
- Peck, C. A., Singer-Gabella, M., Sloan, T., & Lin, S. (2014). Driving blind: Why we need standardized performance assessment in teacher education. *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 8(1), 8–30.
- Reagan, E., Schram, T., McCurdy, K., Chang, T., & Evans, C. (2016). Politics of policy: Assessing the implementation, impact, and evolution of the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) and edTPA. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 24(8/9), 1–23.
- Smith, V. (2014). The edTPA: A model for assessing business teacher candidates. *Business Education Forum*, 68(3), 35–38.
- Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE). (2016a). *Business Education Assessment Handbook*. Stanford, CA: Author.
- Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE). (2016b). State policy: Participation map. Retrieved from <http://edtpa.aacte.org/state-policy>
- Teacher Certification Degrees. (2016a). The California teaching and certification resource. Retrieved from <http://www.teachercertificationdegrees.com/certification/california>
- Teacher Certification Degrees. (2016b). The Illinois teaching and certification resource. Retrieved from <http://www.teachercertificationdegrees.com/certification/illinois>
- Teacher Certification Degrees. (2016c). Welcome to Teacher Certification Degrees: Your comprehensive guide to teaching certification. Retrieved from <http://www.teachercertificationdegrees.com>
- Teacher Certification Degrees. (2016d). *The Tennessee Teaching and Certification Resource*. Retrieved from <http://www.teachercertificationdegrees.com/certification/tennessee>
- The Holmes Group. (1986). *Tomorrow's teachers: A report of the Holmes Group*. (1986). East Lansing, MI: The Holmes Group.