

EDTPA AND RESPECT FOR THE PROFESSIONALISM OF TEACHER EDUCATORS

WHEREAS, for more than two decades P-12 public schools, teachers and teacher education programs have been blamed for the purported crisis in public education. Also, No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top legislation have responded to the assumed failures of teachers, public schools and teacher preparation programs by instituting value-added accountability systems that rely on high-stakes testing measures to track the impact teachers and those who prepare them have on student learning; and

WHEREAS, the current use of these standardized tests narrows the curriculum, fails to accurately assess student learning and deprofessionalizes teachers. Accordingly, teachers and parents as well as some of their unions and organizations have called for more authentic assessments, greater autonomy for teachers, more resources, smaller class sizes and the withdrawal of for-profit corporate intrusion into public education; and

WHEREAS, federal and state mandates placed on teacher education programs have received less critical attention. Teacher Performance Assessment protocols and exams are now being imposed by state governments (e.g., "edTPA"), on schools of education, and on teacher education faculty. Originating from Stanford and designed by teacher educators, much of the content of edTPA contains important components of good teaching and some of the component evaluative methods represent good practices, such as the use of portfolios and multidimensional assessments. edTPA, however, "is designed to be educative and predictive of effective teaching and student learning." (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity, 2012); and

WHEREAS, the central, "predictive claim of edTPA must be placed within the dominant historical context of the testing regime that pervades federal and state assessment policies. As an assessment measure, edTPA is to be linked to existent student success measures (high-stakes testing) that are, in turn, used to evaluate teachers. In these circumstances, what edTPA will predict are successful outcomes valued by federal and state policymakers, and not necessarily successful teachers; and

WHEREAS, when edTPA was introduced by the New York State Department of Education, the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) passed the following resolution on edTPA at the 2014 representative assembly:

- Resolved, NYSUT rejects the notion that edTPA constitutes an appropriate assessment of teacher candidate performance, and takes the position that the New York state Regents' rushed implementation

will undermine the preparation of teacher candidates in New York state; and

- Resolved, the New York State United Teachers calls on the Regents of the state of New York to stop the implementation of edTPA and engage in discussions with NYSUT to seek agreement on certification and assessment policies and implementation practices that will best educate and prepare students for the teaching profession; and

WHEREAS, there was an outpouring of criticism of edTPA in concept and implementation by teacher educators, students and parents across New York state; and

WHEREAS, legislative hearings were conducted jointly by the New York State Assembly Committee on Higher Education and the Assembly Committee on Education on edTPA and teacher certification in New York state where dozens of individuals and organizations testified about the problems of edTPA in concept and implementation; and

WHEREAS, the New York state regents subsequently provided a "safety net" until June 30, 2015, for student teacher candidates allowing them to take another certification test if they did not attain a score above the "cut score" chosen by the State Education Department, and the regents empaneled a taskforce composed of stakeholders including AFT affiliates—the United University Professions, the Professional Staff Congress and NYSUT—to review edTPA and teacher certification in New York state and make recommendations for reform; and

WHEREAS, the requirements imposed by edTPA policy suffer from the same flaws evident in P-12 "reforms":

- They fail to take into account the specific communities and populations teacher education programs serve. For example, the regulations imposed by Race to the Top and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation measure teacher education programs by the rates of employment of their graduates and by the default rate on loans taken out by their students, all of which are dependent on economic forces beyond the control of the programs; and
- They focus on high-stakes test scores, utilizing them to assess performance of graduates and their students. For example, they establish cut scores on standardized exams for graduates and hold teacher education programs responsible for these and for how well the students of their graduates do on high-stakes exams; and
- Without adequate research to affirm the connection, they assume the validity of value-added measures based on test scores and use the

model to evaluate teacher education programs by the impact their graduates have on their students' scores on tests over time; and

- They ignore or marginalize the expertise of the faculty in these programs. The regulations force education faculty to teach a curriculum that is driven by standardized assessments, rubrics and quantifiable outcomes developed by those not directly connected to those programs or the circumstances of the students in those programs, thereby resulting in violations of academic freedom, deprofessionalization of the faculty and a reduction of quality in teacher education.

WHEREAS, edTPA is a high-stakes testing protocol; it is also joined to privatization and outsourcing of the evaluation process. Faculty are required to hand over final evaluations to outside scorers. In the case of edTPA, the Pearson corporation has been contracted by New York and other states to evaluate students' work. Individuals trained and employed by Pearson are responsible for certification or, in some cases, graduation evaluations. Because of the proprietary interests asserted by Pearson, normal professional and collaborative assessments of the evaluation process are not possible; and

WHEREAS, plans for implementing edTPA generally call for students to bear the costs of the test's administration and constitute a financial hardship for students; and

WHEREAS, similar to the test-fixated reforms imposed on P-12 public schools, edTPA is being implemented without a solid research base and without professional consensus in the field about its value; and

WHEREAS, as professional teacher educators and scholars in our field, we believe that teacher education programs must be responsible for developing their own local criteria for evaluating their graduates. These criteria should be developed in collaboration with the schools and communities that the programs serve and be informed by the knowledge and professional experiences educators in those programs bring to their work. The mission of teacher education also consists of helping students become critical participants and agents for change in the schools where they work. We believe that assessments of programs should give weight to the resources available to the programs to carry out their mission. Given the increasing responsibilities placed on teachers and the programs that educate them, such as the need to prepare graduates to teach English language learners, special needs and immigrant student populations, as well as the increasing numbers of students who live in poverty, resource standards should be given prominence in any evaluative system, so that teacher education programs can provide a quality education to future teachers:

RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers reaffirms the professionalism of teacher educators and the importance of maintaining academic freedom of faculty and faculty governance over the curriculum of teacher education schools and programs; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT works to ensure teacher education professionals are included in decision-making about adoption of appropriate performance assessments as well as their implementation, whether they be edTPA or any other teacher preparation clinical training and performance assessment; and

RESOLVED, that the AFT believes that neither edTPA nor any other performance assessment should be tied to a high-stakes testing regime and the outsourcing of evaluation, especially to for-profit corporations such as Pearson, as it is not an appropriate assessment of teacher education programs and teacher performance; and

RESOLVED, given the lack of research to support edTPA's being able to predict which student candidate will be a "good" or "poor" teacher, and given that there is no consensus on a single approach to teacher education and assessment protocols, the AFT calls on the teacher education profession to develop a "best practice" approach to teacher education, articulated to the numerous circumstances under which teaching occurs; and

RESOLVED, approaches and assessments to teacher education should take into account professional standards, resource standards and performance standards.