



Teaching Performance Assessments: International Connections and Future Considerations

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The rise in the use of Teaching Performance Assessments (TPAs) for teacher licensure over the past 20 years reflects a growing focus on practical teaching skills and real-world classroom application. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (National Board) pioneered the standards-based evaluation of accomplished and experienced teachers in the late 1980s. This same approach has taken shape in the field of beginning teaching, bringing TPAs that involve several considerations and tradeoffs with their use.

A goal of TPAs is to provide an assessment that is an authentic measure, embedded in the teacher candidate's instructional experience, and reflective of the future teacher's ability to work with students in the classroom.

These goals contribute to an outcome that is meant to allow the candidate to “demonstrate” their knowledge, skills, and abilities in an actual classroom setting with actual students. A candidate-driven assessment, where teacher candidates compile artifacts and evidence of their practice, may emerge as a desirable solution for states that are seeking a measure that focuses on the practice of teaching. This can complement a state’s measures of knowledge, skills, and abilities in the subject matter the candidate will be teaching.

California has a rich history of incorporating TPAs as part of its teacher certification system, beginning with the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) launched in 2002, and a current model with an established set of Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs) that outline the required knowledge, skills, and abilities that approved TPA models in the state must measure. California has also implemented a process for state approval of TPA models, resulting in three approved TPA models to date (CalTPA, edTPA, and the Fresno Assessment of Student Teachers/FAST) incorporating a common set of evaluation criteria and rules known as the California Teaching Performance Assessment Design Standards. These standards outline expectations for TPA models and their sponsors and ensure consistency and clarity in the assessment process.

California's TPA work continues to this day, with a statewide effort to embed competence in instruction in literacy, including evidence-based method of teaching foundational reading skills, into those TPAs for which Early Childhood, Elementary, and Special Education educators complete.

In September 2023, educators from California convened the Fifth Annual Meredith Fellows Conference, a conference that focuses on presenting timely and useful information to implement performance assessment in the state. This year’s Fellows exemplified California’s focus on continuous learning and performance assessment, featuring diverse speakers and sessions for general educators, specialists, early childhood educators, and administrative service educators. The conference also took the performance assessment conversation to an international level, hosting for the very first time, a presentation and panel discussion with Australian education colleagues.

As summarized in the latest International Test Commission’s newsletter, the panel featured experts that discussed the development and implementation of educator performance assessments around the world and lessons learned in the evolution of Australia’s TPA. The event highlighted striking similarities between California and Australian TPA systems and approaches. Both share a clear purpose and a common goal to measure the accepted professional standards and employ an assessment architecture modeled on the cycle of instruction or teaching workflow, representing a shared commitment to utilize effective education practices.

The shared assessment architecture between the independently developed California and Australia teaching performance assessments helps to illustrate how similarities in the cycle of instruction or teaching workflow across the practice of teaching in different countries (or states within the same country) can lend itself to a common assessment approach across geographies.

The candidate-driven nature of teaching performance assessments lends itself to culturally responsive assessment in ways that global applications of the same standard computer-administered assessment of pedagogical knowledge and skills would not.

In the United States, the initial credentialing of educators typically occurs at the state level, like the process in Australia. However, Stanford University's faculty and staff took a pioneering step by building on California's Performance Assessment history and developing edTPA, the first *nationally* available standards-based beginning teaching performance assessment in the country. Involving the participation of 1,000 educators from 29 states, the District of Columbia, and representatives from over 450 institutions of higher learning, this initiative underscored the importance of having a consistent and objective evaluation process for aspiring teachers, considering the diverse geographies of the country.

edTPA is a subject-specific teaching performance assessment, like the previously mentioned assessment used by the National Board, and it employs the same assessment architecture across 28 different teaching fields. Stanford University partnered with Evaluation Systems of Pearson, which is also the operational partner for the National Board's assessment. edTPA became fully operational in 2013, and over the past decade has emerged as the most widely used teaching performance assessment for preservice teachers nationwide.

The broad use of edTPA for beginning teachers and the National Board's performance assessment for national recognition of accomplished teachers in the US, combined with Australia's TPAs certifying highly accomplished and lead teachers using the Professional Standards for Teachers from the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), suggests that there may be room for applications of teaching performance assessments internationally. The architecture of existing teaching performance assessments might be easily modified by local educators and/or teacher educators to align with local professional standards (for beginning and/or accomplished teachers) in various countries around the world.

Of course, the use of TPAs for beginning teachers prompts considerations around their utility. Key questions such as whether TPAs contribute to the development of effective teachers and if they yield the desired outcomes in the classroom, positively affecting student achievement warrant further exploration. Additionally, there is a need to understand how TPAs sit within a broader system of assessments and supports, given these measures are not the sole requirement for educator certification. These are critical research questions that have begun to be addressed in the field, and recently were presented in a study session held by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. The insights gained from examining international outcomes and our own experiences will play a pivotal role in shaping future conversations around TPAs and the tradeoffs in their use.