
April 29, 2014

The Honorable Senator Kenneth LaValle
Chair, Senate Committee on Higher Education
Legislative Office Building, Room 806
Albany, New York 12248

Dear Senator LaValle:

We would like to, first and foremost, thank you for your willingness to listen to the field and to work with the leadership of university-based teacher and leader preparation programs within the context of the current policy agenda.

There are no school-based factors more crucial to a student's academic success than having an effective teacher in a school led by an effective principal. In its new report, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) made it clear, "...the quality of a school system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers." New York is raising standards for student learning by implementing the Common Core, but that effort can only succeed if we expect this same excellence from the educators who will teach them.

Given the decision of the New York State Board of Regents in their emergency action on Tuesday, April 29, the proposed legislative action by the Senate in regard to candidates for certificate in classroom teaching service (Bill #S07001) will no longer be necessary and would be counterproductive to the progress being made. We set out our reasons below.

We embrace the edTPA as a performance measure which represents the research-base of our profession. The edTPA measures the knowledge and skills that teachers need to be successful in their beginning practice and aligns with well-defined and accepted evidence on what teachers need to know and be able to do to enhance academic performance among the diversity of learners in our schools. Leading researchers have developed this framework. Thirty four states are currently implementing and studying this assessment as a national indicator of teacher quality.

The edTPA, along with the other certification examinations (the Educating All Students exam, the Academic Literacy Skills Test, and the Content Specialty Tests) can only serve to strengthen teacher preparation and our profession as a whole. In fact, changes in teacher preparation programs are well underway; they are comprehensive, and they are transforming the work that we do. As examples, faculty have scaffolded assessments based on standards, revised roles and expectations for student teaching, implemented comprehensive strategies for their own professional development (both teaching and clinical, across education and liberal arts and sciences faculty), and amended outcomes assessment systems in keeping with the State reforms and comprehensive changes in our accreditation mandates. In addition, the conversations and partnerships with P-12 schools have begun a shift to shared ownership for comprehensive clinical practice.

Postponing the implementation of the reform measures has already occurred and a further two-year delay (July, 2015) would negate the current experience of over 1,500 teacher candidates who have already paid for and taken the new assessment. It would also call into question the transformative initiatives currently underway at institutions of higher education across sectors and in the P-12 partnerships being served.


Nonetheless, we do support a safety net for teacher candidates so that they can begin teaching and repaying their student loans. The emergency action passed by the Board of Regents on April 29, 2014 provides this. —With this in mind, we also support the identification of a formative plan that would facilitate teacher education preparation programs in using these data to inform their programs, rather than using preliminary pass rates of the new assessments for institutional profiles and federally reported data. The need for financial assistance to offset the cost of the teacher certification examinations continues to escalate and we ask for additional vouchers that could be available for higher education students with demonstrated financial need.

Every year, roughly 16,000 teacher candidates graduate from schools of education in New York State. It is of the utmost of importance that we work together with our accreditation agency, P-12 partners, and policy officials in the State Education Department to fully implement the necessary reform, as the calls for improvement in teacher preparation have come from the federal government, teacher unions, leadership organizations, and higher education accreditation bodies.

We owe it to our prospective teachers to make sure they are ready for the challenges of the classroom. More importantly, we owe it to children and youth across our State to ensure their teachers can facilitate their learning and advancement in all subjects. Teaching is the core of every student's opportunity for success. Higher standards for our teachers will mean better chances for our students to graduate ready for 21st century colleges and careers.

Not only do we embrace the research-based assessment of the edTPA as a good measure for entry into the profession, we believe that the expectations of this assessment are aligned with the high standards of our profession, of our accrediting body, and of the needs of classroom teachers . . . from their first day on the job. We thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective with you and do ask that you reconsider pursuing the proposed legislative bill in the Senate.

Sincerely,



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