ASSESSING AND EVALUATING TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

APA TASK FORCE REPORT

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Effective teaching has always been important, and, in recent years, the effectiveness of programs to produce high-quality teachers has become an issue of national concern. One fortunate outcome of this renewed focus on teacher education programs is the attention being paid to the creation of valid and efficient tools to assess that teaching force and teacher preparation. Recent scholarship has highlighted three methods—value-added models of student achievement, standardized observation protocols, and surveys of performance—that can be used by teacher education programs to demonstrate that the candidates who complete their programs are well prepared to support student learning. The desire for evidence of program impact arises primarily from the acknowledged ethical and professional responsibility of teacher education programs to assure the public that they are preparing effective teachers for U.S. schools. This report assumes the kinds of data and methods required to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher education programs ought to be informed by well-established scientific methods that have evolved in the science of psychology, which at its core addresses the measurement of behavior.

### Guiding Principles of the Report

- **PreK–12 student learning is the central element of effective teaching and should be an ongoing part of teacher preparation, with implications for quality control, program improvement, and program fidelity-assurance.**

- **Validity is the most important characteristic of any assessment and is the foundation for judging technical quality.** Validity is a comprehensive concept, encompassing other critical concepts such as reliability, intended and unintended consequences of the assessment, and fairness. Irrelevant variation introduced by differences in assessment directions, observer training and biases, assessment locale, and a host of other factors will degrade the validity of the assessment system and the quality of decisions made on the basis of the data. Using multiple sources of data will result in better quality data for making valid inferences.

- **Alignment of all of the elements of a program improvement effort is essential to determining what data to use, how good the data are, and what should and could be done with the data.** Such alignment requires collaboration among teacher preparation programs, districts, and states. The design of explicit feedback loops from the data into program improvement activities is an important requirement of a good assessment process.

- **Pursuit of some of the recommendations in this report would need to be phased in, because they involve considerable change for some programs, states, jurisdictions, and accrediting bodies.** Professional associations, states, and
accrediting bodies can aid in the transitions by providing training for institutions and individuals that will permit programs to acquire the capacity to make the needed changes in a timely manner.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Some of these recommendations can be implemented in the short term, whereas others will require a longer time frame to bring to full fruition. Teacher preparation programs can begin immediately to partner with schools, districts, and state education departments to develop plans for implementing these recommendations, leading to the best use of data for program improvement and accountability.

1. The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and local, state, and federal governments should require that teacher preparation programs have strong affirmative, empirical evidence of the positive impact of their graduates on preK–12 student learning.

2. States should work with teacher preparation program providers to design systems of data collection that include information collected at the stages of selection, progression, program completion, and postcompletion.

3. States and teacher preparation programs should track candidates’ involvement in various preparation experiences and identify models of various program elements or candidate attributes that predict a positive contribution to preK–12 student learning.

4. States should work with teacher preparation programs to develop valid measures of student learning outcomes for all school subjects and grades to assess student learning outcomes similar to those currently available in mathematics, language arts, and science.

5. Teacher preparation programs, universities, not-for-profit organizations, school districts, states, and the federal government should dedicate appropriate resources for data collection and analysis.

6. Institutions and programs that prepare teachers should identify and retain staff with sufficient technical skills, time, and resources to conduct data analyses. They should partner with states and districts in this endeavor.

7. Institutions and programs that prepare teachers should commit to a system of continuous improvement based on examination of data about their programs.

8. Institutions that prepare teachers should train program faculty and supervising teachers in the use of well-validated observation systems and develop a system for regular “reliability” checks so that the observations continue to be conducted with a high degree of fidelity.

9. Federal agencies, state departments of education, research organizations, and teacher accreditation bodies should identify, develop, and validate student surveys that predict student achievement.

10. States, program faculty, and CAEP should continue to develop and validate developmental benchmarks and multiple metrics to be used by teacher preparation programs for graduation decisions to ensure that graduates are proficient teachers who make substantial impacts on student learning.

11. Teacher preparation faculty should develop curricula that prepare teacher candidates in the use of data such as student achievement scores, surveys, and observations so candidates can continue to self-assess, and faculty can assess the progress of their students.

12. CAEP and the states should report annually to the public any adverse impact of implementation of assessments on the teaching force or preK–12 learning.

13. States and CAEP should develop a time frame for implementing the recommendations made here.