

## edTPA in New York: Faculty's Concerns, Issues and Questions on Next Steps

### A Conversation with SCALE

On September 9, 2013, Nicole Marino, Director Teacher Performance Assessment for California Teachers (TPACT) and Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA) at the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE), and Beverly Falk, Professor and Director, Graduate Programs in Early Childhood Education, City College of New York, and Senior Scholar, Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE), responded to questions and areas of concern during a conversation in August 2013 with clcu's ISNetworkED Project facilitators who represented each of the 5.5 project regions around the state. The project facilitators collected the questions and concerns addressed in the conversation with Nicole and Beverly from faculty in their respective regions.

Nicole and Beverly's responses are reported in **blue** below.

**NOTE:** The Standards Setting Committee for New York will meet on October 1, 2013. Their report will be released the end of October and will answer questions regarding passing scores, remediation, etc.

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Overall, faculty are confident in the transmission of content knowledge related to edTPA. They feel that their current courses teach candidates what they need to know pedagogically. Instead, faculty raised the following areas of concern:

- Structural
- Validity
- Social Justice
- Framing
- Difference
- Faculty Time
- Candidate Time
- Writing
- Information Source
- Feedback
- Specialty Area
- Scorer
- Scoring
- Task
- Partnership
- Technology
- Developmental

Questions or comments and Nicole and Beverly's responses to each of these areas of concern are below.

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### Structural Concern:

- Students move through the program at varying rates, and in some cases, take courses and conduct supervised fieldwork in varying sequences. Given this, how can we ensure that knowledge of edTPA is imparted at the right time?

*Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:*

There is a wide range of program structures. From personal experience working in 28 states: we first tried to give all the information up front, then we tried to do it all the end, and neither worked. We found that the best approach is to release the information gradually throughout the program and let candidates know what is happening. Give them access to the handbook right away but we don't break it down for them right away, for example. Let it be a gradual process. Students had it for a reference and could familiarize themselves with it as they were ready.

### Validity Concern:

- Candidates who use more direct instruction seem to score better than those who use inquiry-based, constructivist teaching methods. This may be because it is easier to capture direct instruction on video. Group work, for example, does not record well, particularly in regard to sound. This raises questions about the validity of the assessment.

*Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:*

This question comes up very often. We have some research on this. The research suggests that candidates who use constructivist methods do not score worse. (Nicole volunteered to share this research.) Sometimes however candidates using direct instruction are clearer about the steps of what they do. The edTPA assessment has been designed to be appropriate for a wide range of instructional approaches.

However, we are very clear that group work as an assessment task should *not* be used when submitting individual assessment samples in task 3 and task 4. But the main concern is the candidate's intention, and their ability to articulate it clearly. What is the intention behind the instruction?

- Is there validity research demonstrating the relationship between edTPA and student learning?

*Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:*

Research has been completed to indicate the strength of assessments similar to edTPA (more available on the resource tab of this website). Several of these studies can be read at the links below:

- Preservice Performance Assessment and Teacher Early Career Effectiveness: Preliminary Findings on the Performance Assessment for California Teachers  
<http://edtpa.aacte.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Preservice-Performance-Assessment-and-Teacher-Early-Career-Effectiveness.pdf>
- Using Student Achievement Test Scores as Evidence of External Validity for Indicators of Teacher Quality: Connecticut's Beginning Educator Support and Training Program  
<http://edtpa.aacte.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Using-Student-Achievement-Test-Scores.pdf>

- Performance-Based Assessments as High Stakes Events  
<http://edtpa.aacte.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Performance-Based-Assessments-as-High-Stakes-Events.pdf>
- Developing and Assessing Beginning Teacher Effectiveness: The Potential of Performance Assessments  
<http://edtpa.aacte.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Developing-and-Assessing-Beginning-Teacher-Effectiveness.pdf>
- Evidence in Teacher Education: The Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT)  
<http://edtpa.aacte.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Evidence-in-Teacher-Education.pdf>

There are a number of studies that address this topic. Please see “Leveraging edTPA Data into Programs” at <http://edtpa.aacte.org/faq#17>

### Social Justice Concern:

- Students in elite schools will likely respond to their teacher candidates differently than students in high needs schools. Since candidates are assessed partly by how their students respond, this biases the assessment in favor of candidates in more elite schools. This is dangerous, as it provides a disincentive to place candidates in high needs schools, and penalizes programs that do. This should be addressed in candidates’ reflection on “context,” but it is unclear that this will be sufficient.

***Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:***

There is research about edTPA that we can send out to everyone. There has been no difference between candidates’ scores in different types of schools. There is a lot of conversation about this topic at conferences. The research and conference materials will be sent out. I (Bev Falk) am at an institution where we work with high needs schools and the candidates ended up doing very well on the field test. I think it is possible to do it.

### Framing Concern:

- Although content knowledge is already embedded into the curriculum at most institutions, edTPA assesses candidates on their capacity to explicitly articulate their work in terms associated with this assessment. How can we prepare our students to do this while still teaching the content as naturally as possible rather than as something that is done just for the sake of the assessment? Moreover, teaching content explicitly for the purpose of edTPA is also problematic because students are aware of the politicized nature of edTPA.

***Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:***

We do want to highlight and make more explicit what we are already doing, such as asking more explicit questions about student work and embed more reflective writing in assignments and experiences so students become more adept at explaining what they are doing and why. But it is important to keep authentic content and language that we already use and not make the classes just “edTPA prep.” At the same time, we want to mention that edTPA will ask them to do something similar and show them those sections, so we are always doing translation for them. That way we keep our own program’s culture but familiarize our students with edTPA.

For the candidates who are student teaching this semester, though, we do need to be more explicit because they won't have the benefit of the backwards mapping that will gradually happen for later students.

#### Difference Concern:

- There is no uniform way to restructure our programs, because we all have different charters with the state. This limits our ability to share strategies.

##### *Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:*

There has been significant collaboration – even across states – in spite of differences, such as sharing remediation strategies. There are ways to cross structural boundaries and huge benefits to sharing strategies (e.g., when did you introduce this) even when you have different structures.

#### Faculty Time Concern:

- Helping students prepare their portfolios is very time-consuming for faculty. There are no extra resources or course releases to provide for this. For example, one faculty member noted that 10 students taking the field test generated significantly more work for her. This fall, she will have more advisees.

##### *Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:*

There is a time burden placed on programs. It's time consuming for everyone involved—students, teachers, supervisors and so on. It takes extra time. The time is not the same amount the following year. The first year is the most time consuming of any other year that will follow. It gets easier; it gets clearer for candidates, faculty, etc. You are learning a lot of new language – not just learning it yourselves, but also having to make it clear and explicit to candidates, teachers, principals, and anyone who is getting involved. Once the professional language of edTPA is familiar, you can really get down to what matters in the assessment, which is about the intention—the intention behind the rubrics, the intention behind the instruction. Once we could break through the shell of it, we realized it is about good teaching, which is what the programs want to do anyway, and it gets easier as you go along.

Also, some programs are adding noncredit workshops and some programs are repurposing other courses to give candidates the extra time they need without placing the entire burden on supervisors.

One program, for example, gave up the research course when they first adopted edTPA and devoted it to edTPA. After a few years though they realized they no longer needed a special class, and went back to the research course. This speaks to the reality that it gets easier as time goes on.

#### Candidate Time Concern:

- Students also are short on time. This process is demanding, particularly the expectations for writing commentary. [Note: Faculty with scoring experience noted that students should be advised to be concise and only answer the specific question that is asked. This will decrease the workload as students often write too much.] [See response in next concern.](#)

## Writing Concern:

- In a related issue, students are often not strong writers. The edTPA is evaluating their capacity not only to reflect, but to write on their reflections.

### *Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:*

In my program, we felt we needed to focus on the writing portion, as this is what candidates were least prepared to do. It is analytic writing at its core. For example, we discussed “what is a measurable objective?” and how to write on it. “What’s a measurable objective” is something we explore early on—we thought we were doing well on it, but when we looked at candidate work, we realized they were not doing so well. Looking at their work helped us see where we needed to improve our support to candidates. Seeing this helped our instruction for the candidates.

It is analytic writing at its core. We are asking our students to be very clear on what they did and their intention behind their plans. We made room for extra support in our program to help our candidates improve their writing.

There are other ways to support writing as well. University of Washington for example holds a writing “boot camp” during the student teacher experience itself. They take a few days during student teaching time when students are invited to come to campus to complete the writing for edTPA. Faculty are available to give them feedback on their writing. It is not a time for review and edits of candidate work. It’s time dedicated to doing the writing so that students get it done early rather than waiting until the end. Waiting till the end has a detrimental effect on their writing. It can be helpful to involve the University Writing Center as well.

## Candidate Support for edTPA:

### *Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:*

The following are good places to refer your candidates to for additional support:

- [http://www.nystce.nesinc.com/NY\\_annTPA.asp](http://www.nystce.nesinc.com/NY_annTPA.asp) which is a videotape of an event that took place on May 23, 2013 at University of Washington, Seattle
- Making Good Choices: [http://www.edtpa.com/PageView.aspx?f=GEN\\_GettingStarted.html](http://www.edtpa.com/PageView.aspx?f=GEN_GettingStarted.html)

## Information Source Concern:

- There are too many different sources of information regarding edTPA. One single authoritative source would be helpful.

### *Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:*

There was a large effort this year to get everyone onto the new system. We narrowed it down to two websites. The SCALE/AACTE support site with the official handbooks, support materials, webinars at this address: [edtpa.aacte.org](http://edtpa.aacte.org). The other website is [edtpa.com](http://edtpa.com). This is the technical evaluation site with information about submissions, platforms, vendors.

There are a number of resources that have been developed specifically for NYS (including Newsletters, FAQs and Webinars). See: [nystce.nesinc.com/NY\\_annTPA.asp](http://nystce.nesinc.com/NY_annTPA.asp)

### Feedback Concern:

- It is unclear how much and what kind of feedback faculty should give to students to prepare them to submit their work for edTPA. It is also unclear how much responsibility faculty should take if students fail.

*Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:*

We revised and sent a document in the last few weeks about what type of support is appropriate. This is on the *aacte* website.

There are Support Documents on the *edtpa.aacte.org* (secure site):

- Guidelines for Supporting Candidates:  
<https://secure.aacte.org/apps/rl/resource.php?ref=edtpa>
- Additional support for faculty:  
[http://www.edtpa.com/PageView.aspx?f=GEN\\_Faculty.html](http://www.edtpa.com/PageView.aspx?f=GEN_Faculty.html)

### Specialty Area Concern:

- There is a lack of information about edTPA for specialty areas such as music, art, and physical education, particularly with regard to how candidates should capture them on video and audio.

*Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:*

We are still in the process of collecting samples in these areas. With regard to capturing on video and audio: the purpose behind these assessments is to be more authentic to the teaching that would happen in these areas. A paper assessment isn't as authentic for physical education, etc. That is why more videos are required.

### Scorer Concern:

- There is concern about the background of the scorers. We were told that a master teacher and a teacher educator would score each portfolio, but it is unclear whether that occurred.

*Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:*

That is inaccurate. It is not the case that a master teacher and teacher educator will score each portfolio. The background of scorers: SCALE has designed the scorer training and recruitment process. Scorers are matched to content. Physical education faculty will only score physical education assessments. Scorers need to meet specific qualifications such as working with candidates, and be matched with content and have had pedagogical experience. Scorers can also come with National Board scoring experience.

### Scoring Concern:

- It is still unclear how scoring judgments are made, since commentary was not provided for the field test. It is also unclear whether students need to pass every rubric. The details of cut scores are uncertain as well.

*Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:*

Commentary was not provided in the field test but candidates will, going forward, get back a rubric score with a description of their performance on each rubric. Part of the remediation

process and local evaluation is that when candidates get back their scores, based on what NY decides is a passing score, they will see where they did not score sufficiently. The state will communicate in the technical report released in October how remediation should take place after that.

#### Task Concern:

- One thing that we are a bit concerned about is Task 4 for early childhood. The samples we saw are quite weighty; actually, just as in-depth as the literacy tasks 1-3. Clarification of the expectations for the task would be helpful.

*Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:*

**Task 4 Math portfolio is a complete task, an additional task. They don't need to be done at the same time; they can be done separately at different placements.**

#### Partnership Concern:

- It was initially unclear whether all public schools been notified about edTPA and videotaping. However, one faculty member reported that he understood that principals were notified. Another faculty member stated he heard that an email had been sent to every principal asking them to allow students to be taped. It is possible that schools may not wish to partner with us if we insist upon videos.

*Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:*

**We have been working with New York State and New York City to ensure that there is official communication. In our next conference call with the State and the City we will follow up to make sure that the letters to principals were sent. I (Bev) do know that the Commissioner sent out a letter months ago saying that school districts cannot prohibit candidates from taking video, but did not require them to take student teachers. We have to convince our partners that it will be to their benefit to have our candidates. We need to convince them how it is in their interest—what are the benefits to them? In the continuum of teacher development, they all rely on observation and some rely on video. It's a wonderful tool for reflection of teaching, not just for teacher candidates.**

#### Technology Concern:

- Candidates must become technologically sophisticated. There are many technical issues. For example, files can be very large and take up a lot of space, so candidates must figure out how to store them. It is difficult to sync audio with visual, among other challenges. The quality of the video is seriously affected by the production values: how many mics are in the room and where they are placed, and the kind of tripod being used, for example. This is likely to privilege schools that can afford to purchase technology for their students, or favor students who can afford to purchase it for themselves.

*Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:*

**One of the huge lessons learned in other states is that folks who spend a lot of money on technology regret it. Detachable mics are worthwhile, but otherwise, it's not worth it. The technology changes so much every year. Flash drives can be used and have a lot of room to save files. Bev Falk's institution bought ipads with mics and stands for them. This way, anyone**

who can't afford that equipment has access to it. We found though that most candidates have their own technology. A lot of candidates use their phones or their friend's technology. The candidates are much more adept at this than faculty. The important thing is to provide access if they need it.

**Developmental Concern:**

- Academic language rubrics may not be developmentally appropriate. There is also some concern that scorers are listening for specific buzzwords rather than assessing students according to the context and their capacity.

*Nicole Marino and Beverly Falk:*

We do have academic language training modules that are specific to content. The rubrics cover language demands in most of the areas. We have webinar modules on the website that go over the academic language rubrics. That should clarify this issue.