CCADE Response to the Illinois Stance on the edTPA

Dear Chris and Jason:

We jointly write this letter to articulate our concern and offer alternatives to the policies set forth by the Illinois State Board of Education regarding the edTPA.

Our Concerns:

The Illinois Teacher Preparation Institutions signing this letter wish to express their concern for the decision to make the edTPA the summative teaching assessment used in making a determination about who should be issued a license. Whereas, collectively, we are proponents of the assessment and have willingly prepared to make the curricular changes necessary to embed the assessment into our programs, our concerns about the high-stakes nature of the assessment are many.

1. Pearson has yet to share with institutions in the state the results of its last pilot test. Although two years ago, the three pilot institutions in the state (UIC, Illinois State, and Illinois College) submitted candidate protocols for scoring and received scores, they received no cut-score or interpretation of what the scores revealed about teaching competency. At that time, Pearson decided it needed to make changes and went through a phase of pilot testing involving only those states that were early implementers. In 2012- 2013, Illinois was barred from submitting candidate protocols and was asked to engage in local scoring. Illinois institutions still have not been informed about the results of the second round of pilot testing with the early implementers.

2. We are wary of the effect that cut scores may have on the pipeline of new teachers. Until we know what the effect of the cut-scores will be on this assessment, we do not believe that we should use those scores to make high-stakes decisions.

3. We see potential problems of validity and reliability, given the variation across contexts and institutions as to whom the edTPA is administered. Until studies are done to allay our concerns we remain wary of the effect on the score of candidates who (a) teach in underserved urban or rural schools where students underperform compared to those in well-served and/or affluent schools; (b) teach very young children whose proficiencies may be hard to observe or measure; or (c) teach a large proportion of children with special needs, including second language learners.

4. We also see potential problems because of the variation in the *way* the edTPA is administered. In meetings within and across states, we have observed distinct differences in amount of faculty/mentor support that is given to teacher candidates while they are preparing and implementing the assessment. Although there are some general guidelines for the kind of support that candidates can receive, there is currently no mechanism to ensure that these guidelines are followed.

5. We are concerned about the remediation cost and process for candidates that do not pass the assessment. We assume that providing support services for candidates who do not pass the assessment will come with increased costs borne by both the candidates and the institutions that house them, requiring candidates to enroll in a subsequent semesters and institutions to provide additional faculty support. Indeed, it may even be the case that there is no avenue for providing additional supports. A likely scenario is that a candidate passes the student teaching course (because this course is based upon multiple assessments) and graduates. Because the candidate is no longer a student in the institution, no option for providing additional supports would exist.

6. As teacher educators, our knowledge of assessment tells us that multiple measures give a clearer picture of performance than a single measure. The use of multiple assessments, indeed, is an important part of the assessment of practicing teachers; with no one measure being the sole determinant of teacher performance. Yet, the edTPA is the *only* measure recognized by ISBE to determine the level of student teacher performance. It measures one 3-5 day performance among many in one context among many with one subject area. That fact doesn’t square well with what entails ample evidence about teaching and learning.

Our Proposal:

Given the concerns we outlined, we suggest that ISBE refrain from using the edTPA as its sole measure of student teacher performance until there is more information and research on the effect of the assessment. Until such time, we propose that:

1. Illinois institutions continue to embed the assessment in their programs, require the assessment to be administered in the student teaching semester, seek scoring from Pearson, and provide scores to ISBE, as currently planned.

2. ISBE engage in a series of studies of the effect on candidates of the assessment and its scoring, addressing the concerns we raised above as well as others that arise.

3. For candidates whose scores do not meet or exceed the cut-scores, allow institutions to submit the results of other teacher performance assessments they administer as evidence for teaching competency. This action would allow institutions to use multiple measures, and it represents a sharing of the decision of who can teach between the state and the preparation institution. The institutions would be able to use measures that have already been approved by the state when they approved the program.

The institutions signing this letter agree that the edTPA is clearly focused on teacher performance and includes a number of elements important to competent teaching. However, we are concerned with its use as a single, high-stakes assessment of teacher performance, given that multiple measures make more sense and given that there are so many unanswered questions about its administration and scoring. We urge your careful consideration of the concerns we raise and request that you adopt our proposal.

Sincerely,