

May 24, 2017

Chairman Meeks, Superintendent Smith, and Members of the Illinois State Board of Education:

My name is Larry Sondler and for the benefit of the new members of the Board who weren't here when I spoke to you last November, I have been a member of the professional educator preparation community in Illinois for close to 40 years now, 11 years as faculty in a graduate reading specialist program, the next 25 years or so as licensure officer and director of teacher education at two Chicago area universities, and the last few years as a part-time licensure officer, consultant, and co-founder, with Julie Peters who couldn't be here today, of the Illinois Coalition for edTPA Rule Change. The Coalition is a fluid ad hoc grass-roots group of educators and other stakeholders from across the state who have had and shared major concerns about the unintended consequences of requiring the edTPA for teacher licensure during student teaching.

At the conclusion of my brief appearance here last November, during which I outlined our reasons for urging the Board to explore additional options for assessing candidate readiness to enter the teaching profession, several of the Board members suggested that it was time for the agency and the Board to re-visit the edTPA as the way to respond to PA 97-0607. Several things have transpired since then that we think warrant this reminder:

\* a second teacher performance assessment, the PPAT, which you approved at that meeting last November as an alternative to the edTPA, but which didn't address any of the major problems with the edTPA (including issues of privacy, the effect on student teaching, cost, accountability, etc), did not or would not enter into an agreement with Illinois. Subsequently,

\* the Coalition sponsored several statewide anonymous electronic surveys for school district superintendents, university student teacher supervisors, and classroom cooperating teachers, on the use of the edTPA. In your packet is a one page summary of the results, as well as many pages of comments. While no sophisticated analysis of the results could be completed in time for today's meeting, it's clear that the vast majority of those completing the survey report that the edTPA is more of a hindrance during student teaching than an asset. Surveys were sent to all 862 district superintendents (with a 33% return rate of 282 superintendents), and all 50+ student teacher placement directors to distribute to their cooperating teachers and university supervisors, with about a 20% return rate (176 cooperating teachers and 72 university supervisors). Some of the most disturbing findings are that:

- 11 districts reported that they have stopped placing student teachers district-wide because of the edTPA, and 80 districts reported that one or more schools or classrooms in their district have refused student teachers for the same reasons.
- No effect of the edTPA on desirable outcomes, such as professionalism, getting to know their students, preparation, enthusiasm, reached an agreement level of 50% among cooperating teachers or university supervisors. Only 25% thought that the edTPA made students teachers more ready to teach in the classroom, and only 11% - 26% among all 1,110 respondents thought that the edTPA was a "positive" addition to student teaching. However,

\*the encouraging news is that Dr. Helfer has introduced the concept of a statewide student teaching evaluation that would include a set of elements agreed to by its users. I believe a staff analysis of a survey of all IHEs has led to the identification of a set of 10 common student teaching elements, most of which are included in our Illinois Professional Teaching Standards and the Danielson Framework. At May's SEPLB meeting, Dr. Helfer had a robust discussion with its members, where he stressed the importance of our professional educators at the region, district, building, and classroom levels being involved in its development. This led to the issue of redundancy with the edTPA and the question as to whether it could or would replace the edTPA. We certainly hope that is the direction the agency and the Board will go.

In closing, I want you to know that we are very aware of the pressure state agencies are under to be able to respond to politically connected so-called education reformers who call for meeting national standards, without either understanding authentic assessment or trusting the expertise we have in the state to make good choices and to fairly assess our candidates, and we hope Illinois doesn't do that at the expense of doing what's best for kids.