

## Concerns Regarding the MPTEA/MoPTA Sequence of Assessments

Missouri's educator preparation programs (EPPs) aim to prepare excellent teachers for Missouri's children. In service to that goal, EPPs desire a performance assessment that is rigorous, valid, and reliable. EPPs also require a performance assessment that can help to inform and improve program practice. Unfortunately, the Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment (MoPTA), in tandem with its even more undeveloped sibling, the Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Entry Assessment (MPTEA), accomplishes neither of these goals. The MPTEA/MoPTA battery has been hastily developed by Educational Testing Services (ETS), based on a rushed timeline demanded by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and is not the high-quality performance assessment that Missouri's future educator's—nor the children they will teach—deserve. In its present form, it is not ready to be used as either a formative or a summative tool for teacher candidates. Yet, in the fall of 2014, candidates entering EPPs will pay \$75 for the MPTEA, which is only now being developed in the spring of 2014. In addition, the certification of every student teacher in Missouri during the 2014-2015 academic year will be contingent upon the payment of \$275 for the MoPTA, an instrument that is incomplete. In essence, the financial burden of teacher candidates will be significantly increased in order to finance what amounts to statewide field tests.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, DESE's schedule calls for this faulty process to be repeated for school leaders, counselors, and library media specialists using assessment instruments also being developed by ETS.

Teacher candidates in Missouri's institutions of higher education should not pay for the privilege of field testing tools that will ultimately bring in millions of dollars to ETS. Over the next four years ETS stands to make nearly \$5.5 million from Missouri's teacher candidates via the MPTEA and MoPTA.<sup>2</sup> That candidates should be required to underwrite the development of this battery of assessment tools is even more problematic because of the financial burden it will create. Detailed arguments regarding specific conceptual and financial issues are included below.

### Concerns

The development of the MPTEA/MoPTA assessments does not conform to accepted evidence-based practices. The following list highlights specific issues:

- 1. There is no evidence that these assessments are grounded in research in teacher education.** Neither ETS nor DESE has provided the public with evidence that the architectural design for the MPTEA/MoPTA sequence of assessments is based upon research in teacher preparation. In comparison, the main national alternative to MoPTA, edTPA<sup>3</sup>, has a research-based cycle of planning, instruction, and assessment that is tailored to capture and enhance teacher learning during the student teaching experience. The MoPTA handbook contains no citation or references, justifying the architecture, organization, or choices of topics or tasks include in MoPTA. Teacher educators (nominally) involved in designing MoPTA with ETS were given a pre-defined structure that included minimal research on assessment design and no research on effective student teaching practice. Because MoPTA has only been piloted by select institutions across Missouri, no technical reports have been produced about the tryout, review, or pilot process. This lack of technical

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<sup>1</sup> For example, based upon current rates listed on the institution's website, the addition of the MoPTA fee represents a 5% increase over current cost of tuition and fees at Harris Stowe State University. Based upon similar data, the addition of MoPTA will create a 4.5% increase at Southeast Missouri State and a 4% increase at Missouri State University.

<sup>2</sup> Calculation based upon an estimated 3996 completers (drawn from a 3-year average from the latest Title II reports) and consequent conservative estimate of 3996 teacher candidates entering programs each year. Completers will take the MoPTA (\$275) and entering candidates will take the MPTEA (\$75). Based upon these numbers the one-year cost to Missouri teacher candidates for these two assessments can be estimated at around 1.4 million dollars.

<sup>3</sup> The edTPA is a performance assessment of student teaching used by many of the states that DESE desires to emulate in its "Top 10 by 20" program. Despite the recommendations of Missouri institutions that had piloted it, DESE rejected edTPA as the performance assessment to be used in Missouri. Since the edTPA is the preeminent performance assessment in teacher education, it is reasonable to use it as a point of comparison.

information places EPP national accreditation at risk since the national accrediting body of teacher education, the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), requires EPPs to show that they use data that is relevant, representative, valid, reliable, cumulative, verifiable, and actionable. To date, no public evidence exists to suggest that data derived from the MoPTA meets this standard.

**RESPONSE:**

*Missouri's new assessments, including the MoPTA, are fully supported by research. It is reasonable that teacher educators in Missouri want to know the theory of action that underlies why MoPTA consists of four tasks; why the particular topic for each task was chosen; why the tasks are sequenced as they are; why the tasks are organized in terms of the paradigm of planning, implementing, and reflecting; and why the two focal students recur in each task. It has always been and continues to be the intent of ETS to publish a Technical Manual after the pilot results have been thoroughly analyzed and final adjustments have been made to the various task prompts. The timing of the proposed release of a Technical Manual is consistent with practices ETS has used previously and with the practices of other organizations involved in the assessment industry. The Technical Manual will explain the theory of action and cite the relevant research that undergirds it, as well as documenting the development process and pilot process in detail. ETS will be doing the work of the organization and writing needed to produce the Technical Manual over the next few months and are targeting June as the month when the Manual will be available. It is correct, as noted by the EPPs, that the MoPTA Handbook contains no citations to research literature. That is not the purpose of the Handbook. The purpose of the Handbook is to provide a practical guide to completing and submitting the tasks that comprise MoPTA.*

*Teacher educators were extensively involved in designing MoPTA. Eleven representatives from EPPs served on the committee of twenty-two MO educators that developed the tasks. Free and frank discussion was encouraged, allowing ample opportunity to influence the architecture of the tasks. There can be no doubt whatever that committee members had a profound impact on the task prompts and choice of artifacts that comprise the entire content of each task.*

*ETS would be happy to arrange a conversation between the research staff in our Foundational Validity or Understanding Teaching Quality divisions and Missouri teacher-educators about the architecture of MoPTA and about the Evidence-Centered Design process in terms of which ETS Assessment Development professionals facilitated the creation of the test content by the Missouri Development Committee.*

**2. The scoring procedures in place for the MPTEA and MoPTA undermine any potential claim of validity.**

- a. **Necessary information for accurate scoring has not been developed or is missing.** No valid correlation was given to raters regarding the public rubrics, descriptive categories, and interpretive words that will be used to assess candidates' entries. The rubrics provided to candidates and programs were not used in the training of scorers. No information regarding this process has been made available to educator preparation programs.

**RESPONSE**

*Scoring procedures for the MoPTA are valid and consistent with industry standards. All raters in each room were provided with the tasks and guiding prompts, task-specific rubrics, and the task-specific Focused Reading Guides. During the rater training, each trainer carefully reviewed the requirements of the tasks as well as the details of the rubrics; special attention was given to ensuring that the raters could see the connections between the tasks and the rubrics. When each Focused Reading Guide was introduced as part of the training, connections were made between it and the relevant task and rubric. Because the Focused Reading Guides are documents that blend the task-specific rubrics and guiding prompts to help the rater focus on the collection and documentation of*

*specific evidence that addresses the guiding prompts, raters were able to focus on collecting evidence within the responses prior to evaluating them, using wording that mirrored the rubric. The interpretive words were explained as a way to describe how thorough the evidence was in each textbox. The raters used the interpretive words, as well as the task-specific rubric and the Focused Reading Guide, to help them determine the final holistic score.*

- b. The criteria for qualifying to be a rater are weak.** At the moment the only qualification to score the MoPTA is a background in education. Scorers will need no specific background in the grade levels or subject areas of the candidates they will assess. In comparison, edTPA utilizes scorers exclusively in the content and certification area of the assessments they judge, providing maximum expertise in the scoring of teachers. The present approach violates foundational research on teaching and learning such as the need for pedagogical content knowledge. With the careful attention Missouri's educator preparation programs are giving to the qualifications of those involved in the student teaching process, this scorer selection process is troubling.

## **RESPONSE**

*ETS has experience both with teacher performance assessments that require scorers with specific grade level and subject area background and with teacher performance assessments where scorers do not have to demonstrate grade level and subject area background exactly answerable to the task of teaching they are evaluating. An example of the former is NBPTS; an example of the latter is Washington ProTeach. Washington ProTeach is used in the state of Washington to confer secondary licenses for in-service teachers; in its four years of operation, the scoring has proven to be reliable.*

*For the January 2013 submission of Washington ProTeach, the average percent of exact agreement (two raters exactly agreeing with each other) was 62%. The overall average percent of exact or adjacent agreement (two raters exactly agreeing or disagreeing by no more than one score point) was 99%. These values are reasonable, given the complexity of the scoring and the size of the score scale.*

*Given the concern regarding the specific match of scorer qualification and candidate content area, additional scoring and analyses will be conducted to compare the quality of scoring between content area matches and mismatches. These data will be used to inform any further adjustments to the scoring plan should it be determined to be necessary.*

*Reliability is a measure of the consistency of scores. It focuses on the extent to which differences in test scores reflect true difference in the knowledge, ability, or skills being tested. Reliability coefficients may range from 0 to 1. The higher the reliability coefficient, the more likely individuals would be to obtain very similar scores if they were retested. In this report, Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951) was calculated as a measure of reliability. The Cronbach's alpha calculated based on the January 2013 submission sample is 0.86, indicating a high degree of score consistency.*

*The ETS developers who facilitated the development of both the NBPTS and Washington ProTeach also facilitated the development of MoPTA. It was decided at the outset that the Washington ProTeach model—content situated/content embedded tasks to be scored by teachers and teacher educators who understand the elements of effective teaching—was the most appropriate method for an assessment that focuses on the tasks of teaching that all student teachers are learning to practice. It is important to note that the pilot and pilot evaluation are key elements of the development process and that the pilot results are still coming in and have yet to be carefully studied and analyzed. It is possible that the analysis of the pilot evaluation results will demonstrate that, indeed, there is a need to consider grade-level and content background in assigning scorers to tasks. The entire development process is intended to be transparent, and ETS will consider its findings from the*

*pilot carefully with Missouri educators and teacher educators before a final decision is made about reader qualifications.*

- c. **Procedures for ensuring inter-rater reliability are not in place.** In the operational phase, only 25% of tasks will be double-scored to sustain validity and reliability, unfortunately leaving behind 75% of possible scores of Missouri's teacher candidates to the fate of one scorer. In comparison, in edTPA all scores near the cut score are read by two certified scorers in the content area of the candidates, with a third scorer utilized if disagreement in scores persists.

#### **RESPONSE**

*The proposed plan of single scoring (plus 25% double scoring for statistical purposes) is our current best projection as to the scoring model for the assessment. First, to be clear, under this model, while each task would be scored by a single rater, each task would be scored by a different rater (our scoring system is configured to prevent a rater scoring more than one task per student), meaning that three different raters would evaluate the student submission and contribute to the final score. Additionally, raters will be supervised by certified scoring leaders, who will backread and oversee scoring.*

*The planned scoring model is based on a current projection as to the overall reliability of the MO Preservice assessment, based on experience with other similar assessments. Ensuring appropriate reliability is essential to ensuring the fairness of the assessment. The final decision on the scoring model will be informed by the pilot study data. If, in the course of this analysis, a need is identified, then additional ratings for all candidates for some or all tasks will be added to ensure the overall quality of the assessment.*

3. **No clear connection exists between the MPTEA and MoPTA.** DESE and ETS claim that these two assessments have been developed as pre- and post-assessments to evaluate candidate growth between entry to and exit from an EPP. However, no psychometric connection or theory of growth between these two assessments has been articulated. In short, there is no evidence that the MoPTA will accurately assess the same basic information assessed by the MPTEA, undermining the notion that the two, in combination, can accurately demonstrate growth. In addition, despite the planned launch of the MPTEA in the fall of 2014, EPPs have been provided with no guidance regarding how this tool might be used to improve program quality. Lastly, the fact that the MPTEA is to be scored by EPP faculty, while the MoPTA will be scored by external raters, also undermines the potential for scores from the two assessments to be meaningfully compared.

#### **RESPONSE**

*There is a misunderstanding about the relationship between the MPTEA and the MoPTA. While previous communication might have seemed to indicate some type of specific connection, the fact is that MPTEA and MoPTA do not function as pre- and post-assessments to evaluate candidate growth between entry and exit from an EPP. MPTEA is intended to provide an EPP with useful information about an incoming cohort's knowledge of the elements of teaching associated with an important subset of MoSPE Standards and Quality Indicators. This subset corresponds to the standards and indicators measured by Task 4—the culminating task—of MoPTA, the exit assessment, in which candidates plan, implement, and reflect upon an entire lesson and include a 15-minute un-edited video of themselves teaching.*

*One of the goals of an EPP is to ensure that all candidates demonstrate proficiency on MoSPE; as the culminating task of the assessment, Task 4 is a focal point for the demonstration of this proficiency. Thus, MPTEA and Task 4 are conceptually related. As different assessments (one is an essay assessment and the other a performance-based portfolio task), they cannot be related as pre-and post-assessments. MPTEA is intended as a formative tool to help EPPs plan a course of instruction that will lift a cohort to where it needs to be by the time*

*of the exit assessment. The intention and purpose of MPTEA justify the idea that it should be evaluated locally. ETS will, of course, provide guidelines for evaluating it and using it as a base-lining, formative instrument.*

- 4. The information that will be generated by the MoPTA is of limited usefulness.** ETS has reported that teacher candidates will only receive a score with no feedback. The algorithm that will be used to calculate scores has not been released to assist EPPs in properly preparing candidates for the assessment. In addition, although Task 1 is designed to provide formative feedback for our teacher candidates to improve their practice, there is no distinction in the rubrics between the formative and summative tasks in MoPTA. In comparison, edTPA has a distinct set of rubrics for their formative conversations with teacher candidates. Moreover, there is no mechanism for feedback between supervisors and teacher candidates developed by DESE or ETS to assist in the formative feature of MoPTA.

#### **RESPONSE**

*Information provided by the MoPTA is useful in assessing the quality of the teacher candidate. The MoPTA score results will contain a numerical score along with structured feedback. For Tasks 2, 3, & 4, which are centrally scored, the score range is a 1-4. The student will receive a score report and feedback on each task upon the completion of scoring. The score report will contain a score for each step within the task, structured feedback answerable to the score for each step, and a total sum of all the step scores.*

*Attached is a draft copy of the score report for Task 2. Page two of the report contains the detailed breakdown of the Task 2 submission with a score for each of the steps along with content that describes the meaning of the score that was received. Once all tasks are completed, there will be a final report showing the scores for each task, the passing score requirement, the candidate's score, and a notification of whether the candidate passed or did not pass the assessment.*

*In addition to this information, ETS will make a library of examples available to all students. This library will consist of sample responses for each task to show a prospective student examples of strong, average, and weak responses and will be another way for the student to evaluate his/her own work. This library will be available prior to the initial launch date of the MoPTA.*

*Task 1 is the beginning step of communication among the cooperating teacher, EPP, and teacher candidate. While it is a formative assessment, the emphasis on Task 1 and its rubric should be on its use as a tool for cooperating teachers, EPPs, and teacher candidates to know what they will need to do and become familiar with as they enter their clinical experience. The formative nature of the task also serves as an introduction to the online submission system in which the teacher candidate creates the response to the Task 1 guiding prompts. The Task 1 rubric follows the same format as the rubrics for the other tasks so that teacher candidates can better understand the workings of the rubrics associated with the other tasks. This was a planned effort to ensure teacher candidates become familiarized with all assessment materials.*

## Recommendations

In light of the above concerns, the following actions should be taken:

*In regard to the MoPTA:*

1. During academic year 2014-15, proceed with the statewide field test of MoPTA with **no charge** to student teachers in Missouri and **no cut score** necessary for passing.
2. During academic year 2015-16, continue the statewide field test of MoPTA with **no charge** to student teachers in Missouri and **no cut score** necessary for passing. This will allow time to develop the assessment and its scoring protocols in a manner consistent with accepted assessment development practices.
3. In the fall of 2016, begin the formal use of the MoPTA as a culminating performance assessment tool for Missouri's teacher candidates. This date would still be a full semester earlier than DESE originally indicated that all new measures would be in place.

## RESPONSE

*The initial administration of the MoPTA will begin in fall 2014. An initial cut score of 15 will be in place reflecting a minimum score of 1 or more on each of the 15 components of the MoPTA. Impact data will be analyzed and then a Missouri Qualifying Score will be set by the State Board of Education in August 2015.*

*MOPTA is designed to work with the student-teaching experience. The tasks are not administered all at once as a distinct testing event at the end of the clinical experience. Instead, they are administered at intervals throughout student-teaching. The first task, which involves understanding your class in the context of the school and the community, is formative and does not count toward your final score. The remaining three tasks that do count toward the final score dovetail with the teaching tasks of planning instruction, assessing students and analyzing data to inform further instruction, and implementing instruction. Candidates get the scores for each task in time to learn from the results before submitting the next task. MoPTA is thus both a measure of a candidate's teaching performance and a valuable learning experience in its own right. MoPTA does not end with the final summative score on the whole assessment. It culminates with the Professional Competency Profile. Candidates and their university supervisor fill in the template for the Professional Competency Profile by considering the full complement of feedback on the MoPTA tasks as well as the results of a survey given to the candidates' students. The candidate and the university supervisor also consider the framework upon which the candidate will be evaluated as an in-service teacher. The Professional Competency Profile thus helps guide a candidate's professional development once the candidate has a teaching job; it builds a bridge between the student-teaching experience and the in-service evaluation framework.*

*MoPTA is a teaching tool. Task 1—understanding your class in the context of the school and the community—is formative and is intended to be used expressly as a teaching tool. The cooperating teacher, University Supervisor and the candidate can examine the candidate's submission together, and both of them are free to comment at length on the candidate's responses and artifacts. For the centrally scored tasks—tasks 2, 3, and 4—the candidate will receive more than just one numerical score. Each task has been divided into steps that correspond to the planning, implementation, and reflection phases of each task. A candidate gets an individual score for each step as well as an overall task score. In addition, we encourage the candidate to keep a copy of what he/she submitted for scoring (the explanations as well as the artifacts). This way, when the step-scores and total task scores come back, the candidate can review these scores along with the actual submission with his/her university supervisor. The task can thus become a teaching tool informing the next step in the student-teaching process, which corresponds to the next task that will be submitted.*

*In regard to the MPTEA:*

1. During academic year 2014-15, proceed with the statewide field test of MPTEA with **no charge** to teacher candidates in Missouri.
2. Assign scoring responsibility to ETS for the MPTEA (as they currently do with the similar Praxis II PLT assessment).
3. During academic year 2015-16, continue the statewide field test of MPTEA with **no charge** to the student teachers in Missouri. This will allow time to develop the assessment and its scoring protocols in a manner consistent with accepted assessment development practices.
4. In the fall of 2016, begin the formal use of the MPTEA as an assessment tool for Missouri's teacher candidates, with scoring by ETS.

#### *RESPONSE*

*We have worked with ETS to make the MPTEA an optional assessment. EPPs should discuss whether or not to use the MPTEA as part of their formal admission process. Community colleges should discuss using the MPTEA as part of the process in completing the Associate of Arts in Teaching Degree. The results of the MPTEA would be shared with the educator preparation programs who are considering admitting the teacher candidate. The results would also be useful to inform continuous improvement.*

*ETS will work with DESE to develop a few alternate forms of the MPTEA along with literature on how to score them and offer these to the EPPs to have as a useful tool for their own local analysis of their incoming cohort—with no cost to the student and with no obligation for EPPs to use them. While ETS will be open to holding webinars on how to score these tests as well as how to develop new forms locally, they will be unable to monitor or report scoring or conduct any data transfer work. EPPs may choose to use these alternate forms or continue to use their own formative assessments as many currently do. While EPPs will have these alternate forms and corresponding information available should EPPs choose to use them, there will be no cost to the student and EPPs are not obligated to use them.*