

Statement of Concern Regarding the Missouri Pre-Service Teacher Assessment from the Missouri Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

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), accomplishes neither of these goals. MoPTA 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, 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.¹ 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 million from Missouri's teacher candidates via MoPTA.² That candidates should be required to underwrite the development of this assessment is even more problematic because of the financial burden it will create. Detailed arguments regarding specific conceptual and financial issues are included below.

The development of 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 MoPTA is based upon research in teacher preparation. In comparison, the main national alternative to MoPTA, edTPA³, 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

¹ 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.

² 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). Based upon these numbers the one-year cost to Missouri teacher candidates for these two assessments can be estimated at around 1.1 million dollars.

³ 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.

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 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.

2. The scoring procedures in place for 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.
- 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.
- 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.

3. 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.

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.

DESE Response

On March 26, 2014 this list of concerns was sent to DESE. The concerns were reviewed by DESE and ETS, and a response to this document was provided on April 2nd. Below, we provide a summary of this response (in bold) and a full rejoinder to the response. The DESE response can be read in full online on the MACTE website (<http://associations.missouristate.edu/macte/>).

“Missouri’s new assessments, including the MoPTA, are fully supported by research. 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.”

While it is stated the Missouri's new assessments are fully supported by research, ETS or Pearson, the companies that are profiting from Missouri's pre-service teachers have not publically released the research base that informs any of the MEGA assessments, including MoPTA. The statement below illustrates the inconsistencies with the design and implementation of MoPTA. If MoPTA were informed by research, ETS would not require a pilot to release the research base or rationale that informs the MoPTA framework. Moreover, because MoPTA is an instrument designed to measure pre-service teacher learning, theories of pre-service teacher learning must inform this effort by DESE to assess the quality of teacher candidates. Without such an effort, DESE is being negligent with the public money being awarded to ETS and other companies profiting from Missourians. In comparison, edTPA, the current standard in the performance-based assessment of student teaching was designed, informed, and refined by the pre-service teacher learning literature.⁴ Also, if ETS must wait until after the pilot to release a theory of action and technical report for MoPTA, then it bolsters the perception that the 2014-2015 is indeed a field test that is being underwritten by Missouri's pre-service teachers. Indeed, if ETS claims Missouri educators were “extensively involved in designing MoPTA,” it appears this occurred without the benefit of Missouri educators having access to the extant research that undergirds it.

Although ETS claims that the timing of these reports are consistent with the assessment industry, in comparison, the 2013 edTPA field test summary, which is publically available⁵ clearly delineates the careful attention given to the pre-service teacher research base in the design of edTPA. Other sources attest to the careful attention given to the pre-service teacher research design given to edTPA by its direct predecessor PACT (Performance Assessment of California

⁴ Cochran-Smith, Marilyn, Sharon Feiman-Nemser, D. John McIntyre, and Kelly E. Demers, eds. *Handbook of research on teacher education: Enduring questions in changing contexts*. Routledge, 2008; Cochran-Smith, Marilyn, and Kenneth M. Zeichner, eds. *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education*. Routledge, 2010; Darling-Hammond, Linda, and John Bransford, eds. *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. John Wiley & Sons, 2007.

⁵ Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (2013). 2013 edTPA Field Test: Summary Report. This report can be accessed at https://secure.aacte.org/apps/rl/res_get.php?fid=827&ref=edtpa

Teachers), a performance assessment designed by California educator preparation programs⁶. If the rhetoric that surrounds educator preparation in Missouri is that we require an instrument to help us assess the quality of our candidates and vis-à-vis the quality of our programs, then we deserve an instrument that is designed specifically for those purposes. This theory of action is clearly articulated for both pre-service teachers and educator preparation programs in **all** of the handbooks produced by edTPA.

The claim that teacher educators were involved in the “design” of MoPTA is questionable. While there was certainly representation from 11 Missouri educator preparation programs, the design team was already given the four-task framework from the inception. The teacher educators were not allowed to reconsider or repurpose the architecture of the assessment. Any claim otherwise is false. The request for proposals signed by DESE and ETS will reveal a similar four-part framework that is presently used in MoPTA, and also ETS presented this four-part framework to a national audience in February 2013 at the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. The first full meeting of the design team was in April, 2013. Also, as the response indicates, if the theory for the assessment is produced after the pilot, then it is implausible that the design of the instrument was informed by a theory of pre-service teacher learning during the so-called “design” that the representatives from Missouri’s educator preparation institutions engaged in. As such, it is of little surprise that the new Praxis PAT follows the same architecture. Therefore, we can reasonably surmise that the four-part design that is yet to have any publically released research grounding for pre-service teachers was conceived prior to any “design” that ETS claims occurred in the spring of 2013.

While educator preparation programs would appreciate a conversation with the ETS research staff, what we seek is less a technical conversation with us, and more accountability with the public regarding the research that informs a performance instrument that will have considerable consequences for the profession of teaching in Missouri. Our institutions seek a highly reliable, valid, and useful instrument that can assist us in cultivating the highest quality educators. Without any public accountability by ETS regarding the reliability, validity, design and utility of MoPTA, there is no assurance that this instrument will meet the aspirations all of the Missouri educator preparation institutions have to ensure the quality of future educators.

“Scoring procedures for the MoPTA are valid and consistent with industry standards.”

While scorers were given task-specific rubrics and Focused Reading Guides (FRG), the triangulation between the FRG, task-specific rubrics, and the interpretive words was lacking. Scorers were in fact told to ignore the rubrics and use the FRG and interpretive words. During training, scorers were continuously asked to use professional judgment and preponderance of evidence. Ultimately, what is used to determine a score based on the evidence collected is the interpretive word for each task, since the scorer must complete an interpretive word as they score. Therefore, the relevance is not found in the various descriptors of the task-specific rubrics, but instead in the perception of the task in light of a descriptive word. In fact, the rubrics were overwhelmingly useless in scoring due to their ineffective lack of specificity. The rubrics go against best practices in the development of evaluative rubrics of use to both scorers and candidates. According to research on performance assessment, “Another potential problem is the overuse of ambiguous quantifiers like “occasionally” or “frequently,” which make it difficult for

⁶ Nicole Merino and Raymond Pechone (2013). The Performance Assessment for California Teachers: An Introduction. *The New Educator*, p. 3-11; Charles A. Peck and Morva McDonald (2013). Creating “Cultures of Evidence” in Teacher Education: Context, Policy, and Practice in Three High-Data-Use Programs. *The New Educator*, p. 12-28.

observers to develop a shared understanding of the standard.”⁷ If the publically available rubrics are to have any meaning for teacher candidates or educator preparation programs, these must be the words that are used to provide meaning for the scores ultimately assigned. Given the gravity of the interpretive words in the scoring of MoPTA, these should also be publically available to educator preparation programs. ETS should use the field test environment to completely revise the rubrics so they provide specific guidance in the completion of the tasks.

“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 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. ”

While the cited statistics look impressive, best practices for this standard should be 70%, not the 62% you quote⁸. Moreover, because MoPTA is a high-stakes assessment test, the adjacent agreement between the scores of 2,3, and 4 (which we assume will be the passing scores) is not as important as the agreement scores between 1 and 2 (failing and passing). Presently, no data exists regarding this kind of reliability for MoPTA. Again, the pilot test conducted in fall 2013 was only a pilot—a sample of Missouri’s teacher candidates (although how representative this sample was of Missouri is still unknown). There is certainly no doubt that ETS is experienced with teacher performance assessments. However, the performance assessments listed (NBPTS and Washington ProTeach) are for **in-service teachers**. The needs of **pre-service teachers** are vastly different from those of in-service teachers. While the experience with these two **in-service** assessments are important, this again indicates the lack of attention given to the distinct needs of the pre-service teachers in Missouri. As ETS claims, Missouri’s student teachers are “learning to practice.” NBPTS and Washington ProTeach capture a different stage in the professional progression of a teacher—those seeking higher level (not initial) certification. These reliability numbers, while encouraging, have not emerged from a performance assessment that captures “learning to practice.” Moreover, the uncertainty regarding the match of scorer qualification and candidate content area that ETS admits bolsters the claim that the development of MoPTA requires more time. Indeed, “The American Educational Research Association’s standards advise that raters understand the domains they are assessing, as well as the subjects to be assessed.”⁹ A

⁷ Matthew Graham, Anthony Milanowski, and Jackson Miller (2012). *Measuring and Promoting Inter-Rater Agreement of Teacher and Principal Performance Ratings*. Center for Educator Compensation Reform. This report can be accessed at <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED532068.pdf>

⁸ Matthew Graham, Anthony Milanowski, and Jackson Miller (2012). *Measuring and Promoting Inter-Rater Agreement of Teacher and Principal Performance Ratings*. Center for Educator Compensation Reform. This report can be accessed at <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED532068.pdf>

⁹ American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), & National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME). (1999). *Standards for educational and psychological testing*. Washington, DC: AERA.

state-funded or ETS-funded field test would provide the opportunity to make these changes prior to the consequential implementation of MoPTA.

“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. 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.”

The fact that the final decision on the scoring model will be informed by the pilot study data is further evidence that MoPTA requires more time for development. Only a few institutions conducted the pilot study across the state of Missouri, with no assurances that the sample size would be representative. In fact, for most programs the fall student teachers used in the pilot differ considerably from the more traditional and larger group of spring student teachers who did not participate in the pilot. To make decisions about scoring and scorers from this kind of unscientific sample illustrates a haphazard approach by DESE to the ensuring the validity and reliability of MoPTA and of the quality of the future educators of Missouri. Seemingly, a 2014-2015 statewide field test would provide more concrete representation of Missouri, but teacher candidates should not underwrite this field test.

“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. 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.”

It is encouraging that a library will be made available to students prior to the launch. However, because information of the sampling process of the pilot has not been made available, it is difficult to ascertain whether this library will actually contain examples that are representative of the complete profile of Missouri’s teacher candidates. However, this remains troublesome for those who may not pass. They have no information about if their response was simply not enough or if they did not answer the prompt. These are two different issues that are not addressed. To standardize this, raters could select feedback statements from a list if the student scored below the cut mark. Some type of standard feedback should be designed during the field test period.

From the response, it seems as if the intent of Task 1 is to simply familiarize student teachers with the MoPTA system. However, educator preparation programs were led to believe that Task 1 would be a formative task designed to assist student teacher learning. The lack of attention given to this task such as no formative rubric, no training regarding the formative qualities of this task, and no training on how to formatively assess Task 1 for educator preparation programs, illustrate the inability of MoPTA at the present moment to understand the needs of Missouri’s student teachers and educator preparation programs. Missouri’s educator preparation programs are currently making placement decisions and staffing decisions for the fall semester, when MoPTA

will become operational. The delay in providing any conceptual and technical assistance for Task 1 reiterates that MoPTA had no theory of action for pre-service teacher learning to begin with.

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.

In the spring 2014 Missouri Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (MACTE) meeting it was announced that students in the 2014-2015 academic year would be required to attain a qualifying score of 15 in order to attain certification. This decision regarding the qualifying score was conducted in private meetings between DESE and ETS with no public input from Missouri's educator preparation programs. While the rationale for the new qualifying score was framed as a response to the claim that MoPTA was inconsequential for 2014-2015, the issue with MoPTA was not its inconsequential nature, but the fact that the assessment is unreliable and invalid and the development of this instrument was being underwritten by Missouri's student teachers by tying certification to payment of \$275 to ETS.

Moreover, for all intents and purposes, 15 as a qualifying score is a meaningless and arbitrary selection. With no technical report that exists regarding the validity and reliability of this assessment, no research or statistical evidence was given regarding the selection of 15 as a meaningful qualifying score. DESE is enacting policies that are negligent to the best interests of Missouri's future educators. Additionally, this new policy has not been publically vetted by Missouri's educator preparation programs. As such, it seems that DESE is indicating a level of collusion with its corporate partners at ETS instead of Missouri's 39 educator preparation programs. Given that DESE has not provided any legitimate statistical reason for a qualifying score of 15, the Missouri Association of Colleges of Teacher Education request that DESE and ETS provide such evidence for its policy decision and fully vet the qualifying scores with the public.

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.

Despite the claims of DESE, numerous problems continue to persist with MoPTA. A list of technical concerns developed and presently unaddressed by ETS and DESE is available on the MACTE website. Moreover, the information regarding the Professional Competency Profile and how this fits into the activities required during student teaching illustrates how unaware ETS and DESE are of the realities of student teaching placements. With the Spring 2014 semester near completion, programs need this information to relay to the university supervisors, since Task 1 and the Professional Competency Profile require significantly more work for university supervisors. Programs will have to make judgment calls regarding compensation, training, and orientation for students and university and placement site staff well in advance of the start of the semester. Without an understanding of the formative aspects of Task 1 or the requirements of the Professional Competency Profile, programs are unable to make the needed decisions before the end of the semester. Therefore, the present timeline of becoming operational is too rushed.

As research confirms, “In addition to providing opportunities to improve the agreement and reliability of the system, a lengthier design period allows stakeholders to iron out disagreements and build trust”¹⁰ If this assessment were a free assessment that allowed DESE, ETS, and EPPs to “work out the kinks” and gain answers to the natural questions that will arise in implementing a high-stakes performance assessment, these concerns would surely subside.

We believe that ETS has expertise in developing performance assessments, but that they require more time to conduct a representative field test of this instrument in order to provide ETS and Missouri’s educator preparation programs with the experience needed to create a valid, reliable, and useful tool to better prepare future educators. Therefore, we reiterate our recommendation that 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.

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