



TMEA Statement on Teacher Certification

Members of the Texas Music Educators Association College Division are committed to preparing future educators who are expert in their content area, knowledgeable about educational theory and practice, and committed to professionalism in their field. We strongly endorse the notion that fully prepared teachers should demonstrate both knowledge about teaching and skill as teachers. Our programs are designed to convey information about subject content, learner development, and teaching strategy. We also provide multiple opportunities for future educators to practice and develop teaching skills through peer teaching, fieldwork in the schools, and semester-long student teaching, all of which are supervised by mentors who are successful professional educators.

We are extremely pleased that the recently proposed assessment was *not* adopted as a certification exam. Going forward, we are ready to take an active part in the collaborative exploration process that is emerging from this action, helping to envision a variety of pathways to strengthen educator preparation in Texas. We offer the following as conversation starters as we begin considering the breadth of options available to us in our deliberations.

Efforts to revise certification requirements by including a portfolio-based assessment in place of a certification exam have clarified for us the importance of the student-teaching experience for our teacher candidates. We are not opposed to portfolio-based assessment or assessment of the act of teaching. We are opposed to contrived and redundant procedures that interfere with the student teaching experience or place additional financial burdens on teacher candidates. As we examine the potential development of a demonstration-based certification requirement, we endorse:

- Assessments that include only those elements that are within the control of the student teacher. Pre-existing conditions set by the mentor teacher prior to the student teacher's arrival on the campus regarding classroom arrangement, classroom management procedures, curricular content, etc. should not factor into this process.
- Assessment of teacher candidates that allow for a range of student ability levels, with teacher candidates evaluated on their work *with* students, not the performance *of* students.
- Assessment that aligns with the procedures and documentation inherent in the actual teaching process. The production of overly burdensome additional documents that are not a part of authentic teaching practices distract from the opportunities to learn from mentors during student teaching and to focus on the needs of the students in the classroom.
- Assessment procedures and scheduling that are as flexible as possible, so as not to restrict mentor teachers who generously host teacher candidates in their classrooms with nominal or no compensation for their efforts. Outside processes that interfere with mentor teachers' plans and their students' needs discourage dedicated teachers from hosting student teachers.

One point on which all parties seem to agree is the ideal way to evaluate teachers is to watch them teach. Yet, this poses logistical challenges as a certification requirement.

We are aware of ongoing discussions to adapt the T-TESS for use with teacher candidates. Having a certification requirement that is akin to how teachers are already being evaluated in the schools has merit and lends authenticity to the purpose and procedures. Further, Texas Administrative Code already requires Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) to introduce teacher candidates to the T-TESS. Should the idea of T-TESS adaptation be pursued further, we encourage the precepts outlined above to be integrated in the adaptation. Three timing options seem viable: during preparation in the EPP, during student teaching, or during the first year of employed teaching.



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We encourage consideration of a T-TESS-type evaluation or the creation of a teaching portfolio during the candidates' time in the EPP, rather than as a certification exam that occurs during student teaching. There are ample opportunities for this kind of process to be built into the curricula of an EPP, thereby preserving the integrity of the student teaching experience for teacher candidates, for mentor teachers, and for Texas public school students. Evaluation of these documents could become a part of the regular audit of EPPs to verify quality and consistency.

Should it be necessary to have this evaluation integrated into the student-teaching experience, it should be enacted as an organic part of the student-teaching mentoring and the observation process. Student teachers are observed frequently by university supervisors, evaluated by mentor teachers, and observed by building principals. Rather than sending teacher candidates portfolios and fees to out-of-state evaluators, perhaps an infrastructure could be developed within Texas that utilizes these types of constituents in the certification evaluation process.

As a final option, perhaps the time for evaluating a teacher candidate's teaching is when the teacher candidate has their own classroom and is responsible for making all the choices involved in instruction. EPPs prepare teacher candidates by providing knowledge, facilitating skill development, providing guided fieldwork, and ultimately placing them in student-teaching situations under the guidance of mentor teachers. After successfully meeting all these pre-service requirements (including successful completion of content and professional practice exams), teacher candidates could receive *provisional* certification that allows them to enter the classroom as first-year teachers. During that year, they would undergo T-TESS evaluation and upon successful completion be granted full certification. Such a plan would encourage the continued connection between EPPs and their graduates, strengthening mentorship programs for young teachers in the schools.

This document demonstrates our sincere desire to partner with other stakeholders in the Texas education community and further the conversation by providing others an opportunity to respond with ideas and suggestions of their own.

Respectfully submitted,
TMEA College Division Certification Task Force

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