

## The Decision

The Texas Education Agency is asking the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) to consider launching a pilot that will help the state determine whether to replace the current pedagogy test required for teacher licensure—the multiple choice, Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (PPR) test—with a performance-based assessment used by 18 states called edTPA. edTPA requires teacher candidates to submit evidence of their teaching practice, including lesson plans, student work samples, video clips, and analysis of their teaching effectiveness and student learning.

## Teacher Focus Groups Across Texas

As SBEC considers this shift in licensure requirements for teachers entering the profession, Teach Plus sought feedback from a critical stakeholder group, current Texas teachers. In January 2019, Teach Plus Texas Policy Fellows facilitated 23 focus groups throughout the state of Texas and got direct feedback from 163 teachers about their experiences entering the profession and their perception of current and proposed licensure requirements.

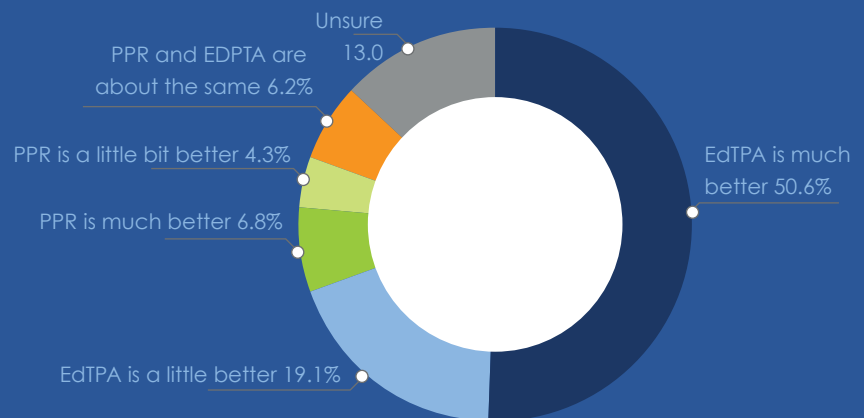
During the focus groups, teachers reviewed the competencies required to enter the teaching profession in Texas, which are aligned to the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) rubric, and used them to evaluate samples of the current PPR test and the performance-based assessment being proposed by the Texas Education Agency, edTPA. Teachers in the focus groups came from 30 different school systems, and averaged 10 years of experience, ranging from one to 42 years. Participants engaged in focus groups to discuss current and proposed licensure requirements and each completed their own questionnaire.



## Findings

When asked, “Overall, which assessment is best aligned to the skills and knowledge necessary to be an effective teacher,” **70 percent of teachers thought edTPA was better aligned to the skills and knowledge necessary to be an effective teacher**, with a majority of teachers thinking it was “much better” than PPR. (See Figure 1)

**Figure 1 |** Count of Overall, which assessment is best aligned to the skills and knowledge necessary to be an effective teacher?

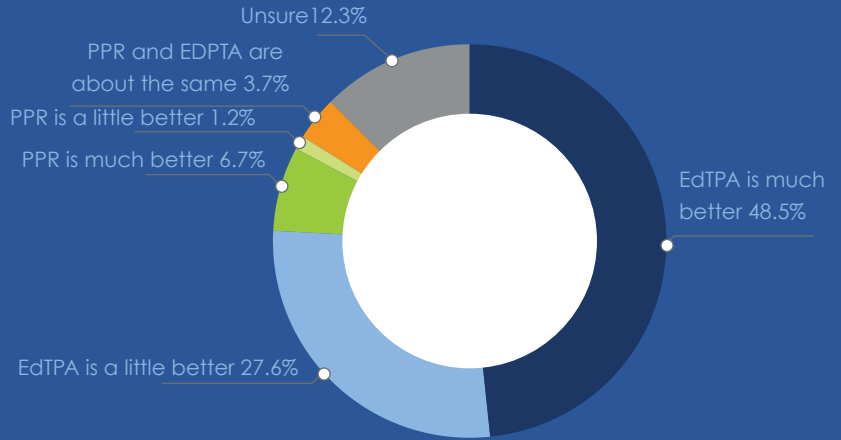




## Findings

When asked, “Which assessment do you believe will best influence educator preparation program alignment with the skills and knowledge necessary to be an effective teacher,” **76 percent of teacher respondents felt the edTPA would best influence educator preparation programs.** (See Figure 2)

**Figure 2 |** Count of Which assessment do you believe will best influence educator preparation alignment with the skills and knowledge necessary to be an effective teacher



The teachers in our focus groups commented extensively on why the adoption of edTPA would improve teacher preparation in Texas, giving more teachers the opportunity to succeed, and improving outcomes for students. Some of their reflections are below.



## The Current System Isn't Working for All Students and Teachers

Many teachers reported feeling that—while there are pockets of excellence—our current system is not preparing all teachers for their first years in the classroom. This can be a contributing factor to high teacher turnover in the early years, and have a negative effect on students, especially the high-need students who are most likely to have a first-year teacher. Because teacher preparation programs are accountable to ensuring that their students pass licensure assessments, improving the alignment between the assessment and the true demands of teaching can drive improvements in teacher preparation.

*I think the current teacher preparation system needs to actually better prepare teachers. Working in a Title 1 school, I have seen many alt certification teachers come and go. They are not provided enough support and in my opinion, the passing of tests is not enough to ensure their classroom readiness. When first-year teachers who are clearly not supported or prepared, the entire functionality of a school diminishes. These candidates leave the profession exhausted and discouraged, and the students are left feeling uncared for, let down, and wondering why their teachers keep leaving them. - Teacher focus group participant*

# Current Assessment Fails to Measure Teacher Candidate Readiness

In general, focus group participants felt passing the PPR was not effective at predicting if teachers were ready to enter the classroom. Many teachers highlighted that the only way to determine effectiveness was to evaluate their ability in real world classroom settings. A teacher candidate's ability to translate theory into practice is critical.

*The current teacher preparation system could work better for teachers and students by assessing whether teachers can truly apply their skills to a real class of students - Teacher focus group participant*

## edTPA Will Positively Influence Preparation Programs

In addition to better assessing teacher candidate readiness for a classroom, teachers think a portfolio assessment will have a positive influence on educator preparation programs - creating more realistic opportunities to reflect and improve prior to entering the classroom. Many teachers reported a need for more time in the classroom and better mentorship throughout the training process. Teachers also identified new teachers lacking real world classroom management and lesson planning experience.

*I know there will be some push back based on the edTPA costing more for future teacher candidates than the current system. However, I challenge those to consider what is more important: creating a cheaper route to becoming a teacher, or creating a more effective route. I know Texas offers many professional adults the chance to change their lives and choose teaching as a second profession in a reasonable way, and that is wonderful. However, we also need to make these alternative routes effective for candidates, and more importantly for our students. - Teacher focus group participant*



## Conclusion

Because a **majority of teachers surveyed believe that edTPA is a better assessment than PPR**, Teach Plus recommends that the State Board for Educator Certification adopt edTPA as the licensure requirement for future incoming teachers.