

MAY 7, 2019

# Proposal for Special Education Teaching Performance Assessment

---

PRESENTED TO: Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2  
On Education Finance  
Hon. Kevin McCarty, Chair



LEGISLATIVE ANALYST'S OFFICE

# Background on Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA)

---

## State Law Requires General Education Teachers to Pass a TPA Before Receiving Their Teaching Credential

- The TPA is a portfolio-based assessment that requires prospective teachers to complete tasks to demonstrate the knowledge and skills expected of beginning teachers. Tasks include preparing lesson plans, assessing student learning, and reflecting on past instruction. Prospective teachers submit their portfolio of written and video-recorded work to an independent assessor for scoring.
- The Legislature's intent was to improve teacher preparation by establishing consistency in teaching assessments across preparation programs.
- The Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) oversees the scoring and administration of the TPA for general education teachers.

## Special Education Teachers Are Not Statutorily Required to Pass a TPA

- Statute gives CTC broad discretion to determine the assessment requirements for special education teachers.
- The CTC does not currently require a TPA for special education teachers but has indicated an interest in implementing such a requirement.



# Governor's Proposal

---

## **Governor's Budget Provides \$1.2 Million to Develop a TPA for Special Education**

- Funding is one time from the Test Development and Administration Account (TDAA)—a special fund that collects revenues from teacher assessment fees.
- The CTC estimates a total cost of \$2 million and intends to request the remaining \$800,000 over the following two years.

## **CTC Plans to Fully Implement the Special Education TPA in Four Years**

- In 2019-20, CTC would contract with a test developer to begin developing the assessment.
- In 2020-21 and 2021-22, CTC would conduct field tests.
- Beginning in 2022-23, new special education teachers would be required to pass the TPA to obtain their teaching credential.

## **Test Taker Fees Would Cover Ongoing Cost of Administering TPA**

- The CTC intends for the special education TPA fee to be comparable to the existing TPA fee, which is currently \$300 per test taker.

## **Budget Also Provides One New Position to Support Special Education TPA**

- The Governor proposes to provide \$136,000 ongoing (TDAA) for one new full-time position to support the development of the special education TPA.



## Assessment—Strengths of Proposal

---

### Proposal Could Help Better Prepare New Teachers to Enter the Classroom

- A special education TPA would assess the knowledge and skills that special education teachers should have to provide instruction to students with special needs, such as managing cases, preparing individualized education programs, and preparing to work with different student needs.
- We found three academic studies generally concluding that teacher performance on the TPA was associated with improvements in student academic outcomes.

### Proposal Could Improve Quality of Teacher Preparation Programs

- The CTC intends to incorporate results from the special education TPA when deciding whether to approve teacher preparation programs. This information will also help CTC identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of each program.
- Program administrators we interviewed thought the TPA could improve the rigor of special education teacher preparation.

### Project Cost and Fund Source Seem Reasonable

- The CTC's estimated development cost of \$2 million assumes some savings from repurposing some components of the TPA for general education teachers.
- The proposed special education TPA draws from funds specifically intended for test development (the TDAA). The balance in the TDAA has been growing in recent years and is likely able to support the initial development cost and the ongoing cost for the one new position.



## Assessment—Potential Downsides

---

### The TPA Is Time Intensive

- Some general education teachers we spoke to were concerned that the time spent completing the assessment seemed high relative to its value as a preparation tool.

### Potential Impact of Special Education TPA on Teacher Supply Is Unclear

- School districts face persistent challenges finding special education teachers. (Approximately one-third of the new special education teaching licenses issued each year consist of temporary licenses issued to individuals who do not meet all credential requirements.)
- A new TPA requirement would add work and cost to the special education teacher preparation process. We are uncertain whether the new requirement would have a notable effect on the number of teachers interested in becoming special education teachers.



## Recommendations

---

### **Adopt the Governor’s Proposals to Fund Development of Special Education TPA and Add One CTC Position**

- The proposals could help improve teacher preparation and would bring special education requirements in line with those for general education.

### **Require CTC to Assess How Proposal Affects Teacher Supply**

- Require CTC to collect additional data during the pilot phase of the assessment, including (1) how the TPA is affecting interest in special education teacher preparation programs, (2) how much time prospective teachers take to complete the TPA tasks and how it affects their overall program workload, and (3) what prospective teachers consider the added value of the TPA to their teaching preparation.
- Require CTC to report this information to the Legislature by January 2022 (before the new TPA requirement would be in effect).
- Use the information to evaluate how the new TPA requirement may affect interest, workload, and completion rates in special education teacher preparation programs.

### **If Interested in Learning More About Impact of the TPA on Student Outcomes, Consider Funding an Independent Evaluation**

- Given the limited existing research, the Legislature could consider funding a study examining whether the TPA achieves the goal of improving teacher preparation and student outcomes.

