

Greetings Commissioners and Commission Staff. My name is Ariya Amin, and I teach 8th Grade TWBI Core in San José Unified School District. This is my fourth year as a credentialed teacher.

I took CalTPA during the 2019-2020 academic year while I was obtaining my credential at UC Santa Cruz. In my experience, I did not find CalTPA helpful or formative as a developing educator. I see value in certain components of the process, such as watching videos of myself teaching and developing well-planned lessons. That said, there are many components of the task that detracted from my time and energy, and therefore took time away from my development. These unhelpful tasks include video editing to condense highlights from a lesson into a few short minutes and writing responses to repetitive questions. The latter especially felt like busy work, and educators, both experienced and developing, have a lot of meaningful tasks and issues already on their plates.

While completing CalTPA, I observed that writing extensively about a single lesson was not particularly helpful for my development. The planning itself is helpful, but CalTPA did not allow me to reflect on my teaching in a meaningful way because it is formulaic, repetitive, and time-consuming. These components distracted me from more meaningful reflection, which I have since found in mentorship, collaboration, feedback, and research. I think it would be more helpful to practice a planning routine in which regular reflection helps each new lesson become stronger and more complete. I would have learned and grown more effectively through repetition and experience.

What was most disheartening was seeing a couple of my colleagues leave teaching because they struggled to pass CalTPA and other tests. In my observation, CalTPA is not predictive of teacher quality, and I saw it bar opportunities for skilled and motivated hopeful educators.

Repetitive lesson planning, combined with comprehensive feedback and mentorship on the quality of my work would have better prepared me for the conditions of teaching in California schools. Reading and applying research in repeated cycles would also be helpful. Teachers need time and practice to grow. We need feedback from people who are familiar with our work and our development. Personally, I would like to see CalTPA replaced with coaching cycles and robust mentorship. I suggest forming a committee of leaders/professors from credentialing programs, CTs, and aspiring educators to develop a system that helps teachers to develop essential skills as they receive and apply meaningful feedback. This is what we strive to create for our students and this is what we deserve as students of our profession.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our feedback and experiences. I look forward to seeing positive change for aspiring educators.

Sincerely,
Ariya Amin