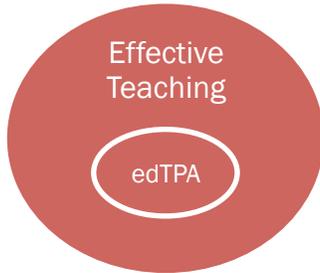


The edTPA

Tips for Success & Survival



Target: Who are my students and what are their real needs?



The edTPA is about good teaching. See it as an opportunity to become a more effective teacher, not as a test. See it as a chance to help actual students, not as hoop you have to jump through for licensure. You—and ultimately, your students—will get out of it what you put into it. It will show in your commentaries.

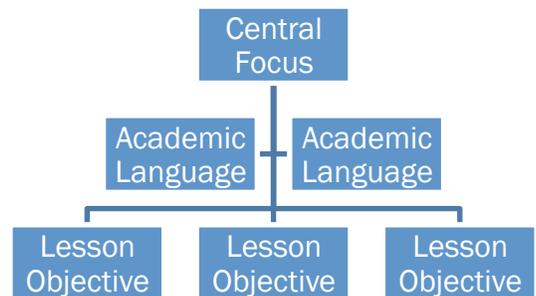
Know thy students. Make the edTPA fit your students, not the other way around. Ground it in what's valuable and relevant to your students, not what looks fun, easy, or "cool." Root it in what your students need as learners, not what you need as a teacher. The more you know your students, the easier the edTPA process becomes. Don't script your instruction, coach your students, or focus exclusively on students whose grades or behavior will make you look good on video. Keep it real.



Prioritize: What am I really asking my students to do?

Content is secondary. Build a learning segment around skills and abilities, not activities or facts. Differentiate instruction and focus on opportunities to see, scaffold, and showcase the process of your students' thinking. Being a good teacher and student are not (necessarily) synonymous with looking good on camera.

Brush up on your Bloom's. Think of academic language not only as discipline vocabulary (e.g., *metaphor* or *ion*), but also as the verbs required for student to "do" your subject and that you use to anchor your learning objectives (e.g., *compare* or *identify*). Let the academic language guide what, how, and why your students are learning what you intend them to.



Analyze: How do I know my students are actually learning?

Ask, don't say.

You cannot control what your students say, but you can control what you say. Harness the power of open-ended questions to probe not just what students are thinking but also how they are thinking. This metacognition showcases how you help students deepen their understanding, whether basic or profound.

Show, don't tell.

When making a statement about student learning, give examples. Explicitly cite something students said, wrote, or did. Instances in speech or writing where students are using your key academic language demands are gold.

Evidence is everything. Throughout the experience, ask yourself: How am I supporting lower-achieving students and challenging higher-achieving students? How am I helping students to work independently and cooperatively? What are students saying, writing, or doing that shows they are learning? And what am I saying, writing, or doing that promotes it?

Document reflection, not perfection. If learning does not go according to plan, breathe. Reflect on why and what you would do differently. If you think you wouldn't change anything the next time around, there's always room for improvement. Explain how you would expand upon your success in the future. There's no perfect lesson—scorers are interested in how you address challenges.

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T

Technology

SOUND CHECK!

Audio > video. Make sure that your recording clearly picks up what students are saying. If a student says something “right on the academic money,” but is not on camera, don’t fret. You can still use it. Good audio will save bad video, but good video without audio is a lost cause.

Be a teacher, not director. Default to keeping the camera stationary. Scorers don’t care about cinematography.

Locate your resources. What video recording equipment does your school have? What equipment does your university or college have? Your school’s technology department or your institution’s library is more than happy to help—that’s why they are there.

Be creative. Sometimes the easiest and best solution is right under your nose. Consider Flip cameras and tablets. Don’t underestimate the power of smartphones: the latest models often feature high-fidelity video.

Practice. Get to know your equipment before filming. Rehearse setting everything up. If applicable, practice downloading your recording onto your computer. Figure out what file formats you are working with and what is compatible with your computer. Leave available lots of memory:

video recordings take up a lot of MBs and GBs. Compress your video where possible. Shoot for clear audio first and foremost. If possible, let the students—and you—get comfortable being on camera. Early on, students may be tempted to withdraw or act out because of the camera’s novelty. The greater familiarity everyone has with the camera, the better. When actually taping, ensure good audio by filming, stopping, checking, and then starting.

More is more. You may think you have a good idea of what video clips you would like to showcase before filming, but many surprises will happen. A fire drill sounds off. A swear word slips out of a student’s mouth. Or, your students dazzle you with academic language during a warm-up you thought would be uneventful. You capture some spontaneous student-student interactions. The more you film, the more evidence you have to choose from.

P

Planning

Before Starting

- Read the edTPA handbook—twice. And then two more times for good measure.
- Inform your principal and your mentor or cooperating teacher that you are conducting an edTPA and that it involves videotaping.
- Send home the student permission slips ASAP. If need be, sell the edTPA to reluctant parents: “This is a special experience. Out of all my classes, I selected your child’s...” No permission slip means no appearance on video, a logistical headache.

During Design & Delivery

- When designing your segment, make sure to compile key research or theoretical references substantiating your practices. You will want to cite them in your commentary.
- Talk about the experience with your professional colleagues or cohort. Share your focus, compare your academic language. Commiserate about the commentaries. Pass along tech pointers.
- After each lesson, document your thoughts and reflection as soon as possible. Record them on your cellphone; write them in a journal. These insights will be invaluable when writing your commentaries.

After Filming

- Work on your commentaries with the rubrics out. (Constantly refer to them in design, too.)
- Read the prompts carefully. The differences are subtle, but many address overlapping concerns. Space is an issue!
- Scorers don’t know what you don’t tell them. If your implementation differs from your planning, you might very well be able to revise your lesson plans and commentary. If not, then you have a great opportunity to show your maturity through reflection.

A

Academic Language.

Don’t make it a secret. Use it yourself in speech and writing. Get your students using it with you—and among one another—in speech and writing. But don’t stop there: assess metacognition. Ask your students to explain how and why they are thinking what they are thinking when they use and perform academic language. This is the evidence you want.