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# LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

## Supporting Candidates' Readiness for edTPA

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### ABSTRACT

In this chapter the authors describe one university's multifaceted approach to support the implementation of edTPA. Using a mixed methods approach, focus was given to teacher preparation strategies and candidates' outcomes in the edTPA categories of English as an Additional Language (EAL) and World Languages (WL). The researchers investigated the use of 10 strategies designed to support teacher candidates with the edTPA tasks before and during the internship semester. Interventions emphasized procedural and instructional scaffolds for candidates, some of whom were second language learners of English. The programmatic details explained in this chapter re-

flect learner-centered instruction for the specific language demands associated with edTPA and describe edTPA support strategies that scaffold language development for the candidates to utilize within their edTPA portfolios. The chapter includes current pilot program results, showcasing the candidates' successful outcomes in both edTPA categories as well as possible next steps in refining candidate support.

Teachers in K–12 classrooms across the nation face increasing pressure to improve students' academic outcomes as a direct result of informed teaching and critical, linguistically supportive instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Herrera, Cabral, & Murry, 2013; Knight et al., 2014; Sato, 2014). In response to such pressure, many teacher-training programs have adopted performance-based assessments like edTPA, to demonstrate that their teacher candidates are ready to teach using research-based best practices (Darling-Hammond, 2014). The use of edTPA continues to expand at a national level. In 2017, 40 states reported using edTPA in over 740 teacher preparation programs (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education [AACTE], 2017). The paradigm shift calls for national transformations within teacher preparation programs so that candidates are well prepared to be successful with such challenging, high stakes, and costly assessments (Cochran-Smith, Piazza, & Power, 2013; Sato, 2014).

The need to enhance teacher candidate support is particularly relevant in the fields of English as an Additional Language (EAL) and World Languages (WL). Teacher candidates in these domains must demonstrate skills that facilitate students' use and application of language in the classroom context and develop a wide variety of scaffolding techniques related to academic language development and communicative language domains (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2016; Grosjean & Li, 2013). Likewise, there is a current focus in teacher preparation to ensure services for candidates representing minority populations as well as the K–12 students they serve (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity [SCALE], 2016). Rendering an already difficult task even more challenging, many of the aspiring EAL and WL teachers are native speakers of languages other than English, yet are required to write lengthy commentaries in English to demonstrate their critical thinking and reflective skills. While multiple studies have indicated that teacher candidates find edTPA challenging (Hildebrandt & Swanson, 2014; Kissau & Algozzine, 2017) and several propose recommendations to support candidates in the successful completion of the assessment (Trojan & Kaplan, 2015), few have investigated the impact of support strategies on candidate performance. In response, the researchers explored the impact of 10 support strategies on WL and EAL teacher candidate edTPA performance. More specifically, the chapter provides an explanatory overview of scaffolded edTPA experiences leading up to and

during internships and offers recommendations for other teacher education programs implementing edTPA.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

While analyzing the related literature to guide and inform the project, three primary topics surfaced. The emerging body of research related to edTPA frequently (a) reports candidate performance, (b) indicates the struggles of non-native speakers of English, and (c) suggests strategies to support teacher candidates.

### Candidate Performance

The limited research currently available supports the notion that all teacher candidates, including those in the EAL and WL categories, could benefit from additional interventions to successfully complete edTPA (Hildebrandt & Swanson, 2014; Kissau & Algozzine, 2017; Russell & Davidson Devall, 2016). In one study examining edTPA scores of 21 world language teacher candidates, Hildebrandt and Swanson (2014) found that the teacher candidates struggled to engage students in the target language and to make cultural comparisons and connections (Rubrics 6–8), with approximately one-fifth scoring in the bottom two levels of these rubrics. Candidates also demonstrated difficulty providing suggestions to improve student performance (Rubric 12), and using assessment to inform instruction (Rubric 13). In a more recent study by Kissau and Algozzine (2017) involving 21 aspiring teachers of French and Spanish, candidates performed well on Task 1: Planning for Teaching and Learning of edTPA with a mean rubric score of 3.36. However, they performed more poorly on Task 2: Instructing and Engaging Students in Learning and Task 3: Assessing Student Learning with total average rubric scores of 2.87 and 2.92, respectively. The above referenced rubric scores have a range from 1 to 5, with a score of 3 being considered as *ready to teach*. Rubric scores of 4 and 5 describe accomplished and highly accomplished skill levels for beginning teachers (SCALE, 2016).

### Native Speakers of Languages Other Than English

While all language teachers are language learners at some level, recent research has suggested that teacher candidates whose first language is not English may need additional support to be successful in meeting the English language demands associated with edTPA (Russell & Davidson Duvall,

2016; Troyan & Kaplan, 2015). In the study by Kissau and Algozzine (2017), for example, non-native speakers of English obtained statistically significantly lower scores than their native-speaking counterparts for Task 3: Assessing Student Learning and for the total edTPA score. Multiple recent studies have suggested that candidates who are non-native speakers of English are at a disadvantage when writing long commentaries in a language that is not their mother tongue (Kissau & Algozzine, 2017; Russell & Davidson Devall, 2016). Russell and Davidson Devall (2016), for example, argued that the lengthy edTPA commentaries required for all three tasks put “native and heritage speakers of languages other than English at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts who are native speakers of English” (p. 15).

### Support Strategies

The review of relevant literature also encompassed tenets of active engagement, collective learning, and sociocultural learning theory. Strategies for engaged learning with high levels of collaboration and collective learning are needed to move learners from apprenticeship to appropriation (Gibbons, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978; Walqui & van Lier, 2010). For example, current research suggests that supportive cooperating teachers play a critical role in teacher candidate success while completing edTPA (Behney, 2016; Kissau, Hart, & Algozzine, 2017). Specific to second language instruction, Behney’s recent study (2016) involving 22 foreign language teacher candidates, found that the teacher candidates who performed best on edTPA indicated that they were placed with a very supportive cooperating teacher. Interns who performed less well on edTPA reported having received less support from their cooperating teacher. Given the critical role played by the cooperating teacher in the student teaching internship, some strategies focus on supporting edTPA specifics in clinical settings (Ferber & Nillas, 2010; Turunen & Tuovila, 2012). That said, recent research has suggested that cooperating teachers, who are tasked with supporting interns in their completion of edTPA, are often unfamiliar with the assessment and its expectations (Kissau et al., 2017).

Another proposed strategy reported in the research indicated that due to cultural and linguistic diversity in the teacher candidate population, the conceptual layers of comprehensive scaffolding should be multifaceted (Walqui & van Lier, 2010). In other words, language teacher candidates may benefit from extensive layers of modeling to learn the processes of instructional and assessment scaffolding as part of what is taught throughout their program. Such modeling should be utilized so the candidates could then demonstrate competencies for their own design and delivery of K–12 instruction. Candidates also need procedural and instructional scaffolding

for their own learning processes to fully comprehend the teacher preparation course contents and concepts (Sleeter & Grant, 2009).

Some of the recommended strategies found in the literature are intended specifically to address the unique needs of English learners (Collier, 1995; Krashen, 1992; National Council of State Supervisors for Languages [NCSSFL], 2015; World-Class Instructional Design & Assessment [WIDA], 2012). Non-native English speaking adult learners may have specialized academic language gaps, requiring targeted interventions for writing at the postsecondary level (Calderón, 2007; WIDA, 2012). The technical language demands within the edTPA tasks may be significantly more difficult for non-native English speaking candidates given the increased complexities of reading and writing and sociocultural patterns within the rubric concepts (Calderón, 2007). The student-centered pedagogical technicalities of edTPA and the dense texts within the edTPA commentaries and rubrics require adult learners to acquire new patterns of writing. Commentary narratives must encompass edTPA's conceptual areas, requiring the candidates to maneuver through multiple registers (Gottlieb & Enrst-Slavit, 2014). Considering sociocultural factors of communication, non-native speaker candidates may be cognitively negotiating their role as a new teacher in the context of U.S. schools in different ways than their native-speaking colleagues while completing edTPA (Kissau, 2014). Furthermore, in the context of edTPA there are specialized digital literacies integrated into language learning. Candidates must use specific language patterns to access and describe digital information to perform well in the required edTPA tasks.

While an overview of the related literature makes it clear that teacher candidates, in particular those who are non-native speakers of English, could benefit from additional support to successfully complete edTPA, it also reveals very little research that investigates the benefits of specific support strategies. To address this gap in the literature, the researchers sought to address the following research question:

**RQ:** *To what extent did the ten implemented strategies impact EAL and WL teacher candidate performance on edTPA?*

## METHODS

The researchers used an explanatory mixed method design (Creswell, 2002) to explore the impact of 10 support strategies on WL and EAL teacher candidate edTPA performance. Characteristic of this type of design, a greater emphasis was placed on analysis of the quantitative edTPA data, with attention also given to qualitative data to complement and build upon the quantitative findings. The quantitative phase of the project was useful

in analyzing the performance of a large number of participants, and the qualitative component provided teacher candidates with the opportunity to express their views on the scaffolded experiences (Merriam, 1998).

## Research Context

The chapter describes the initiatives of a large institution of higher education (IHE) in the southeastern United States, and more specifically a department in its College of Education that prepares aspiring teachers in a variety of licensure areas including K–12 Foreign Language Education and English as a Second Language. The college, an early adopter of edTPA in its state, has emerged as a leader in proactively supporting candidates' success on the performance-based assessment. While not yet required across the state as a licensure requirement, the state education agency has indicated its plans to use passing edTPA scores as part of the teacher licensure process. In anticipation of this coming requirement, the IHE moved forward in implementing a plan to ensure candidates' success. With a focus on preparing candidates to teach in urban settings, the college enrolls nearly 2,400 undergraduate and graduate candidates on an annual basis. After deciding to implement edTPA as a summative assessment in 2014 to demonstrate its candidates' readiness to teach, its stakeholders joined efforts to understand how it could best support the teacher candidates for the performance-based assessment. To ensure objectivity and reliability in scoring, the college decided that all candidate portfolios would be externally scored by Pearson, and received funding from the provost's office to cover the \$300 per candidate expense.

## Participants

The teacher candidates represented a deliberate, available sample at the IHE. While the college's current edTPA implementation plan encompasses 16 programs, this chapter focuses on two specific programs: Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) and Foreign Language Education (FLED). Between Fall 2014 and Spring 2016, nearly 450 teacher candidates completed edTPA and submitted assessment portfolios for external scoring. Of the total, 63 were in either TESL ( $n = 34$ ) or FLED ( $n = 29$ ) programs. Of the 63 candidates, over 30% were native speakers of languages other than English. These candidates possessed varying degrees of English proficiency and spoke a wide variety of first languages including Arabic, Ethiopian, French, Mandarin, Polish, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

## Strategy Interventions

Candidates completing the portfolio occupied two complex roles simultaneously. They were both language learners, learning the language of edTPA, and would-be language teachers. Therefore, the programmatic and instructional strategies described in this chapter were designed to serve as adaptive, language-rich scaffolds for both language teacher candidates and language learners to develop edTPA concepts and language simultaneously (Echevarria et al., 2016).

The strategies and interventions developed were two-fold. Particular strategies were at programmatic levels while others were instructional in nature. With two overarching groupings, aspects of the strategies are therefore conceptually recursive in some chapter subsections. The strategies and interventions were designed intentionally to replicate multiple exposures, repetition, and looping of verbal, procedural and instructional scaffolds that are necessary for candidates' edTPA language development. Aligning with the literature review, the interventions and supports mirrored what the candidates will, one day, encounter in their own K–12 classrooms (Echevarria et al., 2016).

## Programmatic Strategies

The programmatic-level strategies include: (a) a focused analysis of the language demands associated with edTPA, (b) in-depth considerations regarding the coursework for practice tasks, (c) Pearson trained faculty, (d) strategic clinical experiences, (e) cooperating teacher orientation sessions, and (f) planned data collection and analysis.

### *Language Demands and edTPA Practice Tasks*

The faculty responsible for delivering the coursework in both the TESL and FLED programs closely scrutinized the linguistic and communicative aspects of the edTPA tasks, including the complex, conceptual language demands within the system of rubrics and commentaries. Through a series of collaborative sessions, the faculty identified potential systems of support language teachers might need. Specifically, the faculty analyzed the syllabi and capstone projects across the respective programs, considering applications of the edTPA tasks and potential language demands for all candidates, but especially for those who were non-native speakers of English.

Even though edTPA is a culminating capstone project, the revisions were made to consistently scaffold in portions of edTPA rubrics, modeling how to procedurally and instructionally scaffold language learning. The analysis resulted in threading edTPA content and support strategies throughout



TESL and FLED coursework, imparting a degree of accountability and responsibility across faculty members, as opposed to over-burdening faculty teaching edTPA intensive coursework, such as methods classes.

With edTPA language demands in consideration, an early strategy to support candidates was the shifting of two capstone projects in one existing assessment course. The purpose was to more closely align the course projects to edTPA Task 2: Instructing and Engaging Students in Learning) and Task 3: Assessing Student Learning. This allowed candidates to practice delivering language instruction while simultaneously analyzing students' outcomes as a result of their teaching prior to completing the edTPA portfolio during their student teaching internship. The strategy of housing the practice tasks within the same course facilitated specialized support within the scope of one semester, in one clinical setting.

### *Trained Pearson Scorers*

Another programmatic strategy was that 2 of the 4 TESL and FLED faculty members successfully completed Pearson edTPA scorer training, one each in the EAL and WL categories. The training was thought to be a beneficial strategy for all candidates, providing more targeted perspectives on the language demands of the edTPA rubrics and commentaries from external scorers. Teacher candidates whose language was one other than English also needed further clarity on commentaries' organizational features, language choices to match the text purpose, and explicit understandings regarding commentary prompts with a scorer as the targeted audience for the writing. The strategy attempted to remove guesswork from the candidates' viewpoints regarding expectations for external scoring. Pearson-trained faculty facilitated specialized sessions with program faculty while analyzing program coursework, syllabi, and capstone projects, sharing greater insight regarding edTPA expectations.

An additional rationale for having Pearson-trained faculty as a supportive resource, was because the college determined external edTPA scoring would be used with all teacher candidates. Given the fact that each of the Pearson trained faculty members completed extensive training regarding bias and how it must be avoided during the external scoring process, they could relay objectivity measures to the candidates. Finally, the Pearson trained faculty also informed the candidates on the validity and inter-rater reliability measures that are in place for the external edTPA scoring process, further emphasizing objectivity measures.

### *Strategic Clinical Placements*

Another programmatic strategy was the restructuring of clinical placements for the TESL and FLED teacher candidates. With the updated practice tasks and capstone projects, it was necessary to have strategic



collaboration regarding candidates' early clinical placements. The strategy was to facilitate ample opportunities to practice designing, delivering, and assessing language instruction according to the edTPA rubrics. This was an especially important strategy for non-native English speaking candidates, as they would also have earlier and more recursive exposure to student-centered schooling. In support of the recommendation made by Kissau et al., (2011) the researchers recommended that candidates spend more time completing clinical experiences in K–12 schools to gain greater familiarity with student and methodology expectations in U.S. schools. Following this recommendation, the TESL and FLED faculty at the participating IHE worked with partnering K–12 schools' teachers and administrators to develop frequent and enduring clinical experiences for their respective candidates and to describe more explicitly edTPA expectations so that practicing teachers would know what is expected of these teacher candidates and could reflect this expected behaviors in their own instruction. Existing, logistical challenges associated with placing a large number of students each semester, increased accountability placed on teachers, and changing teaching methodologies have made it very challenging for teacher training programs to find high quality placements for teacher candidates (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2014; Gareis & Grant, 2014; Metcalf, 1991). In this respect, assistance from the IHE's Office of Field Experiences was invaluable in ensuring high quality clinical placements that aligned with edTPA and programmatic expectations.

### ***Cooperating Teacher edTPA Orientation***

As a means of familiarizing cooperating teachers with edTPA, the Office of Field Experiences at the participating IHE coordinated each semester an in-depth, face-to-face orientation session with the practicing teachers who agreed to host student teachers for the internship semester. In addition to general logistics and timeline information, the cooperating teachers were also given information regarding the constructs of edTPA, its purpose, and areas where the IHE's teacher candidates were doing well on the assessment, and where there was room for improvement. This was a vital layer of the scaffolding process, not only for the TESL and FLED candidates, but for candidates from all of the college's program areas.

Given that each discipline is unique, the cooperating teacher orientation at the participating IHE also included the opportunity to have breakout sessions with program-specific faculty whereby they gain detailed information regarding the edTPA process. For the TESL and FLED candidates' cooperating teachers, the breakout sessions gave faculty the opportunity to further explain edTPA's distinct language demands, including language differences between the non-native speaker candidates and their cooperating teachers. Principles from language learning and communicative directionality

were included to help cooperating teachers understand candidates' language patterns. In the cases where the cooperating teachers were unable to attend the breakout sessions, the IHE provided video recorded edTPA guidance as well as site-visits by university supervisors.

Within the TESL and FLED programs, the strategy of cooperating teacher orientation was scaffolded even further due to the wide variation from school to school in terms of site-based program structures. For example, TESL program candidates may be student teaching in classrooms where they are co-teaching with another classroom teacher, in a self-contained ESL classroom, or in a pullout program where they work with small groups of English learners for short periods of time, apart from the classroom teacher. Some TESL candidates travel between two or three schools each week to deliver language instruction. In any of these site-based program structures there may also be annual language testing, final exams, and other state-level assessments that impact the candidates' edTPA submission timeline. Since candidates were sometimes student teaching in a program structure that was different from their prior clinical experiences, confusion often arose between the candidates and the cooperating teachers regarding logistical aspects of candidates' completion of edTPA during their internships. It was noted that candidates who were non-native speakers of English also needed extra support from their cooperating teachers to appropriately negotiate and maneuver through timelines for videotaping and student outcomes analysis, based on program structures and the time of the school year.

### ***Planned Data Collection and Analysis***

A final programmatic strategy to support edTPA success with TESL and FLED candidates was the program-specific planned data collection and analysis from the onset of edTPA implementation. This strategy was set in motion to facilitate the ongoing evaluation of candidates' strengths and areas for improvement in regard to the edTPA tasks, and their corresponding rubrics. These analyses have not only allowed the FLED and TESL program faculty members to review progress of program candidates holistically, but have also resulted in more in depth analyses that have shed light on differences in subgroups of candidates.

### **Instructional Strategies**

The above-mentioned programmatic changes influenced instructional approaches used in coursework to better support TESL and FLED teacher candidates. The instructional strategies were also based on scaffolding principles supportive of language learning (Gibbons, 2015) and included (a)

targeted capstone projects with structured peer review, (b) refocused lesson planning with an edTPA planning template, (c) specialized seminars during student teaching, and (d) graduate assistant support. Again, while all of these strategies supported all teacher candidates, specific considerations were given within their designs to support non-native English speaking teacher candidates.

### *Targeted Capstone Projects*

One specific strategy included edTPA rubric alignment for two capstone projects. Both projects required candidates' outcomes to emulate portions of edTPA products including videotaped clips of candidates' teaching and commentary writing. New emphasis was given to candidates' self-analysis of language teaching, students' assessments and their outcomes, as well as the required organizational features and language choices to match practice task commentary writing demands. Adjustments to the capstone projects also provided candidates with earlier school placements for clinical experiences where they could practice skills required in edTPA. Both capstone projects also included the use of edTPA rubrics for their evaluation, which gave candidates in-depth exposure to the specific language demands of the commentaries and artifacts for the practice edTPA tasks.

{H4}Engaged instruction analysis project with structured peer review.—The first of the two revised capstone projects was the Engaged Instruction Analysis Project. Candidates videotaped themselves in clinical settings delivering at least 20 minutes of instruction and captured students' responses and reactions to their teaching. The semester-long project was realigned with the edTPA Task 2 rubrics with a final written analysis aligned with the Task 2 commentary prompts. For non-native English speaking candidates, this strategy provided opportunities to practice and analyze their teaching prior to the student teaching internship. Feedback from candidates regarding technology concerns shaped the procedural scaffolding provided in this assignment. Specific scaffolds included step-by-step instructions, all with visual supports, for video compression, file-type/size conversion, and visual/audio-compatibility strategies to capture candidates' and students' interactions during the practice instruction.

Prior to the video filming process, candidates interacted in class to deconstruct the rubrics and commentary writing prompts with each other. Keeping the non-native English speaking candidates' needs at the forefront, the capstone project included multiple structured classroom discussions about the language demands of the commentary writing, narrative text purpose, and scorer audience both from the language teaching and language learning viewpoints. This chunking of information into smaller, frequent segments facilitated content and language-rich practices with their peers.

Peer review, structured by rubric-specific prompts occurred at several points throughout the project. edTPA rubrics concentrate on reflective and evaluative processes and therefore, merited emphasis. The focus of the instruction analysis project was to capture practiced instructional time in clinical settings. The revised capstone project was different from analyzing a video clip to identify what a teacher candidate was doing while delivering instruction. Rather, candidates were guided to look for elements in their own teaching and their classmates' teachings that demonstrated how they structured students to extend language development and language production. This is a shift away from prior assessment patterns of simply capturing video footage of candidates delivering instruction with little or no reference to how the students' use of language increased as a direct result of the lesson (SCALE, 2016).

{H4}Assessing student-learning project with structured peer review.—The second capstone project that was revised as an instructional support strategy was the Assessing Student Learning Project, aligned with edTPA Task 3. The project examined the corresponding rubrics connected to candidates assessing students' learning. For the non-native English speaking candidates, the completion of this project as a continuum from Task 2: Engaging Instruction Analysis Project, kept the commentary writing process recursive. In class meeting sessions candidates were required to examine and analyze the instructional scaffolds they developed within their instruction, with emphasis on measuring students' language development. The instructor guided, peer-to-peer analysis sessions helped candidates to self-identify and express how their systems of formative and summative assessments were scaffolded for their language learners. The candidates also analyzed their commentaries, using the vocabulary consistent with that presented in the edTPA handbooks.

With edTPA Task 3 alignment, candidates also needed to demonstrate skills for giving students specific, meaningful feedback that was directly aligned with daily lesson goals and language learning objectives. In order for the language teachers to develop discrete skills for giving language learners feedback, they too required feedback that mirrored the alignment with language learning goals. What made this second project unique within the language teacher programs is that it occurred in the same course as practice Task 2. Therefore, candidates had the opportunity to deliver instruction, analyze real student outcome data from the same lesson, and have ongoing structured peer-to-peer feedback sessions aligned with the edTPA rubrics from both Tasks 2 and 3 simultaneously. In other program areas, these aspects of the practice tasks are often done at differing points in different courses, with different student outcome data.

{H4}Guiding reflection questions.—As a final component of both capstone projects, the candidates were given guiding open-ended questions for

their final reflective processes with close connections to EAL and WL rubric progressions. The purpose of this final portion was to guide the candidates toward expanding the language and skills they obtained in practicing Tasks 2 and 3. Such levels of practice task analysis required candidates to be ongoing language learners while also teaching language. The practice tasks aimed to extend the candidates' proficiencies of the language demands of edTPA as measured by Pearson-trained faculty compared to final Pearson-scored outcomes.

### ***Lesson Planning and Language Development***

In order to deconstruct the language demands within the coursework and the edTPA processes, one approach included a close examination of the lesson plan template candidates used to design instruction. While there were aspects of the template that provided fields that could lend themselves to candidates' planning for students' language demands within their lessons, there were also some deficiencies. The candidates' lesson planning outcomes continued to show superficial considerations of the in-depth language demands that are required by edTPA. Similarly, many teacher candidates leaned toward designing lessons that mirror the way they themselves were taught, a common practice among beginning teachers (Borg, 2003). In the TESL and FLED programs, the idea of mirrored lesson design was important for candidates who are non-native speakers of English who may also be unfamiliar with student-centered pedagogies and how they shape language development.

Specifically, the programmatic lesson plan template used with TESL candidates was expanded to include substantially more in-depth aspects of language development (see Appendix A). The lesson plan template expansions included additional spaces for skills required by edTPA, and provided increased areas for TESL candidates to identify and describe language functions, discourse competency, pragmatic competency, necessary language supports, and how to make direct connections between students' native languages and cultures and the language of the lesson being taught. For the TESL candidates, the template also delineated which portions of the language demands are related to content and which are related to English language development, therefore guiding each lesson to have content and language objectives.

### ***Specialized Internship Seminars***

During the full-time student teaching internship semester candidates in all college programs receive support via weekly seminars conducted on campus and online after the school day is completed. However, these seminar sessions contain large numbers of candidates across multiple disciplines and content areas. Differing from their peers, the TESL and FLED

candidates received more tailored, subject-specific support via content-clustered specialized seminars that are devoted to second language teachers and are led by Pearson-trained scorers. The seminar sessions served as scaffolds during the internship semester as the candidates fully shifted into a teaching role, and provided increasing degrees of support as the candidates work up to full time language teaching. The presence of multiple non-native speakers of English in these specialized seminars allowed the instructors to tailor instruction to meet their specific needs. Likewise, candidates were afforded a safe place to voice their potential misunderstandings and concerns with the edTPA tasks.

### ***Graduate Assistant Support***

As yet another means of supporting TESL and FLED candidate success on edTPA, funds allocated as part of a university-wide pilot program to improve student oral and written communications skills were used to hire graduate assistants. Strategically chosen, these graduate assistants represented diverse content areas, including foreign language and TESL, and had all recently successfully completed edTPA. With content-specific expertise, one graduate assistant was assigned per semester to the specialized FLED and TESL seminars. During these seminars, the graduate assistants reviewed candidate draft edTPA commentaries and provided peer-directed feedback and support related to the quality of student written communication. While these assistants could not revise student work, they were permitted according to edTPA guidelines (AACTE, 2016), to offer feedback and suggestions. Such feedback offered candidates information on the areas where their written responses did not address elements of the edTPA rubrics. While such support may benefit all students, it is especially beneficial to those whose first language is not English.

### **Data Sources**

The data sources analyzed were from two academic years between 2014 and 2016. Data sources included edTPA scores from the candidates' Pearson scored portfolios, candidates' narratives from institutionally gathered course evaluations within the same time frame, and archival artifacts and documents from coursework and internship seminars within the same academic years.

#### ***edTPA Scores***

edTPA is a performance-based, subject-specific assessment system intended to measure teacher candidates' readiness to teach upon the completion of a teacher preparation program (SCALE, 2014). The WL and



EAL categories are comprised of the same three tasks of planning, delivering, and assessing instruction. However, they have differing numbers of corresponding scoring rubrics. The WL category has 13 total rubrics while the EAL category has 15. The study examined the three-part portfolio from the participating IHE that is completed and then scored externally during candidates' student teaching clinical internship semester.

### ***Course Evaluations***

Data sources included teacher candidates' completed course evaluations from the study's two academic year scope. Candidates voluntarily and anonymously completed course evaluations online each semester, for each course in which they were enrolled. In all cases the course evaluations contained rating scales and open-ended prompts where candidates offered narrative comments. Narrative details regarding edTPA experiences, strategies, and interventions were collected from coursework where edTPA tasks were practiced and during the student teaching internship.

### ***Artifacts and Documentations***

Additional data sources included artifacts and documentations from edTPA practice tasks infused in coursework and curricular materials. Specifically these artifacts and documentations included faculty recorded anecdotal notes from class activities, assignments, and projects. Candidates were given reflection tasks at varying points in several different courses where the edTPA strategies and interventions were utilized. Some examples included reflection prompts for peer review sessions whereby candidates were asked how the collective learning specifically changed their edTPA draft documents. Candidates also reflected narratively on how course assignments impacted their use of rubric language within their assignment writing.

## **Data Analysis**

The researchers analyzed edTPA data to calculate mean scores for individual edTPA rubrics, for each of the three tasks, and overall edTPA performance scores. Mean score calculations for both the EAL and WL program-specific, were then compared with mean scores for other college programs. Mean score calculations were also compared to available national level performance scores within the EAL and WL edTPA categories.

The researchers also recursively analyzed qualitative data regarding the strategies and interventions used, investigating emergent patterns from candidates' narratives, artifacts, and documentations. The researchers inductively examined themes within candidates' expressions to peg which aspects of the strategies and interventions were identified as helpful and

where challenges remained. Likewise, portions of the narrative data from the student teaching semester were analyzed in isolation.

FINDINGS

The researchers aimed to gain insight regarding the impact of ten implemented strategies on EAL and WL teacher candidates’ performance on edTPA. The quantitative data suggested that TESL and FLED program candidates outperformed their counterparts in 10 program areas (see Figure 8.1). For example, the TESL program candidates from the Spring 2016 semester showed the highest rubric average scores in comparison with those of the other nine programs.

Further data analysis revealed patterns of language teacher candidate success when compared to national results. These data, specifically from year 2 of the IHE’s formal data collection display how the IHE candidates compared to others in the same edTPA categories at the national level. Figures 8.2 (WL) and 8.3 (EAL) show that the IHE candidates in these categories either exceeded the national means, or, in the case of WL candidates, approached the national average.

When reviewing the data specific to each of the three tasks in the WL category, the raw scores for Task 2 indicated the largest variance between the IHE candidates’ scores and the national mean. The IHE candidates showed a mean score of 15.30, which is well above the national mean at 12.70. Likewise, the IHE candidates’ raw scores in Task 1 at 14.30 were over 2 points

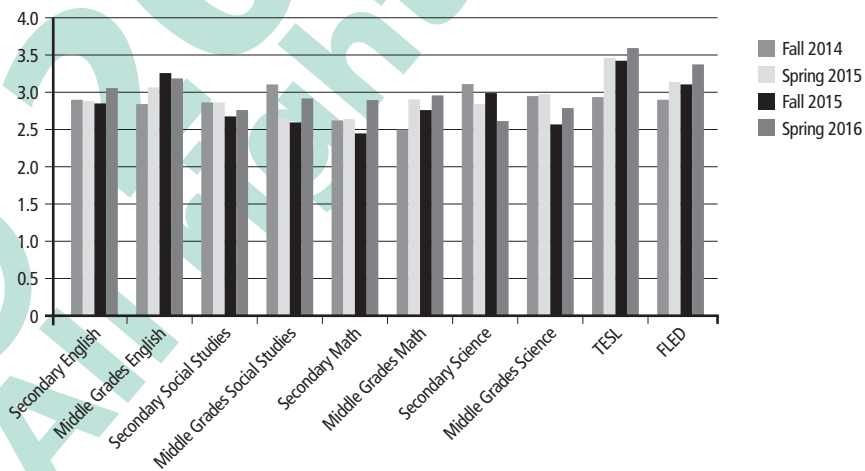
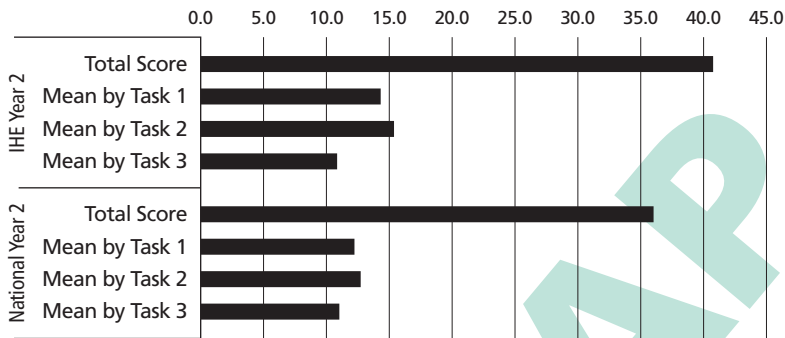


Figure 8.1 Rubric averages by program area (2014–2016).



**Figure 8.2** World Language category tasks 1–3 mean results Year 2.



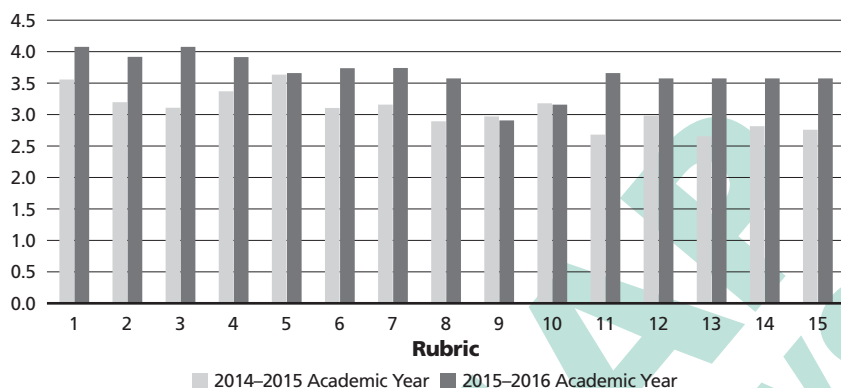
**Figure 8.3** English as an Additional Language tasks 1–3 mean results Year 2.

above the national means of 12.20. Even in Task 3, the IHE candidates were only .20 points away from the national mean.

Examining the raw scores within the EAL category, the IHE mean results were above the national mean in all three tasks. Task 1 scores represented the greatest variance between the IHE candidates' 19.30 mean and national mean of 17.20. Similarly, for Task 2 the IHE candidates' 16.30 mean was above the national average of 15.30. Task 3 scores from the IHE candidates were also above the national mean by nearly 1 point.

### Patterns of Growth

Data analysis also provided more specific details regarding the language teachers' growth from year one to year two on individual rubric scores. Examining the year one and year two data was helpful in gaining further insight regarding the programmatic and instructional supports that are in place.



**Figure 8.4** EAL rubric average by academic year.

Increased clarity about rubric growth patterns also allowed the IHE to examine where candidates may continue to need additional support. For example, the candidates in the EAL category showed growth on all edTPA rubrics in the 2015–2016 academic year, with the exception of rubric nine. Studying the details associated with Rubric 9, aspects linked to the implemented strategies were reconsidered. The most notable change occurred in regard to Rubric 11. There was a .98 increase in mean score between the 2014–2015 and 2015–2016 academic years, suggesting the benefits of the practice task work and other strategies connected to the rubric (see Figure 8.4).

## DISCUSSION

The study's purpose was to contribute additional insight to the existing dialog on supporting language teacher candidates with edTPA from the IHE perspective. The following discussion points on the study's outcomes address the research question: To what extent did 10 implemented strategies impact EAL and WL teacher candidate performance on edTPA? The project responded to research suggesting that EAL and WL teacher candidates, and particularly non-native speakers of English, could benefit from greater support in their completion of edTPA (Hildebrandt & Swanson, 2014; Kissau & Algozzine, 2017; Russell & Davidson Devall, 2016). With this in mind the authors examined the notion that the 10 strategies described were beneficial to the EAL and WL teacher candidates.

The data collected from the 63 study participants suggested that the strategies were beneficial to candidate edTPA performance. The 34 EAL and 29 participating WL teacher candidates at the IHE, out of 450 total candidates representing 16 programs, scored higher than national averages

on all three tasks. Noting the importance of engaged, collective learning to address language acquisition struggles (Gibbons, 2015), it stands to reason that the strategies, with learner-centered, structured peer review may have been a contributing factor. With this in mind, the study's results suggest that language teacher candidates can be highly successful with the edTPA assessment when provided adequate support. This point extends Hildebrandt and Swanson's research (2014) to further demystify concerns that edTPA may include unreasonably high expectations for language teacher candidates. Likewise, the study may further reassure teacher preparation program coordinators that language teacher candidates, even when English is not their first language, can be successful on edTPA.

In support of the work of Walqui and van Lier (2010), the study's results lend support to the notion that candidates need reinforcement in order to move from apprenticeship to appropriation. Given the IHE candidates' mean scores when compared to the national averages in all three tasks, it is feasible that the edTPA outcomes were in part a result of the EAL and WL candidates' exposure to hands-on practices in a broad scope of interventions. Candidates practiced different aspects of edTPA in several courses and diverse clinical settings prior to student teaching. Additionally, EAL and WL teacher candidates had extensive practical experiences with structured peer review.

Another interesting contribution of the study to the existing body of literature is that it suggests possible strategies that may have significant impact on candidate performance. Take for instance the candidates' highest performance on rubrics one and three (both in Task 1). With the importance of procedural and instructional scaffolding for language learning (Sleeter & Grant, 2009), this particular finding was potentially due to the lesson plan template strategy, explicitly used with language teacher candidates. Study-participants used a detailed lesson plan template, delineating content and language objectives in scaffolded portions more so, than the generic lesson plan template used with other program candidates. Furthermore, specific attention by EAL and WL program faculty to the language demands associated with the edTPA tasks may have been yet another contributing factor.

The study also suggests possible support strategies specific to Task 3, often reported to be the most challenging (Hildebrandt & Swanson, 2014). The IHE's candidates had overall higher performance marks on task three when compared to national levels. One possible explanation for this finding is the opportunity to practice instruction and assessment tasks in the same course, and in the same clinical setting. Such a pointed intervention further supports the importance of maximizing comprehensible input in genuine, manageable contexts for learning (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavits, 2014; Krashen, 1992).

A final contribution of the study to the related body of research is that the development and implementation of the strategies described in this chapter required extensive collaboration among program faculty. The collective process has taught TESL and FLED faculty that, given the wide-ranging, intricate language demands associated with edTPA, no one assignment, faculty member, or course can fully prepare teacher candidates to successfully complete the edTPA project. Faculty members in other program areas could learn from this valuable lesson. The process also solidified the point that language teachers who are also language learners have specific needs related to edTPA success.

### **LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

There are limitations to consider when interpreting the study's results. While the study investigated the impact of ten strategies on candidate performance, there are, of course, a number of other factors that may have influenced candidates' performance on edTPA. The authors are not suggesting a direct correlation between the ten strategies described above and enhanced candidate performance. Future research might further investigate the extent to which individual strategies and supports were more or less beneficial than others by utilizing more formal pre- and post-intervention data. Likewise, future research may be expanded to include open-ended interviews with teacher candidates at varying points in their edTPA experiences to glean a more in-depth view of common struggles and candidates' recommendations regarding beneficial supports. Furthermore, future research might expand to data collection and analysis across several IHEs' candidates with parallel interview protocols to gain further understandings from varying IHEs' programs.



APPENDIX A

edTPA Lesson Plan Template

Content-based Central Focus:	
NCSCOS/WIDA Standards:	
Daily Language Objective:	
Daily Content Objective:	
Language Function:	Academic Vocabulary and Language Demands
Linguistic Competency (grammatical, pragmatic, discourse, metalinguistic):	Language Supports (sensory/graphic/interactive):
Prior Knowledge/Cultural/L1 Connections:	

Activity	Description of Activities and Setting (Student Engagement)	Time
Focus and Review		
Statement of Objectives for Students		
Teacher Input		
Guided Practice/Application		
*Focus on student engagement and application of language (academic/new)		
Independent Practice/Application		
*Focus on continued application of language		
Formative/Summative Assessment Method(s):		
Closure		
Targeted Students/Small Group Modifications/Accommodations		
Materials/Technology:		
Next Steps:		

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