

The Basics of Assessing Student Learning

Task 3

INTRODUCTION

Task 3 of the edTPA focuses on assessment. For Task 3, candidates will analyze one individually completed assessment of student learning from their learning segment.

DESIGNING AND CHOOSING AN ASSESSMENT

The purpose of Task 3 is to showcase candidates' abilities to use assessment to support student learning and drive future instructional decisions. It is important to choose an assessment that has standards-driven evaluation criteria, provides opportunities for rich, substantive feedback, and provides opportunities for detailed, differentiated analysis.

Success for Task 3 begins in planning the learning segment. Candidates should design several quality assessments and corresponding evaluation criteria. None of these assessments has to be summative. Rather, assessments and related evaluation criteria should clearly align to daily objectives, the central focus, and content standards. A common misconception regarding Task 3 is that candidates should analyze an assessment on which all students performed well, which candidates think will impress the evaluators. This is simply not the case.

ANALYZING THE ASSESSMENT

After students complete the chosen assessment, candidates will analyze the patterns of learning for the whole class. If the rubric or other evaluation criteria is strong, the analysis becomes much simpler. When analyzing the patterns of student learning, it is important to understand that grades are not necessarily indicative of what the student learned.

Rather, candidates should focus their analysis on specific components of the objectives and standards being measured by the assessment.

Once candidates have analyzed the patterns of student learning for the whole class, they will choose their three focus students. The focus students should represent the patterns of learning the candidates found. Therefore, the choice of focus students should flow naturally from the analysis. Candidates will submit work samples and associated feedback for the three focus students.

GIVING STUDENTS FEEDBACK

What does good, quality feedback look like? Very simply, it is candidates sharing with students what they did well, as well as how the students can improve. To be successful on the edTPA, candidates need to ensure that the feedback they give is aligned with the objectives and standards measured by the assessment. Candidates should also give students specific strategies to use to improve their performance. Don't just tell students what is wrong with their work, rather use the feedback as a teaching tool to help students grow.

To advance the use of feedback as a teaching tool, the edTPA prompts you to consider how you will get students to understand and use the feedback you give them. Consider how frustrating it is when you spend hours grading papers and giving meticulous feedback to students for them to only glance at their grade and not use the feedback in a meaningful way. How can you avoid this in your practice? Think through how you will foster students' ability to use feedback as a truly teachable moment, and include it in your Task 3 commentary.

CLOSING THE LOOP: USING ASSESSMENTS TO DRIVE INSTRUCTION

The last set of prompts in the edTPA asks candidates to describe how they will use the information gathered from this assessment to drive further instruction. When answering these prompts (and any of the reflection prompts in edTPA), it is imperative that candidates' responses be specific and centered on student learning. This means the next steps should include research-based pedagogical strategies or interventions and supports for students with specific learning needs (i.e., struggling readers, English language learners, or students with Individualized Education Plans or 504 Plans, etc.). It is often helpful to conceptualize next steps as related to skills rather than content. Candidates likely won't repeat the content of the learning segment, but the higher order skills practiced will likely be used throughout the year. For example, candidates who are teaching English Language Arts might not teach the same short story twice; however, the reading comprehension or textual analysis skills practiced in their learning segment will likely be repeated in a later unit.