Thinking Organizers: Tools for Candidates to Organize and Record Their Thinking During Both Formative and Summative edTPA Experiences

Purpose: As teacher candidates undergo the edTPA assessment process, they can experience difficulty keeping track of the reasoning and thinking behind all of the decisions that they made during the process. These thinking organizers provide an avenue through which candidates can record their thoughts, reasoning, and evidence of practice throughout the edTPA process and then have easy access to that information when they are ready to write their commentaries.

These thinking organizers were created by Elisa Palmer (edTPA coordinator, Illinois State University) to assist candidates with the organization of their thoughts prior to writing their official responses to the edTPA commentary prompts. These supports provide a table for each commentary question that the candidate fills in with his or her thoughts. The teacher candidate can then use that table to write his or her official response to that question.

Use of the thinking organizers is not limited to work on the summative edTPA portfolio. Instructors can use the tables in formative experiences leading up to the summative edTPA portfolio creation. For example, a course may have an assignment or clinical experience that requires reflections upon professional practice. The course instructor can utilize some of the thinking organizers and adapt them to the particular questions asked in that assignment or clinical reflection.

Overall, the thinking organizers are helpful in aiding teacher candidates in their documentation of their thinking and reasoning throughout the completion of their edTPA portfolio as well as providing a tool for creating and organizing responses in formative course work.

Thinking organizers are available for the following edTPA handbooks:

- Agriculture
- Business Education
- Early Childhood
- Elementary Education
- Elementary Literacy
- Elementary Mathematics
- English as an Additional Language
- Family and Consumer Sciences
- Health Education
- K-12 Physical Education
- K-12 Performing Arts
- Middle Childhood English Language Arts
- Middle Childhood Mathematics
- Middle Childhood Science
- Middle Childhood Social Studies
- Secondary English-Language Arts
- Secondary History/Social Studies
- Secondary Mathematics
- Secondary Science
- Special Education
- Technology and Engineering Education
- Visual Arts
- World Languages

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Planning Commentary Thinking Organizers and Helpful Hints (World Language Version)

Please note: The purpose of this thinking organizer is to help you gather and organize your thoughts in preparation for writing your planning commentary. You will still need to write your answers in paragraph form in the official edTPA planning commentary template.

1. Central Focus

a. **Describe the central focus and purpose for the content you will teach in the learning segment.**

Sentence starters:

The central focus of this learning segment is …

I am teaching this content because…

b. **Given the central focus, describe how the standards and learning objectives within your learning segment address students' development of communicative proficiency in the target language**
   - **in meaningful cultural context(s)**
   - **with a focus on all three modes of communication:**[1]
     - **Interpretive**
     - **Interpersonal**
     - **Presentational**

[1]

Organize your response:

List the standard or learning objective	How does this address students' development in communicative proficiency in the targeted language?	Does it focus on interpretive, interpersonal or presentational communication?

c. **Explain how your plans build on each other and make connections between language forms and language functions to help students develop communicative proficiency in the target language within meaningful cultural context(s).** .

Organize your response:

Lesson	Identify the language form being addressed.	Identify the related language function and explain how it is connected to the language form.	Explain how this helps students develop communicative proficiency.	Identify the cultural context.
Lesson 1				
Lesson 2				
Lesson 3				

How does Lesson 1 lead into Lesson 2? How does Lesson 2 lead into Lesson 3?

2. Knowledge of Students to Inform Teaching

For each of the prompts below (2a–b), describe what you know about your students with respect to the central focus of the learning segment.

Consider the variety of learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (e.g., students with IEPs, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students)

a. **Prior academic learning and prerequisite skills related to the central focus—Cite evidence of what students know, what they can do, and what they are still learning to do.**

Organize your response:

Students	Related content already learned	Related skills students already have	What the students are learning to do related to the learning segment
Class as a whole			
Students with IEPs			
Students with 504 plans			
Other groups of learners			

b. Personal/cultural/community assets related to the central focus—What do you know about your students' everyday experiences, cultural and language backgrounds and practices, and interests?

Organize your response:

Students	Students' everyday experiences related to the learning segment	Students' cultural and language backgrounds related to the learning segment	Students' cultural and language practices related to the learning segment	Students' interests related to the learning segment
Class as a whole				
Students with IEPs				
Students with 504 plans				
Other groups of learners				

Notes: Stay positive – discuss your students' assets
Keep the learning segment in mind – only discuss student assets related to the learning segment

3. Supporting Students' Communicative Proficiency in the Target Language

a. Justify how your understanding of your students' prior academic learning and personal/cultural/community assets (from prompts 2a–b above) guided your choice or adaptation of language tasks and materials. Be explicit about the connections between the learning tasks and students' prior academic learning, assets, and research/theory.

Organize your answer:

Chosen learning task or material (or adaptation of either)	Associated student learning or asset	Why did you make this choice?	What research supports this choice?	How does the research support this choice?

b. Describe and justify why your instructional strategies and planned supports are appropriate for the whole class, individuals, and groups of students with specific learning needs.

Consider students with IEPs, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students needing greater support or challenge.

Organize your answer:

Instructional/planned support	How is this tied to the learning objective?	Why is this appropriate for the whole class or what particular group of students is this designed for?

c. Explain how the language tasks promote comparisons and connections between the experience and knowledge students bring (i.e., students' prior academic learning and personal/cultural/community assets) and the cultural practices, products, and perspectives of the target language.

Language Task	How does this task promote a comparison or connection between what students know or have experienced and the cultural practices, products or perspective of the target language?

d. Describe common errors and misconceptions about the target language and/or the cultural practices of the target language within your content focus and how you will address them.

Organize your answer:

Possible error or misconception	How will you address it during instruction?

4. Monitoring Student Development of Communicative Proficiency in the Target Language

In response to the prompts below, refer to the assessments you will submit as part of the materials for Task 1.

a. **Describe how your planned formal and informal assessments will provide direct evidence of students' development of communicative proficiency in the target language in meaningful cultural context(s) throughout the learning segment.**

Organize your response:

Assessment	Where does it occur in the learning segment?	What learning objective(s) does this assessment address?	How will this assessment provide evidence of students' development of communicative proficiency?	What cultural context is being used?

b. **Explain how the design or adaptation of your planned assessments allows students with specific needs to demonstrate their development of communicative proficiency in the target language in meaningful cultural context(s).**

Consider all students, including students with IEPs, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students.

Organize your response:

Description of assessment or assessment adaptations	The student(s) for whom the assessment was designed or adapted	How does this assessment allow this student(s) to demonstrate his/her development of communicative proficiency?

Instruction Commentary Thinking Organizers and Helpful Hints (World Language Version)

Please note: The purpose of this thinking organizer is to help you gather and organize your thoughts in preparation for writing your instruction commentary. You will still need to write your answers in paragraph form in the official edTPA instruction commentary template.

1. **Which lesson or lessons are shown in the video clips? Identify the lesson(s) by lesson plan number.**

Sentence starters:

"The lesson shown in the clips is Lesson #_____"
OR
"The lesson shown in Clip 1 is Lesson _____ and the lesson shown in Clip 2 is Lesson _____."

2. Promoting a Positive Learning Environment

a. How did you demonstrate mutual respect for, rapport with, and responsiveness to students with varied needs and backgrounds, and challenge students to engage in learning?

Organize your answer:

Characteristic of Positive Learning Environment	Video segment(s) with time stamps that demonstrates this characteristic	How does this clip demonstrate this characteristic?
Mutual respect for students		
Rapport with students		
Responsiveness to students' needs		
Challenging students to engage in learning		

3. Engaging Students in Learning

a. Explain how your instruction engaged students in developing communicative proficiency in the target language in a meaningful cultural context with a focus on at least two modes of communication:[2]

■ **Interpretive AND**

_____

[2]

- **Interpersonal OR**
- **Presentational**

Organize your answer:

Student action	Video clip with time stamps that shows this action	How is this action seen in the video?
Students are engaged in developing communicative proficiency in interpretive communication		
Students are engaged in developing communicative proficiency in interpersonal communication		
Students are engaged in developing communicative proficiency in presentational communication		

b. **Describe how your instruction linked students' prior learning and personal, cultural, and community assets with new learning.**

Instructional connections between student characteristics and new learning	Video clip with time stamps that shows this connection	How is this connection seen in the video?
Students' prior learning		

Students' personal assets		
Students' cultural assets		
Students' community assets		

4. Deepening Student Communicative Proficiency in the Target Language during Instruction

    a. **Explain how you elicited and built upon student responses to promote thinking and develop students' communicative proficiency in the target language in meaningful cultural context(s).**

Evidence of eliciting responses from students related to…	Video clip (including time stamps)	Describe how you elicited responses and deepened student thinking in this clip
Promoting student thinking		
Developing students' communicative proficiency in the target language		
Meaningful cultural contexts		

    b. **Explain how you supported your students' development of communicative proficiency in the target language with respect to**

        ■ **language forms**

        ■ **language functions**

        ■ **meaningful cultural context(s)**

Evidence of students' development of communicative proficiency in the target language with respect to…	Video clip (including time stamps)	Describe how you facilitated the students' development of communicative proficiency in this clip
Language forms		
Language functions		
Meaningful cultural context		

c. Explain how your instruction promotes comparisons between students' personal, cultural, or community assets and the cultural practices, products, and perspectives of the target language.

Evidence of students comparing their personal, cultural, or community assets to…	Video clip (including time stamps)	Describe how you facilitated the students' development of communicative proficiency in this clip
Cultural practices of the target language		
Cultural products of the target language		
Cultural perspectives of the target language		

5. Analyzing Teaching

Consider the variety of learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (such as students with IEPs, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students).

a. **What changes would you make to your instruction—for the whole class and/or for students who need greater support or challenge—to better support student development of communicative proficiency in the target language (e.g., missed opportunities)?**

Organize your response:

Learning need seen in video	Video segment (Including video # and time stamps)	Proposed change in teaching practice

b. **Why do you think these changes would improve student development of communicative proficiency in the target language? Support your explanation with evidence of student learning and principles from Second Language Acquisition/Teaching theory and/or research.**

Organize your response:

Proposed change in teaching practice	How would this change improve student development of communicative proficiency?	What evidence of student learning supports this conclusion?	How is this conclusion supported by the principles from Second Language Acquisition/Teaching theory?

Assessment Commentary Thinking Organizers and Helpful Hints (World Language Version)

Please note: The purpose of this thinking organizer is to help you gather and organize your thoughts in preparation for writing your assessment commentary. You will still need to write your answers in paragraph form in the official edTPA assessment commentary template. The exception to this is your response to 1b.

1. **Analyzing Student Communicative Proficiency in the Target Language**

   a. **Identify the specific learning objectives measured by the assessment you chose for analysis.**

   Organize your answer:

Objective	Explain how this is measured in the assessment

b. Provide a graphic (table or chart) or narrative that summarizes student learning for your whole class. Be sure to summarize student learning for all evaluation criteria submitted in Task 3, Part D.

Create a table that shows the student learning/performance by question or activity aligned to objective.

c. **Use evidence found in the 3 student work samples and the whole class summary to analyze the patterns of learning for the whole class and for groups or individual learners. The analysis should focus on students' communicative proficiency in the target language through the interpersonal and presentational modes of communication in meaningful cultural context(s).**

Consider what students understand and do well, and where they continue to struggle (e.g., common errors, confusions, need for greater challenge).

Organize your answer:

Students' communicative proficiency in the target language through…	Related patterns of student learning observed (What are they doing well or what are they struggling with?)	Students showing this pattern	Evidence from whole class summary	Evidence from student work samples
Interpersonal communication				
Presentational communication				

2. **Feedback to Guide Further Learning**

   b. Explain how feedback provided to the 3 focus students addresses their individual strengths and needs relative to communicative proficiency in the target language.

   Hints: Be sure to provide feedback to students on both their strengths and their errors.
   Be sure to provide equal feedback to all student work samples.

Focus student	Description of feedback provided (identify question, page, etc.)	Associated learning objective	How does the feedback address the student's strengths and needs related to his/her communicative proficiency in the target language?
1			
2			
3			

c. **How will you support students to understand and use the feedback to further their learning related to the learning objectives, either within the learning segment or at a later time?**

Focus student	How student will understand and use the feedback for further learning to their current work?	How you will support the student in understanding and using the feedback?
1		
2		
3		

3. **Using Assessment to Inform Instruction**

   a. **Based on your analysis of student learning presented in prompts 1c–d, describe next steps for instruction**

      - **for the whole class**

      - **for the 3 focus students and other individuals/groups with specific needs**

   - **Consider the variety of learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (e.g., students with IEPs, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students needing greater support or challenge).**

Students	Next steps for instruction
Whole class	
Focus student 1	
Focus student 2	
Focus student 3	
Individuals with specific needs	
Groups with specific needs	

b. Explain how these next steps follow from your analysis of student learning. Support your explanation with principles from Second Language Acquisition/Teaching research and/or theory.

Next step for instruction	What learning need is this in response to?	Why did you choose this as your next step for instruction?	What research supports this instructional choice?	How does this research support this instructional choice?