Supporting the Candidate during the TPA

The TPA is a summative, subject-specific portfolio-based assessment of teaching performance that demonstrates teaching candidates’ readiness for licensure. Teaching candidates complete the TPA during their preparation program within a clinical field experience. Evidence of teaching competence consists of authentic artifacts documenting teaching and learning during a learning segment lasting approximately one week and commentaries explaining, analyzing, or reflecting on the artifacts. In constructing the TPA, candidates apply what they have learned from their coursework about research, theory, and best practices related to teaching and learning.

Strategies for supporting candidates may include:
- Distributing TPA support documents;
- Providing explicit timelines for completion of the TPA;
- Identifying connections between assignments completed during coursework and tasks in the TPA;
- Assigning parallel tasks during coursework, e.g., analyzing a videotape of Teaching and learning, constructing a unit of instruction, assessing student work;
- Arranging technical and logistical support for videotaping and uploading documents into electronic platforms;
- Providing and discussing samples of previously completed TPA;
- Offering emotional support to help candidates persist;
- Offering the above types of assistance through student teaching seminars; and
- Offering the above types of assistance through a separate course to support candidates in completing the TPA.

The TPA is a high-stakes assessment linked to program completion and certification. Therefore, it is important that faculty, supervisors, cooperating teachers, peers, and other educators offering assistance understand the distinction between appropriate and inappropriate support to candidates as they work on completing the TPA.

Candidates are learning how to teach and are being guided by more experienced teachers, often in co-teaching contexts. Professional conversations about teaching and learning associated with the outcomes assessed in the TPA are not only appropriate, but desirable. The TPA can and should allow candidates to draw upon these conversations as they create their own understandings of teaching and learning and apply them in the teaching decisions that they make. However, educators providing support should not direct candidates what to write in the TPA. Support providers should ensure that the teaching decisions and thinking reflected in the TPA are the candidate’s own integration of their own experience, research and theory, and insights about the type of teaching and learning reflected in their learning segment.

The TPA should document the work of candidates and their students in their classrooms. Educators offering support should discourage any attempts by candidates to fabricate evidence or plagiarize work. Many, if not most, candidates will use or adapt curriculum materials developed by others. Candidates should cite the source of adapted materials,
including materials received from experienced teachers. It is up to each candidate to explain how the materials are appropriate for their students and the relevant learning objectives and standards. Given the demonstrated value of collegiality in education and the placement of the TPA within an educational program, TPA encourages collaboration but is also interested in ensuring the authenticity of the portfolio submission. Therefore, the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable support are made explicit below to support a consistent understanding across TPA institutions.

**Acceptable** forms of support for constructing the TPA include:

- Explaining the general design of curriculum materials or instructional and assessment strategies, leaving it to candidates to make selections and/or adaptations based on perceptions of their students’ strengths and needs and on the content to be taught.
- Asking probing or clarifying questions that encourage candidates to deepen their analysis of and reflection on the artifacts, commentary prompts, and/or their responses and to communicate these analyses and reflections more clearly.
- Using rubric constructs or rubric language to provide candidates with guidance on how their performance will be evaluated formally once submitted.
- Using rubric constructs or rubric language to debrief observations made by field supervisors or cooperating teachers (unless the observation is made of a lesson recorded and analyzed as part of the TPA learning segment).

**Unacceptable** forms of support for constructing the TPA include:

- Using TPA rubrics to provide formal feedback (as scores) on drafts of TPA tasks prior to submission (this does NOT preclude the use of the rubrics for scoring/grading embedded signature assessments, course assignments or other formative assessments in the program prior to the TPA).
- Making choices of curriculum materials or instructional strategies (other than those required by the cooperating teacher/school/district) for the candidate.
- Providing your own analysis of the candidate’s students or artifacts or offering alternative responses to commentary prompts.
- Suggesting specific changes to be made in a draft TPA rather than asking questions aimed at helping candidates reflect on a draft and reach their own conclusions about needed changes.
- Providing coaching for candidates perceived to be weak that is aimed at helping them pass the TPA rather than at improving their teaching competence, e.g., extensive focused feedback on repeated drafts leading to the final submission.
- Editing the TPA (by faculty or peers).