**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 (Middle Childhood English Language Arts)**

***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**

1. **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. Provide the title, author (or, if a film, the director), and a short description (about a paragraph) of salient features of the text(s) that a reviewer of your evidence, who is unfamiliar with the text(s), needs to know in order to understand your instruction. If there is more than one text, indicate the lesson(s) where each text will be the focus.**

Consider including the following in your description: genre, text structure, theme, plot, imagery, or linguistic features, depending on the central focus of your learning segment.

Organize your answer:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Text | Description | Lesson in which the text is used |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**c. Given the central focus, describe how the standards and learning objectives within your learning segment address young adolescents’ abilities to use textual references to**

* **construct meaning from, interpret or respond to complex text**
* **create a written product interpreting or responding to complex features of a text**

Organize your response:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| List the standard or learning objective | Identify if it is connected to constructing meaning from, interpreting or responding to complex text, or creating a written product interpreting or responding to complex features of a text. | Explain how these are connected. |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**d. Explain how your plans build on each other to help young adolescents make connections between textual references, constructions of meaning, interpretations, and responses to text to deepen their learning of Middle Childhood English-Language Arts.**

Note: Discuss how you will get the students from reading a text to constructing meaning, interpreting and responding to that text.

Organize your response:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Will young adolescents be making connections between textual references, constructing meaning from text, interpreting text, or responding to text? | Explain how this is addressed in  Lesson 1 | Explain how Lesson 2 builds on Lesson 1 | Explain how Lesson 3 builds on Lesson 2 |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**e. Explain how you will help students make interdisciplinary or integrative connections between the central focus of the learning segment and other subject areas.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Central Focus | What other subject area do you want your students to connect the central focus to? | How will you help young adolescents make this connection? |
|  |  |  |

**2. Knowledge of Students to Inform Teaching**

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

Consider the variety of young adolescent learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (e.g., students with IEPs or 504 Plans, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students).

1. **Prior academic learning and prerequisite skills related to the central focus—Cite evidence of what young adolescents know, what can they 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 languagebackgrounds related to the learning segment | Students’ 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

**c. Young adolescent developmental assets related to the central focus—What do you know about your students’ cognitive, physical, and social and emotional development?**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Students | Students’ cognitive development related to the central focus | Students’ physical development related to the central focus | Students’ social/emotional development related to the central focus |
| Class as a whole |  |  |  |
| Students with IEPs |  |  |  |
| Students with 504 plans |  |  |  |
| Other groups of learners |  |  |  |

**3. Supporting Students’ English-Language Arts Learning**

1. **Justify how your understanding of your students’ prior academic learning (from prompts 2a above) guided your choice or adaptation of learning tasks and materials. Be explicit about the connections between the learning tasks and students’ prior academic learning 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? |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

1. **Justify how your understanding of your students’ personal, cultural, community, and developmental assets (from prompts 2b-c above) guided your choice or adaptation of learning tasks and materials. Be explicit about the connections between the learning tasks and students’ assets and research/theory.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Identify students’ personal, cultural, community and developmental assets | Adaptation of learning tasks and materials | Connections between the learning tasks and students’ assets and research/theory? |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

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

Consider the variety of young adolescent learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (e.g., young adolescents with IEPs or 504 plans, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students).

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? |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**d. Describe common student errors or misunderstandings within your central focus and how you will address them.**

Organize your answer:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Possible student error or misconception | How will you identify if students have this misconception or have made this error? | How will you address this during instruction? |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**4. Supporting English-Language Arts Development Through Language**

As you respond to prompts a-d, consider the range of students’ language assets and needs- what do students already know, what are they struggling with, and/or what is new to them.

**a. Language Function. Using Information about your students’ language assets and needs, identify one language function essential for your young adolescents to construct meaning from, respond to, or interpret text. Listed below are some sample language functions. You may choose one of these or another more appropriate for your learning segment.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Analyze | Argue | Describe | Evaluate |
| Explain | Interpret | Justify | Synthesize |

Sentence starter: “The language function essential for student learning within my central focus is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

**b. Identify a key learning task from your plans that provides young adolescents with opportunities to practice using the language function identified above. Identify the lesson in which the learning task occurs. (Give lesson/day number.)**

Sentence starter: “The key learning task that gives students the opportunity to practice using the language function is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This task occurs on day \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in lesson \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

**c. Additional Language Demands. Given the language function and learning task identified above, describe the following associated language demands (written or oral) young adolescents need to understand and/or use:**

**- Vocabulary**

**- Plus at least one of the following:**

**- Syntax**

**- Discourse**

Organizing your response:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Language demand | Describe associated language demands (written or oral) young adolescents need to understand and/or use |
| Vocabulary |  |
| Syntax |  |
| Discourse |  |

**d. Language Supports. Refer to your lesson plans and instructional materials as needed in your response to the prompt below.**

* **Identify and describe the instructional supports (during and/or prior to the learning task) to help students understand, develop, and use the identified language demands (function, vocabulary, discourse, or syntax)**

Organizing your response:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Language demand | Language support planned | How does this language support help students use the language function? |
| Vocabulary |  |  |
| Syntax and/or discourse |  |  |

**5. Monitoring Student Learning**

**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, including a written product, will provide direct evidence of young adolescents’ abilities to construct meaning from, interpret OR respond to a complex text 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 student mastery of the learning objective(s)? |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**b. Explain how the design or adaptation of your planned assessments allows young adolescents with specific needs to demonstrate their learning.**

Consider the variety of young adolescent learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (e.g., young adolescents with IEPs or 504 plans, 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 learning? |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Instruction Commentary** **Thinking Organizers and Helpful Hints (Middle Childhood English Language Arts)**

***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 young adolescents with varied needs (academic and developmental) and backgrounds, and challenge young adolescents 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’ varied needs (academic and developmental) |  |  |
| Challenging students to engage in  learning |  |  |

**3. Engaging Students in Learning**

**a. Explain how your instruction engaged young adolescents in constructing meaning from, interpreting, or responding to a complex text.**

Organize your answer:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Student action | Video clip with time stamps that shows this action | How is this action seen in the video? |
| Students are constructing meaning from a complex text. |  |  |
| Students are interpreting a complex text. |  |  |
| Students are responding to a complex text. |  |  |

**b. Describe how your instruction linked adolescents’ prior academic learning and personal, cultural community assets or developmental assets with new learning.**

Organize your response:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 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 |  |  |
| Students’ developmental assets |  |  |

**4. Deepening Student Learning during Instruction**

**a. Explain how you elicited and built on student responses to promote thinking and develop students’ abilities to construct meaning from, interpret, or respond to a complex text.**

Organize your response

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Evidence of eliciting responses from students to promote thinking and develop students’ abilities to… | Video clip (including time stamps) | Describe how you elicited responses and deepened student thinking in this clip |
| Construct meaning from a complex text |  |  |
| Interpret a complex text |  |  |
| Respond to a complex text |  |  |

**b. Explain how you supported students in using textual references (or, if a film, visual references or dialogue) to check or justify their constructions of meaning from or responses to complex text.**

Organize your response

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Evidence of supporting students in using textual references to check or justify constructions of meanings | Video clip (including time stamps) | Describe how this clip illustrates your support of students |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**5. Analyzing Teaching**

Consider the variety of young adolescent learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (such as students with IEPs or 504, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students).

1. **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 young adolescent learning of the central focus (e.g., missed opportunities)?**

Organize your response:

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

1. **Why do you think these changes would improve student learning? Support your explanation with evidence of young adolescent learning AND principles from theory and/or research, including young adolescent development.**

Organize your response:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Proposed change in teaching practice | How would this change assist students with achieving the learning objective? | What research is this change based on? | How does this research support your proposed change? |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Assessment Commentary Thinking Organizers and Helpful Hints (Middle Childhood English Language Arts)**

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

Organize your answer:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Learning Objectives | Explain how these are 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 Assessment Task 3, Part D.**

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

**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 differences for groups or individual learners relative to**

* **constructing meaning from complex text**
* **interpreting OR responding to complex text**

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

Organize your answer:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pattern of student learning observed  (What are they doing well or what are they struggling with?) | Is the pattern relative to constructing meaning from, interpreting or responding to complex text? | Students showing this pattern | Evidence from whole class summary | Evidence from student work samples |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

1. **Feedback to Guide Further Learning**

**b. Explain how feedback provided to the 3 focus students addresses their individual strengths and needs relative to the learning objectives measured.**

*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 objectives | How does the feedback address the student’s strengths and needs? |
| 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. Evidence of Language Understanding and Use**

**a. Explain and provide concrete examples for the extent to which your students were able to use or struggled to use language (selected function, vocabulary AND and discourse or syntax to develop content understandings.**

Organize your response:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Language Demand | Evidence of use (be specific) | How does this evidence show the students using the language demand to develop their content understanding? |
| Selected language function (write it in) |  |  |
| Vocabulary |  |  |
| Syntax |  |  |
| Discourse |  |  |

**4. Using Assessment to Inform Instruction**

**a. Based on your analysis of young adolescent learning presented in prompts 1 b-c, 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 young adolescent learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (e.g., students with IEPs or 504 plans, English language learners, struggling readers, underperforming students or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted students).

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

1. **Explain how these next steps follow from your analysis of young adolescent learning. Support your explanation with principles from research and/or theory as well as young adolescent development.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 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? |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |