**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 Level History/Social Studies 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**

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. Given the central focus, describe how the standards and learning objectives within your learning segment address**

* **facts and concepts**
* **interpretation and analysis skills**
* **building and supporting arguments**

Organize your response:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| List the standard or learning objective | Identify if it is connected to a fact or concept, interpretation and analysis skill, or building and supporting arguments. | Explain how these are connected. |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**c. Explain how your plans build on each other to help young adolescents make connections between facts, concepts, and interpretations or analyses to build and support arguments about historical events, a topic/theme or social studies phenomenon.**

Note: Discuss how you will get the students from examining a historical event, topic/theme or phenomenon to building and supporting arguments.

Organize your response:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Identify the fact, concept, interpretation/analysis skill, or practice of building/supporting arguments being addressed | Explain how it is addressed in  Lesson 1 | Explain how Lesson 2 builds on Lesson 1 | Explain how Lesson 3 builds on Lesson 2 |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**d. Explain how you will help young adolescents 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 below (2a–c), 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—What do young adolescents know, what can they do, and what are they 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 |  |  |  |

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

Organize your response:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Students | Students’ everyday experiences related to the learning segment | Students’ cultural backgrounds 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’ History/Social Studies Learning**

1. **Justify how your understanding of your students’ prior academic learning (from prompt 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 | 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.**

Organize your answer:

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

1. **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 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? |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

1. **Describe key misconceptions within your central focus and how you will address them.**

Organize your answer:

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

**4. Supporting History/Social Studies Development Through Language**

1. **Language Function. Identify one language function essential for students to learn the history/social studies content within your central focus. Listed below are some sample language functions. You may choose one of these or another more appropriate for your learning segment.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Analyze | Compare/contrast | Construct | Describe | Evaluate |
| Examine | Identify | Interpret | Justify | Locate |

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. 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 and key phrases**

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

**- Syntax**

**- Discourse**

Consider the range of students’ understandings of the language function and other language demands—what do students already know, what are they struggling with, and/or what is new to them

Organizing your response:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Language demand | What do students already know? | What are they struggling with? | What is new to them? |
| Vocabulary |  |  |  |
| Key phrases |  |  |  |
| Syntax |  |  |  |
| Discourse |  |  |  |

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

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

Organizing your response:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Language demand | Language support planned | How does this language support help students use the language function? |
| Language function: |  |  |
| Vocabulary and/or key phrases |  |  |
| 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.**

1. **Describe how the planned formal and informal assessments provide direct evidence of how young adolescents learn and use facts, concepts, and inquiry, interpretation, or analysis skills to build and support arguments or conclusions about historical events, a topic/theme, or a social studies phenomenon throughout the learning segment.**

Organize your response:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Area of Targeted Student Learning | Description of assessments designed to monitor the targeted student learning. | Explain how this assessment will provide evidence of student mastery of this area of targeted student learning? |
| Understanding and use of facts and concepts |  |  |
|  |  |
| Use of inquiry, interpretations, or analyses |  |  |
|  |  |
| Building of arguments or conclusions |  |  |
|  |  |

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

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 learning? |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Instruction Commentary** **Thinking Organizers and Helpful Hints (Middle Level History/Social Studies 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 young adolescents in**

* **developing the skills of inquiry, interpretation or analysis in relation to accounts of historical events or social studies phenomena**
* **building and supporting arguments or conclusions**

Organize your answer:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Student action | Video clip with time stamps that shows this action | How is this action seen in the video? |
| Students are participating in inquiry, interpretation, or analysis of accounts of historical events or social studies phenomena |  |  |
| Students are building and supporting arguments or conclusions about historical events or social studies phenomena |  |  |

**b. Describe how your instruction linked young adolescents’ prior academic learning and personal, cultural, community, 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 student responses that supported your students’ ability to form inquiries, interpretations or analyses of history/social studies sources and accounts AND build and support arguments or conclusions.**

Organize your response

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Practice of Teaching/Learning | Video clip (including time stamps) | Describe how you elicited responses and deepened student thinking in this clip |
| Evidence of eliciting responses from students that require inquiry, interpretation, or analysis of sources. |  |  |
| Evidence of eliciting responses from students that require the building and supporting of arguments and conclusions. |  |  |

**b. Describe and cite examples from the video clips of how you supported young adolescents in using evidence from one or more sources to support interpretations or analyses and arguments or conclusions about historical events or a social studies phenomenon.**

Organize your response

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Video clip (including time stamps) | Describe how you supported students in this clip |
| Evidence of helping students interpret or analyze evidence in multiple sources |  |  |
| Evidence of helping students build and support arguments or conclusions with evidence from multiple sources |  |  |

**5. Analyzing Teaching**

Consider the variety of young adolescent 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).

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 student 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 |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**b. Why do you think these changes would improve young adolescent 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 Level History-SS 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 Learning**
2. **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 described 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 differences for groups or individual learners relative to understanding, using, or demonstrating the ability to do the following:**

* **facts and concepts**
* **inquiry, interpretation, or analysis skills**
* **building and supporting arguments or conclusions**

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 facts and concepts, inquiry, interpretation or analysis skills, or building and supporting arguments or conclusions? | 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 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 objective | Does the feedback focus on the student’s strengths or errors? |
| 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**

**Explain and provide evidence for the extent to which your students were able to use or struggled to use language (selected function, vocabulary and/or symbols, and additional identified language demands from Task 1) 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 |  |  |
| Symbols |  |  |
| Syntax |  |  |
| Discourse |  |  |

**4. Using Assessment to Inform Instruction**

**a. Based on your analysis of young adolescent learning presented in prompt 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 young adolescent 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).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 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 student learning. Support your explanation with principles from 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? |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |