



Making Good Choices in Special Education

Candidate Support Resource

Planning

Instruction

Assessment

*Analysis of
Teaching*

*Academic
Language*

Version 02

SCALE

Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, & Equity

MGC_SPE_v02

Copyright © 2025 Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University. All rights reserved. The edTPA trademarks are owned by The Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University. Use of the edTPA trademarks is permitted only pursuant to the terms of a written license agreement. This document was authored by SCALE with design assistance from Evaluation Systems.

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
The edTPA Tasks and the Cycle of Effective Teaching	4
Getting Started.....	6
Alignment of Rubrics and Commentary Prompts.....	11
Planning Task 1: Planning for Instruction and Assessment	12
Instruction Task 2: Instructing and Engaging the Focus Learner	25
Assessment Task 3: Assessing Learning	35
Professional Responsibilities.....	39
Important Information about Preparing and Submitting Evidence	40

Introduction¹

This support guide will help you make good choices as you create and implement your edTPA learning segment. It is *not* a substitute for reading the handbook. Instead, it should be used as a reference where you can find supplementary advice for completing specific components of edTPA as needed.

Read the entire handbook before you start your edTPA work. The handbook is dense. Reading it thoroughly before you start will help you navigate the requirements once you begin the work. Don't skip any sections, text boxes, or footnotes. Everything in the handbook provides important information that will help guide you in your decision making.

Once you have read the entire handbook, *Making Good Choices in Special Education* will support your decision making as you develop artifacts and respond to commentary prompts in each of the three tasks. By reading and reflecting on the questions and suggestions in *Making Good Choices in Special Education*, you will develop a deeper understanding of edTPA and have many of your questions addressed. This document will help you think about how to plan, instruct, assess, and reflect on learning, not only for completing edTPA, but also for effective teaching well into the future.

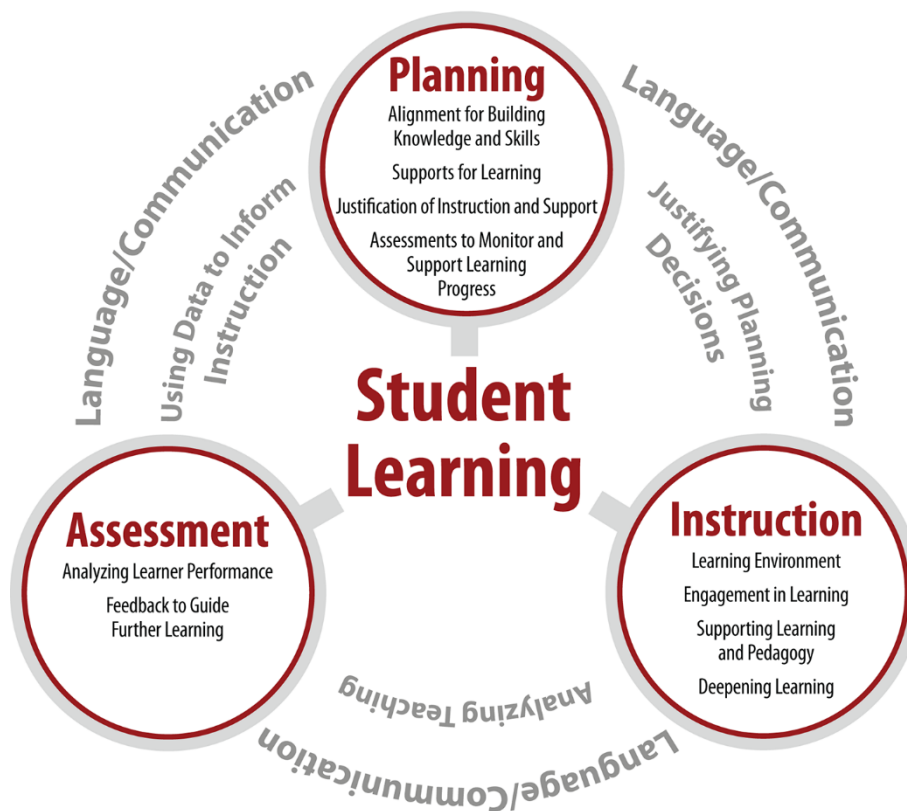
On the pages that follow, each section of this document addresses **key decision points** that you will encounter as you complete your edTPA. Use the live links from the questions in the overview chart to locate answers to inform your decisions. **Bold text** in the answers provides specific directions to guide your choices.

You may find some questions repetitive across tasks. This “repetition” is intentional. The questions that appear across tasks represent threads that tie all the tasks together, for example, your knowledge of the focus learner or the learning goal for the learning segment. Questions that appear to be similar are couched in terms of the task that you are completing. For example, you will respond to questions about how your knowledge of your focus learner was used to plan, instruct, and assess. When considering your understanding of your learner in Planning Task 1, you should include references to how the learner's assets are reflected in your instructional strategies and materials. When you respond to a similar prompt in Instruction Task 2, you should describe and provide evidence for what you and the learner actually said and did in the video clip(s) submitted. Therefore, when you encounter a prompt that seems similar to one you already answered, think about how the context in which the prompt appears might guide your response.

¹ This version of *Making Good Choices in Special Education* replaces earlier versions posted on the edTPA.com and edtpa.aacte.org websites. SCALE recognizes Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell, Kelli Appel and John Snakenborg for their contributions to the Special Education version of *Making Good Choices*.

The edTPA Tasks and the Cycle of Effective Teaching

The three edTPA tasks represent a cycle of effective teaching (i.e., teaching focused on meeting specific needs to support learning). Planning Task 1 documents your **intended** teaching, Instruction Task 2 documents your **enacted** teaching, and Assessment Task 3 documents the **impact** of your teaching on the learning of the focus learner.



The three tasks and the evidence you provide for each are framed by your understandings of your focus learner and their learning. As you develop, document, and teach your lessons, you will reflect upon the cyclical relationship among planning, instruction, and assessment, keeping your focus learner's needs at the center of your teaching.

Evidence of Teaching Practice: Artifacts and Commentaries

An essential part of edTPA is the evidence you will submit of how you planned, taught, and assessed your lessons to deepen learning of content reflected in the learning goal. This evidence includes both artifacts and commentaries:

- **Artifacts** represent authentic work completed by you and your focus learner. These include lesson plans, copies of instructional and assessment materials or data collection procedures, video clips of your teaching, and a work sample from the focus learner.
- **Commentaries** are your opportunity to describe your artifacts, explain the rationale behind your choices, and analyze what you have learned about your teaching practice and its impact on your focus learner. Note that although your writing ability will not be scored directly, commentaries must be clearly written and well focused.

When preparing your artifacts and commentaries, refer to the rubrics frequently to guide your thinking, planning, and writing. Refer to the Evidence Chart in the Special Education Handbook for information about how your evidence should be formatted for electronic submission.

Evaluation Criteria

The rubrics used to score your performance are included in the handbook, following the sections describing the directions for each task. The descriptors in the five-level rubrics address a wide range of performance, beginning with the knowledge and skills of a novice not ready to teach (Level 1) and extending to the advanced practices of a highly accomplished beginner (Level 5).

Structure of the Assessment

The handbook provides specific instructions on how to complete each of the three tasks of the edTPA Special Education assessment. After an overview of the tasks, the handbook provides instructions for each task, organized into two sections:

- 1. What Do I Need to Do?**

This section provides specific, detailed directions for completing the task.

- 2. How Will the Evidence of My Teaching Practice Be Assessed?**

This section includes the rubrics that will be used to assess the evidence you provide for the task.

Getting Started

Key Decisions

Planning Ahead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I get started with my edTPA preparation? • How much time do I need?
Organizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evidence do I have to submit? • How do I represent my thinking and teaching in writing? • What should I keep in mind when preparing my evidence for submission?
Understanding the Rubrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I understand the rubrics? • How do the commentary prompts align to rubrics?

Planning Ahead

How do I get started with my edTPA preparation?

Since it is important to understand the whole edTPA before you begin, **read through the edTPA handbook, including the rubrics and glossary, and any other support materials you may have been given by your preparation program.** Once you have done this reading and understand the assessment, you are ready to begin.

The three tasks that structure edTPA (Planning Task 1, Instruction Task 2, and Assessment Task 3) are connected together. Acquiring a complete understanding of the evidence that you need to submit in Instruction Task 2 and Assessment Task 3 will help guide you as you plan the learning segment for Planning Task 1.

The edTPA Special Education handbook focuses on the teaching and learning for one focus learner. It is important to obtain written consent for video recording and for citing relevant goals, modifications, and accommodations from the IEP to help inform planning as early as you can so that you do not have to choose a new focus learner if consent is withheld. Some districts and schools do not allow candidates to view IEPs directly, so you may need to get this information from the cooperating teacher after you obtain the consent.

You will likely be instructing your focus learner in a class or group setting. Instruction should proceed as it typically does in this group setting. Remember that you will be planning, instructing, and assessing the entire group or class, but your edTPA will highlight what you are doing specifically to support and meet the needs of your focus learner. This will likely include strategies for the entire group/class as well as some strategies specifically designed for your focus learner.

[Back to Getting Started Key Decisions Chart](#)

How much time do I need?

The edTPA is composed of 3–5 consecutive lessons. The exact length of time will be determined by the length of each lesson, how many lessons you include in your learning segment, and how long it takes you to respond to the commentary prompts and assemble and submit your work for scoring. Although the edTPA can be completed in a matter of a few weeks, you should not assume you will be able to do this, as student teaching is typically composed of many requirements. As a result, time management is critical for successful completion of edTPA. Begin planning your edTPA portfolio as soon as possible, but be sure you know your focus learner well enough to plan with knowledge of his/her strengths and needs. Do not procrastinate.

[Back to Getting Started Key Decisions Chart](#)

Organizing

What evidence do I have to submit?

For edTPA, you will submit artifacts (e.g., information about your Context for Learning, lesson plans, video clips, copies of assessments, and materials for your lessons) and commentaries. Response templates are provided as a structure for organizing your responses to the Context for Learning questions and the three task commentaries.

When completing the commentary response templates, note that there are page limits. However, supplementary information you may be directed to add to the end of commentaries as needed does not count toward those limits (e.g., citations of materials from others, transcriptions of inaudible portions of videos, any required translation of materials in a language other than English,² copies of the assessment analyzed).

All of the requirements about what to submit (and information about the optional elements) are introduced in the Tasks Overview Chart and then specified in more detail in the Evidence Chart at the end of the handbook. Read the Evidence Chart and be sure that you understand the requirements and all necessary evidence you must submit before you start working on your edTPA. You may find it helpful to use the Evidence Chart as a checklist as you ensure that you

² If you are submitting materials in a language other than English, see the [Submission Requirements](#) for more detailed translation requirements and guidelines. Requirements vary by subject area.

have submitted all necessary evidence according to the requirements, including artifact format (e.g., live hyperlinks to materials are not permitted). Portfolios with missing, inaccessible, or inappropriate evidence will receive condition codes (see the [Submission Requirements](#)).

[Back to Getting Started Key Decisions Chart](#)

How do I represent my thinking and teaching in writing?

Although the rubrics do not address the quality of your writing (and you will not be penalized for writing errors in spelling, grammar, or grammatical structures (syntax)), you should be mindful that your written work reflects your thinking and your professionalism. Try to let your own voice come through in your writing. Writing errors may change or cloud the meaning of your commentaries, so proofreading is essential. When writing your edTPA commentaries, consider the following guidelines:

- **Note the originality requirements included within the edTPA Professional Standards and Submission Requirements.** As indicated in the subject-specific edTPA handbooks, you and your teacher preparation instructors can and should discuss how the various aspects of edTPA connect with each other and to your preparation coursework and field experiences, including the placement in which you complete your edTPA portfolio. However, the specific choices that go into the Planning, Instruction, and Assessment Tasks that are part of edTPA should solely reflect **your thinking, based on your knowledge of pedagogy and your focus learner's strengths and needs. All writing should be your own—edTPA uses software to detect plagiarism.**
 - **Originality requirements apply to settings where co-teaching and collaborative planning may take place.** Even if you are co-teaching, collaboratively planning with another candidate or your grade-level team, or in a context with a uniform, prescriptive curriculum,³ you must be the lead teacher for the lessons documented in the learning segment and submit original commentaries. You may choose to incorporate help from other classroom personnel during your learning segment (e.g., teacher's aides or parent helpers) but, again, you must be the lead teacher, and these strategic decisions should be addressed in your commentaries. In your Context for Learning artifact, you will explain your placement setting and any features that influence your planning process. Your commentaries for each task must provide your own justification for planning decisions and analyses of your teaching and the resulting learning.
 - **Outside editing support of your official edTPA submission that includes direct revisions to the content of your writing is not permitted.** Consult with your program leaders for guidelines for acceptable support while developing your edTPA materials.

³ See the "[Planning for Alignment and Learning](#)" section of this document for more information on how to address prescribed curricular requirements.

- **Respond to commentary prompts in either bulleted or narrative form.**
 - **Page limits indicate the maximum number of allowable pages.** Although you may write up to the maximum as needed, you may not need to reach that maximum in order to sufficiently complete your commentaries.
- **Read each prompt in the templates carefully and completely.** Be sure to respond to all parts of the questions using simple straightforward sentences or bullets.
 - Pay attention to conjunctions (“and”, “or”). When the prompts are bulleted, make sure to address each bullet point.
 - Incomplete, superficial, and unelaborated responses are not sufficient. One or two sentences for each prompt will not contain enough information for a reviewer to understand your intentions, what or how you have taught, or what your focus learner has learned.
- **Move beyond showcasing or summarizing your classroom practice** and show that you understand your learner and how to support his/her development of knowledge and skills, as well as to identify and analyze the evidence of his/her learning to support further learning and inform your future instruction. edTPA provides an opportunity to reflect on your beginning teaching practice and what you have learned by planning, instructing, and assessing student learning. **Perfect teaching is not expected.**
- **Pay attention to the verbs in the prompts.** They will guide the depth of your writing. When asked to “describe,” do that: tell about what you planned or did. When prompted to “explain,” include more detail, and give reasons for your decisions. “Justify” requires analysis; you must explain why you did what you did and include evidence to back up your response with supporting details.
- **Provide specific, concrete examples to support your assertions.** Do not merely repeat prompt or rubric language as your responses to commentary prompts—you must always include examples and evidence of **your** teaching. If you suggest that the focus learner was able to understand a concept, provide concrete examples from the focus learner’s written, oral, or other performance work that demonstrate and support your claim. For example, you might point to a specific aspect of the focus learner’s response or behavior on an assessment that supports your statement. Your assertion that the focus learner understands what you have taught must be backed up with evidence that you specify. Use time stamps to direct a scorer’s attention to specific points of instruction and provide concrete evidence for your commentary statements. Time stamps can be approximate; they need not be accurate to the second.
- **You may find some prompts repetitive across tasks.** This “repetition” is intentional. Key prompt elements that appear across tasks represent threads that tie all the tasks together, for example, your knowledge of students or the central focus of the learning segment. Questions that appear to be similar are couched in terms of the task that you

are completing. Therefore, when you encounter a prompt that seems similar to one you already answered, think about how the context in which the prompt appears might guide your response.

[Back to Getting Started Key Decisions Chart](#)

Understanding the Rubrics

How do I understand the rubrics?

Each edTPA task has five rubrics, and each rubric has five levels of scoring. As you work on responding to the commentary prompts, refer to the associated rubrics and read them again before and during your writing process. Carefully read the qualitative performance differences across levels found in **bold text** in each of the rubric descriptions. Pay attention to the **conjunctions** (“and”, “or”) in the descriptions so that you are sure to provide all of the information required. Be sure to review the Level 1 rubric descriptors carefully, as these point out particular issues to avoid.

If there are particular rubrics that you want to learn about in more depth, refer to the Understanding Rubric Level Progressions (URLP) after each rubric in the Special Education handbook. The URLP gives a detailed description of the differences in rubric levels and provides subject-specific examples of what evidence might look like on each level.

[Back to Getting Started Key Decisions Chart](#)

Alignment of Rubrics and Commentary Prompts

The rubrics and commentary prompts align as depicted in the charts below.

Planning Commentary & Rubrics

Rubric #	1	2	3	4	5
Commentary Prompt	1a–d	1a–d, 2a–d, & 3a–d	2a–d & 3a–d	4a–b	1c, 2a–d, & 5a–b

Instruction Commentary & Rubrics

Rubric #	6	7	8	9	10
Commentary Prompt	3a–b	4a–c	5a–c	6a–b	7a–b

Assessment Commentary & Rubrics

Rubric #	11	12	13	14	15
Commentary Prompt	1a–f	1d–f & 2a–c	2b–c	3a–c	1d–f & 4a–b

NOTE: Although particular commentary prompts align with certain rubrics, all of the required artifacts and commentary responses for each task are taken into account during the scoring process. For example, your lesson plans, assessments, instructional materials, and video(s) are key artifacts in the scoring process that may provide relevant evidence for multiple rubrics. So while you will not find a rubric that “scores” these items in isolation, they all inform and are part of what will be used in evaluating your responses.

[Back to Getting Started Key Decisions Chart](#)

Planning Task 1: Planning for Instruction and Assessment

What Do I Need to Think About?

In Planning Task 1, you will describe your plans for the learning segment and explain how your instruction is appropriate for the focus learner and the content you are teaching. As you develop your plans, you need to think about the following:

- What does your focus learner know, what can they do, and what are they still learning to do?
- What does the focus learner need to learn to make progress toward the selected learning goal (academic or nonacademic)?
- What are the important knowledge and skills you want the focus learner to develop within the learning segment?
- What instructional strategies and learning tasks will you design to support access, learning, and related communication?
- How will you monitor and record the focus learner's progress toward lesson objectives?
- How is the teaching you propose informed by your knowledge of your focus learner?

Key Decisions

Planning for Alignment and Learning RUBRIC 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I select a focus learner? • How do I select a learning segment? • How do I select a learning goal? • What do I do after I select my learning goal? • What should I include in my lesson plans? • What if I have particular lessons that I am required to teach in a prescribed way or if my school or grade level has a standard curriculum? • What instructional arrangement(s) should I consider in my planning? • What else should I think about?
Knowledge of the Focus Learner RUBRICS 2 & 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do I include as baseline data? • What information should I convey about my focus learner? • How do I support my decisions for instruction and assertions about the focus learner regarding his/her learning needs and strengths? • How specific do my references to research and theory have to be?
Communication Skill RUBRIC 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I identify the communication skill for the learning goal?
Planning Assessments RUBRIC 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds of assessments should I choose for my edTPA learning segment?

Planning Task 1 Key Points

Planning for Alignment and Learning

Tasks 2 and 3 are dependent on your choices in Planning Task 1. Re-read all of Planning Task 1, including the rubrics. Be sure you understand the key concepts, description of requirements, and components of the task. Read the footnotes to clarify “IEP” and terms in the rubrics. Additionally, use the glossary to ensure you understand critical terms (e.g., baseline data, communication, generalization, learning goal, maintenance, and self-determination).

How do I select a focus learner?

The focus learner must have an exceptionality identified on his/her individualized educational program/plan (i.e., IEP, IFSP or other plan). Select a learner that is representative of the varied/range of learner needs on your caseload or in your class. ***The focus learner selected should have multiple learning or support needs (do not select a focus learner with the fewest needs). You want to be able to demonstrate your ability to meet the complex needs of a learner.*** As a candidate, you are not evaluated on whether or not your focus learner is able to respond correctly to each learning task. You are evaluated on your ability to plan for, respond to, and evaluate and assess the focus learner’s strengths and needs. A learner with varied challenges will provide opportunities for you to demonstrate your skill in planning, instruction, and assessment. **At least one of these needs** (academic needs, identified by an IEP goal or support needs, identified by either an IEP goal and/or required accommodations/modifications) **must be aligned with the focus learner’s IEP. The learning goal you develop or the specific planned supports to help the focus learner achieve the learning goal must be based on the focus learner’s IEP.** Finally, because you are required to document that learner’s performance over a number of days, you will want to choose a focus learner who typically has consistent attendance.

[Back to Planning Task 1 Key Decisions Chart](#)

How do I select a learning segment?

When developing a learning segment for your edTPA, identify your focus learner’s individual learning needs for instruction (this must be based on an IEP goal the learner is working toward or a support need identified in the IEP). However, **if your focus learner is learning any academic content (including early literacy, early numeracy, or functional academics), the learning segment must address an academic learning goal.** The learning segment itself may be part of a larger unit of instruction. The learning segment you plan should be consistent with your normal teaching responsibilities. One-to-one teaching is not a requirement for edTPA, rather, you teach in the context in which the focus learner is typically taught (whole class, small group, pull out, etc.).

In addition, the learning segment should provide opportunities for instruction and assessment of a learning goal and allow you to provide specific planned supports for your focus learner. **As with any learning segment, decisions about what to teach should be driven by what the focus learner is expected to learn at his/her particular grade level as well as the content of the**

learner's individualized education program/plan. You will want to think carefully about *how much content* to address in your edTPA learning segment; this is a significant decision about manageability, not only for the scope of your edTPA portfolio but also for the capacity of the focus learner to learn within the 3–5 lessons of the learning segment. **District guidelines, school goals, and learner interests must be considered as well.** While your cooperating teacher must not choose a learning segment for you, his/her input can be useful in guiding you to consider all of the relevant factors.

[Back to Planning Task 1 Key Decisions Chart](#)

How do I select a learning goal?

After identifying the content of the learning segment, you will need to specify the learning goal, the standards and objectives, and the specific planned supports that will help your focus learner to achieve this learning goal.

Specify one learning goal: The learning goal is selected first.

- **For a focus learner with academic learning needs, the learning goal should address academic content** that the focus learner can reasonably be expected to achieve in 3–5 lessons. Academic content includes traditional subjects of the general education curriculum (English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies); functional academics; and early literacy/numeracy. The learning goal may or may not align with an IEP goal. However, if the learning goal does not align with an IEP goal, the specific planned supports must be related to an IEP goal or the required modifications and accommodations identified in the focus learner's IEP.
 - **General education curriculum** is the same curriculum as that established for students without disabilities. Instruction in traditional subjects of the general education curriculum may include adaptations (accommodations and/or modifications).
 - **Functional academics** are composed of academic skills needed for independence in everyday life. This includes skills in traditional content areas: reading, writing, math, social studies, and science. Examples of functional academics include reading signs in the community, rounding costs up to the next dollar, retelling stories, holding books right side up and turning pages from left to right when role-playing reading, and counting a small number of objects.
 - **"Early literacy . . . [refers to] the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that precede learning to read and write in the primary grades (K–3)"** (Roskos, Christie, & Richgels, 2003), including "[developing] alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, letter writing, print knowledge, and oral language" (National Institute for Literacy, 2009).

- “**Early numeracy** represents a collection of skills that develop during the pre-kindergarten years including number and operations, geometry, measurement, patterns and algebra, and data analysis and classification” (Wackerle-Hollman, 2014).
- **For a focus learner not working on any academics, functional academics, or early literacy/numeracy content** (e.g., infants/toddlers or learners with the most severe and profound learning needs), the learning goal may address functional skills that the learner is working toward achieving (e.g., physical or motor skills; social, emotional, or behavioral goals; vocational or career readiness goals; or communication skills). However, in this case, the learning goal **AND** specific planned supports (see “[Develop Specific Planned Supports](#)” in the next section) must then align with an IEP goal and/or required accommodations and modifications.

[Back to Planning Task 1 Key Decisions Chart](#)

What do I do after I select a learning goal?

Align with Standards

After determining the learning goal for the segment, you should identify the standard(s) (early childhood, academic content, modified, or alternative standards) that you will address in the learning segment. These can be national, state, or locally adopted standards (relevant to your context). Though you may find many standards that relate tangentially to your planned learning segment, **choose only one standard for the learning goal**. If you are teaching academic content to a class, be sure to select a standard that reflects your focus learner’s applicable IEP goals, strengths, and needs, which may or may not differ from those of the rest of the class. In your Planning Commentary, complete the table in prompt 1 by **listing the standard you have selected that is central to the learning goal. You may include the standard(s) on your lesson plans, but that is not required for this assessment**. If your state does not have early childhood, modified, or alternative standards, there may not be a relevant standard related to some learning goals. In that case, state that there is none when asked in the Planning Commentary prompt 1 table.

Create and Sequence Lesson Objectives

Next, you will create measurable lesson objectives, which contain explicit, operationally defined criteria related to the learning goal. Identify them on the lesson plans and in the table in Planning Commentary prompt 1. **Daily lesson objectives must be measurable, describing what you expect your learner to exhibit by the end of the lesson. Pay particular attention to the behavioral verb you choose. For instance, if you say that your focus learner will “understand” something, you may be creating an objective that is not measurable since it is not possible to observe and measure what someone “understands.” It is better to use a verb such as**

“identify” because it would be possible to tell whether a focus learner was able to correctly “identify” a piece of information.

Your lesson objectives should be sequenced to build on one another, moving the focus learner toward achieving the learning goal. This generally means the objectives will be different for each lesson. However, for some learners, lessons may focus on the use of planned opportunities, repeated trials, or repeated practices to enhance skills, acquisition, and/or use. In these cases, the lesson objectives and learning goal may overlap and lesson objectives may not differ across the lessons. If this is the case, there are other ways to demonstrate a “logical sequence” in the lessons. You can use slightly different, more challenging materials from lesson to lesson, or you may fade the use of supports through the learning segment. You will have the opportunity to explain the logical sequence of the lesson objectives, learning tasks, materials, and planned supports in Planning Commentary prompt 1d. The educators who score your edTPA will carefully examine the match between your learner strengths and needs, the learning goal, and lesson objectives to determine if such overlap is appropriate.

Develop Specific Planned Supports

Next you will develop specific planned supports to assist the focus learner in achieving the lesson objectives and, ultimately, the learning goal. You will briefly list the planned supports (including specific Universal Design for Learning strategies) in the table in Planning Commentary prompt 1a, illustrate their use in the lesson plans, and explain **how** they support the focus learner in Planning Commentary prompts 3a–d and 4b. Furthermore, you will explain how the supports are aligned with the learning goal and/or the focus learner’s IEP in Planning Commentary prompt 1b. These supports should provide the focus learner with opportunities to participate in or demonstrate learning for the learning goal.

Specific planned supports may include changes to the learning environment; the use of explicit instructional strategies, learning tasks, or materials tailored to meet the individual needs of the focus learner; accommodations or modifications; the use of assistive technology; and the use of a prompting strategy or a scaffolding strategy. Special educators are required to use research-based strategies in delivering special education services. It is important that you identify the underlying evidence base, which supports the use of the planned instructional strategies and specific supports. These research-based instruction and support strategies should be incorporated into the lesson plans. You will justify your instruction and support strategies in prompt 3c of the Planning Commentary. Rather than designing the learning segment and lessons and later looking for research to justify those decisions, it is suggested that you engage in these processes simultaneously, conducting a database search to identify available research related to the needs of the focus learner, the academic content area, the age and grade level of the focus learner, and the specific identified disability of the focus learner and then incorporating the specific individualized supports into the planned lessons.

The specific planned supports must be associated with either an IEP goal or required modifications/accommodations if

- the academic/functional academic/early literacy or numeracy learning goal is not associated with an IEP goal **OR**
- the learning goal is nonacademic.

[Back to Planning Task 1 Key Decisions Chart](#)

What should I include in my lesson plans?

You will submit a lesson plan for every lesson taught and documented in your edTPA learning segment. The plans should provide enough detail so that educators scoring your edTPA can determine the sequence of the lesson objectives and learning tasks and activities, the plan for assessment, and a description of what you and the focus learner will be doing during each lesson. If you are teaching a group, including working as a co-teacher, write the plans for the group lesson, including any accommodations and modifications. While you are planning for the group and may have specific strategies and adaptations for learners other than the focus learner, **you may remove any strategies or adaptations that apply solely to other learners if you are over the lesson plan page limit.** In that case, include only those strategies and adaptations that apply to the focus learner. Confirm that the specific strategies and adaptations for the focus learner are clearly delineated in the group plan.

Be sure to address all lesson plan components described in your edTPA handbook while making sure that each submitted plan is **no more than 4 pages in length.** If you are using a lesson plan model that extends beyond that limit, you will need to condense them or excerpt the necessary components listed below. Planned assessments/data collection forms will be attached as separate artifacts as noted in the Evidence Chart.

Each day's lesson plan should include the following:

- **one measurable lesson objective, with explicit operationally defined criteria per lesson (more lesson objectives obligate you to collect more assessment information)**
- **a list of instructional resources and materials**
- **a description of the lesson activities, learning tasks, instructional strategies, and specific planned supports, including adaptations or modifications for the focus learner**
- **list of assessment tools and data collection procedures for the lesson objective**

NOTE: Do not put explanations and rationales in your lesson plans, as scorers are instructed to look to the commentary prompts for explanations of your thinking and justification for your plans.

[Back to Planning Task 1 Key Decisions Chart](#)

What if I have particular lessons that I am required to teach in a prescribed way or if my school or grade level has a standard curriculum?

Many teachers plan lessons that are from published or prescriptive curriculum guides that are required in a particular district, school, or department. In some cases, pedagogy is prescribed by the curriculum or IEPs. If this is the case for you, your Context for Learning artifact, plans, and commentary should describe the requirements. **If the curriculum needs modification to meet your focus learner's needs, the commentary should also address what you did to make the curriculum more appropriate:**

- how you selected or modified curriculum materials with your focus learner's background, strengths, and needs in mind, and/or
- how you adapted a lesson to meet your focus learner's learning needs (e.g., alternative examples, additional questions you ask, or supplementary activities).

[Back to Planning Task 1 Key Decisions Chart](#)

What instructional arrangement(s) should I consider in my planning?

The learning segment should occur in the setting in which it would normally occur, whether that is a general education classroom, preschool classroom, job setting, or some other place. Additionally, you should use the instructional arrangement(s) normally used in your setting. For example, if instruction in your classroom typically includes using cooperative groups, you should teach your lessons within the context of cooperative group activities. Unless your focus learner requires individualized instruction as the regular setting, there is no advantage to working with your focus learner in a 1:1 instructional arrangement, and it may in fact work against you, as the focus learner may not be used to working in a novel arrangement and may not respond in a way you would typically anticipate. Teaching the focus learner in the typical instructional arrangement will provide more opportunities for you to demonstrate your skill in planning, instruction, and assessment. Additionally, for learners who regularly participate in group instruction, it provides you with greater opportunities to demonstrate dynamic, active learning by capitalizing on the interactions between and among learners.

[Back to Planning Task 1 Key Decisions Chart](#)

What else should I think about?

You will be asked to describe the strategies used to foster greater independence for your focus learner—maintenance, generalization, self-determination, self-directed learning, self-instruction, etc. Think about what you can do to support the focus learner to move toward greater levels of independence, even if the learner has not yet mastered the targeted knowledge/skills. For example, you can model or prompt the learner to focus on cues to help shape a response or direct the learner to engage in verbal rehearsal to set the stage for him/her being able to do this independently.

[Back to Planning Task 1 Key Decisions Chart](#)

Knowledge of the Focus Learner

What do I include as baseline data?

You need to have baseline data for the learning goal. Baseline data is broadly defined in the handbook glossary. Baseline data tell you what the focus learner knows or can do **before** you begin instruction in the learning segment toward the learning goal. As such, they are crucial to show learner progress as well as to justify strategies and supports. You can collect the data yourself or you can obtain information from teachers who have experience with the focus learner or relevant student records. However, baseline data should be directly related to the learning goal **and collected prior to planning the learning segment**. When possible, collect baseline data that will mirror what will be collected in the assessments during the learning segment. Baseline data should allow you to describe your focus learner's prior learning experiences, including prerequisite knowledge and skills related to the lesson objectives. Academic/functional or academic learning goals should have baseline data in the form of a pretest, performance assessment, or previously completed assignment.

[Back to Planning Task 1 Key Decisions Chart](#)

What information should I convey about my focus learner?

Planning Task 1 requires you to demonstrate your depth of knowledge of your focus learner **in relation to the learning goal you have planned**. Making casual references or surface level connections to the learner's background, interests, strengths, and learning needs will not be enough—you will need to collect baseline data. You also need to describe your focus learner in terms of strengths, needs, and interests.

When describing how your knowledge of the focus learner affects your instructional and support decisions for Planning Task 1, your response should provide **relevant detail** about your focus learner's prior learning/experiences, development, and strengths (including personal and community assets) in addition to his/her learning needs. Your written commentary and lesson plans should reveal what you plan to do in the learning segment to capitalize on your focus learner's strengths and to meet his/her varied needs. **Your commentary responses should clearly communicate how you structured the learning segment to reflect the needs, assets, and interests of the focus learner.**

Be sure that your descriptions are based on *your* observations of your focus learner and not on assumptions associated with his/her background. **A good way to ensure you are avoiding assumptions is to ask yourself if you can back up your assertions with evidence and to include that evidence in your responses.**

[Back to Planning Task 1 Key Decisions Chart](#)

How do I support my decisions for instruction and assertions about my focus learner regarding his/her learning needs and strengths?

It is vital that you provide specific, concrete examples to support your assertions. When describing your focus learner's strengths, personal and community assets, or prior academic/functional or academic learning experiences, specifically describe what the asset or prior learning encompasses and how it is related to your learning segment. In order to support your explanations, refer to the baseline data and the instructional materials and lesson plans you have included as part of Planning Task 1.

Do not merely repeat prompt or rubric language as your responses to commentary prompts—you must always include examples and evidence of your teaching. Provide specific and concrete examples of strengths and needs from your focus learner's prior written, oral, or demonstrated work that demonstrate and support your claim. See the two different examples of academic and nonacademic prior instructional histories below:

Academic: *When tested at the beginning of the year, Terry could read 24 simple CVC words independently. By January, he was reading 62 words correctly with several self-corrects. He is now working on CVCe (Consonant-Vowel-Consonant with silent e) words to reach his IEP goal of 75 CVC (Consonant-Vowel-Consonant) and CVCe words read correctly by the end of the year.*

Vocational: *Sonya is good about using her checklist to complete regular tasks in her work placement. However, if she completes these tasks early, she does not check to see if there are additional tasks that could be done. She also did not notify her supervisor last week when she was sick. She gets very upset when she makes mistakes and shuts down. Therefore, I am working with her on communication in the workplace, identifying different scenarios, and using role-play and error prevention to help her learn what she might say.*

[Back to Planning Task 1 Key Decisions Chart](#)

How specific do my references to research and theory have to be?

When including research/theory in your edTPA, you should **justify what you are doing**. Justify your instructional choices from your plans, i.e., your choice of teaching strategies and materials. You may include the principles of research and theory you have learned in courses in your preparation program, your independent reading, or elsewhere. Draw upon educational philosophy and **specific** theories of development, learning, group work, and motivation, as well as conceptions and research-based practices of the subject-specific discipline you are teaching.

In order to make a clear connection to your focus learner's strengths and needs, justifications should reference specific research-based instruction and/or support strategies related to the learning goal and lesson objectives. **You should explain the theoretical concepts and lines of research that support/inform what you have planned to do** (i.e., why you think that your plans should be successful with your focus learner). Do not merely name drop a theorist (e.g., Vygotsky or Bloom said . . .), mention a textbook author, or describe a concept without being

explicit about the theory or research finding, how it reflects knowledge of *your* focus learner, and how both are reflected in your plans for instruction. Be sure your justification centers on instructional and support choices that move the learner toward meeting the lesson objectives and learning goal.

Formal citations are not required when referencing research/theory—only when referencing copyrighted materials such as textbooks. If you do list citations, provide them at the end of the commentary; they will not count toward the page limits.

[Back to Planning Task 1 Key Decisions Chart](#)

Communication Skill

How do I identify the communication skill for the learning goal?

Teaching is inherently a reciprocal exercise. When presenting information to students or requesting that they demonstrate some type of skill or competency, educators are expecting learners to communicate in some way what they know or understand. An educator communicates an idea, and then a student communicates an understanding. The communication skill used in a learning task may include expressive communication skills (i.e., speaking, writing, demonstrating), and in some instructional content areas, representational language skills (e.g., using symbols, notation), and/or receptive communication skills (i.e., listening; reading text, pictures, or signs), which are needed by the focus learner in order to engage in the learning task and demonstrate learning successfully. Communication skills are so embedded in instructional activities that you may take many for granted. In identifying a communication skill and planning to support the focus learner's use of the communication skill, you will need to anticipate a moment during instruction when you will expect the focus learner to use expressive/receptive communication to participate in learning tasks and/or demonstrate learning. As a special educator you will likely work with students with a range of communication abilities. The communication skill you identify needs to be related to the learning goal. The learning segment may include multiple opportunities for the focus learner to use a communication skill related to the learning goal. You need to identify only one example of the focus learner's use of the communication skill, providing an example from the lesson plans of how you supported the focus learner to use the skill.

The communication skill should make clear what the focus learner will do with communication to participate in learning tasks and/or demonstrate learning for the learning goal. Often, the standards and/or objectives for the learning segment will include communication skills embedded in the content to be learned—look to the verbs used (i.e., explain, signal, compare, argue, request). Choose *one* communication skill that the focus learner will need to develop in order to participate in instruction or demonstrate learning across the learning segment for the learning goal.

As previously mentioned, you are also asked to explain how you will support the focus learner in developing and using the communication skill. The support strategies should be specific to

the use of the communication skill and not merely related to helping the focus learner in achieving the learning goal. Planned supports for communication can include instructional strategies such as vocabulary development, modeling, guided practice; materials such as graphic organizers, dictionaries, spell-check; or accommodations such as assistive technology. It is the candidate's responsibility to describe how the communication skill allows the focus learner to participate in learning tasks and/or demonstrate learning and how the identified supports will assist the focus learner in acquiring, maintaining, and/or generalizing the communication skill.

For additional definitions and concrete examples of communication skills, see the Appendix, the Special Education glossary, and the Understanding Rubric Level Progressions for Rubric 4 and Rubric 14 located in the Special Education handbook.

[Back to Planning Task 1 Key Decisions Chart](#)

Planning Assessments

What kinds of assessments should I choose for my edTPA learning segment?

The assessments and daily assessment records for your selected learning segment should be aligned with and directly measure the focus learner's progress toward the learning goal. As a result, they should provide opportunities for a focus learner to show his/her understanding of content or skills in relation to ***all*** of the lesson objectives of the learning segment. A simple way to show that you have planned to measure each lesson objective is not only to include the assessments you will use to measure each lesson objective, but also to create an assessment record in a table format that lists the learning goal, summarizes the baseline data, lists each of the lesson objectives, and allows you to describe whether or not the individual lesson objectives have been met. **You are encouraged to include both formal and informal assessments throughout the learning segment.**

[Back to Planning Task 1 Key Decisions Chart](#)

Planning Task 1 Key Points

What to Include	What to Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focus learner that has multiple learning and support needs as identified in his/her IEP • A learning goal, which for the vast majority of selected focus learners addresses academic content • Standards and IEP goal(s) for the learning goal • One lesson objective for the learning goal per lesson in daily lesson plans • Specific support strategies to assist the focus learner in achieving the lesson objectives, which are based on the needs of your focus learner • All rationales and explanations for your instructional choices written in your commentary (not elaborated in your lesson plans) • Explicit justification of why your instructional strategies, materials, and specific planned supports are appropriate for your focus learner • Identification of and support for the learner's use of an expressive/receptive communication skill for the learning goal • Explanations of assessments and a daily assessment record that show how you plan to monitor the focus learner's progress toward all lesson objectives and the learning goal • Three to five lesson plans, each no more than 4 pages in length • Instructional artifacts to help scorers better understand the learning segment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of the focus learner based on assumptions • Content inaccuracies • Inappropriate, unreasonable scope and sequence in the learning segment • Generic, unrelated support strategies • Lack of alignment between IEP goals, standards, the learning goal, lesson objectives, learning tasks, and assessments • Responses to commentary prompts that are too brief or that do not directly address the prompt (if you feel like you are repeating yourself, you may not be detecting the different nuances between the prompts)

Instruction Task 2: Instructing and Engaging the Focus Learner

What Do I Need to Think About?

In Instruction Task 2, you will demonstrate how you engage and support your focus learner's progress toward the learning goal. Before you begin your instruction, you need to think about the following:

- How does the learning environment demonstrate respect for and rapport with all learners, including the focus learner, enhance progress toward self-determination, and support engagement in learning?
- How do the strategies engage and motivate your focus learner in learning tasks to achieve the lesson objectives?
- How are you connecting new learning to the focus learner's prior knowledge, skills, and personal or community assets?
- How are you using strategies and materials to scaffold instruction for or otherwise support the focus learner?
- How will your instructional strategies, planned supports, and materials support learning, capitalizing on the focus learner's strengths and developing or applying developmentally appropriate self-directed learning strategies?
- How will you use evidence from your instruction to examine and change your teaching practices to more effectively meet the focus learner's needs for acquiring, generalizing, maintaining, and/or self-directing use of the goal-related knowledge and skills?

Key Decisions

Video Recording	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What if video recording is not allowed in my placement? • What are my professional responsibilities for maintaining confidentiality? • What are the features of a quality edTPA video? • How do I prepare my edTPA video recordings for my learning segment? • What resources do I need to consider (equipment, software, and tutorials)?
Learning Environment RUBRIC 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do I look for when selecting clip(s) that demonstrate respect and rapport? • How do I demonstrate a positive learning environment that supports and challenges the focus learner?
Engaging the Focus Learner RUBRIC 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I select my video clip(s) to show active engagement of the focus learner in developing knowledge and skills related to the learning goal?
Deepening Learning RUBRIC 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I show that I am deepening the focus learner's understanding of knowledge and skills related to the learning goal?
Analyzing Teaching Effectiveness RUBRIC 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is important to consider as I identify changes I would make to the learning segment?

Instruction Task 2 Key Points

Re-read all of Instruction Task 2, including the rubrics. Be sure you understand the key concepts, description of requirements, and components of the task. Read the rubric footnotes to clarify terms in the rubrics. Additionally, use the glossary to ensure you understand critical terms (e.g., respect, rapport, and challenge).

Video Recording

What if video recording is not allowed in my placement?

Some placement settings (e.g., psychiatric facilities, juvenile correctional institutions, and hospitals) do not allow video recording for safety or security reasons. If you are placed in one of these settings with such a policy, then contact your edTPA coordinator for guidance in developing alternative evidence. **Candidates are expected to provide video recorded evidence of instruction for all other placement settings. If video recording is not allowed because of a district, school, or institutional policy, which is not related to safety or security, then contact your university supervisor to either gain assistance in securing permission or finding another placement.**

[Back to Instruction Task 2 Key Decisions Chart](#)

What are my professional responsibilities for maintaining confidentiality?

You are required to collect consent forms for **all** learners—not just the focus learner—and from any adults who appear in your video clip(s) for edTPA. Your program will provide you with a consent form to use. If someone without consent accidentally appears in the video, you may blur the face and use the video. In those cases, choosing to blur faces will not count as impermissible editing. In addition, while you should remove identifying information from your edTPA, if the video includes identifying information for the school that cannot be avoided or readily blurred out, for example, the name of the school is on a learner's sweatshirt or on a wall in the background where you are working, you do not need to remove it; the scoring system is secure and scorers are trained to keep all portfolio information confidential.

It is vitally important that you only use the video for the purpose of completing your edTPA. **Video of your teaching should *never* be posted in public venues like YouTube, Facebook, etc., or shared with people not involved with the edTPA assessment (e.g., potential employers or your family) without additional permission, as this violates the confidentiality of the children you teach and their families. Even when intending no harm, this is a serious breach of professional ethics.**

[Back to Instruction Task 2 Key Decisions Chart](#)

What are the features of a quality edTPA video?

There is no requirement or expectation for you to create a professional-quality production. The use of titles, opening and closing credits, a musical soundtrack, or special effects must be left to Hollywood, as reviewers will be examining only what the video shows you and your learner(s) doing within the learning segment. However, while it is not necessary to be technically perfect, it is important that **the quality of the video (clarity of picture and sound) be sufficient for scorers to understand what happened in your classroom.** In most cases, the sound quality will be most important, but if the learning task demands skills or

communication (e.g., American Sign Language) that are best understood through viewing, then the video quality will be important. If communication that is important to understand is occasionally inaudible or, in the case of sign, visible, in the clip(s), you may provide a transcript with your commentary, embed quotes in your commentary response, or insert captions in the video clip (a permissible edit) (see the Instruction Task 2 section of the Special Education edTPA Assessment Handbook for more information).

[Back to Instruction Task 2 Key Decisions Chart](#)

How do I prepare my edTPA video recordings for my learning segment?

- **Advise your cooperating/master teacher and the principal at your school of your need to video record lessons for your learning segment.** If the school is new to edTPA, you may ask your university supervisor to help facilitate arrangements.
- **Although a camera operator is often unnecessary, discuss any plans for someone to operate the camera.** If you use a camera operator, look to people who already have approval to be in classrooms (e.g., your cooperating teacher or your university supervisor). For any others, be sure that you obtain prior approval well in advance and that your invited camera operator knows and follows school procedures for visitors.
- **Collect the necessary consent forms from a parent/guardian of your learner(s) or, if eligible, from the learner(s), as well as adults who might appear in the video.** Respecting learners' privacy, as well as protecting yourself and your cooperating teacher, is a professional responsibility that should not be ignored.
- **Read your edTPA handbook carefully to note the limits on length of clips. NOTE: These limits may differ for Tasks 2 and 3.**
- **Make arrangements for the necessary video/audio equipment well in advance.** If you do not have ready access to video equipment (such as smart phone, tablet, laptop, or video recorder), reach out to peers, family members, your cooperating/master teacher, university supervisor, or university/school technology staff.
- **Location. Location. Location.** Think about where you and your learner(s) will be located in the "classroom" during the activities to be portrayed in the video and where to place the camera. If you are filming in a public community setting (e.g., store), visit the setting at the time of day when you plan to film to assist in your planning. Regardless of location, ask yourself the following questions: What evidence do the rubrics call for that the camera will need to capture? Where will the camera/microphones need to be placed in order to optimize sound quality? In particular, think about where to place any other learner who may have withheld permission to be filmed so that she or he can participate in the lesson off-camera. If you do need a camera operator, meet in advance to share the lesson plan and video needs.

- **Practice video recording *before* teaching the learning segment.** Practice will provide a chance to test the equipment for sound and video quality, as well as give your learner(s) an opportunity to become accustomed to the camera in the room.
- **Try to record the *entire* set of lessons in your learning segment.** Recording more than what you plan to submit for edTPA will provide you with plenty of footage from which to choose the clip(s) that best meet the requirements for edTPA. It is also helpful to have extra footage to use in case of technical problems or the future need for a retake.
- **Your face must appear in at least one video clip to confirm your identity.** If the camera angle to best capture interactions does not include your face, your face may appear briefly and the camera angle can be adjusted while the camera is running so that the video clip is continuous.
- **Be natural.** While recording, try to forget the camera is there (this is good to explain to your focus learner as well) and teach like you normally do. If possible, record other lessons prior to the learning segment so that the camera is not a novel item. If using a camera operator, advise him or her not to interject into the lesson in any way and to minimize camera movement.
- **Be sure to select and submit clips with quality audio** so that those viewing your clips can hear you and the focus learner as well as any relevant discussion the focus learner may have with other learners. It is often helpful to watch the video recording each day so that you can check for audio quality. As you watch, note possible examples of evidence with time stamps for later consideration in choosing the clip(s). It will be important to identify specific instances of the video recording with time-stamp references in your commentary responses. While it is fresh in your mind, record a transcription for occasionally inaudible parts for the video that you might want to include in your submission.
- **Identify and address key portions that are inaudible.** As you view and listen to the video clips, note any inaudible portions where transcription is necessary to help an educator better understand and evaluate the teaching and learning. You may provide a transcript, add captions for these portions, or provide a time stamp and quotes for the inaudible sections in your commentary. Be selective—you do not need to address all inaudible comments, but the majority of the video should be clearly audible and show both you and your focus learner. In addition, transcription for this purpose should be limited to addressing audibility concerns; further analysis or explanation of your teaching belongs in the commentary.
- **Address any portions of the video that require translation.** Captions or transcriptions may be necessary if the instruction is in a language other than English. See the [Submission Requirements](#) and your handbook for specific direction on when translation to English is needed.

- Your video clip(s) are the primary sources of evidence used in scoring Instruction Task 2. The evidence you need to collect for Instruction Task 2 should demonstrate how you engage the focus learner while teaching. Read the handbook instructions carefully. Read each prompt in the Instruction Commentary Template **AND** read each rubric in the handbook to fully understand all of the evidence that your video should demonstrate. When choosing your clip(s), consider what the focus learner is **doing**. It is helpful to watch your clip(s) to be sure that they provide evidence for all of the required elements. When responding to your prompt, consider using time stamps from the video to support your written commentary and direct a scorer's attention to **what you want him/her to see**. Consult the Evidence Chart in your handbook for specific requirements for your clip(s).
- **Choose clip(s) that meet requirements for content and length.** Review the video, using any notes you have made, to identify excerpts that portray the focus required in Instruction Task 2. Then go back to select the clip(s) and identify starting and stopping times for the excerpts. Any break in the continuity of events signals the start of a new clip to scorers, so count the number of clips/excerpts carefully. **CAUTION:** You may receive condition codes if you exceed the number of clips permitted, if the total time of your clip(s) exceeds the maximum, OR if the total number of minutes represented in your clip(s) for Instruction Task 2 is less than 3 minutes.
- **Be sure to review the instructions for downloading and saving both the video and audio from the camera if you are not already familiar with them and ensure that you backup your files once downloaded.** As soon as the video recording is downloaded, view the video to ensure the video and audio quality will allow a scorer to understand what is happening, and make a backup copy of the video and audio on a hard drive, a USB drive, or an external drive.

[Back to Instruction Task 2 Key Decisions Chart](#)

What resources do I need to consider (equipment, software, and tutorials)?

edTPA does not require any particular software, cameras, or editing equipment, although there are formatting requirements outlined in the Evidence Chart in your handbook. An expensive camera is not necessary for the demands of this assessment. Many cameras in laptops, tablets, and phones are capable of producing a picture and sound quality that is suitable for your video needs. However, certain situations (groupings where the learners are not facing the camera microphone, lots of ambient noise, etc.) may necessitate the use of some kind of external microphone.

Video equipment and cropping your clip(s) for edTPA: Since the clip(s) you submit for your edTPA must consist of a continuous teaching without any edits, you will need to use cropping tools to extract a clip from the longer video you record. If you are new to video recording or to the camera you are using, be sure to read the instruction manual that comes with the camera. Even if the manual has been lost, most manuals are available online at the manufacturer's

website. Manufacturers may also have online tutorials to help you learn how to use the camera. YouTube has a plethora of videos that demonstrate how to set up and operate a camera.

The free video editing software that comes with most computers is perfectly adequate for preparing and saving the clip(s) in the format required in your edTPA handbook. PCs have the program Windows Movie Maker (found in the START menu under PROGRAMS), while Macs provide you with iMovie. There are many online tutorials that will support you in learning how to use these programs. Contact your edTPA coordinator and program IT support for suggestions.

[Back to Instruction Task 2 Key Decisions Chart](#)

Learning Environment

What do I look for when selecting clip(s) that demonstrate respect and rapport?

Establishing respect and rapport with your focus learner and all other learners is critical for developing a mutually supportive and safe learning environment. Respect is the **positive feeling of esteem or deference toward a person** and the specific actions and conduct representative of that esteem. Rapport is a close and harmonious relationship in which members of a group **understand each other's ideas, respectfully collaborate and communicate, and consider one another's feelings**. Both respect and rapport are demonstrated by how you treat learners and how they treat each other, and you should work to make them evident in your videos. While you may be working with learners who face challenges in these areas, your video should show you are actively working to create an environment of respect and rapport within the context of your learner's(s') disability-related characteristics. Learners with disabilities may require very individualized strategies over a length of time to develop respect and rapport, and each learner may demonstrate rapport in a very unique way. For learners who have severe challenges in social and communication skills, respect and rapport may be revealed in learners' body posturing, proximity, or eye contact, as well as absence or lower levels of undesirable behavior. Be sure to consider the modes of communication and all levels of social behavior most applicable to your target learner when identifying evidence of respect and rapport. **In your commentaries, cite specific scenes (time stamps are very helpful) from the video clip(s) that illustrate the respect and rapport you have established with all learners.** Remember that scorers do not know your learner(s), so you will need to both cite and explain more subtle and individualized evidence of respect and rapport for a particular learner.

[Back to Instruction Task 2 Key Decisions Chart](#)

How do I demonstrate a positive learning environment that supports and challenges the focus learner?

Examples of support and challenge should be related to the learning goal. Choose a video clip that shows you using supports that are consistent with the focus learner's needs and prior learning experiences. These need not be unique to the focus learner if she or he has common

needs with other learners in the video. Challenge is defined as probing ahead of the focus learner's current ability levels. **Challenge can be demonstrated by including prompts or opportunities for the focus learner to learn content or demonstrate learning beyond his/her current performance level.** It is difficult to demonstrate challenge if your focus learner appears to automatically know and understand all of the content of the lesson.

[Back to Instruction Task 2 Key Decisions Chart](#)

Engaging the Focus Learner

How do I select my video clip(s) to show active engagement of the focus learner in developing knowledge and skills related to the learning goal?

The evidence you need to collect for Instruction Task 2 should demonstrate how you engage the focus learner while teaching. The video clip(s) should feature instruction where there is focus learner–candidate or focus learner–other learner interaction with an **opportunity to engage in learning tasks that increase the focus learner's understanding related to the learning goal.** In addition, the clip(s) should provide evidence of **how you link prior learning to new learning to engage and motivate the focus learner.**

The pacing of the lesson and learning activities is important. A well-planned lesson, in which the focus learner remains engaged, can be facilitated by the pace of instruction and smooth transitions between different activities. Excessive downtime or a prohibitively fast-paced lesson can be barriers to your focus learner's engagement in the learning activities.

[Back to Instruction Task 2 Key Decisions Chart](#)

Deepening Student Learning

How do I show that I am deepening the focus learner's understanding of knowledge and skills related to the learning goal?

The video clip(s) should show how you elicit responses (by providing instruction related to the learning goal) from the learner(s) and how you respond to the performance and application of learning. The purpose of this interaction should be to deepen learning by helping the learner develop greater understanding of the skills/knowledge related to the learning goal or more fluency in their application.

You can draw upon any of the interactions in the video to **highlight how you prompt, listen to, or observe the focus learner and any other learners and respond in such a way that you are supporting him/her/them to develop and/or apply their new learning.** Your feedback can be verbal or nonverbal (such as pointing) and should be more specific than “yes” or “no” or other general comments. At a minimum, **the clip(s) should show you eliciting responses, closely monitoring learner progress, and providing feedback to the focus learner with opportunities to respond, but you should not be ignoring other learners in the class or group.** If you are teaching a group, unless you have provided evidence to the contrary, scorers will assume that

the focus learner will be learning from your and his/her interactions with other learners and from your feedback to them. However, be sure to include some interactions directly with the focus learner.

[Back to Instruction Task 2 Key Decisions Chart](#)

Analyzing Teaching Effectiveness

What is important to consider as I identify changes I would make to the learning segment?

Analyzing teaching effectiveness requires you to answer two primary questions:

1. Considering my learner's responses to instruction, if I could teach this lesson again, what would I do differently?

Answer this question by analyzing and describing what you have learned about teaching toward the learning goal to this focus learner. Base your analysis on your observations of how the learner responded to the instructional strategies and materials you used in the video clip(s) submitted.

2. Why would I make the changes?

Use the analysis from question 1 to identify what you would do to improve your teaching to better facilitate learning. **Be specific about any changes you would make if you were able to teach the lesson(s) again.** The changes may address some logistical issues (time management, giving directions, etc.) but **should focus mostly on how you would improve the actual instruction to draw upon the focus learner's strengths and to address and support the focus learner's needs in relation to the learning goal.**

You will also need to cite evidence that explains **why** you think these changes will work. Consider how research and theory inform your decisions about needed changes. Be sure to **cite specific examples of what the focus learner understood/could do and did not understand/could not do (as well as any other strengths and needs), and describe the concepts from theory and/or research that support your proposed changes.** Be explicit about any knowledge of the focus learner that also informed the changes that was not obvious from the video. ([Click here to return to Planning Task 1 explanation of citing research.](#))

[Back to Instruction Task Key 2 Decisions Chart](#)

Instruction Task 2 Key Points

What to Include	What to Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clip(s) that contain evidence addressing each criterion in the rubrics• References in your commentary responses to specific examples found in your video clip(s)• Time stamps identifying evidence from the video clip(s) in every response• Information about the focus learner that is needed to support your conclusions that may not be evident from the video for an educator who does not know the learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing your video publicly on YouTube, Facebook, or any other website. It is both a legal and ethical obligation to respect the privacy of learners.• Choosing a clip that shows you making significant content errors• Showing disrespect to any learner or allowing learners to be disrespectful to each other• Mismatches between instruction and support choices and focus learner's needs and strengths

Assessment Task 3: Assessing Learning

What Do I Need to Think About?

In Assessment Task 3, you will analyze the focus learner's progress toward the learning goal and their use of the communication skill. Before you begin the analysis, you need to think about the following:

- How will you gather evidence and make sense of what the focus learner has learned?
- How will you provide meaningful feedback to the focus learner?
- How will you identify evidence of and explain the focus learner's understanding or use of the communication skill to participate in learning tasks and/or demonstrate learning related to the learning goal?
- How will you use evidence of what the focus learner knows and is able to do to plan next steps in instruction?

Key Decisions

Analysis of Focus Learner's Performance RUBRIC 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of assessment data should I analyze for my edTPA?
Feedback RUBRICS 12 & 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of learner feedback should I include in my edTPA? • How do I explain how my focus learner will understand and use the feedback I give?
Analyzing the Focus Learner's Use of Communication RUBRIC 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I identify evidence of the focus learner's use of the targeted communication skill?
Use of Assessment to Inform Instruction RUBRIC 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do I need to think about when determining "next steps" for my teaching?

Assessment Task 3 Key Points

Re-read all of Assessment Task 3, including the rubrics. Be sure you understand the key concepts, description of requirements, and components of the task. Read the footnotes to clarify terms in the rubrics. If necessary, re-read the glossary for terms used in “What do I need to do?” (e.g., baseline data, assessment).

Analysis of Focus Learner’s Performance

What kind of assessment data should I analyze for my edTPA?

You will use the baseline data, daily assessment records, and a completed work sample to inform your analysis of performance for the learning goal. **There are multiple options for the format of your submitted focus learner work sample (document, time stamp in video clip, or an additional video clip), so read the handbook specifications charts closely.** These options make a work sample possible for any type of learning goal. It is important for you to provide the analysis of the work sample and evidence you provide. Scorers will not interpret the meaning of the focus learner’s work. You must do this. Successful candidates do much more than simply state whether the focus learner was able to achieve the lesson objectives and learning goal. Analysis requires you to dig into the evidence to uncover patterns of the focus learner’s performance, identifying strengths and needs as well as how successfully your instruction and specific planned supports facilitated learning toward the learning goal for the focus learner. Again, if you suggest that the focus learner was able to understand a concept, provide concrete examples from the focus learner’s written, oral, or other performance work or from patterns in the daily assessment records that demonstrate and support your claim.

[Back to Assessment Task 3 Key Decisions Chart](#)

Feedback

What types of learner feedback should I include in my edTPA?

The feedback should be related to the learning goal and should be **the actual feedback given directly to the focus learner.** Feedback should offer the focus learner clear and specific information about his/her performance around the lesson objectives and align with the analysis of learning for the learning goal. Think about strategies for feedback that address patterns in the focus learner’s performance and also attend to unique student work. At the very least, your focus learner should be made aware of his/her strengths and errors. **Effective feedback should specifically identify areas where he/she did well and where he/she needs to improve related to the specific learning objectives.** Percent correct and nonspecific comments such as “Good job” are not sufficient, as the focus learner will have little idea what exactly he/she did well. In contrast, comments such as “Great job recognizing that ‘who’ questions refer to people [academic learning goal]” or “You are doing better waiting for Mr. Johnson [boss/supervisor] to finish before you start speaking [vocational or communication learning goal]” direct attention to the details of performance, deepening the focus learner’s understanding of the progress toward the learning goal.

The same expectation applies to feedback on how the focus learner can improve. For example, citing the number of problems the focus learner completed incorrectly [academic learning goal] is not sufficient. **In order to identify an area for improvement, the focus learner needs to know what it is that needs correction. Your feedback must be related to the learning goal.** Following are two examples of feedback addressing needs and reinforcing strengths related to both an academic and a nonacademic learning goal:

- Feedback related to an academic learning goal, written on the focus learner's paper: "You've got a great idea for the content of this paragraph. Now work on your topic sentence. It needs more focus."
- Oral feedback related to a nonacademic learning goal (motor skills): "Great job cutting on the line, but you seem to be having trouble holding the paper still as you cut. Watch what I do. [Teacher models holding paper to cut.] See how my thumb is on the top of the paper and pointed up when I hold it? Make your thumb look like mine."

[Back to Assessment Task 3 Key Decisions Chart](#)

How do I explain how my focus students will understand and use the feedback I give?

The purpose of giving feedback is to help your focus learner understand what he or she knows and can do and what he or she still needs to work on. Research shows that the opportunity to apply feedback promotes learning. When responding to this prompt, make sure you address how the **focus learner understands and uses feedback**. Think about feedback for the work sample you plan to analyze for Assessment Task 3. If feedback is to be applied immediately after it is given, what will you do to assist the focus learner in understanding and using the feedback? An example of immediate feedback and opportunities to understand and apply it is illustrated by the example of cutting with scissors in the previous question. If feedback will not be applied immediately, what are you going to do to ensure that the focus learner understands the feedback that he or she was given? Then think about the upcoming lessons and the feedback given to the learner. What opportunities are there in the next lessons for the focus learner to apply the feedback? Would revision of the work sample be a more powerful learning experience? Is there additional support that might scaffold the application of the feedback and support learning? Does the focus learner have different needs that imply different choices? **Your explanation should demonstrate that you have considered how and when the focus learner might best apply the feedback to support or extend his/her learning.**

[Back to Assessment Task 3 Key Decisions Chart](#)

Analyzing the Focus Learner's Use of Communication

How do I identify evidence of the focus learner's use of the targeted communication skill?

You will explain in your analysis and provide evidence that your focus learner used or attempted to use the targeted expressive/receptive communication skill related to the learning goal. The communication skill was identified in Planning Task 1. **You must support your**

explanations by citing specific evidence from video clip(s) using a time stamp and/or the learner work sample. The evidence cited must clearly demonstrate how the focus learner used or attempted to use the identified communication skill to participate in instruction and/or demonstrate learning related to the learning goal.

[Back to Assessment Task 3 Key Decisions Chart](#)

Use of Assessment to Inform Instruction

What do I need to think about when determining “next steps” for my teaching?

Informed by your analysis of the focus learner’s performance on the learning goal in the learning segment, “next steps” should detail the instructional moves you plan to make going forward in relation to the learning goal. These next steps may include additional feedback to the focus learner, a specific instructional activity/learning task, or other strategies. **The next steps should aim to maintain, support, or extend learning of the learning goal.** Describe your next steps in language specific enough that another educator could carry them out. **You will also need to justify your next steps with principles from research and/or theory.** ([Click here to return to the Planning Task 1 explanation of citing research.](#))

[Back to Assessment Task 3 Key Decisions Chart](#)

Assessment Task 3 Key Points

What to Include	What to Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed daily assessment record (and baseline assessment, if not evident in daily assessment record) Graphic (table or chart) or narrative that summarizes the focus learner’s progress toward the learning goal Description of performance patterns in relation to specific planned supports used Completed work sample for the learning goal (the work of the focus learner only, not a group project) Evidence of the feedback that you provided to the focus learner related to the learning goal Specific references to the focus learner’s work sample and/or assessments to support your commentary responses Concrete evidence of the focus learner’s use of the communication skill (video clip or work sample) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Superficial analysis of the focus learner’s performance without citing evidence from the baseline data, daily assessment records, and the work sample Misalignment between the daily assessment records, learning goal, lesson objectives, and/or analysis Feedback that is developmentally or age-inappropriate or contains significant inaccuracies Identifying next steps for learning that are not related to your analysis of the focus learner’s progress toward the learning goal

Professional Responsibilities

Refer to the following table for an overview of your professional responsibilities in developing evidence for edTPA. If you are submitting artifacts and commentaries for official scoring, refer to www.edTPA.com for complete and current information before beginning your work.

Included here are important information and policies such as submission requirements and deadlines, registration agreements, attestations, permissions, and confidentiality. Whether or not you are submitting for official scoring, you should fulfill the professional responsibilities described below.

Responsibility	Description
Protect confidentiality	<p>To protect confidentiality, please remove your name and use pseudonyms or general references (e.g., “the district”) for your state, school, district, and cooperating teacher. Mask or remove all names on any typed or written material (e.g., commentaries, lesson plans, work samples) that could identify individuals or institutions. During videorecording, use the focus learner’s first name only.</p> <p>To ensure confidentiality of your students and yourself, do not share your video on any publicly accessible platforms or websites (YouTube, Facebook, etc.).</p>
Acquire permissions	<p>Before you record your instruction, ensure that you have the appropriate permission from people with the legal right to give permission—a parent/guardian of the focus learner or (if appropriate) your learners and adults who appear in the videorecording. Permission must be obtained for all learners who appear in the video, even if they are not the focus learner. Your program will provide you with procedures and necessary forms to obtain these permissions, according to agreements with the school or district in which you are student teaching or completing your internship. If your program does not provide the necessary forms, you may refer to the sample forms found on the www.edTPA.com. The release forms are not to be submitted with your materials, but you should follow your campus policy for retaining them.</p>
Cite sources	<p>Provide citations for the source of all materials that you did not create (e.g., published texts, websites, material from other educators). List all citations by lesson number at the end of the Planning Commentary. Note: Citations do not count toward the commentary page limit.</p>
Align instruction with state standards	<p>As part of the assessment, you will document the alignment of your lesson plans with the California academic content standards or the <i>California Preschool Learning Foundations</i>, Vol. 1–3. Refer to the California Department of Education website to obtain copies of relevant standards for this assessment.</p>
Follow the guidelines for candidate support at the www.edTPA.com	<p>Follow the guidelines for candidate support found at www.edTPA.com as you develop your evidence for edTPA. Although you may seek and receive appropriate support from your university supervisors, cooperating teachers, university instructors, or peers during this process, the ultimate responsibility for completing this assessment lies with you.</p> <p>Therefore, when you submit your completed work, you must be able to confirm your adherence with certain statements, such as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have primary responsibility for teaching the focus learner during the learning segment profiled in this assessment. • I have not previously taught this learning segment to the focus learner. • The video clips submitted are unedited (continuous) and show me teaching the focus learner profiled in the evidence submitted. • The focus learner’s work included in the documentation is that of my focus learner, completed during the learning segment documented in this assessment. • I am the sole author of the commentaries and other written responses to prompts in this assessment. • Appropriate citations have been made for all materials in the assessment whose sources are from published text, the Internet, or other educators.

Important Information about Preparing and Submitting Evidence

Required Evidence Reminder

Candidates must follow all handbook expectations for preparing artifacts and commentaries and verify they have met each [submission requirement](#) when uploading their final materials for scoring to avoid receiving condition codes.

Submission requirements not included in the handbook:

- **The minimum length of video evidence:** Condition Code D (insufficient evidence) will be applied when candidates submit less than 3 minutes of videorecordings. The maximum video requirement varies by field, and candidates should consult their subject-specific handbook.
- **Candidate identification in video evidence:** Condition Code F (video is edited) will be applied if your face cannot be seen for identification purposes at least once in at least one of the video clips for Instruction Task 2.
- **The minimum number of students in video evidence:** Condition Code G (fail to conform to handbook instructions) will be applied if you have not provided in the commentary a time stamp reference and description of where a partial view of student(s) occurs if the number of students present in the video is the minimum and one or more students is only partially visible.

Clips of Student Work Samples and Evidence of Feedback

If more than one focus student appears in a video or audio clip of a work sample or feedback, upload the same clip separately for each focus student who is seen/heard and label appropriately. Describe how to recognize each of the focus students in the clip and provide the label associated with the clip in the relevant commentary prompt(s).

Document Page Settings and Review

All documents are sent through a conversion process to standardize the format for review and official scoring.

In order to avoid potential issues with the upload and conversion of your documents for viewing, please use standard settings in your document “Page Setup” for .doc, .docx, or .odt files or in your “Print Settings” for a PDF driver:

- **Page Size:** Letter 8.5" × 11"
- **Orientation:** Portrait or Landscape, as appropriate
- **Margins:** “Normal” or “Default” is preferred. These are typically set at 1" for top, left, bottom, and right margins. A minimum of 0.5" is required.

Please review each page of your document in “Print Layout” mode or perform a “print preview” before upload to confirm that the page settings and print settings are appropriate for the content in the document. For example, if your document content should be reviewed in landscape mode, you need to confirm that your print settings are using landscape orientation and that the content is not trimmed on the left and right margins.

You must still review each page in your document using the viewer within the Pearson ePortfolio system before submission to confirm that the entire document has been converted properly and can be viewed.

Video Captioning

Video captioning may be used as a method to provide a transcript of any audio track that may be difficult to hear or understand. This applies to all content areas.

As with written transcripts, the use of video captioning is permitted only to clarify for a scorer what is being said in the videorecording and cannot be used to enhance the videorecording with additional content.

Templates

The track changes feature may have been inadvertently turned on in some templates. When the track changes feature is activated, you will notice that the text you type appears in red (or blue) and is underlined. You will also notice in the left margin a vertical line that indicates the insertion/deletion of text in lines.

To turn off track changes, click on the Review tab, then click the Track Changes image in the Tracking group. If you have typed responses in the template, you can remove the tracked changes and retain your current work by clicking the Accept image on the Review tab, then selecting the Accept All Changes in Document command.