

Teaching Literacy in Tennessee and edTPA: Overlaps and Distinctions

This document is intended to make connections and distinctions between edTPA and the state-adopted approach of [teaching literacy in Tennessee](#).¹

edTPA and the teaching literacy in Tennessee approach share similar goals, including teachers' abilities to: 1) demonstrate knowledge of literacy subject matter, content standards, and subject-specific pedagogy; 2) intentionally plan for and implement high-quality literacy strategies; and 3) apply knowledge of varied students' needs.

There are also distinctions between teaching literacy in Tennessee and edTPA. **Teaching literacy in Tennessee is an ongoing, statewide approach** that prepares educators to be effective teachers of literacy. It focuses on supporting students in becoming proficient readers who use both skills-based and knowledge-based competences to make meaning from text. This vision for reading proficiency is translated into an actionable framework that highlights the ways in which teachers create the types of daily opportunities outlined in the theory of action by utilizing literacy based instructional strategies, multiple sources of data, and differentiation to provide effective Tier I instruction to all students.

edTPA is a performance assessment completed during a finite time period during candidates' preparation used to measure their readiness to teach elementary (K-5) literacy. It is based on findings from research that successful teachers 1) develop knowledge of subject matter, content standards, and subject-specific pedagogy, 2) develop and apply knowledge of varied students' needs, 3) consider research and theory about how students learn, and 4) reflect on and analyze evidence of the effects of instruction on student learning.

This document should not be read as an alignment; instead, teacher educators can use this guide to identify common language as they support teacher candidates in becoming effective teachers of literacy.

Because teaching literacy in Tennessee is geared towards K-3 educators, this guide was created using the edTPA Elementary Literacy Assessment Handbook.

¹ Teaching literacy in Tennessee communicates a [statewide strategy](#); it is not limited to the [Teaching Literacy in Tennessee](#) document.

1. Planning – Design

When planning, teachers/candidates carefully consider:

- alignment to the student content standards,
- students’ needs and abilities, and
- students’ conceptual understandings

in order to create

- lessons that intentionally build on one another to reach learning goals and
- authentic and meaningful learning experiences.

Teaching Literacy in Tennessee

When planning, teachers consider the literacy unit design framework, which outlines specific considerations for teachers as they plan for units of study. A **unit of study** is planned around a concept(s) that allows students the opportunity to investigate, build, and share disciplinary knowledge and understanding. Concepts require students to develop factual knowledge as well as **conceptual understandings** (understanding of ideas and the ability to transfer knowledge into new situations and apply it to new concepts) as they gain knowledge about the world. Using complex texts, lessons are intentionally sequenced to build students’ scheme and conceptual understandings.

edTPA Rubric 1

When planning, candidates design a **learning segment**, which includes a series of 3-5 consecutive lesson plans that support students’ understanding of the **central focus** (important understandings and core concepts that students should develop within the learning segment) with a clearly defined beginning and end.

2. Planning – Student Needs

When planning for students’ needs, teachers/candidates carefully consider:

- students’ background knowledge, abilities, and interests,
- students’ previous learnings, and
- students’ cultural influences

in order to create

responsive instructional practices that are appropriate for all students.

Teaching Literacy in Tennessee

When planning, teachers consider students’ needs at every iteration of the unit design.

When planning, teachers analyze texts for complexity and consider the needs and interests of the readers (students). Teachers understand **reader considerations** and ask questions such as:

- What prior background knowledge or experience will readers need to successfully access and comprehend the text?
- What cultural details will students need to know to access/engage with/comprehend the text?
- What learning experiences must students have to lead them toward successful completion of the end of unit task?
- What kinds of thinking and problem solving will students have to use to fully access the text?
- What vocabulary will readers need to know to access and comprehend the text?
- How much support will readers need to access/comprehend the text? What will challenge my students most in this text? What supports/extensions can I provide?

edTPA Rubrics 2, 3

When planning, candidates consider the variety of learners in their class in relation to the central focus of the learning segment.

When planning for the learning segment, teachers consider:

- What are my students’ **prerequisite skills** (content knowledge/skills and academic experiences prior to the learning segment) related to the central focus? What do my students know, what can they do, and what are they still learning to do?
- What do I know about my students’ everyday experiences, interests, and cultural and language backgrounds and practices?
- How can my understanding of my students’ prior academic learning and **personal** (interests, knowledge, everyday experiences, family backgrounds), **cultural** (traditions, languages, dialects, worldviews, literature, art), **and community assets** (resources, local landmarks, community events/ practices) guide my choice or adaptation of learning tasks and materials?
- How are my instructional strategies and **planned supports** (instructional strategies, learning tasks/materials, and other resources deliberately designed to facilitate student learning of the central focus) appropriate for the whole class, individuals, and/or groups of students with specific learning needs?

3. Planning – Supporting Literacy Development

When planning for students' literacy development, teachers/candidates carefully consider:

- students' language assets and needs and
- the integration of essential skills

in order to make sense of
the complexity related to students' literacy learning.

Teaching Literacy in Tennessee	edTPA Rubric 4
<p>When planning, teachers consider how students develop and use skills-based (constrained skills such as print concepts, fluency, phonological awareness, phonics, and word composition) and knowledge-based competencies (unconstrained skills such as vocabulary, oral language, concepts about the world, ability to understand and express complex ideas) <i>together</i> to make meaning from text.</p>	<p>When planning, candidates support students with developing an essential literacy strategy and related skills. Candidates also consider how students will use language to perform the essential literacy strategy and identify language demands (language function, vocabulary, syntax and grammar, and discourse) associated with a key literacy learning task.</p>

4. Instruction – Learning Environment

When constructing a literacy-rich environment, teachers/candidates carefully consider:

- the physical and emotional context and
- students' varied backgrounds and experiences

in order to

engage student in literacy learning.

Teaching Literacy in Tennessee

When teaching, teachers structure the environment to promote literacy and establish a **classroom climate** (social, emotional, and physical aspects) and **culture** (norms and expectations that define the classroom community) that promotes lifelong learning. Teachers promote collaboration through the use of academic talk structures (e.g. turn and talk, accountable talk, think-pair-share, cooperative learning) and grouping arrangements, offer opportunities for students' choice by varying the grouping options or projects students produce, and acknowledge students' cultural histories and affirm the unique identities and experiences in light of textual interpretations.

edTPA Rubric 6

When teaching, candidates demonstrate a positive literacy **learning environment** (designed physical and emotional context, established and maintained throughout the learning segment to support a positive and productive learning experience for students) that supports students' engagement in learning. Candidates demonstrate respect for, **rappport** with (a close and harmonious relationship in which the people or groups understand each other's feeling or ideas and communicate well with each other), and responsiveness to students with varied needs and backgrounds, and challenge students to engage in learning.

5. Instruction – Literacy Strategies

When constructing a literacy-rich environment, teachers/candidates carefully consider:

- the physical and emotional context and
- students' varied backgrounds and experiences

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Teaching Literacy in Tennessee	edTPA Rubric 1
<p>When teaching, teachers select and implement high-quality instructional strategies (instructional techniques or methods like interactive read alouds, shared reading, interactive writing, etc.) that integrate a variety of texts around the concept(s) of the unit in order for students to simultaneously build their skills-based and knowledge- based competencies. Instructional strategies are selected with consideration to the teacher's goals for the students, students' needs, and the demands of the text.</p>	<p>When teaching, candidates must actively engage students in integrating strategies and skills to comprehend OR compose text. The related literacy skills (skills students will develop and practice while learning an essential literacy strategy) help students understand and apply the essential literacy strategy (the specific strategy for comprehending or composing text) throughout the learning segment. Instruction of the essential literacy strategy must link to students' prior academic learning and personal, cultural, and community assets with new learning.</p>

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6. Instruction – Student Responses

When eliciting responses from students, teachers/candidates carefully consider:

- implementing carefully composed questions that vary in type,
- appropriately scaffolding questions, and
- address any potential misconceptions

in order to support

Teaching Literacy in Tennessee	edTPA Rubric 8
<p>When teaching, teachers use carefully designed question sequences that support students in making meaning from the text. The questions are purposefully planned with attention to the enduring understandings and are organized with varying levels to support students in gaining a deep understanding of the text. Question sequences are text-specific and provide opportunities for students to discuss and/or writing out their developing thoughts.</p>	<p>When teaching, candidates elicit student responses to support the use of the essential literacy strategy and/or related skills to comprehend OR compose text. At a high level, candidates build on student responses and facilitate interactions among students so they can evaluate their own abilities to apply the literacy strategy in meaningful reading/writing contexts. Candidates ask questions that go beyond surface-level.</p>

7. Instruction – Tasks

When engaging students in tasks, teachers/candidates carefully consider:

- how authentic tasks should build on one another, and
- the specific abilities of the students

in order for students to
demonstrate literacy knowledge.

Teaching Literacy in Tennessee	edTPA Rubric 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9
<p>When teaching, teachers engage students in meaningful, cognitively-demanding speaking and writing activities that focus on the unit’s enduring understandings. These daily tasks (tasks that provide different methods for students to demonstrate their growing knowledge and progress towards meeting grade level expectations) are structured for students to be able to: 1) answer questions, 2) solve problems, 3) construct arguments, 4) pursue interests, and 5) build new knowledge. The daily tasks culminate in a rich, authentic end-of-unit task (task that requires students to apply and demonstrate knowledge and skills at the units) that prompts students to use multiple standards for the larger purpose of demonstrating conceptual understandings.</p>	<p>When teaching, candidates implement learning tasks (activities, discussions, or other modes of participation that engage students to develop, practice, and apply skills and knowledge related to a specific learning goal), which are developed to support the essential literacy strategy and related skills for comprehending OR composing text. Candidates make clear links between the learning tasks and students’ prior academic learning, their assets, and research/theory.</p>

8. Assessment – Student Learning

When assessing student learning, teachers/candidates carefully consider:
evidence from students' learning collected during instruction
in order to
adjust future teaching.

Teaching Literacy in Tennessee	edTPA Rubric 5, 11, 12, 13, 14
<p>When assessing student learning, teachers use ongoing formative assessments (assessments utilized during instruction to provide the information needed to effectively direct and target teaching and learning as it occurs) throughout all instructional strategies. The information collected from formative assessments allows for teachers to monitor and adjust lessons as needed. Incorporating scaffolding and opportunities for student practice allow students to demonstrate where they are in comparison to where they will need to be at the end of the unit.</p>	<p>When assessing student learning , candidates plan and use formal and informal assessments throughout the learning segment to monitor student learning of the essential literacy strategy and related skills. Candidates analyze one assessment (activity that provides evidence to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning) from the learning segment related to the essential literacy strategy and related skills. Candidates must provide evidence of students' use of the language function (how students will use language to perform the essential literacy strategy) and additional language demands (vocabulary, syntax, and/or discourse).</p>

8. Assessment – Reflection

When assessing student learning, teachers/candidates carefully consider:
evidence from students' learning collected during instruction
in order to
adjust future teaching.

Teaching Literacy in Tennessee	edTPA Rubric 10, 11, 12, 13, 15
<p>When reflecting after teaching, teachers use a variety of data sources to make instructional decisions that will best meet the needs of their students. Teachers take the evidence collected from multiple forms of assessments and analyze it for patterns, areas of need, and proof of new knowledge and understanding.</p>	<p>When reflecting after teaching, candidates determine qualitative and quantitative patterns of learning across the whole class and for individual students. Candidates provide specific feedback related to the learning objectives and use the feedback to guide students' further learning.</p>