

## Implementation of edTPA Completion Prior to Student Teaching

*Nicole Muth*

*Kathleen Kremer*

*Val Keiper*

*Richard Schnake*

*Renae MacCudden*

**Concordia University Wisconsin**

*In many states, teacher candidates are required to complete the Education Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA). Faculty at a Midwestern university recently piloted implementing edTPA completion prior to student teaching and revealed (a) an easing of tensions associated with edTPA completion, (b) a positive impact on the student teaching experience, and (c) the ability to use edTPA to formatively support candidate growth. Candidates successfully completed the edTPA prior to student teaching, which provided the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills learned from the assessment, set goals for continued growth, and maintain the focus on the intended goals of the student teaching experience.*

### Introduction

In 2018, the teaching profession continues to experience a seismic shift as teachers are held to high standards in performance. In many states, new candidates are required to complete a standardized assessment (the Education Teacher Performance Assessment or edTPA) for licensure or program completion. This performance-based assessment, with creative roots from Stanford University, has blanketed the nation with a multitude of new state policies regarding its implementation and minimum scores for licensure. As states transition to the edTPA requirement, institutions of higher education offering licensure programs have had to implement programs to support for their teacher candidates.

In fall 2014, elementary education faculty at a medium-sized liberal arts university piloted the implementation of the edTPA with 21 student teachers during a non-consequential period, generating data with national and localized scoring, feedback from teacher candidates, and faculty observations. The pilot experience led the faculty to question the traditional timing of edTPA completion during student teaching. Subsequently, this led the faculty team to the focal research question: Can edTPA be successfully completed prior to student teaching?

With that question in mind, the faculty research team explored allowing students to complete the edTPA prior to student teaching. Students were provided the opportunity to complete the assessment during the methods semester, which is generally taken the semester prior to student teaching. This semester is filled with numerous scaffolded teaching experiences, and culminates with students completing an intense week-long “pre-student” teaching experience in which they independently plan, implement, and assess student learning. During the course of data collection several secondary questions emerged for the research team:

1. Are tensions related to completing edTPA minimized during pre-student teaching completion? If so, how?
2. How does completion of edTPA during pre-student teaching affect the student teaching experience?
3. Does completion of edTPA during pre-student teaching enhance the student teaching experience? If so, how?

### **Background to the Study**

The study originated when the faculty research team, during their pilot of edTPA in fall 2014, observed tensions among the student teachers related to edTPA completion. Furthermore, faculty observations indicated a decline in the overall quality and learning benefits of the student teaching experience that the research team presumed was a result of preoccupation with edTPA completion. The team then began questioning whether placing edTPA completion in the methods semester prior to student teaching could mitigate some of the tensions they observed, as well as reclaim the full benefits of student teaching, or even enhancing it, thereby benefiting pre-service teachers. Previous research indicated that effective scaffolding and timely feedback are significant to candidates' perceptions of and efficacy for the edTPA (Meuwissen & Choppin, 2015). This research further supported the notion to move edTPA completion to the methods semester where students would have greater support from faculty and peers. That initial implementation became an essential component of the teacher preparation program with consequential outcomes. By fall 2016, candidates had to earn a requisite score to qualify for initial licensure in the state of Wisconsin. It was during that transition time the education faculty debated, evaluated, and finalized the best possible placement for the completion of the assessment. This study explored (a) tensions associated with edTPA completion among preservice teachers, (b) the timing of edTPA implementation and its impact on the teacher preparation program, and (c) the use of formative edTPA analytical data to support candidate growth in planning, instruction, and assessment.

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **Introduction to Previous Research**

New teachers are expected to have a solid foundation in content knowledge, pedagogy, classroom management and organization, and the use of data to monitor student progress and make instructional decisions (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Stronge & Hindman, 2003). The edTPA was developed to respond to the demand for a standardized assessment of preservice teacher readiness and to guide preservice program improvement (Ledwell & Oyler, 2016). Various performance assessments, including edTPA, have necessarily been designed to assess those skills.

As a standardized assessment used in teacher preparation programs, the edTPA can effectively measure skillful planning, instruction, and assessment. Further, it aligns teacher preparation programs with teacher evaluation practices in PK-12 educational settings as it bears connections with the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the Educator Effectiveness platform, which is used in many PK-12 schools for teacher evaluation and improvement (Adkins, 2016). Like other

PK-12 models, the edTPA enables pre-service teachers to use feedback from the assessment to reflect on their performance and set goals for improvement in planning, instruction, and assessment. Research has clearly demonstrated that students outperform peers when taught by effective teachers over ineffective ones (Paine, Beal-Alvarez, & Scheetz, 2016; Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003; Stronge & Hindman, 2002).

### **Tensions Experienced by Student Teachers**

There is opposition to the perceived value of the edTPA. A dynamic which cannot be ignored is the overall tension associated with its use as a high stakes summative assessment (Lachuk & Koellner, 2015). Research has shown that completing high stakes assessments comes with associated tensions that students need to navigate. While some of these tensions can be productive, many are not, resulting in an inefficient use of time and resources. Meuwissen and Chopin (2015) identified three distinct kinds of tension which candidates often experience: support, representation, and agency.

Support tensions (considered ambiguities related to the availability of assistance from faculty, cooperating teachers, and peers) often vary from one organization to another. Although differing interpretations exist about the amount of support faculty can provide for teacher candidates during the edTPA process, the revised edTPA support guidelines explicitly state restrictions that include editing of drafts, critiquing drafts, and uploading the submission (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity [SCALE], 2016). Support tensions were also related to the placement itself, including cooperating teachers that had little knowledge of the edTPA process. Candidates primarily mediated these support tensions through social networking with fellow peers working on edTPA. Activities with peers included discussing handbook language, sharing online sources, critiquing drafts of commentaries, and discussing video production tips. Additionally, cooperating teachers allowed candidates the freedom in the classroom to support whatever was needed to complete the edTPA such as modifying curriculum and schedules (Meuwissen & Chopin, 2015).

Representation tensions are related to how candidates chose to represent and demonstrate their teaching practice in the edTPA. While there is a need to represent one's teaching as complex (involving many variables that include students and curriculum) and constantly changing, edTPA requires candidates to focus on particular competencies, practices, and rubric criteria. Candidates expressed tension while describing the teaching process as continuous; specifically as it related to interpersonal relationships and subject matter instruction. This was largely due to the limited means in which they could represent the teaching process through lesson plans, video clips, and student work samples. Selecting adequate samples that fully demonstrated all core proficiencies of the assessment was a concern area for candidates. Further, there was perceived pressure to portray practices in an orderly fashion as often teaching involves a more varied response to classroom realities. These tensions were mediated by candidates as they attended closely to the edTPA organization and prompts in the structured writing of the commentaries (Meuwissen & Chopin, 2015).

Agency tensions were defined as “the extent to which preservice teachers have control over circumstances that affect their assessment performance” (Meuwissen & Chopin, 2015, p. 6).

Constraints in placement sites such as edTPA videotaping familiarity and protocols, cooperating teachers' knowledge of edTPA, resistance by stakeholders on shifting classroom practices, and issues related to the assessment were documented agency tensions. The influence of the context in which the teaching experience occurs has been well documented. Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000) noted and discussed the specific challenges for authentic assessment that exist in education today given the diversity of learning environments and students. Candidates in the Meuwissen and Chopin (2015) study mediated these agency tensions by both stating edTPA requirements to school personnel in their placements and through justifying their teaching context within the edTPA submission.

### **Early vs. Traditional edTPA Implementation**

Several studies have examined piloting the implementation of edTPA. In a 2015 survey of 104 pre-service teachers experiencing the implementation of the edTPA in New York and Washington, researchers concluded that it was not the substance of the edTPA that impacted their troubled perception of it, but rather how it was implemented. Their overall findings suggested that the arduous process of edTPA impacted teacher candidates' ability to focus on and learn from their coursework and clinical experiences. One reported implication of that survey data was that candidates perceived edTPA as being time consuming, very complex, and unfamiliar. In response, the researchers suggested a gradual "roll-out" process for implementing edTPA that would be distinctly transparent. Furthermore, they stressed the importance of positioning the edTPA as a lever for meaningful learning, not simply as a high stakes summative tool for evaluating candidates and teacher education programs. Survey respondents identified preparation activities they had found useful for edTPA completion. The three most effective activities were completing an edTPA-like activity that included the commentary prompts and rubrics, engaging in group discussions about the edTPA expectations with their peers, and participating in the edTPA preparation focused seminars or workshops (Meuwissen, et al., 2015).

Another study examined how teacher candidates and faculty hosts engaged in edTPA pilot experiences. Lindauer, Burns, and Henry (2013) presented findings that indicated candidates were overwhelmed with the process and felt as though university supervisors offered limited support. University supervisors were viewed as key support people who needed training on how to best support teacher candidates while cooperating teachers in the field were not expected to contribute much to the process of completing the edTPA.

Pecheone and Chung (2006) examined the pilot process for the Performance Assessment for California Teachers, which preceded the implementation of edTPA. The state-wide project used embedded signature assessments throughout teacher preparation programs to prepare pre-service teachers for a summative assessment on teaching knowledge and skills that took place during student teaching. The data provided "important feedback to credential programs about ways that they can better support prospective teachers' learning experiences and strengthen their preparation in specific areas of teaching knowledge or skills" (p. 32). Those research results strongly suggest that students who receive targeted support in the development of their summative assessment viewed their experience more positively and felt that this process strengthened their teaching.

In their research, Burns, Henry, and Lindauer (2015) analyzed the success of supporting candidates using a particular model centered around four initiatives: placements, partnerships, practice, and practical support. In relation to practice, teacher candidates completed a practice edTPA during pre-student teaching in which they received extensive support and feedback from their professor. During the student teaching semester, students were also given a week between placements to work on writing their edTPA submission and would ideally submit it prior to beginning their second placement. Despite these modifications to the teaching program, 87% of the student teachers reported they either agreed or strongly agreed that the edTPA was overwhelming, but, all students felt supported in their work.

Conflicting perspectives and evidence led to questions regarding the impact of the edTPA on the overall student teaching experience. Burns, Henry, and Lindauer (2015) found that 71% of pre-service teachers reported that the edTPA interfered with their student teaching responsibilities by requiring detailed written commentaries of their plans, reflecting on videos of their instruction, and analyzing assessments. Many educator preparation programs offer support dates where teacher candidates are pulled out or meet after the school day to work on their edTPA. Several participants in another study reported logistical difficulty when completing their edTPA during student-teaching due to its intensive time requirements and the extensive support required by their cooperating schools and teachers (Meuwissen, Choppin, Shang-Butler, & Cloonan, 2015). Furthermore, Greenblatt (2016) found that it is more challenging to complete the edTPA during the spring semester due to the magnitude of standardized assessments being completed by the students they teach, which limits the timing of the edTPA.

Another difficulty arises when a teacher candidate successfully completes student teaching but does not pass the edTPA. This has led to debates over the timing of the assessment and how to balance candidates' readiness and knowledge of the profession with ample time to repeat the edTPA process if needed. According to Hildebrandt and Swanson (2014), many schools recommend that candidates submit their edTPA in the middle of the student teaching semester to allow for resubmission in the same semester if necessary. Naturally, multiple submissions results in an increased financial burden and more time away from the full-time teaching responsibilities expected during student teaching.

### **Summative vs Formative Use of edTPA**

The edTPA is essentially viewed as a summative assessment. One research team identified the edTPA as a “summative assessment used to evaluate student teacher quality and preparation” (Burns, et al., 2015, p. 18). That viewpoint seems to echo that of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), which states, “edTPA is intended to be used as a summative assessment given at the end of an educator preparation program for teacher licensure or certification and to support state and national program accreditation” (n.d., p. 2).

While the edTPA is primarily considered a summative assessment, there are some indications it can also be used as a formative assessment. One Vanderbilt graduate provided a clear example:

Even though the TPA is used for summative assessment, it is also formative, and the main lesson of the TPA is exactly what new and pre-service teachers need to learn:

‘It’s about the students, dummy!’ The TPA process shape[s] the candidate’s field experience [so that the] focus [is] entirely on students. Yes, we videotape lessons, and we refer to that as ‘videotaping ourselves,’ but what we are really trying to capture on that tape is our ability to foster a student-centered learning experience (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2013, p. 14).

Furthermore, additional guidelines allow for formative feedback such as probing questions in preparation for and during the edTPA preparation process (SCALE, 2016).

A review of the current literature thus identified evidence for the tensions surrounding the timing and usefulness of the edTPA and the possibility that this could be mitigated by early implementation. Armed with this knowledge and support, the research team pursued their fundamental question and were quite confident of the anticipated answers to their secondary questions. That expectation provided the motivation needed to further explore the successful completion of edTPA prior to student teaching.

### **Methods**

#### **Stage 1**

The researchers, a collegial team of professors in elementary education at a private university in Wisconsin, first implemented the edTPA in fall 2014. The cohort of teacher candidates in the methods semester completed a modified version of the edTPA. During the methods semester, teacher candidates completed a pre-student teaching experience that consisted of one week at a local elementary or middle school site where they assisted a half day and taught one lesson each day. The modified edTPA included a written planning task, an observation by a faculty member during the teaching of the learning segment, daily reflections using prompts similar to those in the instruction task, and an oral presentation of student learning, similar to the assessment task. These were then locally scored by the faculty team – the researchers – who gave teacher candidates oral and written feedback throughout the process and assessed the final products using all of the standard edTPA rubrics.

In spring 2015, that same cohort of students completed the entire edTPA without modifications during their student teaching experience, and was again locally scored by university supervisors. The full edTPA commentaries were written during student teaching, in contrast to the modified commentaries written during pre-student teaching. The two assessments were scored locally by two different faculty evaluators. The faculty also served as university supervisors, observing teacher candidates in the classroom, reading and responding to weekly reflections, evaluating teaching, and corresponding with cooperating teachers. Student teachers had two full days of professional development and peer support during the completion of edTPA. Teacher candidates participating in the pilot also completed a survey (Appendix A) during the final portfolio interview at the end of student teaching to provide feedback on the preparation received and experiences in completing edTPA.

## Stage 2

As a result of the experiences of the pilot semester, faculty questioned how and when to best implement the edTPA. Given the mandate to add the edTPA to the assessment process, the faculty research team explored placing it in the methods semester and identified possible ramifications. The feedback and data analysis from the pilot semester led the researchers to hypothesize that completion of the edTPA during pre-student teaching would preserve the quality and effectiveness of the student teaching experience by allowing teacher candidates to apply what they learned and see the impact on student learning. Pearson did not preclude candidates from completing the edTPA prior to student teaching, and the state of Wisconsin allowed for the edTPA to be completed at any point in the clinical experience, provided that candidates are adequately prepared to be successful on the edTPA (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2016).

In some studies, student teachers had reported feeling more prepared for teaching during their second placement as a result of completing their edTPA during their first student teaching placement (Proulx, 2014). Thus, by implementing edTPA during the methods semester, it was expected that teacher candidates would demonstrate greater confidence in the application of the skills required for edTPA in subsequent teaching experiences.

Fall 2015 pre-student teachers experienced course curriculum changes to support successful completion of the edTPA, such as teaching opportunities prior to the pre-student teaching experience, and reflective assignments that required students to analyze student work samples and video of their teaching experiences. At this point, the state required its completion, but it was not consequential. All pre-student teachers were given the opportunity to prepare materials that could be used for edTPA completion during the pre-student teaching experience that occurred near the end of the methods semester. Each student taught a lesson for five days in local elementary or middle school classrooms in the subject that most closely aligned to the candidate's minor or strengths. The sites and cooperating teachers were intentionally selected by faculty members to mitigate agency tensions reported in previous studies (Meuwissen & Chopin, 2015). Candidates were given the option to use this experience for edTPA submission or use it as practice. Those that chose the second option would complete edTPA during student teaching.

This opportunity enabled students to choose to complete edTPA over a longer time span and in different settings. The impact of the context in which the edTPA teaching experience occurs has been well documented (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000). In light of this, early completion of the edTPA allowed teacher candidates a second chance to complete edTPA during the subsequent student teaching semester in the event that the methods semester teaching experience was less than optimal or successful. Furthermore, students who needed to redo the experience due to any unforeseen circumstances had a built in safeguard to complete the assessment in the upcoming student teaching semester.

The planning commentary includes a section that requires teacher candidates to explain how they used their knowledge of students to inform their teaching. Candidates observed the class they would teach for at least a half day, but were encouraged to return to the classroom to observe the class for additional time. Pre-student teachers also met with the cooperating teacher to discuss

the individual learning needs of the students. This was done to alleviate faculty concerns that teacher candidates would not know their students as well as they would if they would have completed edTPA after a few weeks of student teaching.

Scaffolded supports were designed to prepare teacher candidates to complete the edTPA during the methods semester by using the guidelines for acceptable candidate support (SCALE, 2016). These modifications were designed to mitigate the support tensions related to faculty and cooperating teachers that had been identified in previous research studies (Meuwissen & Chopin, 2015). The modifications included a gradual release of edTPA tasks. Students were introduced to models of varying complexity for planning, instructing, and assessing lessons in mathematics, literacy, science, and history/social studies. With these models, students dissected rubric criteria and practiced portions of the edTPA tasks during the methods semester. Students also debriefed on their experiences through reflective writings using targeted questioning, which was supplemented by faculty feedback.

For the actual edTPA submission, this process was repeated with peers replacing faculty. A written peer feedback form was used to guide teacher candidates with a way to examine lesson plans through an edTPA criteria lens. Teacher candidates self-selected a peer to provide this feedback. After pre-student teaching, teacher candidates prepared an oral presentation for a small group of their peers in which they shared the context for learning, a short video from their learning segment, and assessment evidence. Peers then provided feedback and asked questions in preparation for the commentaries in the instruction and assessment tasks of edTPA (see Appendix D for the *Peer Feedback* form).

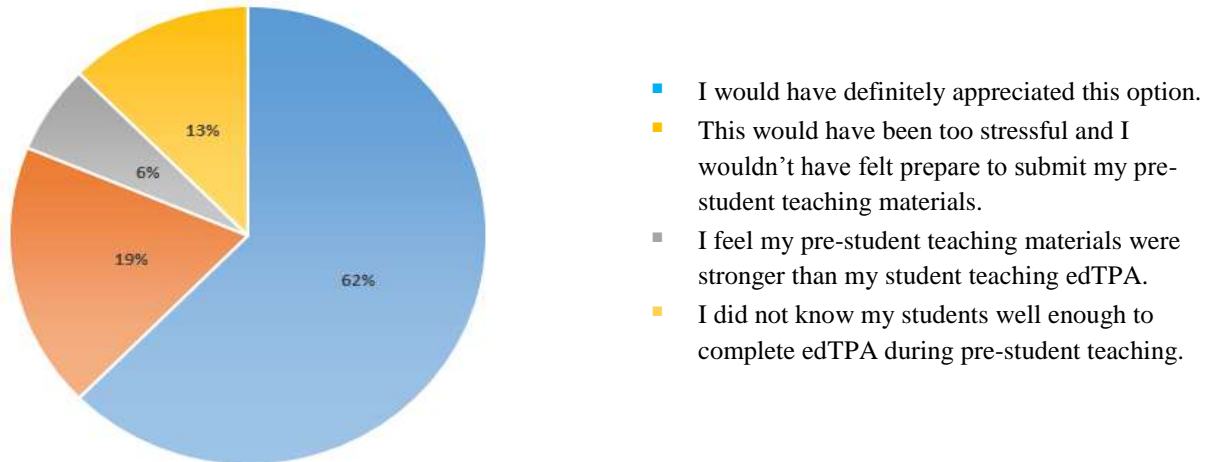
Candidates were given the option to submit their pre-student teaching materials for the edTPA or use materials from student teaching. Those candidates using their pre-student teaching materials for their official edTPA, but who were not ready to submit their materials by the start of the student teaching semester, were required to attend two additional support meetings, one at the start of student teaching, and another a few weeks into the semester. At these meetings, progress was shared on the edTPA tasks and students had opportunities to ask questions to peers and faculty. Candidates then submitted their edTPA materials for official scoring later in the student teaching semester. Students choosing to complete the entire edTPA during student teaching attended a preliminary support meeting at the start of student teaching and were excused from student teaching to attend three full day meetings. This was an increase in support during student teaching in response to feedback from the pilot semester. Students received professional development to review the criteria in the edTPA rubrics, academic language, and educational research and theory. They were also able to ask clarifying questions of faculty and receive peer feedback from other students at the meetings. As the study progressed, the candidates followed essentially the same process with some minor tweaking. At the end of the student teaching semester, students were asked to complete a survey (see Appendices B and C) to provide their perceptions on the benefits and challenges regarding the timing of the edTPA and their experiences.



## Analysis and Findings

### The Survey Data

During their student teaching in spring 2015, the cohort from the pilot semester reported tensions that arose with the initial implementation of the edTPA similar to those reported in other research studies. On a survey completed at the end of student teaching, one student commented, “I felt that the process was just way too much work during student teaching.” Another stated, “I personally did not feel prepared enough for edTPA when I had to complete it. I feel as if the professors could have done a better job preparing us.” During that early implementation, students were largely unfamiliar with the edTPA and its components. In the survey, teacher candidates were also asked for their opinions regarding the option of completing edTPA during pre-student teaching. The responses showed strong support among the candidates for early implementation opportunities (Figure 1). Almost 70% of the participants responded favorably to the option of completing the assessment in the semester prior to student teaching.



*Figure 1.* Pilot Semester Survey: Should methods students have the opportunity to use their pre-student teaching material for edTPA?

Subsequent cohorts, given the option of attempting the edTPA during the methods semester, completed a survey at the end of the student teaching semester and were asked to identify both advantages and disadvantages of completing the edTPA early. One respondent who completed the edTPA prior to student teaching perceived this advantage, “Student teaching is an extremely busy time, and I am afraid that if I were to complete edTPA during that time I would lose focus on my real purpose of being in the classroom.” Another reflected, “There was much less stress associated with planning and time management... I was much more prepared than I would have been during student teaching. I had more time to create supplementary materials as well as teaching aids, like visual manipulatives and anchor charts.” A third perceived disadvantages, “You do not have the experience of being in the classroom and truly getting to know the students before you video record a lesson. It is also a disadvantage because you gain so much knowledge about being in the classroom through student teaching, so it would be beneficial to have that knowledge before doing edTPA.”

Upon completion of the semester, one candidate who used pre-student teaching lessons for the edTPA, but finished the commentaries later in the student teaching semester reported, “I believe that it is very helpful to complete edTPA prior to student teaching because when student teaching rolls around, you have WAY too much to do.” Another candidate acknowledged, “I filmed during pre-student teaching and wrote it during student teaching because I didn't want to do it that much. I kept putting it off because I didn't want to do it, I didn't have time to just sit down and do it.”

Three candidates completed the entire edTPA during student teaching. In the survey, one expressed, “Pre-student teaching is the first time you are getting used to writing lesson plans and there was a lot to get used to just with that, let alone adding such a huge project on top of it. It might create a perception someone is not meant for teaching when really they are just learning how to balance and handle what teaching is really like; it takes time to learn that.” Another related, “I felt that it took away from student teaching, as all I focused on was edTPA and meeting the requirements, rather than just enjoying student teaching and the learning experiences it has to offer.”

### The edTPA Scoring Data

Differences between the pre-student teaching and student teaching data from the pilot semester suggested that students could perform nearly as well on edTPA during pre-student teaching as they could during student teaching. All of the candidates in the semester in which early submission was piloted scored above the current minimal standard (38) on the locally evaluated modified edTPA. Furthermore, 91.5% of all students that completed the edTPA prior to student teaching and 95.2% of all student that completed it during student teaching scored above the current requisite score. With a state requisite score implemented in September 2016, the data was further analyzed to determine the impact of a consequential score for licensure. All students who completed the edTPA after it became consequential for licensure have achieved a passing score on the first submission. Figure 2 illustrates the edTPA scores of candidates who completed the edTPA prior to and during student teaching for planning (Task 1), instruction (Task 2), and assessment (Task 3). The distribution of scores by task were similar for those that completed the edTPA prior to and during student teaching.

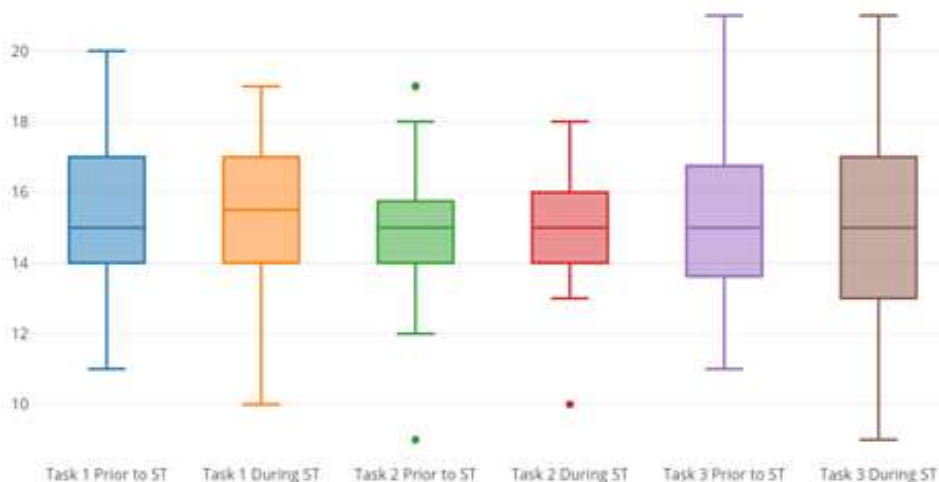


Figure 2. Comparison of edTPA Scores by Task.

## EdTPA COMPLETION PRIOR TO STUDENT TEACHING

One concern faculty had regarding early completion of edTPA was whether teacher candidates would know students well enough to (a) plan lessons that support varied student learning needs (rubric 2), (b) use knowledge of students to inform teaching and learning (rubric 3), and (c) establish rapport to support student engagement in learning (rubric 6). An analysis of the data on these rubrics show that a higher percentage of students who completed edTPA prior to student teaching scored at the proficient level or higher for all three of these rubrics (Table 1). A rubric score of 3 represents the knowledge and skills of a candidate who is ready to teach.

Table 1  
*Percentage of Teacher Candidates Scoring at Each Level of Proficiency.*

	Rubric Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Planning to Support Varied Student Learning Needs (R2)</b>					
Prior to Student Teaching (n = 47)	0%	12.8%	63.8%	23.4%	0%
During Student Teaching (n = 21)	0%	19.0%	66.6%	12.2%	0%
<b>Using Knowledge of Students to Inform Teaching and Learning (R3)</b>					
Prior to Student Teaching (n = 47)	0%	8.5%	70.2%	21.3%	0%
During Student Teaching (n = 21)	0%	9.5%	81.0%	9.5%	0%
<b>Learning Environment (R5)</b>					
Prior to Student Teaching (n = 47)	0%	2.1%	80.9%	17.0%	0%
During Student Teaching (n = 21)	0%	9.5%	85.7%	4.8%	0%

### Discussion

The driving question for this study was whether the edTPA could be successfully completed prior to student teaching. The data provide evidence that it could. In addition, the following secondary questions were identified:

1. Are tensions related to completing edTPA minimized during pre-student teaching completion? If so, how?
2. How does completion of edTPA during pre-student teaching affect the student teaching experience?
3. Does completion of edTPA during pre-student teaching enhance the student teaching experience? If so, how?

The data analysis led to the following insights regarding these questions.

### **Tensions Associated with edTPA**

A perceived benefit of early implementation is the reduction of reported tensions. Representation tensions, which included choosing appropriate artifacts, appeared to be reduced by the scaffolded teaching activities during the methods semester. Candidates were required to select and create artifacts that closely simulated edTPA expectations, which allowed the application of the same criteria when completing the edTPA submissions. Support tensions were eased by having the daily support of faculty and peers within the acceptable guidelines for the edTPA candidates (SCALE, 2016). Agency tensions, which included external factors associated with teaching placement, were greatly reduced by careful control of cooperating teachers and host schools during the one week placement during the methods semester. University supervisors used the same group of host schools and cooperating teachers each semester. Consequently, the cooperating teachers understood what candidates needed to do for the edTPA and were less constrictive with the curricular requirements because the candidate was only teaching one class period for one week. The faculty researchers agreed that the reduction of tensions further advocated placing edTPA completion in the methods semester, where appropriate support was readily accessible (Meuwissen & Choppin, 2015).

### **Impact on Student Teaching**

One of the most significant objectives of the student teaching experience is transitioning teacher candidates from the role of a student to that of a teacher through the use of professional mentors in an authentic classroom. This transition has a natural growth pattern as teacher candidates become more proficient at demonstrating the dispositions of effective classroom teachers. Through observations during the pilot semester, the faculty discerned a negative impact on the intended purpose of student teaching when candidates completed edTPA during student teaching. Candidates did not achieve the expected growth toward being independent practitioners. Consequently, the experience also lost some of its rich value as candidates focused substantial time and energy on the edTPA completion, rather than enjoying student teaching and the associated learning experiences. Many were left feeling overwhelmed and apprehensive about the profession, rather than excited and confident to take on their own classroom. As shown in Figure 1, the responses seem to indicate a preference for early completion of edTPA. Candidates not choosing early completion reported that edTPA did indeed compromise the student teaching experience and specifically the effectiveness of their teaching.

### **Benefits for Student Teaching**

The researchers anticipated that completing edTPA earlier could potentially result in a richer student teaching experience, as the planning, instruction, and assessment elements learned in completing the edTPA were applied to everyday classroom teaching. To help teacher candidates recognize and then affirm the edTPA as a valuable learning process, the preparation for and scores from the edTPA were used formatively to measure teacher candidate proficiency in the skills and dispositions addressed in the assessment, set goals for growth, and provide feedback to support their growth. In addition, student feedback, performance evaluations, and faculty evaluations all validated that early implementation positively impacted the student teaching experience. One student teacher remarked:

As I have been reflecting on my first student teaching placement, I realized how much I was able to enjoy it. I went through the entire placement without being severely stressed and I was able to enjoy student teaching for all it is. If I had put off edTPA to do while student teaching, I would have been extremely overwhelmed with everything. I was easily at my school for 9 hours a day, so going home to work on edTPA for a couple of hours would have been extremely difficult. I know that you and all of the elementary ed professors worked extremely hard so that we could do it early, so THANK YOU! It is such a relief knowing that I passed and just have to complete my placement and paperwork to get my license. Continue to stress the importance of doing edTPA early to current students.

Thus, successful completion of edTPA during the methods semester supported the assessment's efficacy as formative for student teaching.

In addition to being a summative measure of each student's proficiency at the start of student teaching and a summative assessment of program effectiveness, the edTPA scores were also used formatively to identify individual teacher candidate's strengths and areas for growth. During the student teaching semester, teacher candidates met for professional development meetings three times during the semester. At the start of each placement, student teachers set a goal for professional growth, using a format typically required of in-service teachers. First, they were encouraged to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses from their pre-student teaching experience. Teacher candidates then shared and discussed their goals with their peers, making appropriate modifications prior to sending these to their university supervisor. Next, university supervisors crafted reflection prompts and observed lessons taught by the candidate using each teacher candidate's goal for the quarter as one area of focus. After student teachers received their edTPA scores, they were encouraged to use the scores and feedback they received to revise their goal.

### **Limitations**

Significance testing was not part of the data analysis as teacher candidates self-selected whether they used materials from the pre-student teaching experience to complete the edTPA early, or to use these materials as a practice and complete the edTPA during student teaching. Also, the population of the study, by definition, was an intact group. The sample size of student teachers between spring 2016 and fall 2017 who completed the edTPA prior to student teaching was 43, and the sample size of the group who completed it during student teaching was 12. Because there are many factors not related to the teaching effectiveness of the candidate that impact the edTPA scores, it was not unusual for average scores to fluctuate between groups. The lack of diversity, as well as the small size of the samples and the university, might be naturally limiting variables in the effectiveness of this model for other institutions of higher education.

### **Conclusions**

The design and application of a significantly new approach to the implementation of the edTPA provided a new perspective. With the emerging perception of the edTPA as not just a summative, but also a formative assessment, came the recognition that edTPA could be completed earlier in a

future educator's track than in student teaching. This new emergent view also allowed for scaffolded learning to occur before edTPA implementation, and more effective application of the learned skills afterward..

This study demonstrated that early implementation of the edTPA in teacher candidate development could be successful. The dynamics of early implementation were carefully evaluated according to (a) tensions associated with edTPA completion, (b) the timing of edTPA implementation and its impact on the teacher preparation program, and (c) the use of edTPA to formatively support candidate growth. Teacher candidates benefited from being able to apply what they learned from the edTPA and reap the full experience of student teaching. It was further confirmed that placing edTPA in the semester preceding the student teaching semester allowed faculty to be more effective by modeling edTPA concepts and planning appropriately scaffolded activities for teacher candidates to practice their application.

### **Author Notes**

**Nicole Muth** is an Associate Professor of Education and Mathematics and the Chair of the Elementary Education Department at Concordia University Wisconsin.

**Kathleen Kremer** is an Associate Professor in the Elementary Education Department at Concordia University Wisconsin.

**Val Keiper** is a Professor in the Elementary Education Department at Concordia University Wisconsin.

**Richard Schnake** is a Professor of Education and the Associate Director of Educational Administration & Graduate Education Research Coordinator at Concordia University Wisconsin.

**Rena MacCudden** is an Assistant Professor in the Elementary Education Department at Concordia University Wisconsin.

Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Nicole Muth at [nicole.muth@cuw.edu](mailto:nicole.muth@cuw.edu).

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Appendix A

Survey for Candidates in the Pilot Semester

We greatly appreciate your participation in our pilot for edTPA implementation and request your feedback. All feedback will be completely anonymous, so please provide your honest feedback to help us support future candidates as they prepare for the edTPA.

Please rate the need for professional development during pull-out meetings on the following topics:

- Writing academic language functions and identifying additional language demands.
- Justifying plans, suggested modifications, and next steps using research and theory.
- Designing learning activities that integrate personal, cultural, and community assets.
- Selecting a central focus that is well-suited to edTPA.
- Recording lessons and selecting appropriate clips to demonstrate engagement and teacher/student and student/student rapport.
- Providing opportunities for students to use feedback on assessments to guide future learning.
- Analyzing and providing evidence of student language use.
- Planning follow-up instruction that addresses the learning needs identified through the assessment analysis.

Which resources did you use to help you complete your edTPA and which resources were most helpful?

What additional resources would be helpful to candidates in completing edTPA?

What parts of our full day professional development sessions were the most helpful to you in completing the edTPA? How could the format be improved to make them more beneficial?

The amount of time scheduled for professional development sessions was:  
Too long; About right; Not enough

Which of the following would be more helpful:

- An additional whole-day professional development session to write, receive feedback, and ask questions
- More frequent, shorter sessions, rather than whole-day sessions. (This would mean candidates would teach at least ½ day prior to coming to campus for sessions.)
- Optional Google+ chats with professors to ask questions and get additional support.

We are considering having candidates complete the exact edTPA as defined in the edTPA handbooks during pre-student teaching and giving students the option to submit the pre-student teaching edTPA prior to student teaching. If students pass, they could focus their attention on

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student teaching, but if they do not, they would have time to resubmit all or part of the edTPA during student teaching. Which of the following best fits your feelings about this option:

- I would have definitely appreciated this option.
- This would have been too stressful and I wouldn't have felt prepared to submit my pre-student teaching materials during the methods block.
- I feel my pre-student teaching materials were stronger than my student teaching edTPA.
- I did not know my pre-student teaching students well enough to complete edTPA during the methods block.
- The topic I taught during pre-student teaching was not well suited for edTPA.

Please include any additional feedback on your preparation or experience with edTPA

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### Appendix B

#### Survey for Candidates Choosing to Complete edTPA Prior to Student Teaching

What are your perceived advantages to completing edTPA prior to student teaching as opposed to during student teaching?

What are your perceived disadvantages to completing edTPA prior to student teaching as opposed to during student teaching?

Estimate the number of hours you spent completing your edTPA portfolio?

Completing edTPA prior to student teaching is more beneficial than during student teaching.  
Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

The expectations of edTPA align with the expectations of new teachers.  
Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

The support provided was sufficient for completing edTPA prior to student teaching.  
Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

The edTPA feedback (Task 1 rubric scores) impacted your planning during the student teaching semester. Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

The edTPA feedback (Task 2 rubric scores) impacted your instruction during the student teaching semester. Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

The edTPA feedback (Task 3 rubric scores) impacted your assessment during the student teaching semester. Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

In what ways did the edTPA feedback (rubric scores) impact your student teaching semester?

In order to better prepare teacher candidates for edTPA, professors should:

Start:

Stop:

Continue:

I would describe edTPA as:

Appendix C

Survey for Candidates Choosing to Complete edTPA During Student Teaching

What are your perceived advantages to completing edTPA prior to student teaching as opposed to during student teaching, as you did?

What are your perceived disadvantages to completing edTPA prior to student teaching as opposed to during student teaching, as you did?

Estimate the number of hours you spent completing your edTPA portfolio?

Completing edTPA prior to student teaching is more beneficial than during student teaching.  
Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

The expectations of edTPA align with the expectations of new teachers.  
Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

The support provided was sufficient for completing edTPA prior to student teaching.  
Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

The support provided was sufficient for completing edTPA during student teaching.  
Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

I chose to redo my edTPA during student teaching because:

In order to better prepare teacher candidates for edTPA, professors should:

Start:

Stop:

Continue:

I would describe edTPA as:

Appendix D

Peer Feedback Form Used by Candidates in Preparation for edTPA

Name of Person Providing Feedback:

Name of Lesson Plan Writer:

1 – Read the procedure portion of the lesson plan only. Write what you think the main objective of this lesson plan is. Write what you think the academic language function is.

2 – If you were to teach this lesson from this lesson plan, what additional information would you need? What questions do you have about the procedure?

Now read the remainder of the lesson plan.

3 - Are the objective(s) and academic language function(s) similar to what is stated on page 1 of the lesson plan? If not, stop and discuss with your peer.

4 – How do the academic language supports help students (including students that will need extra support; i.e. ELL) understand, develop, and use the academic language function and other identified academic language demands?

5 – Identify how each objective and academic language function that is listed on page 1 is assessed and the criteria for each assessment. What questions would you have about these assessments if you were teaching and assessing this lesson?

6 – What feedback will the teacher provide to the learners? How will the learners use the assessment feedback?

7 - How does this lesson build off of students' previous knowledge? How does this lesson build off of students' interests, personal or cultural backgrounds, and/or utilize community assets?

Subject Specific Information - Math

8 – What strategies will be used to identify and respond to preconceptions, common errors, and misunderstandings?

9 - Identify portions of the lesson plan that build students' conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, mathematical reasoning, and/or problem solving skills.

10 - What supports are planned for students with specific needs and/or groups of students with similar needs (extensions, support for struggling learners, IEP/504 needs must be met) to enable all students to meet the objectives?

11 – How will students use different types of representations to deepen and extend their understanding of mathematical concepts?

Subject Specific Information - Literacy

8 – What strategies will be used to identify and respond to common developmental approximations or common misconceptions within your literacy central focus?

9 - Identify portions of the lesson plan that build students' understanding of an essential literacy strategy for comprehending or composing text.

10 - What supports are planned for students with specific needs and/or groups of students with similar needs (extensions, support for struggling learners, IEP/504 needs must be met) to enable all students to meet the objectives?

11 – How will students learn, practice, and apply the essential literacy strategy for comprehending or composing text in a meaningful context?

Subject Specific Information – Science

8 – What strategies will be used to identify and respond to common preconceptions (based on prior academic learning and experiences) within your central focus?

9 - Identify portions of the lesson plan that build students' abilities to use science concepts and scientific practices during inquiry to explain or make predictions about a real-world phenomenon.

10 - What supports are planned for students with specific needs and/or groups of students with similar needs (extensions, support for struggling learners, IEP/504 needs must be met) to enable all students to meet the objectives?

11 – How will students analyze evidence and/or data based on scientific inquiry?

Subject Specific Information – Social Studies

8 – What strategies will be used to identify and respond to key misconceptions within your central focus?

9 - Identify portions of the lesson plan that build students' understandings of facts, concepts, and inquiry, interpretation, or analysis skills to build and support arguments or conclusions about historical events or a social studies phenomenon.

10 - What supports are planned for students with specific needs and/or groups of students with similar needs (extensions, support for struggling learners, IEP/504 needs must be met) to enable all students to meet the objectives?

11 – How will students use evidence from sources as they interpret or analyze and build and support arguments or conclusions?