

# edtpa instruction commentary example

edtpa instruction commentary examples are crucial for teacher candidates navigating the edTPA process. Understanding what makes a strong instruction commentary, from planning effective lessons to demonstrating impact on student learning, can significantly boost a candidate's confidence and performance. This comprehensive guide delves into the intricacies of crafting an exemplary edTPA instruction commentary, providing insights into the specific requirements of each task, offering practical advice for articulating pedagogical choices, and showcasing what a successful example looks like. We will explore how to effectively connect your lesson plans to your students' needs, how to articulate your instructional strategies, and how to reflect on student learning and its impact on future teaching. This article aims to demystify the process, offering actionable strategies for every teacher candidate seeking to excel.

- Understanding the Purpose of the edTPA Instruction Commentary
- Key Components of the edTPA Instruction Commentary
- Task 1: Lesson Planning and Instruction Commentary
- Task 2: Assessing Learning and Instruction Commentary
- Task 3: Analyzing Teaching and Planning Next Steps
- Crafting a Compelling Narrative: Writing Style and Tone
- Common Pitfalls to Avoid in Your Instruction Commentary
- Example Snippets for an edTPA Instruction Commentary
- Tips for Success: Maximizing Your edTPA Instruction Commentary

## Understanding the Purpose of the edTPA Instruction Commentary

The edTPA, or Educative Teacher Performance Assessment, is a performance-based assessment designed to measure a teacher candidate's readiness for the classroom. The instruction commentary is a vital component of this assessment, serving as the candidate's opportunity to explain and justify their pedagogical decisions. It's not merely a summary of what happened in the classroom; rather, it's a reflective narrative that demonstrates a deep understanding of teaching and learning. The purpose is to showcase how the

candidate planned, instructed, and assessed their students, with a specific focus on how these actions facilitated student learning.

The commentary allows candidates to articulate their reasoning behind instructional choices, connecting them to established pedagogical theories and research. It's where candidates demonstrate their ability to analyze student needs, differentiate instruction, and effectively manage a classroom to promote learning. Ultimately, the edTPA instruction commentary aims to prove that the candidate can translate theoretical knowledge into practical, impactful teaching practices that lead to positive student outcomes.

## **Key Components of the edTPA Instruction Commentary**

The edTPA instruction commentary is structured to guide teacher candidates through a systematic self-assessment of their teaching practice. Each task within the edTPA has a corresponding commentary section, requiring specific types of information and analysis. These components are designed to ensure a thorough examination of the teaching cycle: planning, instructing, and assessing.

Central to the commentary is the articulation of how instructional decisions are made in response to the specific needs of the students in the class. This involves discussing the rationale behind lesson design, the selection of materials, the implementation of teaching strategies, and the methods used to assess student understanding. The commentary also emphasizes the candidate's ability to reflect on their practice and make informed adjustments for future instruction based on student learning evidence.

## **Task 1: Lesson Planning and Instruction Commentary**

Task 1 of the edTPA focuses on the initial planning stages and the execution of those plans. The instruction commentary for this task requires candidates to provide a detailed explanation of their lesson plans, aligning them with learning objectives and student needs. This includes describing the context of the learning environment, the characteristics of the students, and how the lesson was designed to address specific academic, language, and socio-emotional needs.

## **Contextual Factors and Student Needs**

In this section, candidates must clearly outline the demographic makeup of their class, including prior academic knowledge, language proficiency, cultural backgrounds, and any special learning needs. This analysis of student characteristics is crucial because it directly informs instructional decisions. For instance, understanding that some students are English Language Learners (ELLs) might lead to incorporating visual aids or sentence frames into the lesson, which the candidate must then articulate in their commentary.

The commentary should detail how the candidate gathered information about their students and how this information shaped the planning process. This demonstrates a commitment to equitable teaching practices, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to succeed. Explaining the "why" behind the lesson's design, rooted in student data, is paramount.

## **Learning Objectives and Academic Language**

A critical element of Task 1 is the articulation of clear, measurable learning objectives. These objectives should specify what students will know or be able to do by the end of the lesson. The commentary must explain how these objectives were developed and how they align with curriculum standards.

Furthermore, candidates need to identify and describe the key academic language students will need to understand and use during the lesson. This involves thinking about specific vocabulary, discourse structures, and language functions that are essential for engaging with the content. The commentary should detail how the candidate planned to support students' acquisition and use of this academic language, perhaps through explicit instruction, modeling, or opportunities for practice.

## **Instructional Strategies and Learning Activities**

This is where candidates describe the specific teaching strategies and activities they employed to achieve the learning objectives. The commentary should go beyond simply listing activities; it needs to explain the pedagogical rationale behind each choice. For example, if a teacher used a think-pair-share activity, the commentary should explain why this strategy was chosen – perhaps to promote collaborative learning, allow for processing time, or encourage peer teaching.

The commentary should also address how the instruction was differentiated to meet the diverse needs of the students. This might include providing varied

levels of support, offering different pathways to achieve the learning objective, or adapting materials. Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness in instructional delivery is a key aspect of effective teaching.

## **Task 2: Assessing Learning and Instruction Commentary**

Task 2 shifts the focus to how candidates assessed student learning and used that information to inform their instruction. The instruction commentary here requires candidates to analyze student work, reflect on the effectiveness of their assessments, and explain how they provided feedback to students.

### **Assessment Design and Implementation**

Candidates must describe the assessments they used to gauge student understanding of the learning objectives. This includes explaining the type of assessment (e.g., formative, summative, formal, informal) and its purpose. The commentary should detail how the assessment was designed to accurately measure student learning and how it was implemented in the classroom.

Crucially, candidates need to explain how the assessment aligned with the lesson's objectives and the instructional strategies employed. If the lesson focused on developing critical thinking skills, the assessment should be designed to capture evidence of those skills, not just factual recall. The commentary should demonstrate a clear line of sight from learning objectives to assessment.

### **Analysis of Student Work**

This is a core component of Task 2. Candidates are expected to analyze student work samples to identify what students understand and where they struggle. The commentary should provide a detailed analysis, highlighting common errors or misconceptions, as well as evidence of student learning. This analysis should be specific and grounded in the actual student work submitted.

The analysis should not only point out what students did wrong but also explain why they might have made those errors. This demonstrates a deeper understanding of learning processes and common developmental or conceptual challenges. The commentary should clearly link the observed patterns in student work back to the instructional activities and the learning

objectives.

## **Providing Feedback and Responding to Student Needs**

Candidates must explain how they provided feedback to students on their work and how that feedback was intended to promote further learning. The commentary should describe the nature of the feedback (e.g., written, verbal, peer) and how it was tailored to individual student needs or common patterns identified in the assessment analysis.

Furthermore, the commentary should discuss how the candidate responded to the information gathered from the assessments. This might involve reteaching a concept, providing additional practice, or modifying future lessons based on student performance. This demonstrates a cyclical approach to teaching, where assessment informs instruction.

## **Task 3: Analyzing Teaching and Planning Next Steps**

Task 3 requires candidates to critically analyze their overall teaching practice, reflecting on their effectiveness and planning for future instructional improvements. The instruction commentary here is about self-evaluation and forward-thinking.

## **Self-Reflection on Teaching Effectiveness**

Candidates are asked to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching throughout the lesson segment. This involves considering various aspects, such as classroom management, student engagement, the effectiveness of instructional strategies, and the impact on student learning. The commentary should be honest and insightful, demonstrating a willingness to learn and grow as an educator.

The reflection should be evidence-based, referencing specific moments from the lesson or patterns observed in student work. For example, a candidate might reflect on how a particular questioning technique led to increased student participation, or conversely, how a certain activity did not fully engage a subset of the students. This demonstrates an ability to critically assess one's own practice.

## Planning for Future Instruction

Based on the analysis of student learning and self-reflection, candidates must outline specific plans for future instruction. These plans should directly address the needs identified in the previous tasks. This might involve reteaching a concept, providing more challenging activities for advanced learners, or refining instructional strategies based on observed student responses.

The commentary should demonstrate how these future plans build upon the learning that occurred and how they are designed to further enhance student understanding and progress. This showcases a commitment to continuous improvement and the development of a responsive, student-centered teaching practice.

## Crafting a Compelling Narrative: Writing Style and Tone

The instruction commentary is not just about listing facts; it's about weaving a narrative that clearly articulates a candidate's pedagogical thinking. The writing style should be professional, clear, and concise. Avoid jargon where possible, or if it is necessary, define it. The tone should be reflective, analytical, and confident, conveying a deep understanding of teaching and learning principles.

Use active voice and strong verbs to describe your actions and their impact. Ensure smooth transitions between paragraphs and ideas. The goal is to create a cohesive and persuasive argument for your teaching effectiveness. Think of it as telling the story of your teaching, supported by evidence from your practice.

## Common Pitfalls to Avoid in Your Instruction Commentary

Many teacher candidates make similar mistakes when writing their edTPA instruction commentaries. Being aware of these common pitfalls can help you avoid them and strengthen your submission.

- **Lack of Specificity:** Vague statements like "I differentiated instruction" are not enough. You need to explain how you differentiated and why it was appropriate for specific students.

- **Not Connecting to Theory/Research:** While not always explicitly required for every sentence, demonstrating an awareness of pedagogical principles and research can significantly enhance your commentary.
- **Focusing on What Was Taught, Not What Was Learned:** The emphasis should always be on student learning and how your instruction contributed to it, not just on the content covered.
- **Inadequate Analysis of Student Work:** Simply stating that students did well or poorly is insufficient. You need to analyze specific examples of student work to demonstrate your understanding of their learning.
- **Weak Reflection:** Superficial reflections that simply state "I would do it again" or "It went well" are not impactful. Deep, analytical reflections that consider "why" and "how" are necessary.
- **Ignoring Student Needs:** Failing to explicitly connect instructional decisions to the identified needs of your diverse learners is a major oversight.
- **Grammar and Spelling Errors:** These can detract from the professionalism of your commentary and suggest a lack of attention to detail.

## Example Snippets for an edTPA Instruction Commentary

To illustrate the points made above, here are a few example snippets that demonstrate effective commentary writing:

### Example Snippet for Task 1:

"Given that five students in the class are identified as English Language Learners with intermediate proficiency in English, as noted in their IEPs, I planned to incorporate visual aids throughout the lesson. Specifically, I designed a graphic organizer for note-taking that included key vocabulary with accompanying images to support comprehension. The 'Think-Pair-Share' activity was chosen to provide a low-stakes opportunity for these students, and others, to verbalize their understanding with a peer before sharing with the whole group, allowing for processing time and peer support."

## Example Snippet for Task 2:

“Analysis of the student work on the persuasive writing task revealed that while students demonstrated a good understanding of constructing a basic argument, many struggled with providing specific, credible evidence to support their claims. For instance, student A, who stated ‘schools should have longer lunch breaks,’ only offered the reason ‘because kids are hungry.’ This indicates a need to explicitly teach strategies for finding and citing evidence, perhaps through modeling with a mentor text and providing sentence starters like ‘For example, research shows...’ or ‘According to the article...’ in the next lesson.”

## Example Snippet for Task 3:

“Reflecting on the lesson, I noticed that while the cooperative learning groups were generally productive, one group consistently struggled with off-task behavior. Upon reviewing the group’s participation, it became clear that the assigned roles were not clearly defined, leading to a lack of accountability. For future lessons involving group work, I will implement a structured role assignment system with clear expectations for each role, perhaps using a checklist, to ensure all members contribute equally and stay focused on the task.”

## Tips for Success: Maximizing Your edTPA Instruction Commentary

Successfully navigating the edTPA instruction commentary requires careful preparation and a strategic approach. Here are some key tips to help you produce a high-quality submission that effectively showcases your teaching abilities.

- **Understand the Rubric:** Thoroughly review the edTPA rubrics for the instruction commentary. They clearly outline the criteria against which your work will be assessed, so you know exactly what the scorers are looking for.
- **Be Specific and Provide Evidence:** Avoid generalizations. Use concrete examples from your teaching experience and student work to support your claims. This is what makes your commentary compelling and credible.
- **Connect Everything:** Ensure a clear and logical connection between your lesson plans, your instructional strategies, your assessments, your analysis of student work, and your future plans. Show how each part



informs the other.

- **Focus on Student Learning:** Continuously ask yourself: "How did this instructional choice impact my students' learning?" Your commentary should be centered on student progress and understanding.
- **Be Reflective, Not Just Descriptive:** Go beyond simply describing what happened. Analyze why it happened and what you learned from it. Critical reflection is a hallmark of an effective teacher.
- **Use Clear and Concise Language:** Write in a professional tone. Ensure your writing is easy to understand, free of jargon, and free of grammatical errors and typos.
- **Address all Prompts:** Make sure you answer every question and address every requirement within the edTPA handbook for the instruction commentary.
- **Seek Feedback:** If possible, have a mentor teacher, university supervisor, or trusted colleague review your commentary before submission. An external perspective can highlight areas for improvement.
- **Organize Your Thoughts:** Before you start writing, outline your commentary to ensure a logical flow and that you cover all essential points.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What are the key components typically expected in an EDTPA Instruction Commentary?

An EDTPA Instruction Commentary typically requires candidates to explain their lesson plans, focusing on how they will support student learning, address diverse learners, select appropriate instructional strategies, and manage the learning environment. It often includes sections on learning objectives, materials, procedures, and assessment.

### How detailed should the explanation of instructional strategies be in an EDTPA Instruction Commentary?

The explanation should be detailed enough for a rater to understand the pedagogical rationale behind each chosen strategy. This includes explaining why a particular strategy was selected to meet specific learning objectives and student needs, not just what the strategy is.

## **What is the role of differentiation in the EDTPA Instruction Commentary?**

Differentiation is crucial. The commentary needs to clearly articulate how the instruction is tailored to meet the needs of diverse learners, including students with disabilities, English language learners, and those who are gifted or advanced. This involves explaining specific modifications and accommodations.

## **How can I effectively connect my instructional strategies to my learning objectives in the commentary?**

You should explicitly state each learning objective and then explain how each instructional strategy directly contributes to students achieving that objective. Use phrases like 'To meet the objective of [objective], I will implement [strategy] by...'

## **What are common pitfalls to avoid when writing an EDTPA Instruction Commentary?**

Common pitfalls include being too vague, simply describing activities without explaining the 'why,' failing to connect strategies to objectives or student needs, and not adequately addressing diverse learners. Overly lengthy or repetitive explanations are also problematic.

## **How important is it to mention classroom management within the Instruction Commentary?**

Classroom management is very important. The commentary should explain how you will establish and maintain a positive and productive learning environment, manage student behavior, and ensure that the physical and digital learning spaces support instruction and student engagement.

## **What is the purpose of including specific examples of teacher and student talk in the commentary?**

Examples of teacher and student talk demonstrate how you will facilitate learning through questioning, feedback, and discussion. They show how you will promote student understanding, encourage participation, and respond to student thinking, aligning with your instructional strategies.

## **How should I structure my EDTPA Instruction Commentary for clarity and impact?**

A clear structure is essential. Many commentaries follow the structure of the lesson plan itself (e.g., introduction, main activities, conclusion). Use

clear headings and subheadings, and ensure a logical flow from objectives to strategies to assessment, with explicit connections made throughout.

## **Can I use an example of a past lesson for my EDTPA Instruction Commentary, or does it need to be a new, hypothetical lesson?**

The EDTPA Instruction Commentary is designed to reflect your actual teaching practice for the specific lesson(s) you are submitting as part of your portfolio. While you might draw on experience, the commentary should accurately represent the instruction you provided or intend to provide for the submitted artifact(s).

## **Additional Resources**

Here are 9 book titles related to the concept of "EDTPA instruction commentary example," each beginning with *and a brief description*:

### **1. *Insights into Instructional Design: Crafting Effective Learning Experiences***

This book delves into the foundational principles of creating engaging and impactful lessons. It offers practical strategies for aligning learning objectives, instructional activities, and assessments, crucial elements for any strong instructional commentary. Readers will find guidance on how to articulate the rationale behind their teaching choices.

### **2. *Reflective Practice for Educators: Theory and Application***

This resource explores the vital importance of self-assessment and continuous improvement in teaching. It provides frameworks for educators to analyze their teaching, identify areas for growth, and implement changes. Understanding reflective practice is key to developing a compelling instructional commentary that showcases pedagogical growth.

### **3. *Assessment for Learning: From Theory to Practice***

This text examines various assessment strategies and their role in informing instruction and student learning. It emphasizes formative assessment techniques and how to use assessment data to adjust teaching. The book offers insights into how to effectively communicate assessment results and their implications in a commentary.

### **4. *Differentiated Instruction for Diverse Learners: Strategies and Tools***

This book focuses on tailoring instruction to meet the unique needs of all students in a classroom. It provides a wealth of practical strategies for differentiating content, process, and product. Understanding and articulating differentiated instruction is a cornerstone of strong pedagogical practice and commentary.

### **5. *The Art of Explaining: Clear Communication in the Classroom***

This title focuses on the essential skill of making complex concepts understandable for students. It offers techniques for structuring explanations, using clear language, and checking for comprehension. Mastering explanation is vital for demonstrating effective teaching in an instructional commentary.

#### *6. Lesson Planning for Impact: Creating Meaningful Learning Opportunities*

This book guides educators through the process of designing lessons that not only cover content but also foster deep understanding and engagement. It emphasizes the connection between planning, instruction, and student outcomes. The book provides models for articulating the intentionality behind lesson design in a commentary.

#### *7. Classroom Management Strategies: Building a Positive Learning Environment*

This resource explores effective approaches to creating and maintaining a productive and respectful classroom environment. It offers practical techniques for setting expectations, managing behavior, and fostering student engagement. A well-managed classroom is a prerequisite for effective instruction, and this book helps articulate that link.

#### *8. Culturally Responsive Teaching: Understanding and Implementing Best Practices*

This book addresses the critical need to acknowledge and incorporate students' cultural backgrounds into the learning process. It provides strategies for creating inclusive environments and developing curriculum that resonates with diverse student populations. Demonstrating culturally responsive teaching is a significant aspect of a comprehensive instructional commentary.

#### *9. Evidence-Based Teaching: Connecting Research to Practice*

This title examines how to integrate research findings into daily teaching practices to improve student learning. It explores how to critically evaluate educational research and apply its insights to instructional decisions. This book helps educators understand how to justify their pedagogical choices with a basis in educational research for their commentary.

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