# Were They Ready?

## An Analysis of a Teacher Performance Assessment to Determine if Perception Was Matched by Reality

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## Introduction

Effective early childhood teacher preparation programs offer courses and curricula that are aligned with current research on best practices and related to the knowledge and skills that early childhood teacher candidates are expected to demonstrate on certification exams and teacher performance assessments. Early childhood teacher candidates in well-designed teacher preparation programs develop professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions in a community of learners making sense of readings, observations, field experiences, and group projects through their interactions with others (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2009; 2011).

Beginning in May 2014, all education program graduates in New York State (NYS) must pass new and/or revised certification exams in order to become certified to teach in NYS. Early childhood teacher candidates enrolled in an approved NYS teacher preparation program are required to pass the Academic Literacy Skills Test (ALST), Content Specialty Test (CST-Multi-Subject or Multi-Subject: Teachers of Early Childhood (Birth-

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Grade 2)), Educating All Students (EAS) test and a Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA Early Childhood) in order to be recommended for certification. The new teacher certification examinations serve as a critical benchmark of a candidate's readiness to teach in NYS.

For the first time, teacher candidates were required to submit an edTPA portfolio. The edTPA evaluates practice-based skills proven to have a positive impact on student achievement and assesses the components of effective teaching (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity [SCALE], 2015). The practice-based skills that have an impact on student learning include knowledge of content and subject-specific pedagogy, problem solving strategies, adaptation for diverse learners, sensitivity to context, and respect for and knowledge of students (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hill, Rowan, & Ball, 2005; Guerriero, 2014). Practice-based opportunities are those that afford candidates opportunities to integrate both content and pedagogy acquired through coursework into instruction (Ericsson, 2014). One of the important rationales for the implementation of a rigorous classroom-based measure of pre-service teacher quality is that such a tool will provide new sources of data that are highly relevant to the task of improving programs for teacher preparation (Peck & McDonald, 2013).

Research has shown that the edTPA can be used as a learning tool for pre-service teachers and as a form of feedback for teacher education programs (Lin, 2015). In an effort to utilize the edTPA and the subsequent results as a learning opportunity for a teacher preparation program, this paper addresses two studies. Study 1 investigated teacher candidates' perceptions about their preparation and readiness for the edTPA based on the support they received from the teacher preparation program and their coursework. The findings from this study suggest that early childhood teachers' perceptions of their readiness for a teacher performance assessment may indicate the extent to which their coursework prepared them to meet the requirements of the edTPA (Brown, 2016). The current study, Study 2, examines if the actual scores the teacher candidates received on the edTPA matched their estimated scores.

## Teacher Performance Assessments

According to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2012), two components are critically important in teacher preparation: teacher knowledge of the subject to be taught and knowledge and skill in how to teach that subject (p.4). Teacher Performance Assessments (TPAs) capture a comprehensive range of knowledge and skills and directly evaluate teaching ability by requiring teacher candidates to

complete a portfolio during their student teaching experience (Pecheone & Chung, 2006; SCALE, 2015). TPAs have begun to find appeal in the context of teacher education programs and teacher licensing for their innovative ways of assessing teacher knowledge and skills, but primarily for their potential to promote teacher learning and reflective teaching (Chung, 2008). Based on the findings that student academic achievement in classes and in student teaching is related to success on state teacher tests, Adkins, Klass, and Palmer (2015) concluded that student achievement in overall coursework had a small positive relationship to the key concepts and skills that states regard as crucial components in their assessments.

Pre-service teacher preparation programs with a strong structure, coursework, and field experiences are crucial to preparing future teachers (Sawyer, Andzik, Kranak, Willke, Curiel, Hensley, et al., 2017). Instruction that incorporates effective performance skills training is vital to equipping pre-service teachers with the tools they will use to educate children (Sawyer, et al., 2017) and knowing how teacher education programs prepare their graduates to affect learning is critical for ongoing reform efforts (Diez, 2010). Darling-Hammond, Newton, and Wei (2013) found that candidates' feelings that they learned from a TPA were the strongest when they also felt that they were well supported by their program in learning to teach and in completing the assessment process. Research conducted by Pecheone and Chung (2006) suggests that TPAs can be used in teacher education as a valid measure of individual teacher competence for the purpose of teacher licensure and as a powerful tool for teacher learning and program improvement.

Although the edTPA was designed to better gauge if teachers are prepared for the classroom, it is getting mixed reviews from teacher candidates. Candidates have reported that completing the tasks led them to be more reflective and to more carefully consider their teaching practices (Brown, 2016). Yet there were other candidates who reported feeling overwhelmed by the requirements of the edTPA (Burns, Henry, & Lindauer, 2015), saying that they did not necessarily understand how the edTPA process works and the specific expectations of the assessment were confusing (Meuwissen, Choppin, Cloonan, & Shang-Butler, 2016).

Whereas some faculty have discovered that the edTPA is an opportunity for them to learn and to invigorate their programs for teacher candidates (Pecheone & Whittaker, 2016) and offers data and feedback that can help identify strengths and weaknesses for teacher education programs (Lys, L'Esperance, Dobson, & Bullock, 2014), the edTPA is not without controversy in higher education. There are teacher educators who feel the "edTPA narrows the possibilities of teaching and learning,

distracts us (teacher educators) from critical multicultural education, is an invitation for corporate encroachment, and restricts academic freedom" (Madeloni & Gorlewski, 2013, p. 18). Greenblatt reports, "… student teachers were reduced to tears because of the pressure they felt to pass the edTPA while keeping up with their other personal and academic responsibilities" (p.52).

It is not yet clear if and how the edTPA will shift teacher effectiveness. Recent research conducted by Goldhaber, Krieg, and Theobald (2016) suggests that teacher candidates who pass the edTPA have a greater impact on student achievement in reading. However, the same study concluded that passing edTPA was not associated with improving student outcomes in math.

## Early Childhood edTPA

Research is clear that effective early childhood teaching is highly skilled work that requires specific knowledge, skills and mastery of a body of practical techniques (Ryan & Gibson, 2016; Whitebook, 2014). The purpose of the edTPA Early Childhood is to measure teacher candidates' readiness to teach young children, ages 3–8. The edTPA assessment is designed with a focus on student's learning and principles from research and theory. It is based on findings that successful teachers:

◆ Develop knowledge of subject matter, content standards, and subject-specific pedagogy.

◆ Develop and apply knowledge of varied student's needs.

◆ Consider research and theory about how students learn.

◆ Reflect on and analyze evidence of the effects of instruction on student learning (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity [SCALE], 2015, p.1).

The edTPA assesses candidates' planning, instruction, and assessment practices to ascertain whether they align with the criteria of effective teaching. The edTPA Early Childhood assessment is composed of three tasks. The tasks and the evidence that teacher candidates provide for each of the tasks are framed by their understandings of students and their learning:

1. Task 1: Planning for Instruction and Assessment documents the teacher candidate's intended teaching.

2. Task 2: Instructing and Engaging Children in Learning documents the enacted teaching.

3. Task 3: Assessing Children's Learning documents the impact of the teaching on student learning (SCALE, 2015).

## Study 1: Teacher Candidates' Perception About Their Readiness

### *Purpose of the Study*

To support the alignment and sequencing of early childhood coursework in an accredited teacher preparation program located in a large urban area with the edTPA, the purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which teacher candidates felt their early childhood coursework prepared them for the edTPA. In addition, the study sought to determine how early childhood teacher candidates perceived their readiness for the edTPA. Specifically, I ask: How do early childhood teacher candidates rate their readiness for the edTPA tasks and evidence of teaching practices?

## Methods

### *Participants*

At the time of this study, the teacher preparation program offered a graduate program for students seeking initial certification in early childhood education (Birth-Grade 2). The participants were Masters of Science teacher candidates seeking initial certification in early childhood education. The teacher candidates were required to enroll in a supervised practicum in early childhood near the completion of their graduate coursework. The practicum is an on-the-job experience and is taken by teacher candidates who are lead teachers, associate or assistant teachers in early childhood schools and programs. It is a college-supervised experience with a 15-hour seminar. The ten early childhood teacher candidates who were enrolled in the course were recruited to participate in this study. To avoid the appearance or potential for coercion, a part-time instructor who was not the practicum instructor or onsite supervisor discussed the research project with the teacher candidates.

The teacher candidates were employed in a variety of settings (public, private, religious and/or community based) and at various grade levels (preschool through Grade 1). While all of the teacher candidates enrolled in the practicum class completed the prerequisite coursework required for registering in the practicum class, their level of classroom experience in their current worksites varied from less than one year to ten years. Chart 2 displays the list of the early childhood courses completed prior to enrolling in the practicum course.

Data collection

### *Teacher Candidate Questionnaires*

The part-time instructor distributed and collected pre- and post questionnaires. The teacher questionnaire was designed to explore teacher candidates' perceptions about their prior coursework in the early childhood program and their readiness for the edTPA. The question-naire inquired about specific topics related to the edTPA requirements including the three tasks: reflection, analyzing teaching, and video and artifact submission.

Teacher candidates completed the pre-questionnaire on the first day of the practicum class for the spring 2014 semester. The pre-questionnaire asked questions regarding their knowledge about the expectations and requirements of the edTPA. The post-questionnaire was completed during the last practicum class of the spring semester. As the teacher candidates were preparing their edTPA portfolios, the post questionnaire asked questions pertaining to their perceptions about the support the coursework in the early childhood program provided them in preparing for the edTPA.

## Results of Study 1

Ninety percent of the teacher candidates reported that they were not familiar with the specific requirements of the edTPA prior to reading the handbook. These results showed that, on average, teacher candidates

**Chart 1**
*Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of Their Readiness for the edTPA*
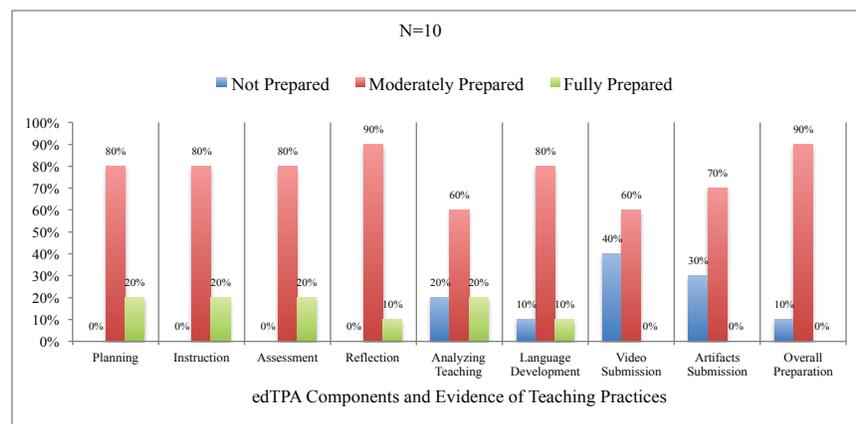
perceived themselves as moderately prepared for the assessment (see Chart 1). The teacher candidates also indicated that some of the coursework in the early childhood teacher preparation program supported them in their preparation for the edTPA (Brown, 2016).

## Coursework Supporting the edTPA Tasks

### *Task 1: Planning for Instruction and Assessment*

For Task 1 in the Early Childhood edTPA, teacher candidates are required to select one class as a focus for the assessment and identify a learning segment to plan, teach, and analyze children's learning (SCALE, 2015). Half of the teacher candidates indicated that the early childhood curriculum course supported them in planning the learning segments in order to teach and analyze children's learning.

### *Task 2: Instructing and Engaging Children in Learning*

For Task 2 in the Early Childhood edTPA, teacher candidates are required to identify learning experiences from the learning segment that show them interacting with children to promote language and literacy development to video record. In general, the teacher candidates felt that their prior coursework in the methods classes supported them with instruction and engagement.

### *Task 3: Assessing Children's Learning*

For Task 3 of the Early Childhood edTPA, teacher candidates are required to select one common assessment that they will use to evaluate the language and literacy development for the children they are working with (SCALE, 2015). For the most part, teacher candidates indicated that their prior coursework in the early childhood program did not support them in assessing children's learning. Although early childhood teacher candidates are required to take an assessment course as part of their course of study, this course is offered through another program within the same department as the early childhood program. The teacher questionnaire only requested information for courses that were in the early childhood department. In a follow-up interview, teacher candidates stated that the Assessments in Early Childhood course offered some support for Task 3. Chart 2 depicts the coursework that teacher candidates felt supported them with the edTPA tasks.

## Implications

The purpose of Study 1 was to support the alignment of coursework in an early childhood program with the edTPA with the intention of enhancing the courses. Implications from this study indicate that the edTPA can be a valuable resource for learning in a teacher preparation program and that the components and evidence of teaching practices can be used as guidelines to develop assignments in foundation and methods coursework to support teacher candidates as they prepare TPAs.

## Study 2: Did Perception Match Reality?

### *Purpose of the Study*

This inquiry sought to determine if teacher candidates perceived scores on the edTPA components prior to submitting their portfolios matched the actual scores they received on the performance-based assessment. The examination of the edTPA scores sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How did teacher candidates' estimated edTPA scores compare to the actual scores they attained on the assessment?

**Chart 2**
*Teacher Candidates' Perceptions*
*of the Coursework That Supported the edTPA*
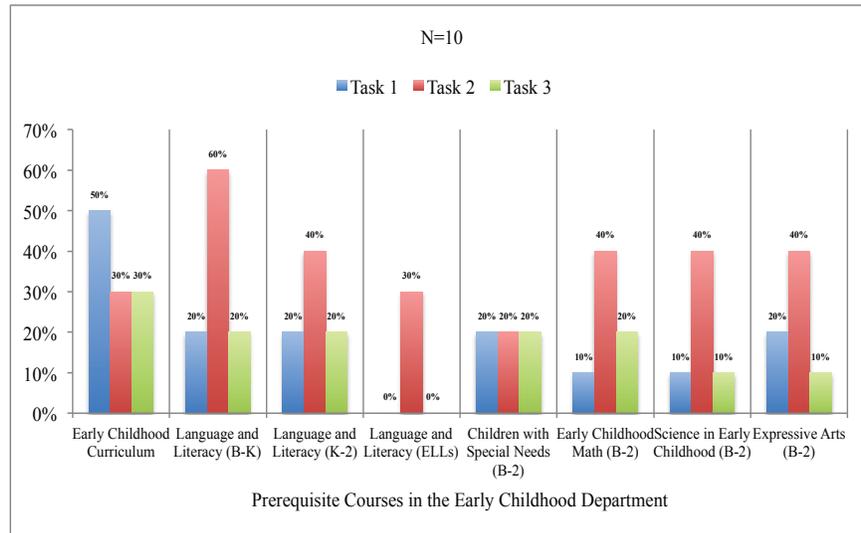
2. Did the edTPA rubric scores confirm components that the teacher candidates felt more prepared for?

3. Did the edTPA rubric scores confirm components that the teacher candidates felt less prepared for?

## Data Collection and Analysis of edTPA Scores

Eight early childhood teacher candidates submitted their edTPA portfolios between July 2014 and October 2014. At the time of this analysis, one teacher candidate did not plan on submitting the portfolio and another teacher candidate had begun the submission process, but had not submitted the portfolio for scoring. The total edTPA score, the three task scores and each rubric score were analyzed to determine the alignment of teacher candidates' estimated scores with their actual assessment scores. As the school of education did not have access to comments made on individual teacher candidates' edTPA portfolios, Making Good Choices: A support guide for edTPA candidates (2015) and the edTPA Early Childhood (2015) were used as frameworks to analyze the teacher candidates scores.

The minimum threshold needed to pass the edTPA for certification purposes was approved by the NYS Education Department in 2013 (NYSED, 2013). The minimum passing score for the Early Childhood edTPA is a total of 41 out of a maximum of 75 points. This represents an average rubric score of 2.73 out of a maximum five points.

## Results of Study 2

### *Teacher Candidates' Estimation of Their Rubric Scores*

In study 1, teacher candidates were asked to estimate their anticipated edTPA scores based on their familiarity and knowledge of the edTPA Early Childhood. Teacher candidates' estimated edTPA rubric scores were slightly higher than the actual scores they received on the assessment. The average estimated rubric scores for the edTPA tasks and the average estimated total edTPA score demonstrated that the teacher candidates felt confident in their competence to meet the minimum score needed to pass the edTPA. Table 1 depicts the alignment of the teacher candidates' estimated scores on each of the edTPA rubrics and the estimated average total task score with the actual total edTPA score they received on the assessment.

**Table 1**

*Teacher Candidiates' Estimated and Actual edTPA Scores*

| | Estimated Rubric Scores | | | | | | | | | Actual |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Teacher Candidate A | Teacher Candidate B | Teacher Candidate C | Teacher Candidate D | Teacher Candidate E | Teacher Candidate F | Teacher Candidate G | Teacher Candidate H | Average Rubric Score | Average Rubric Score |
| **Task 1: Planning for Instruction and Assessment** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rubric 1: Planning for the Whole Child | 3.5 | 3.5 | 4 | 3 | 3.5 | 3 | 3 | 3.5 | 3.38 | 3.63 |
| Rubric 2: Planning to Support Varied Learning Needs | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3 | 3.44 | 3 |
| Rubric 3: Using Knowledge of Children to Inform Teaching and Learning | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3 | 3.44 | 3.16 |
| Rubric 4: Identifying and Supporting Vocabulary Development | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3 | 3.44 | 3.25 |
| Rubric 5: Planning Assessments to Monitor and Support Children's Learning | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| **Task Total** | 17 | 17 | 17.5 | 16.5 | 17 | 16.5 | 16.5 | 15.5 | 16.69 | 16.04/25 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Task 2: Instructing and Engaging Children in Learning** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rubric 6: Learning Environment | 4.5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3.94 | 3.31 |
| Rubric 7: Engaging Children in Learning | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3 | 3.44 | 3.31 |
| Rubric 8: Deepening Children's Learning | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3.19 |
| Rubric 9: Subject-Specific Pedagogy | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2.56 |
| Rubric 10: Analyzing Teaching Effectiveness | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| **Task Total** | 17 | 16.5 | 16.5 | 16.5 | 16.5 | 16.5 | 16.5 | 18 | 16.38 | 15.38/25 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Task 3: Assessing Children's Learning** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rubric 11: Analysis of Children's Learning | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3.25 |
| Rubric 12: Providing Feedback to Guide Learning | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2.69 |
| Rubric 13: Children's Use of Feedback | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2.31 |
| Rubric 14: Analyzing Children's Vocabulary Development | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3 | 3 | 3.38 | 3 |
| Rubric 15: Using Assessment to Inform Instruction | 3.5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3.1 | 3.19 |
| **Task Total** | 16 | 15.5 | 15.5 | 15.5 | 15.5 | 15.5 | 15 | 15 | 15.48 | 14.44/25 |
| **edTPA Total Score** | | | | | | | | | 48.55 | 45.55/75 |

## Discussion: Tasks and Individual Rubric Scores

## Task 1: Planning for Instruction and Assessment

### *Rubric 1: Planning for the Whole Child*

Meeting the needs of the whole child requires a comprehensive approach that addresses multiple modalities. For rubric 1, the teacher candidates were rated on how their plans supported the active and multimodal nature of young children's development of language and literacy. The average score for the teacher candidates on rubric 1 was 3.63. This score indicated that the teacher candidates' learning segments consistently built on each other to support language and literacy. See Chart 3 for the range of scores on rubrics 1-5.

### *Rubric 2: Planning to Support Varied Learning Needs*

Planning to support varied learning needs requires teacher candidates to use a multitude of strategies to reach all children and provide them with opportunities to develop and demonstrate their individual strengths and abilities while bolstering areas where they need support. For rubric 2, the teacher candidates were rated on how they used knowledge of the children to support their varied learning needs. The average score on rubric 2 was 3.0. This score indicated the teacher candidates' learning segments consistently included supports that were tied to the learning

**Chart 3**
*Planning Rubric Scores*
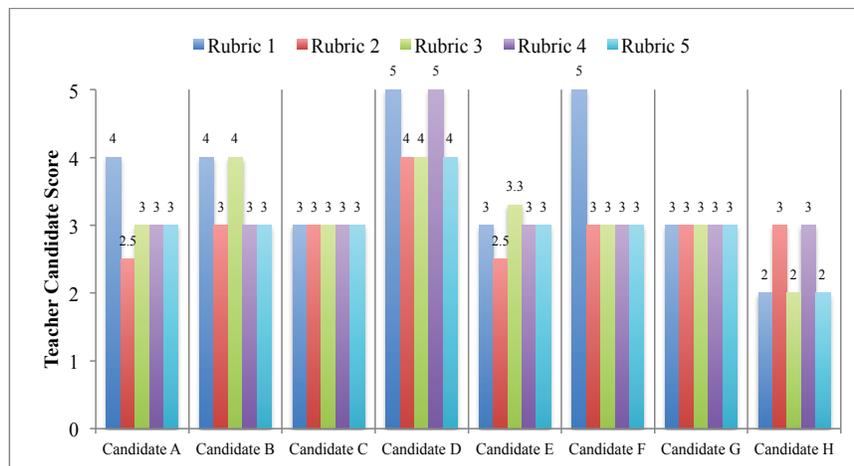
objectives and provided opportunities for children with different learning approaches.

### *Rubric 3: Using Knowledge of Children to Inform Teaching and Learning*

Using their knowledge of children to inform teaching and learning, teacher candidates must know not only the content and its related pedagogy, but also the children to whom they will teach that content. For rubric 3, the teacher candidates were rated on how they used their knowledge of children to justify their instructional plans. The average score on rubric 3 was 3.16. This score indicated that the teacher candidates justified why their learning segments were developmentally appropriate using examples of children's prior academic learning or personal/cultural/community assets, but not both.

### *Rubric 4: Identifying and Supporting Vocabulary Development*

Teacher candidates can identify, support and facilitate children's vocabulary learning using a variety of strategies, including making conversation and posing thoughtful questions (Christ & Wang, 2012, p.74). For rubric 4, the teacher candidates were rated on how well they identified and supported children's vocabulary development. The average score on rubric 4 was 3.25. This score indicated the teacher candidates' identified vocabulary related to their learning experience even though their plans included general support for vocabulary development.

### *Rubric 5: Planning Assessments to Monitor and Support Children's Learning*

It is recommended that teachers use both formal and informal screening and assessment approaches to systematically evaluate children's growth across all domains of development and learning within natural contexts, including the early childhood classroom (Gillis, West, & Coleman, 2009). For rubric 5, the teacher candidates were rated on how the informal and formal assessments selected or designed monitored children's active and multimodal development of language and literacy. The average score on rubric 5 was 3. This score indicated that the teacher candidates' planned assessments provided evidence of multiple modalities to monitor children's learning, but were not strategically designed to allow individuals or groups with specific needs to demonstrate their learning.

## Task 2: Instructing and Engaging Children in Learning

### *Rubric 6: Learning Environment*

Engagement strategies enable teachers to capture the interest of children as they acquire new skills and concepts. For rubric 6, the learning environment was rated on how the teacher candidate demonstrated a positive learning environment that supported children's engagement in learning. The average score on rubric 6 was 3.31. This score indicated that the teacher candidates demonstrated rapport with and respect for children and provided a positive, low-risk learning environment. See Chart 3 for the range of scores on rubrics 6-10.

### *Rubric 7: Engaging Children in Learning*

Because of children's diverse literacy needs, teachers plan experiences and interactions that support children's language and literacy development using strategies that allow them to process information through multiple modalities. For rubric 7, the teacher candidates were rated on how they engaged children in an active and multimodal nature to support young children's development of language and literacy. The average score on rubric 7 was 3.31. This score indicated that children were engaged in learning experiences that promoted language and literacy development through at least one modality that supports the active nature of children's learning.

### *Rubric 8: Deepening Children's Learning*

Extended and authentic conversations help build children's receptive and expressive vocabulary as well as their comprehension skills. For rubric 8, the teacher candidates were rated on how they elicited children's responses to promote the active and multimodal development of language and literacy. The average score on rubric 8 was 3.19. This score indicated that the teacher candidates elicited children's responses to promote their understanding of language and literacy.

### *Rubric 9: Subject-Specific Pedagogy*

An interdisciplinary learning experience fosters the acquisition of foundational knowledge and promotes integration of ideas from multiple modalities. These experiences integrate information from a variety of sources to form a more cohesive learning experience for children. For rubric 9, the subject-specific pedagogy was assessed on how the teacher candidate used interdisciplinary learning experiences to promote chil-

dren's development of language and literacy. The average score on rubric 9 was 2.56. This score indicated, on average, that the teacher candidates made vague or superficial reference to interdisciplinary connections to promote language and literacy development.

### Rubric 10: Analyzing Teaching Effectiveness

Reflective teaching is a process of self-observation and self-evaluation. By analyzing information about what goes on during the planning, instruction and assessment process, teachers are able to identify and explore their own teaching practices. For rubric 10, the analysis of teaching effectiveness was rated on how the teacher candidate used evidence to evaluate and change teaching practices to meet children's varied learning needs. The average score on rubric 10 was 3. This score indicated that teacher candidates proposed changes that addressed children's collective learning needs related to the central focus, but made superficial connections to research and/or developmental theory.

## Task 3: Assessing Children's Learning

### Rubric 11: Analysis of Children's Learning

Assessment of young children's progress and achievements is ongoing, strategic, and purposeful (NAEYC, 2009). For rubric 11, the analysis of

**Chart 4**
*Instruction Rubric Scores*
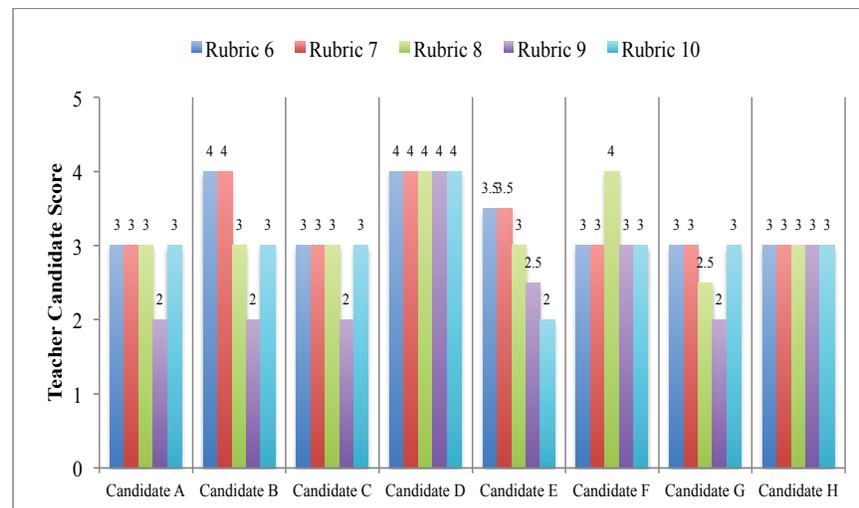
children's learning was assessed on how the teacher candidate analyzed evidence of children's language and literacy learning. The average score on rubric 11 was 3.25. This score indicated that the analysis focused on the children's strengths and needs. In addition, the analysis included some attention to differences in children's learning across the class. See Appendix E for the range of scores on rubrics 11-15.

### *Rubric 12: Providing Feedback to Guide Learning*

Providing children with meaningful feedback can greatly enhance learning and improve student achievement. For rubric 12, the feedback to guide children's learning was rated on the type of feedback the teacher candidate provided to children. The average score on rubric 12 was 2.69. This score indicated, on average, that the feedback was general and addressed the needs and/or strengths related to the learning objectives.

### *Rubric 13: Children's Use of Feedback*

Many teachers tend to focus on the correctional rather than the instructional aspects of feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Children should be actively involved in learning what the criteria mean and in understanding the goals and purposes of feedback (Spiller, 2009). For rubric 13, the feedback the children used was rated on how the teacher candidate supported the children in understanding and using the feedback to further guide their learning. The average score on rubric 13 was 2.31. This score indicated, on average, that teacher candidates provided a vague description of how the children will understand or use feedback.

### *Rubric 14: Analyzing Children's Vocabulary Development*

In rubric 14, analyzing children's vocabulary development was assessed on how the teacher candidate used vocabulary to develop content understanding. The average score on rubric 14 was 3. This score indicated the teacher candidate explained and provided evidence that children use the vocabulary associated with the learning experience.

### *Rubric 15: Using Assessment to Inform Instruction*

Assessment is a tool for monitoring children's progress toward a program's desired goals. Teachers cannot be intentional about helping children to progress unless they know where each child is with respect to learning goals. For rubric 15, the use of assessment to inform instruction was rated on how the teacher candidate used the analysis of what children knew and were able to do to plan next steps in instruc-

tion. The average score on rubric 15 was 3.19. This score indicated that the teacher candidates' next steps proposed general support that will improve children's learning related to assessed learning objectives, but were only loosely connected to research and/or developmental theory.

## Limitations

This study was a follow-up to Study 1 that examined early childhood teacher candidates' perceptions of their preparation and readiness for the edTPA. This inquiry was to determine if the teacher candidates' perceptions and estimated scores aligned with the actual scores they received on the assessment. Although the results from this inquiry cannot be generalized to other teacher candidates preparing for the edTPA, this study can provide teacher preparation programs with a framework for aligning coursework expectations and assignments to a teacher performance assessment. This study can also provide teacher preparation programs with an outline for identifying the strengths and needs in their program's course of study in order to support teacher candidates with teacher performance assessments and certification exams.

**Chart 5**
*Assessment Rubric Scores*
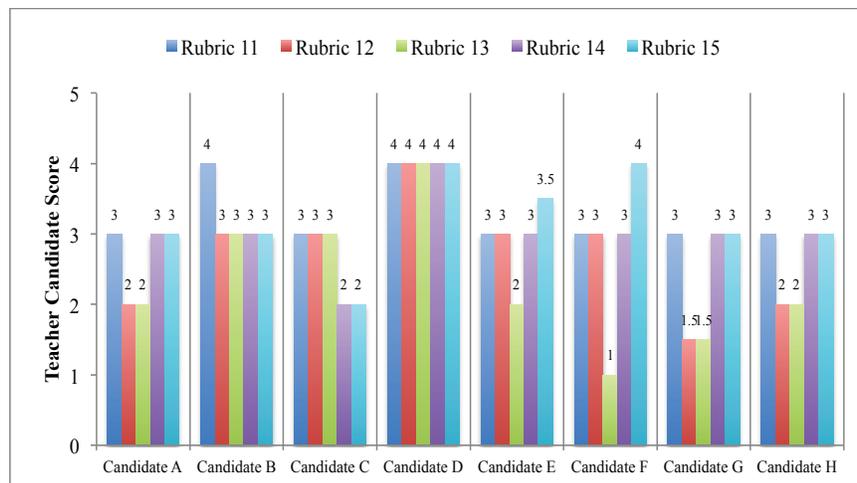
## Conclusions

The findings from this examination indicate that the teacher candidates were confident in their preparation, skills and overall readiness for the edTPA. In study 1, teacher candidates noted that their knowledge and support from coursework prior to preparing and submitting their edTPA portfolio was strongest in Planning Task 1 and Instruction Task 2. Their average scores on each of these tasks indicated that they were insightful and optimistic in their abilities to submit an edTPA portfolio that would meet the minimum requirements for a passing score. The teacher candidates' average rubric scores on Task 1 (rubrics 1-5) and Task 2 (rubrics 6-10) also indicated that they were cognizant of their abilities to submit learning segments, appropriate evidence and supporting documentation that would meet the minimum criteria.

In Study 1, teacher candidates indicated that their prior coursework in the early childhood program minimally prepared them for Assessment Task 3. The average score on Task 3 was lower than Task 1 and Task 2, which indicated that they were perceptive and realistic about their preparation and readiness for this component of the edTPA. The teacher candidates' scores on rubrics 13 and 14 were 2.69 and 2.31 respectively. These scores were the lowest rubric scores the teacher candidates received on their edTPA portfolios.

Were they ready? Results from this inquiry indicate that the small sample size of teacher candidates were ready, moderately prepared, and, for the most part, successful in passing the edTPA. A study conducted by researchers at the University of Rochester found that teacher candidates better understood the edTPA process and what is expected of them after two years of assessment implementation in New York and Washington States (Meuwissen, et al., 2016). In alignment with this current examination, Meuwissen et al., found that the degree of support for and preparation of teacher candidates submitting their edTPA portfolio has strengthened in teacher preparation programs. While the results of these studies are encouraging, implications suggest more research is needed to determine if, how, and to what degree teacher preparation programs are using the cycle of teaching effectiveness identified in the edTPA as an instructional framework and guideline for their performance-based assessments to support teacher candidates as they progress through their course of study towards certification in their field.

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