

edTPA: The New Normal



By Anthony Parish

During the past decade, physical education teacher education (PETE) programs across the country have taken a major hit. Despite the need for qualified physical education teachers across the country, many universities are losing their PETE programs. The state of Ohio is a poignant example of this precipitous decline. Ohio has seen its number of PETE university programs drop from more than a dozen to just two (Parish & Baghurst, 2018). The reasons for this sharp decline are complex and range from increases in minimum passage scores on state certification exams to low support in schools from administration and poor pay. Along with these reasons, a new feature in teaching certification programs has had a significant impact: the Education Teacher Performance Assessment.

The Education Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA) is a student-teaching assessment portfolio that has now been adopted by 41 states and more than 786 teacher-training programs across the country. Its main focus is to confirm that all new teachers possess the requisite skills needed to effectively teach. It is completed by student-teachers during their final student-teaching internship (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2017).

The edTPA portfolio for physical education consists of three tasks (planning, instruction and assessment) and is scored using 15 different rubrics. Each of these rubrics uses a scale ranging in points from zero to five. Student-teachers are required to submit several videos and lesson plans and answer a series of prompts to illustrate competency in teaching. Contextually, student-teachers are expected to pick three focus students from their class and center their videos and prompt responses on those students' performance in class. Artifacts (student work samples) must also be provided to show improvement over the course of the lessons/unit. These artifacts range in scope from pretest and posttest results to work samples and written reflections by students (University of Illinois College of Education, 2018).

Student-teachers must achieve a cumulative score, tallied from the three tasks, of 38 to pass the portfolio assessment and receive teaching licensure. Student-teachers who do not pass may redo the assessment. They have the option to resubmit the entire portfolio or retake as many of the individual tasks as they need (University of Illinois College of Education, 2018). Some universities are tying passage of the edTPA to graduation.

Task 1: Planning

Task 1 examines planning. Here student-teachers are expected to show their knowledge of the background of the school in which they are placed to justify their reasons for organizing and teaching the unit or series of lessons in a certain way. Interning teachers are also expected to demonstrate previous knowledge of their students to be used as a baseline template for determining the sequencing of classes. Task 1 also contains the student-teacher's lesson plans. For most subject areas of emphasis, student-teachers are expected to provide five lesson plans. Because of the infrequency with which most school districts offer physical education classes in their schools, edTPA only requires three lesson plans for PE majors. These lessons must be consecutive and must all come from a single, common unit. These requirements are in place so that edTPA graders can find supportive evidence of a student-teacher's fundamental understanding of sequencing and their ability to effectively connect newly learned tasks to previously learned skills.

Task 2: Instruction

Task 2 focuses on the lesson plans created in Task 1 and how they were applied in the classroom through direct instruction. This task also looks at how student-teachers interacted with the class, especially in regards to feedback being predominantly

corrective in nature, and how the student-teacher employed differentiated learning. Here, student-teachers are expected to submit video evidence of instruction. Education Teacher Performance Assessment graders expect to see student interaction as well as tactile corrective feedback. These examples are the longer video examples provided and often last up to 20 consecutive minutes. Student-teachers are not allowed to pause or stop the video; it must be continuous. Finally, the learning environment is another important aspect to which edTPA graders pay particular attention. Student-teachers must create a classroom environment conducive to cognitive learning (University of Illinois College of Education, 2018).

Task 3: Assessment

Task 3 focuses on the most challenging edTPA task in PE: assessment. Assessment must demonstrate the student-teacher's knowledge of how to create appropriate assessments and the student-teacher's ability to apply that knowledge in a classroom setting. Unlike other subject areas in an education college, PE student-teachers must provide video evidence of assessment. These video segments are far shorter than the ones for Task 2, but they need to be on point and specific in what they demonstrate to the edTPA graders. Positive feedback, even to a student in the class performing the skill or task perfectly, must have a corrective, instructional tone. Simply stating, "Good job" or, "That's exactly how you want to do it" will not yield solid scoring on the representative rubric. This requirement causes some depredation among student-teachers because they have been trained to give corrective feedback only in those instances in which a skill or task form is deficient.

Academic Language

Academic language is likely the most challenging aspect of the edTPA portfolio. It is considered the link that cohesively connects the three tasks into a continuum. Academic language consists of four separate sections: 1) language function — the action verb of the outcomes for the lessons (e.g., demonstrate, display, describe); 2) vocabulary — the terms associated with the activity being taught (e.g., dribble, field, goal); 3) syntax — the set of symbols, words or phrases that together create structures for complete activities (e.g., cues, officiating signals for a game of football); and 4) discourse — large-scale understanding or completed structure for a larger activity (e.g., officiating a game of football, playing a game of football). Each of these language sections must be addressed in some capacity in Task 3. Providing evidence of these sections is greatly challenging and often serves as the antithesis for positive rubric scores.

Issues with the edTPA

As edTPA's popularity continues to expand into even more states and universities, it is important to identify and recognize a variety of issues associated with edTPA. First, edTPA is expensive and can be cost-prohibitive for cash-strapped students.

If student-teachers do not pass the edTPA and are forced to retake all or part of it, the cost is repeated. Second, grading can be very arbitrary. As a supervising professor, I have seen a wide variance in scoring. In reviewing these portfolios by student-teachers before submission, I have found myself baffled by the different and inconsistent scoring. This inconsistent scoring leads to another issue, which is a lack of feedback commentary by graders. Often, comments that accompany the grade reports are stock lines that give little specificity about deficient areas. Student-teachers who have to retake portions of their edTPA portfolios are often confused as they have no specific feedback telling them what they did incorrectly and what they need to rework before resubmitting. Additionally, customer service for edTPA is insufficient. A call to the help line gleans little information. Oversight is also an issue. Students wishing to contest their grades must submit an additional money allotment that will only be returned if the appeal is found in favor of the student-teacher.

Finally, there appears to be a risk for teaching to the test. Many universities are now embedding all or portions of the edTPA into their programs of study. These portions take time away from studying educational theory and practical application of teaching methods. The question must be asked of whether this singular document should hold so much power in relation to a fledgling teacher's future career.

Tips for Success with edTPA

Despite some issues with edTPA, it is important to recognize, as was mentioned earlier, that edTPA is quickly becoming the benchmark for student-teacher assessment. Therefore, it is necessary to find a way to make it work. Looking at tips provided by students who have already gone through the process might help achieve better outcomes on the edTPA portfolio for student-teachers. Here are some of these student-teacher suggestions:

- Starting early on the portfolio is an absolute necessity. This portfolio is large and involved. It is not something that can be crammed into a weekend. Videos and student artifacts have to be collected early for later use. Additionally, it is vital for students to dedicate a large amount of time to Task 3. The assessment section is generally the weakest among the three tasks, as students tend to wait to begin and end up producing a less-than-average product.

- Students should make a second set of videos as a backup. If the first set of videos is incomplete in their evidence, students could have a hard time finding supporting evidence for Task 3. By this point in their student internships, they may no longer be teaching the same class or set of students, and they would have to start the entire portfolio process again from the beginning.
- Student-teachers should overcollect artifacts. Similar to making backup videos, it is better to have too many student work samples than too few.

References

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. (2017). *Participation map*. Retrieved from <http://edtpa.aacte.org/state-policy>

Parish, A., & Baghurst, T. (2018, January). *The PE drain. PETE on the precipice: Staying relevant in a field of other sport and exercise majors*. Paper presented at the 2018 NAKHE Annual Conference, Phoenix, AZ.

University of Illinois College of Education. (2018). *A guide for cooperating teachers: Supporting candidates during edTPA*. Retrieved from <https://education.illinois.edu/docs/default-source/default-document-library/edtpa-guide-for-coops-ece.pdf?sfvrsn> **S**

Anthony Parish (aparish@georgiasouthern.edu) is an associate professor in the Department of Health Sciences and Kinesiology at Georgia Southern University—Armstrong Campus in Hinesville, GA.

Submissions Welcome!

Readers are encouraged to send “Theory into Practice” submissions to column editor Anthony Parish at anthony.parish@armstrong.edu.

The purpose of the *Strategies* Theory into Practice column is to distill high-quality research into understandable and succinct information and to identify key resources to help teachers and coaches improve professional practice and provide high-quality programs. Each column (1,000–1,300 words or roughly four typed, double-spaced pages) summarizes research findings about a timely topic of interest to the readership to enable practitioners to apply research, knowledge and evidence-based practice in physical education and sports.

Advertiser Index

SHAPE America National Convention	49
SHAPE America Online Institute	Back cover
SHAPE America Publication	Inside front cover
Skate in School	Inside back cover