

edTPA: You, Too, Shall Pass

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EdTPA was more than an assessment of teacher preparedness. It was more than a reflective writing task. It was a measurement of one's own sanity and will to reach the light at the end of a tremendously redundant tunnel.

After a few months of sifting through this assessment and its three tasks, I had to question, were the writers of edTPA conspiring to lure young educators away from careers in education, perhaps due to a deficit in other industries such as plumbing or politics? Maybe it was a weeding-out experiment designed to prevent anyone who does not have the wherewithal to complete it from becoming a teacher, since such failure, I guess, is supposed to suggest that one should not be trusted to educate the youth.

I digress, mostly because it doesn't matter what the underlying purpose is, at least not for us. As teachers seeking certification, we had to loyally complete the project to the best of our ability and pay \$300 in order to submit it to Pearson. There was no time to ask bigger 'why' questions.

The portfolio I submitted ended up being around 80 pages. That number alone isn't what I found to be excessive. The problem lies in the fact that what was said in those 80 pages could have probably been explained in 10 or fewer. It was incredible how many times I was asked to answer the same question, again... and again. My mind was spinning a million miles a minute trying to decipher what more they could possibly want from me. Based on information passed down from various sources, it was suggested to our cohort that the raters weren't necessarily experts in the field of ESL. Thus, we were told, we must avoid terms that would prevent raters from getting confused and taking off points---which begs the question---WHAT?

In the end, this was simply the worst piece of writing I have ever produced, so naturally I'm not even proud to say I achieved a 'pass' from the edTPA raters. Go figure.

Unfortunately, I cannot sing even one piece of praise for this assessment. In the amount of time my peers and I spent jumping through edTPA's hoops, we could have been actually growing and reflecting as young teachers through meaningful coursework and classroom discussions, and this is time that we can never get back. I feel less prepared to teach because of the amount of time and energy this dastardly assessment demanded. I am now, however, extremely well versed in the art of edTPA and bamboozling inexperienced raters. I feel as though these are not skills that will get me much further in life, except through the bureaucracy of teacher certification in New York City. And to be perfectly frank, I can only hope that this nonsense is sorted out soon for the sake of future cohorts and peers.

The moral of this story is to predict what the raters might want, and give it to them, no matter how relentlessly repetitive and monotonous the rubrics may be. Then, you, too, shall pass.