

edTPA and Academic Language Development: Supporting Faculty and Teacher Candidates
Across the K-12 Disciplines

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College of Education
University of North Carolina at Charlotte
2016 SOTL Grant Submission
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Abstract

Teacher candidates across North Carolina will soon be required to successfully complete a performance-based assessment called edTPA to be recommended for initial teaching licensure. In preparation, the UNCC College of Education has been piloting its use across K-12 programmatic disciplines for nearly three years. Simultaneously, the College has formally collected data since 2014 to address program needs via candidates' assessment outcomes. Based on preliminary analyses, there is an indication that pre-service teachers across content area programs continue to struggle with how to operationalize academic language development (ALD) with their students. The one outlier in this pattern is the group of candidates in the Teaching English as a Second Language program. These candidates' edTPA scores indicate an effective demonstration of knowledge and skills related to ALD. Therefore, this project's goals are to discover teacher candidates' conceptualizations of ALD and, to create and implement a specialized series of supportive Canvas modules for the College faculty who prepare teacher candidates for edTPA. The research questions for a mixed-methods study are: 1) What do current College of Education edTPA faculty identify as challenges associated with supporting pre-service teachers' understandings of ALD? and; 2) How do current pre-service teachers conceptualize ALD in the context of their content-area? The project has the potential to a) increase faculty awareness regarding the specialized edTPA aspect of ALD across the content areas, b) expand the integration of ALD competencies across the College's teacher preparation programs, and c) ultimately increase teacher candidates' edTPA outcomes across the content areas.

Budget Request for SOTL Grant Year 2017-18

Joint Proposal? Yes X No

Title of Project edTPA and Academic Language Development: Supporting Faculty and Teacher Candidates
Across the K-12 Disciplines

Duration of Project One year (spring 2017—spring 2018)

Primary Investigator(s) Joan Lachance

Email Address(es) JLachance@uncc.edu

UNC Charlotte SOTL
Grants Previously
Received (please names
of project, PIs, and dates) None

Allocate operating budget to Department of Middle, Secondary, and K-12 Education

Account #	Award	Year One January to June
Faculty Stipend	Transferred directly from Academic Affairs to Grantee on May 15	\$ 3850.00
911250	Graduate Student Salaries	\$1000.00
911300	Special Pay (Faculty on UNCC payroll other than Grantee)	\$8750.00
915000	Student Temporary Wages	
915900	Non-student Temporary Wages	
920000	Honorarium (Individual(s) not with UNCC)	
921150	Participant Stipends	\$1050.00
925000	Travel - Domestic	
926000	Travel - Foreign	
928000	Communication and/or Printing	
930000	Supplies	
942000	Computing Equipment	
944000	Educational Equipment	
951000	Other Current Services	
GRAND TOTAL		\$14,650 .00

Account #	Award	Year Two July to June
Faculty Stipend	Transferred directly from Academic Affairs to Grantee on May 15	\$ -
911250	Graduate Student Salaries	
911300	Special Pay (Faculty on UNCC payroll other than Grantee)	
915000	Student Temporary Wages	
915900	Non-student Temporary Wages	
920000	Honorarium (Individual(s) not with UNCC)	
921150	Participant Stipends	
925000	Travel - Domestic	
926000	Travel - Foreign	
928000	Communication and/or Printing	
930000	Supplies	
942000	Computing Equipment	
944000	Educational Equipment	
951000	Other Current Services	
GRAND TOTAL		\$ -

Attachments:

1. Attach/provide a narrative that explains how the funds requested will be used.
2. Has funding for the project been requested from other sources? ___ Yes ___x___ No.
If yes, list sources.

Budget Narrative

Faculty Stipend (\$3850)

A summer stipend will be paid to the Principal Investigator (PI). In the spring and second summer session of 2017 the PI will work with participating faculty and graduate candidates to complete and vet the development of the Canvas modules with the overarching connection to academic language development. Within the stand-alone modules, the specific topics addressed will be in the areas of 1) An Overview of Academic Language, 2) The Features and Dimensions of Academic Language, 3) Principles of Language Acquisition and Progression, 4) Academic Language and the Content Standards, and 5) Integrating & Operationalizing Academic Language Across the Curriculum. These modules will potentially correspond with current methodologies coursework whereby candidates practice edTPA tasks in the Graduate Certificate programs as well as the undergraduate areas of study, therefore enhancing current program structure. The completed development of these modules will be informed by the project's research questions as well as established, theoretically based best practices in academic language development. Likewise, existing edTPA data serves to inform program evaluation and comparison of post-project results.

The Canvas module finalization process will take place in the fall 2017 semester, with post-survey follow up and adjustments based on faculty's piloted use of module aspects for full availability in spring 2018. Likewise, in the fall 2017 and spring of 2018 semesters the PI will analyze the project data to prepare manuscripts, a conference presentation, and to disseminate the project results.

Graduate Student Salaries (\$1000)

A graduate assistant (GA) will work closely with the PI during the spring and second summer session of 2017. In most cases, graduate students are paid on average an hourly rate of \$9/hour. It is therefore estimated that \$1000 would provide the PI with approximately 110 hours of GA support. A large percentage of time would be spent in the spring and second summer semesters of 2017 assisting the PI with the logistical details for the faculty workshop, the coordination of the surveys for data collection with the participants, establishing the schedule for the vetting process, and the video clip development. Any remaining time would be focused on supporting the PI with researching additional relevant literature and relevant venues, ensuring manuscript submissions and a conference presentation.

Special Pay (\$8750)

In the spring semester of 2017, the PI also requests a stipend of \$350 for each of the 25 edTPA faculty (\$8750) for their initial input, vetting, and final input related to the project. In the first semester of the project they will attend a half-day workshop. They will also commit to project participation in the summer and fall semesters of 2017 for exploration, piloting aspects of the modules, and to provide vetting feedback. Special emphasis within the pre and post project surveys as well as the interviews will be given to the intended aspects of academic language development and specific challenges these faculty members experience during courses taught where edTPA tasks are practices.

Participant Stipends (\$1050)

The PI will consult with three graduate students the discipline of teaching English as a second language [TESL], who have successfully completed edTPA and had rubric scores of 4 or above on the majority of the 15 rubrics within Tasks One, Two, and Three. This is to seek input on the

modules' content information related to academic language development in order to include the specific details necessary to support academic language development within content-based instruction across the K-12 curricular areas. The PI will host a two-part collaborative workshop with the graduate students, in the spring 2017 and summer 2017 semesters to ensure the modules comprehensively reflect the components to address the specialized nature of academic language development and language progression. The workshop will 1) review module contents aligned with academic language development in content-based instruction, 2) share faculty input and initial vetting details. Finally, these participants will also commit to project participation in the fall 2017 semester to glean additional input from the peer perspective based on candidate-based data from the program exit surveys. The PI requests a stipend of \$350 for the three participating graduate candidates (\$1050).



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October 27, 2016

The purpose of this letter is to enthusiastically endorse Dr. Joan Lachance's proposal for a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning grant titled *edTPA and Academic Language Development: Supporting Faculty and Candidates across the K-12 Disciplines*.

By academic year 2019-2020, teacher candidates across North Carolina will be required to successfully complete a performance-based assessment called edTPA in order to be recommended for initial teaching licensure. Anticipating this requirement, for the past three years the College of Education has piloted the use of edTPA across multiple K-12 disciplines. Unfortunately, with the exception of teacher candidates in the Teaching English as a Second Language program, the pilot data have revealed sub-standard performance among candidates in all of the K-12 disciplines in the area of *academic language development (ALD)*. These poor ALD performance levels must be improved by 2019 in order for our teacher candidates in these disciplines to become teachers.

The goal of Dr. Lachance's proposed program is to better understand and expand the teaching and learning practices that have led to the ALD success of candidates in the Teaching English as a Second Language program to all other disciplines in which UNC Charlotte's teacher candidates are enrolled. Toward that end, Dr. Lachance has designed a robust program involving Canvas module development, professional development workshops, and specialized instruction in order to help teacher candidates in all of UNC Charlotte's teacher education programs succeed in the edTPA beginning in 2019.

Dr. Lachance is very qualified to conduct the work associated with this grant. Having earned her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction in 2010, she has served as a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Teaching English as a Second Language at UNC Charlotte for the past three years. Her record of teaching, scholarship, and service has been very good. Prior to her employment at UNC Charlotte, Dr. Lachance gained extensive experience as an English as a Second Language counselor in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. She is recognized regionally as a leader in the field of dual language teaching and learning and is becoming an institutional expert on edTPA.

I strongly support Dr. Lachance's receipt of this grant. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dawson R. Hancock", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Dawson R. Hancock, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies

Project Narrative

A. Specific Aims

The Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) partnered with the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) to develop a comprehensive teacher performance assessment tool, edTPA with the goal of establishing uniformity throughout teacher preparation programs nation-wide. Specifically, edTPA's conceptual framework supports teacher candidates' effective lessons via methodologies that support diverse student populations and authentic assessment within the teaching and learning processes. The performance-based assessment is strategically designed to move teacher candidates to actual classroom application in real-world scenarios, transforming theory into informed practice. In each of the education program areas there is a series of rubrics, delineating candidates' progression of subject-matter skills with the goal of increased K-12 student outcomes (AACTE, 2016; SCALE, 2016)

Following this national trend, the state of North Carolina intends to use edTPA as a requirement for teacher candidate initial licensure in the academic year 2019-20. In direct response to this the UNCC College of Education began infusing aspects of edTPA competencies in program coursework in 2013. As of fall 2014, the College established formal data collection for teacher candidates completing teacher preparation programs. At present the data include over 900 candidate scores with an additional 175 to be added at the completion of the current semester. These scores are cross-curricular in program areas in elementary as well as middle, secondary, and K-12 areas of licensure.

Within the current edTPA processes, the College, via the Department of Educational Assessment and Accreditation has begun data analysis to observe programmatic patterns within the College. These patterns are also compared to state and national trends. Candidates' individual results in each of the three over-arching areas of planning, implementation, and assessment are

scored with a content-area specific corresponding series of edTPA rubrics ranging in number from 13-18, based on the discipline. There is also a specialized commonality to measure candidates' demonstration of academic language development (ALD) within the instructional design and delivery processes across *all* the K-12 disciplines. To this point, preliminary analyses indicate a number of teacher candidates in an array of program areas are demonstrating difficulties with how to operationalize ALD with their students. In contrast, the area of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) reveals candidates' rubric scores are programmatically higher than other areas within the College. In some rubric instances, scores are above state and national patterns. This would indicate that the specialized approach to ALD with these candidates, via combined language and content methodologies in content-based instruction is resulting in increased candidate outcomes with edTPA.

This project aims to transfer and support candidates' expansion of specialized knowledge and demonstrated skills regarding ALD to all edTPA categories within the UNCC College of Education, emphasizing the conceptual nuances related to ALD through the TESL lens of perspective. While these aims make provisions for the obvious, supporting teachers who will work specifically with English learners, the project more importantly supports general education teachers' understandings of ALD while working with all K-12 student populations.

The goals and objectives of the project are two-fold. Goal 1) to develop academic language development Canvas modules specifically designed for College of Education faculty who work with pre-service teachers, and; Goal 2) to support teacher candidates' increased demonstrations of academic language development within their classroom practices and edTPA assessments.

Through the strategic development of Canvas modules, as comprehensive stand-alone resources, both candidates and faculty will have access to detailed information regarding how to

operationalize ALD in K-12 classrooms. Precise information, clustered into a sequence of 15-20 minute modules may be used in a variety of ways and, in a variety of contexts at varying points in coursework where candidates practice edTPA tasks. This platform aims to streamline faculty focus on academic language development, to literally allow them to “pluck” prepared mini-lesson modules for straightforward infusibility into current coursework. This eliminates faculty from having to overhaul course contents while allowing them to augment current areas of emphasis with more specialized information on ALD. General areas of ALD and how they relate to edTPA to be included in the modules include: An Overview of Academic Language, The Features and Dimensions of Academic Language, Principles of Language Acquisition and Progression, Academic Language and the Content Area Standards, and Integrating & Operationalizing Academic Language Across the Curriculum.

Within the project study, the core research questions are: 1) What do current College of Education edTPA faculty identify as challenges associated with supporting pre-service teachers’ understandings of ALD? And 2) How do current pre-service teachers conceptualize ALD in the context of their content-area? The outcomes of these research questions intend to shape the final design system of support within the newly developed Canvas modules. This way, the information will be grounded in theory and practice to this topic yet, specifically targeted to meet the needs of the UNCC teacher candidates and the faculty who prepare them for edTPA.

Candidates who are studying TESL methodologies have required coursework that prepares them for the specialized knowledge and skills related to language acquisition and all students’ ALD. Likewise, the current data indicate these candidates have higher edTPA scores related to ALD, which is also a conceptual facet across the edTPA content areas. Therefore, it’s reasonable to create faculty and candidate resources on ALD from this perspective to facilitate ALD

integration across the teacher preparation programs. In alignment with the SOTL suggested areas of focus, the project has the potential to a) increase faculty awareness regarding the specialized edTPA aspect of ALD across the content areas, b) expand the integration of ALD competencies across the College's teacher preparation programs, and c) ultimately increase teacher candidates' edTPA outcomes across the content areas.

B. Literature Review

As the first nationally available assessment of this sort, the strategically focused measures target the evaluation of K-12 pre-service teacher candidates' readiness in 27 different areas of specialization upon completion of a teacher preparation program. The field-tested tool places emphasis on demonstrated knowledge and skills in the three areas of instructional planning, implementation, and assessment and is being adopted at varying levels in 35 states across the U.S. and the District of Columbia as a required part of teacher preparation programs (AACTE, 2016; SCALE, 2016). Within the assessment a common thread of conceptual focus is in the area of ALD (AACTE, 2016). That said, given the originality of the evaluation, there is still a need across the curricular areas to raise awareness regarding the concept and its manifestations in the classroom (SCALE, 2016).

In addition to content-specific vocabulary, academic language development requires meaningful context and the construct of students' relevant engagement (Gottlieb, Katz, & Ernst-Slavit, 2009). Pre-service teachers need to demonstrate the design and delivery of instruction that fosters rich and wide-ranging language experiences (Graves, 2006). The crucial point of structured, authentic interaction to think, discuss, and garner meaning with peers is vital for clarity within the ALD processes (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011; Zwiers, 2008). Likewise, when

there are classroom gaps with these aspects of ALD, a sense of opacity occurs, resulting in students' hindered understandings (Ernst-Slavit & Mason, 2011).

Further dimensions of ALD for pedagogical consideration include comprehension of discourse patterns, text structures, the reduction of large concepts into manageable chunks, idiomatic expressions and slang, linguistic connectors that convey relationships between ideas, and etymological roots and patterns. These granular details are in addition to considering students' higher connections between processing language as it is received through reading and listening to then produce language after constructing cognitive meaning via speaking and writing (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014). Given these specifics and specialized concepts, along with the recognition that ALD occurs across the content areas, it is essential that teacher educators shift the ways in which language and content are taught (Gottlieb & Ernst-Slavit, 2014).

C. Methods

Based upon the academic complexities within the study's focus topic, ALD, the selected research method for this study is an integration of qualitative and quantitative as the preferred methodology. In the spring of 2017 the PI will work with 25 College of Education faculty connected to edTPA, either as core faculty teaching K-12 education methods courses from the content areas (math, science, social studies, English, TESL, Foreign Language Education, and Special Education) or as part of the clinical faculty associated with supporting edTPA. These participants will participate in a half-day professional development workshop whereby they will be familiarized with the project. They will also be asked to articulate specific details related to current challenges with ALD and teacher candidates via survey and open-ended questions. The second half of the workshop will include break-out sessions where faculty in their respective

content areas will discuss potential ways for implementing Canvas modules on ALD into existing courses where candidates practice edTPA tasks.

Simultaneously, three teacher candidates from each of the content areas in the process of completing the edTPA assessment will complete a brief survey regarding their conceptualizations of ALD in their current content area setting as part of an already existing process during the student teaching semester. These results, combined with the faculty survey results will be analyzed and used for the development of the Canvas modules to specifically target identified aspects of ALD within the general ALD parameters. Likewise, consultations will begin with three graduate candidates from the TESL program who completed the edTPA process with scores resulting in a 4 or above on the majority of the 15 rubrics within Tasks One, Two, and Three. This is to seek input on the modules' content information related to ALD in content-based instruction, ensuring the specific details align with best practices for local and regional classroom application. This information will include short demonstrative video clips, showcasing the "peer to peer" perspective from the TESL candidates to other candidates across the content-areas.

In summer 2017, selected faculty teaching applicable edTPA coursework will begin to pilot certain aspects of the Canvas modules for vetting. The TESL candidates will meet again to collaboratively vet the modules. This process will continue into fall 2017 for module finalization. This timeline facilitates full availability of the Canvas modules for implementation in the courses supporting edTPA practices for spring 2018. Finally, in fall 2017, the participating faculty will complete a post-project follow-up survey to measure pre and post workshop patterns for the preliminary ascertainment of Canvas module impacts during edTPA practice task coursework.

D. Evaluation

Having research questions that address ALD both from the faculty and teacher candidates' perspectives strengthens the project evaluation. The PI will collect and analyze triangulated quantitative and qualitative data for deductive and inductive approaches (Krathwohl, 1998). In this study with mixed methods design, both quantitative and qualitative data are equally weighted with concurrent data collection (Cresswell, 2005; Caracelli & Greene, 1993). Data collection with informed consent will include voluntarily a series of Likert-scale survey questions as well as a series of open-ended response questions centered on the research questions. Qualitative data from the narrative responses regarding ALD will be thematically and numerically coded. Quantitative data from the Likert-scale will be factor analyzed for thematic comparisons with the qualitative data set. With comparative results, the data will be consolidated to finally form new variables for respective findings and recommendations (Caracelli & Greene, 1993).

The two years of current, existing data without these modules serve as baseline data for post-project comparative analysis with regard to edTPA scores. Likewise, the pre and post project faculty survey results measure potentially changed patterns related to the identified ALD challenges within the coursework where edTPA tasks are practiced prior to the student teaching semester. The post-project analysis of the candidates' exit surveys via the College's Department of Educational Assessment and Accreditation open reporting measures post project changes in expressed conceptualizations of ALD.

E. Knowledge Dissemination

In addition to the Dean's Office, the PI will present project results to the College of Education's teacher training programs and UNCC's campus at the February 2017 SOTL

Showcase. The PI will also announce the project findings through the College of Education newsletter, *Connections*. At the state level, the project results will be shared with the NCDPI stakeholders connected to edTPA, and the PI will submit a proposal to present the project results at the 36th annual North Carolina Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators (NC-ACTE) conference. At the national level, the PI will submit a proposal to present at the annual edTPA national conference to share project results. Finally, the PI will prepare and submit a manuscript to the *Journal of Teacher Education*, a prestigious, international journal that includes publications on aspects of edTPA and academic language development in K-12 schools.

F. Human Subjects

IRB Approval to conduct this research will be applied for in Fall of 2016 for use in Spring 2017. IRB approval will be forwarded upon request.

G. Extramural Funding

The PI will meet with the UNCC College of Education Office of Research Development and Management. Options for external funding will be explored that specifically relate to the project. The PI intends to submit a Spencer Foundation grant in fall 2018, intending to investigate ways for continued expansion of academic language development in K-12 schools. The Foundation has a Small Research Grant program that provides funding up to \$50,000.00; this project is in alignment with their strand for Teaching, Learning, and Instructional Resource area of inquiry. With this external funding, the PI would expand the project to include more participating faculty members and, broaden the targeted teacher candidates in a wider variety of pre-edTPA coursework.

H. Timeline

Date	Project Task
Spring 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PI works with GA to firm up survey questions • PI works with GA to coordinate faculty focus group participant logistics • PI works with GA to coordinate TESL candidate focus group participant logistics • PI works with GA to begin Canvas modules development, including video clips and narrated presentations
Second Summer Session 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PI works with TESL candidate focus group on production of mini video clips • PI works with GA to finalize and polish developed Canvas modules • PI vets preliminary modules with UNCC College of Education faculty teaching applicable edTPA coursework in the summer
Fall 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PI continues to work with UNCC faculty and TESL graduate candidate focus groups for final vetting and promotion of open availability of Canvas modules • PI disseminates results
Spring 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canvas modules fully open and available • PI uses data analysis for manuscript development • PI disseminates results

Conclusively, UNC Charlotte is in the position to improve teaching and learning effectiveness in the area of academic language development. This project directly fosters and strengthens the state's intentions to implement edTPA as the performance based assessment used with teacher candidates for recommending licensure upon completing a teacher preparation program. This project directly responds to the identified area of challenge with current teacher candidates which, has an overall impact on highly effective teaching in K-12 settings. Ultimately, by supporting the expansion of faculty and candidate support in academic language development, this project fundamentally advances and sustains new demonstrations of integrating and operationalizing academic language development across the content areas.

(word count 2487)

References

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