Up-cycling the edTPA:

Preparing Candidates to Advocate for Their Practice through Rhetorical Argumentation

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Portfolio Teacher Performance Assessments (e.g., edTPA)

- Intended to evaluate pre-service teachers' readiness to teach
- Represent novice teachers' emerging professional identities
- Often create tensions of policy and preparation
  - High-stakes proxy for demonstrating teacher effectiveness
  - Require programmatic and curricular shifts
  - Potential to shift focus during student teaching experience
  - Contributes to accountability narratives and high-stakes testing climate

edTPA Overview

Professional portfolio – specific to certification area

Task 1: Planning (artifacts: plans for instruction & materials)
Task 2: Instruction (artifacts: videoclips of instruction)
Task 3: Assessment (artifacts: student work samples)

Requires extensive writing (up to 33 pages commentary)

Evaluated by outside scorer - program completion/certification contingent upon meeting cut score

The Challenge

Providing candidate support that

- Emphasizes agency and professionalism
- Enriches candidate understanding and professional practices
- Aligns with program values

# Our Response: Reframing edTPA as Written Argument for Competency (rather than *assessment of competency*)

❖ What happens when edTPA tasks are **reframed as rhetorical arguments that teacher candidates make** about their planning/teaching/assessment practices?

❖ How does this framing shape the ways teacher candidates interpret edTPA tasks and **use elements of rhetorical argumentation to develop written arguments** about their knowledge and effectiveness as beginning teachers?

❖ How can this framing also **enable teacher candidates to better understand and use rhetorical argumentation** across contexts?

Everything is an Argument!
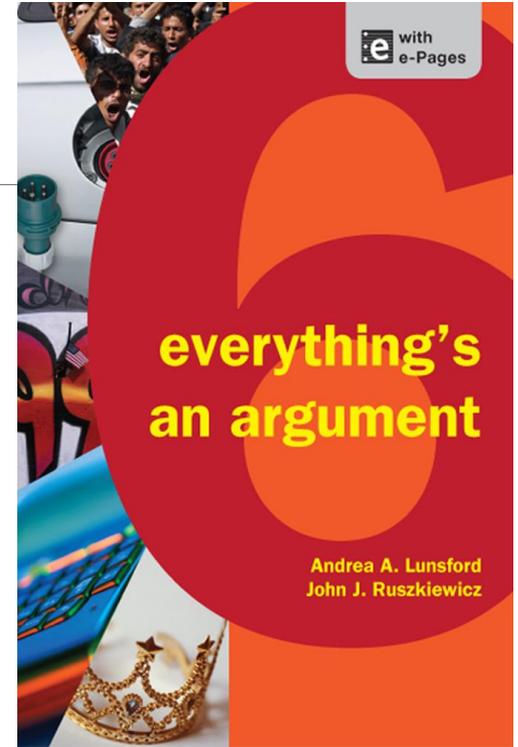
Toulmin Model of Argumentation (1958/2008)

Primary elements of argument
- **Claim**: the position being argued for
- **Grounds**: reasons or supporting evidence
- **Warrant**: chain of reasoning that connects the grounds to the claim (represents "common ground" between author and audience)
- **Backing**: support for the reliability/relevance of warrant in current context

For example...

- **Claim**: Ann's bedroom is on fire.
- **Grounds**: Smoke is pouring from Ann's bedroom.
- **Warrant**: Smoke is a primary sign of fire.
- **Backing**: Because fires generally produce smoke.

(Karbach, 1987)

Argument in Common Core Writing Standards

Text Types and Purposes
1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Production and Distribution of Writing
4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational [research/theory] texts to support analysis, reflection, or research.

Argument in ALST Performance Indicators

a. delineates and evaluates the argument and specific claims in a text

b. evaluates the validity of reasoning used to support arguments and specific claims in a text

c. evaluates the relevance and sufficiency of evidence used to support arguments and specific claims in a text

f. integrates and evaluates content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively

ACADEMIC LITERACY SKILLS TEST (ALST) TEST FRAMEWORK Copyright © 2014

Argument in ALST Performance Indicators

g. introduces a precise, knowledgeable claim

h. uses valid reasoning to support the claim

j. chooses relevant and sufficient evidence from multiple texts to support the claim

k. establishes and maintains an appropriate style and tone

m. produces a conclusion that follows from and supports the claim

n. chooses precise language for clarity and rhetorical effect

Our Process

- **Textual analysis** to examine language from edTPA handbooks through lens of rhetorical argumentation
- Alignment and analysis of **pedagogical strategies** (to frame edTPA as written argumentation)
  - audiorecording and texts from instruction
  - instructional materials
- **Teacher candidate artifacts** (work samples, reflective writing)

Interpreting the edTPA as an Argument for Competency

SCALE *Elementary Education Assessment Handbook-* "as a performance-based assessment, edTPA is designed to engage candidates in demonstrating their understanding of teaching and student learning in authentic ways."

Implies overall claim that candidates must make — *As a novice teacher, my performance demonstrates my "understanding of teaching and student learning in authentic ways."*

What Is My Argument? Interpreting the edTPA as an Argument for Competency

I am an effective novice teacher because my planning, instruction, and assessments demonstrate that students are engaged and learning (and when they are not or they do not, I have reasonable, evidence-based ideas for what to do next).

Coordinating subclaims across the full edTPA portfolio

Each task requires candidate to **make specific claims and establish grounds** (mobilize specific evidence)

- o Task 1: Planning (evidence: lesson plans, materials, assessment tools)
- o Task 2: Instruction (evidence: videoclips of instruction)
- o Task 3: Assessment (evidence: student work samples)

Commentary prompts and evaluation rubrics provide insight into audience priorities/values (useful for crafting **warrants** and **backing**)

Example: Instruction Prompt

Refer to scenes in the video clip(s) in your response. Describe how your instruction linked students' prior academic learning and personal, cultural, and community assets with new learning.

Example: Instruction Prompt

Claim and **Evidence**

Refer to scenes in the video clip(s) in your response. Describe how your instruction linked students' prior academic learning and personal, cultural, and community assets with new learning.

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Aligning Argument with Audience:
Using the Rubrics to Interpret Audience Values

Target Rubric: Engaging Students in Learning
How does the candidate actively engage students in integrating strategies and skills to comprehend or compose text?

Level 3: Candidate links prior academic learning to new literacy learning.
Level 4: Candidate links prior academic learning AND personal, cultural, or community assets to new literacy learning.

Aligning Argument with Audience:
Using the Rubrics to Interpret Audience Values

Audience priorities/beliefs (for use with warrants)

To effectively engage students in new learning:
- a teacher must <u>at least</u> link that new learning with prior academic learning
- <u>and also should</u> make links with students' personal, cultural, or community assets.

Ques#	language from prompt	language from rubric	audience interest/value	claim needing to be made	evidence type
1.a	Describe the central focus and purpose for the content you will teach in the learning segment.		You have a central focus for your learning segment.	I have a central focus for the content I will teach in my learning segment.	
1.b	Given the central focus, describe how the standards and learning objectives within your learning segment address an essential literacy strategy, requisite skills that support use of the strategy, reading/writing connections.		Your standards and objectives address an essential literacy strategy and requisite skills.	My standards and objectives in my plans address an essential literacy strategy and requisite skills.	
1.c	Explain how your plans build on each other to help students **make connections** between skills and the essential strategy to comprehend **OR** compose text in meaningful contexts.	Rubric 1 Level 2: Candidate's plans for instruction **support student learning of skills** with **vague connections to strategies for comprehending OR composing text**. Level 3: Candidate's plans for instruction **build on each other** to **support learning** of the **essential literacy strategy for comprehending OR composing text with clear connections to skills**. Level 4: **Candidate's plans for instruction build on each other** to **create a meaningful context** that **supports learning** of the essential literacy strategy for comprehending **OR** composing text **with clear AND** consistent **connections to skills**.	Plans for instructions build on each other. Plans create a meaningful context for learning essential literacy strategy. Clear and consistent connections to skills.	My plans for instruction build on each other and create a meaningful context for learning the essential literacy strategy for these reasons. My plans help students to make clear and consistent connections between skills and the essential literacy strategy for these reasons.	lesson plans for literacy sequence

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Entering a Broader Conversation: Drawing Support from Research/Theory

Claim, Evidence, Backing

Assessment prompt: *Based on your analysis of student learning…describe next steps for the whole class and 3 focus students. Explain how these next steps follow from your analysis of student learning. Support your explanation with principles from research and/or theory.*

Entering a Broader Conversation:
Drawing Support from Research/Theory

- Frame discussions of research and theory as **participation in a broader conversation**
- It is a professional teacher move to participate with authority (rather than the student move - to simply justify responses with citation)
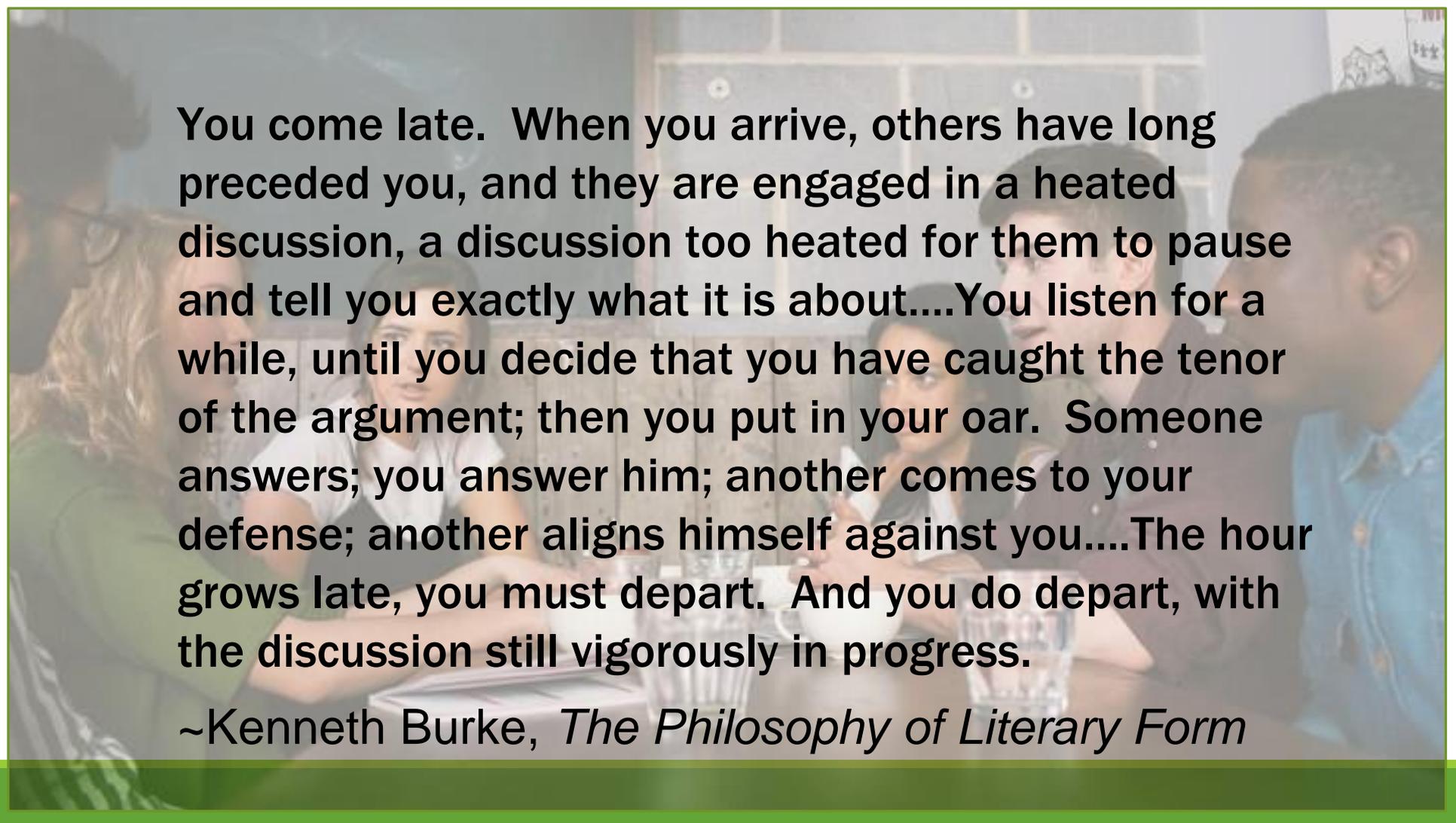
You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about....You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you....The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

~Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*

Candidate Commentary Response (Task 2)

I show responsiveness to students with various needs in the video (**Clip 2, 3:38**) because **I called a specific boy up to the board to practice fixing a quotation** *because I had noticed that he was struggling with doing it correctly, and I wanted to be able to give him the opportunity to fix one at the board with me. This also shows that* **I am providing a challenging but safe learning environment for students where they can feel comfortable with practicing and unafraid to make mistakes. The phone rings (Clip 2, 4:20) and when I go over to answer it, while I speak to the person on the line, the students are quiet and watching their classmate work up at the board**. *This shows that* **the students and I have mutual respect for each other** *because they do not take advantage of me going to answer the phone as a time to begin to chat with neighbors.* **They also show that they have respect for their peers** *because they are paying attention to the student at the board while I answer the phone.*

Candidate Reflection

Thinking about my teaching and writing the edTPA in terms of claims and evidence **helped me to reflect on what worked and what didn't work more accurately**, *and thus gave me a lot of specific things to write about in my edTPA. For example, in task 4, a focus student got a particular math problem on rewriting math sentences wrong. Why did he get it wrong? What did he do? So my claim is that he doesn't understand this certain concept, and my evidence is the mistake he made.* **Then, I can get deeper into thinking about what he did wrong and how to fix it.** *So now my claim is that I will teach him a certain method and the details of his specific mistake is the evidence that my new method might be helpful for him.*

Candidate Reflection, cont'd

Then comes the reengagement lesson, and I now have his work. So, if he now understands the concept, my claim is that my strategy was effective in teaching him this new concept, and my evidence is that he is not making the same mistake anymore and got it right. If he still doesn't get it, that's okay too. This just means that my claim is that he is still misunderstanding something and the evidence is the mistake he made (it may be the same mistake or a different one now). And then the process would repeat itself. ***So, thinking about claims and evidence gives me a structure of how to think about analyzing a student's work and deciding what they need from me.*** *And then that translates beautifully into a narrative for the edTPA questions because they don't just want to know what you think!*

"Author-izing" Teacher Candidates

Rhetorical argumentation as a **strategy** and a **stance** for edTPA support

Strategy: Emphasis on edTPA as *Written* Argument

Highlighting *writing moves* candidates can make in composing edTPA materials:

e.g., Teach 3 INs strategy (Lawrence, 2014): practice these moves as writers, recognize these moves in model texts

- INtroduce **claim** and supporting evidence
- INsert **evidence**
- INterpret evidence in terms of claim (**warrant**)

Stance: Helping candidates craft arguments for their competency

- Candidates position themselves as *authors* of their professional identities – vs. giving this authority to the test/scorer
- Crafting an argument is the role of an author – can promote teacher agency as opposed to "test prep"
- Rejects the premise that teachers are suspicious characters who need to defend what they do
- Aligns with premise that professional teachers make informed, intellectual decisions, and they can articulate these to a variety of audiences

Upcycling… to Promote Deeper Understanding of Rhetorical Argumentation

- Support complex understandings to inform instruction of argumentative writing (Common Core Standards, ALST)
- "Reading" texts and contexts through the lens of argumentation ("everything is an argument" – links to advocacy)
- Support ability to enter professional conversations (articulate clear claims, identify audience values and relevant evidence, connect to other professional knowledge and ongoing conversations)

And yet…

- Purposes and audiences for teachers' professional writing are complex and varied

- Still need to acknowledge that teaching is messy, and learning to teach is messy – arguing for competency (to an external, specific, empowered audience) provides just one view into teaching practices.

- How can we help candidates prepare to enter additional conversations about teaching and learning (recognizing other audiences and purposes for arguments they may want to make)?

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