

TPA for New Teachers: General Tips

The Teacher Performance Appraisal Process should be taken very seriously, as three successive ratings that are less than Satisfactory will likely result in dismissal and a report being filed with the Ontario College of Teachers. Therefore, while adequate preparation for the TPA process can be time consuming, it is highly advisable that you invest sufficient time to prepare for the process - for your own protection.

Be mindful of the following tips as you prepare for the TPA Process.

1. Be proactive in every step of the performance appraisal process.
2. Review all Board documents related to the process carefully to determine the requirements for each step in the process.
3. Become familiar with the forms that are prescribed for the process. Anticipate questions that the evaluator may have and think carefully about appropriate responses.
4. Take time to gather supporting materials that will assist you in demonstrating your skills as a teacher and that will show how you are meeting the 8 required competencies.
5. The New Teacher TPA Process is still very new. **DO NOT** assume that the evaluator knows the process well or interprets and applies the process, terminology, and expectations in the same way that you do. Ask questions of clarification, when you are unsure of the expectations of the evaluator.
6. Be prepared to have a professional dialogue with your evaluator. Be prepared to articulate your expertise in instructional strategies, curriculum initiatives, assessment tools, and the developmental characteristics of the students you teach.
7. As the process unfolds, take note of specific comments and expectations that the evaluator expresses.
8. In each meeting with the evaluator, reiterate the next steps as you understand them to ensure that you both have a common understanding of what is being required.

9. You will not be able to demonstrate all of the eight mandatory competencies during the classroom observation. Nevertheless, you should give careful thought about how you can structure the lesson to demonstrate as many of the competencies as possible. Be prepared to point to other lessons or units where you have demonstrated (or will demonstrate) other competencies not covered in the lesson observed. Also, be prepared to produce evidence of how you are meeting expectations for a competency that cannot be demonstrated in the classroom (example, communication with parents).
10. Become familiar with a number of key examples under each competency (as listed in the *Evidence Log – Appendix E*), so that you can use the language of these examples in your discussions with the evaluator. Note: The *Evidence Log* is an optional resource that may be used by the teacher or the evaluator. You should clarify with the evaluator whether he/she intends to use this resource.

NOTE: If you feel that you are encountering significant problems during the TPA process, immediately contact your federation representative for assistance and advice.

Step 1: Getting Ready for the Pre-Observation Meeting

- Before the pre-observation meeting, prepare a point form overview of the Course for the lesson that will be observed. Make a separate list of your professional activities within the school that you can rely on to provide evidence for competencies that will not be observed in the classroom visit.
- Make notes about the class that will be observed to highlight circumstances that can be barriers to learning (i.e. lack of textbooks and other resources, large class size, numbers of students with problems or challenges – learning disabilities, lack of language skills, behavioural issues ...) and be prepared to discuss your strategies for dealing with those barriers.
- Be prepared to articulate clear and concise points about your professional strengths and activities as they relate to the eight competencies.
- Know the language of the examples listed in the *Evidence Log*. For example, if you wish to highlight the competency of “commitment to the well-being and development of all pupils” focus on specific examples that are tied to this competency -- i.e. note how you group students to help each other, or how you make use of information on a student’s IEP to develop appropriate modifications for the student.

Step 2: The Pre-Observation meeting

- Have all of your documents organized so that you can easily refer to them.
- Describe your plan for the class that will be observed – curriculum expectations, what the students will learn or do, how you will assess student learning, resources that you will use, modifications that you plan to use for certain students ...
- Listen carefully to the directions and suggestions of the evaluator and take notes. **Use any appropriate opportunity you can to highlight your strengths, your successes with the class and your positive plans for their learning.**

Step 3: Classroom Observation

- Ensure that you are well prepared for the class and demonstrate effective classroom routines.
- Project an air of enthusiasm and confidence. Don't be intimidated by the evaluator's presence.
- Follow your plan for the lesson.
- As soon as possible after the class is completed, make outline notes about specific elements of the lesson that went well. Reflect on any areas that did not go as well as you had hoped and think of how you will address (in a positive, not defensive manner) any critical points that you think the evaluator might raise.

Step 4: Post-Observation Meeting

- This meeting should occur as soon as possible after the classroom observation (normally within five days).
- Be sure that you are prepared to make suggestions (in an appropriate and professional manner) about what should be included in the evaluator's comments.
- Remember that this meeting is your last **formal** opportunity to have a professional dialogue with the evaluator and to present additional materials that provide evidence of how you are meeting the competencies.
- If you become concerned that the evaluator is making a lot of recommendations about competencies that you need to focus on for professional growth or areas in which you need to improve, take careful notes and ask questions of clarification. Immediately after the meeting, consult your federation representative about your concerns.