Audience
- Faculty
- Program and institution leaders
- Clinical supervisors
- P-12 instructional coaches, building administrators, and district partners
- State/local education agencies

Recommended Use
Use this resource as an initial orientation to academic language as it is framed in edTPA.

Conceptual Rationale
Academic language is the language of school, content, and classrooms. It is the language that students need in order to understand, communicate, and perform in the content disciplines. Academic language includes the oral and written language structures used in the content area, the “thinking” structures used to organize and connect complex ideas, and the meaning-making strategies used to understand and communicate.

Experts think, act, and communicate in ways specific to their discipline; it is important for teacher candidates to see that “academic language is part of a cognitive toolbox for undertaking real content area tasks in the same or analogous ways to experts” (Wilhelm, 2007, p. 44).

Description
This presentation introduces the concept of academic language and explains how it is layered in the three tasks of edTPA. First, academic language is framed within classrooms as the language necessary for students to be able to participate and learn the discipline. The presentation then focuses specifically on academic language in planning, instruction, and assessment as described in edTPA. It then provides examples of academic language in specific content areas.

Key Points
- Academic language is more than the vocabulary of a content area; it includes the thinking and participation structures that are part of the discipline.
- Explicit attention to academic language is a key component of thoughtful planning, instruction, and assessment, as it helps provide the structures that students need to use in order to learn and engage deeply with the content.
- Teacher candidates are asked to attend to academic language in both planning and instruction, paying particular attention to the language demands for the lesson.
- An expectation of edTPA is that teacher candidates will scaffold the development of academic language in their students; candidates will attend to the vocabulary, discourse, and syntax necessary for students to learn and participate in the content of the learning segment.

Additional Resources

Disclaimer: This resource is provided for informational and support purposes only. There is no requirement that it be used as-is or as a template by a program implementing edTPA. It can be used or modified by any participating institution or it can be used as a springboard for institutions to create their own support materials that address their contexts and needs.