
**Performance Assessments and Competency-based Teacher Preparation
in Content Area Literacy and English Language Arts Instruction
for 7-12 Educators in Connecticut**

**Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Project Presentation
March 8, 2002**

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Joseph Gambini
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Background:

The 2003 Connecticut regulations¹ for licensure specifically note that all middle level and secondary level teacher candidates will need to demonstrate competence in "teaching and reinforcing language arts (reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and visually representing) skills and concepts throughout the curriculum" (p. 30 and p. 32). In line with current national standards for teacher certification, the Connecticut regulations do not specify completion of courses or credits as a stipulation for certification; instead the 2003 regulations require completion of competencies. Institutions in Connecticut recommending candidates for licensure will need to ensure that their pre-service teachers will have met all the required competencies. In addition to the competencies noted, candidates who wish to be certified as 7-12 English teachers will need to meet subject-specific competencies in the discipline of English. This includes "study in the evaluation and instruction of students in the area of language arts" (CSDE 2003, p. 35).

Project Goals:

In alignment with NCATE unit standards the overarching goal of our workgroup is to create a pre-service teacher candidate performance-based assessment for grade 7-12 teachers in the area of English Language Arts. Our workgroup was funded to create three deliverables:

- a) a literature review of performance-based assessment of 7-12 teachers in the English Language Arts (ELA);
- b) a description of the competencies for 7-12 ELA teachers that delineate the depth and breadth of preparation utilizing the research base noted in (a);
- c) performance assessment (based on the literature review and competencies) of 7-12 ELA teacher candidates.

¹State of Connecticut State Board of Education. (n. d.). Regulations concerning state educator certificates, permits and authorizations, Effective July 1, 2003. Hartford, CT: Author.



Connecticut State Department of Education

Title II Teacher Quality
Enhancement Workgroup Grants

Presentation by the
**Secondary-level English
Language Arts Workgroup**

December 13, 2002

Purpose of Task

Our workgroup is working on:

- A Literature Review of Performance Assessment
- A Description of Competencies for English Language Arts Pre-service Candidates
- A Performance Assessment (based on the literature review and competencies) of 7-12 ELA teacher candidates, including:
 - Development of the assessment
 - Development of a rubric for evaluating performance
 - Piloting the assessment and testing the rubric

Purpose of Task (continued)

This task is a simulation based on the analysis of student responses to a CAPT item in which students were asked to demonstrate a critical stance.

Pre-service candidates are requested to read two student responses, determine if the responses met the criteria of demonstrating a critical stance, and to use the responses to inform instruction.

Pre-service candidates at the completion of their coursework and at the "gate" prior to student teaching take this assessment.

Workgroup Composition

Our workgroup includes:

- University Faculty in Teacher Education & English
- K-12 Teachers in English Language Arts
- Reading Consultants
- Curriculum Specialists

We have collaborated with:

- Charles Duke, NCTE
- Fran Archambeault, University of Connecticut

Our Workgroup

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Task and Candidate Assessment



Our task measures candidate performance based on content taught in Secondary English Language Arts (7-12) Graduate and Undergraduate Programs.

We will use the results from this task to make decisions about candidate performance at the gate prior to student teaching.

Lessons Learned



- We started out with a larger goal and due to the complexity of performance assessment, we focused our work to one “gate” which would inform us about candidate knowledge, ability, and readiness for teaching.

Lessons Learned (continued)

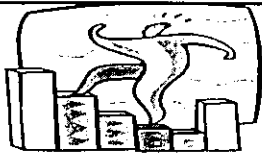
- We have aligned our task with national curriculum standards (NCTE/NCATE) so that programs would be able to use this task in their assessment process.
- We have had the participation of many stakeholders in this process: university professors, K-12 teachers and administrators, CSDE specialists, and students on different campuses (graduate and undergraduate, public and private). This contributes to the validity (authenticity) of the task.

Challenges & Questions

- Is this task appropriate for candidates at this gate? Why or why not?
- As a result of our piloting:
What changes do we need to make in our task? In our rubric? What recommendations are important for administration of the task?
- Can the task be replicated across the state for use in graduate and undergraduate programs? What are the unique challenges to do this?



Next Steps



•All three institutions (CCSU, UB, Yale) are completing the fall piloting. Our next steps are to team score the data sets, then cross team score the data sets.

•In January we have targeted a one-day workshop to discuss the results of our fall piloting and to refine the task and rubric.

•We plan to work with members at each of our institutions for the use of the task in our programs.

Focus of Small Group Discussions



We invite feedback about:

•Task validity and reliability;

•Task appropriateness for pre-service candidates prior to student teaching;

•Task feasibility for replicability.

(End of slides.)

Issues and Challenges of Creating Performance-based Assessments of Secondary English Language Arts Pre-Service Teacher Candidates

**Program Proposal for the National Council of Teachers of English
93rd Annual Convention
November 20-25, 2003
San Francisco, California**

**Patricia Mulcahy-Ernt, University of Bridgeport
David Cappella, Central Connecticut State University
Joan Cummings, Masuk High School
Georgette Nemr, Connecticut Department of Education**

Purpose of Session

The panel represents a state-wide partnership of university and K-12 teachers, who received a Title II grant to design a performance-based assessment of secondary-level pre-service English Language Arts teacher candidates in Connecticut's Teacher Preparation Programs. The goal of this grant was to develop a performance-based assessment in alignment with the national standards, specifically those of the National Council of the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the affiliated Learned Societies in the area of literacy and language, particularly the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA). The panel, comprising two University professors and a high school English teacher, will summarize their work on the collaborative state-wide Title II project. The panel will also address psychometric issues and the challenges of designing appropriate performance-based assessments. Following the panel's presentation, the Connecticut State Department of Education Title II Project Director will provide the critical perspectives of state and national accreditation panels requiring performance-based assessment.

Theoretical Background

As a result of national teacher reform initiatives, teacher preparation programs are now asked to reconceptualize learning and teaching in light of performance-based competency measures to determine what pre-service teacher candidates know and are able to do. These new competencies and the assessment of them will need to be evident when programs seek national accreditation; as a result, programs will need to demonstrate assessment systems that show alignment of the teacher candidate standards with program goals, assessment of teacher candidate competencies at critical points throughout their program, and assessment of teacher candidates during field experiences and student teaching.

**Program Session for the National Council of Teachers of English
93rd Annual Convention
November 20-25, 2003
San Francisco, California**

Program Submitted By:

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Format of Session: Panel Presentation

Title of Session: Issues and Challenges of Creating Performance-based Assessments of Secondary English Language Arts Pre-Service Teacher Candidates

Annotation: The panel will summarize their work on a collaborative state-wide Title II project in Connecticut, which culminated in the design of a performance assessment for pre-service secondary English Language Arts teacher candidates. The panel will also address psychometric issues and the challenges of designing appropriate performance-based assessments.

Topic of Emphasis: Teacher Education

Reviewer Level of Interest: Conference on English Education (Teacher Education)

Audience Level of Interest: College/University

Session Participants:

Chair: Patricia Mulcahy-Ernt, University of Bridgeport

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Presenter 1: Patricia Mulcahy-Ernt, Professor of Education, University of Bridgeport

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Presentation Title: Designing Valid, Reliable, Appropriate Performance-based Assessments for Secondary-level English Language Arts Teacher Candidates

Presenter 2: David Cappella, Assistant Professor of English, Central Connecticut State University

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Presentation Title: Linking National Standards with Performance Measures for Secondary-level English Language Arts Teacher Candidates

Presenter 3: Joan Cummings, English Department Chair, Masuk High School

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Presentation Title: Voices from the Classroom: Assuring Validity in Assessment Design and Rubric Development

Recorder/Reactor: Georgette Nemr, State of CT Title II Project Director, CT Department of Education

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While the term "performance assessment" is not new to the educational arena, the application of this type of assessment to teacher licensing is a recent movement. A performance-based licensing system requires, according to Darling-Hammond and Cobb (1996), several key components for its success, such as:

the adoption of clear standards for performance that are thoroughly evaluated through *performance-based assessments for licensing*. These assessments must be good representations of the actual tasks, knowledge, and skills needed for teaching;

the *replacement of course-counting strategies* for licensing and program approval with two kinds of standards: (1) licensing based on successful completion of performance-based assessments and completion of an approved/accredited program and (2) program review and accountability based on a demonstration that the school's program provides learning opportunities that lead to the successful attainment of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to teach. (p. 51)

McDaniel (1994) notes that "a major argument for performance assessment is that the behaviors tested are much more closely aligned to the behaviors desired at the conclusion of instruction than are paper and pencil tests" (p. 184). Noted for its authenticity, its richness for complex problem solving tasks, and its descriptive evaluation of student performance, this type of assessment allows for a variety of simulations and realistic situations so that the teacher candidate can demonstrate what he/she knows and can do.

The measurement of the progress and achievement of teacher candidates in college certification-track programs has traditionally involved the completion of a series of approved courses on a Planned Program of Study, along with requisite field experiences and culminating student teaching placements. The typical measure of progress has been based on student scores on teacher-made tests, on instructors' grades of course research papers and course projects, and of observations of supervisors during the field experience placements. Program requirements may have also included passing results of performance on standardized tests; teacher licensing also required (and still does) passing scores on the required exams in the PRAXIS series.

During recent reforms in the area of teacher preparation the use of additional measurement tools and approaches has attempted to provide data about pre-service teacher performance that matches the types of experiences that teachers in classrooms have. As Cochran-Smith (2001) notes: "The question that is currently driving reform and policy in teacher education is what I refer to as 'the outcomes question.' This question asks how we should conceptualize and define the outcomes

of teacher education for teacher learning, professional practice, and student learning, as well as how, by whom, and for what purposes these outcomes should be documented, demonstrated, and/or measured " (p. 1). Cochran-Smith (2001) continues, "The new standards focus on what teacher candidates can actually do in schools and classrooms by emphasizing performance, particularly in relation to students' learning. The new standards, which received final approval in 2000, are effective for all institutions seeking NCATE accreditation during or after Fall 2001. NCATE's new system will require schools of education to provide performance evidence of candidate competence, including state licensing examination results as well as summarized and sampled performance evidence of candidates' knowledge and skill (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1999)" (p. 14).

Harris and Hodges (1995) in *The Literacy Dictionary: The Vocabulary of Reading and Writing* provide a concise definition of performance assessment as "the measurement of educational achievement by tasks that call for the student to produce a response like that in the instructional environment" (p. 182). Thus, in teacher preparation programs performance assessments ask teacher candidates to produce responses to tasks that simulate actual teaching situations. These tasks may be during the teacher candidate's coursework, field placements, or other experiences during the professional preparation for becoming a teacher.

The centrality of performance-based assessment in teacher preparation programs is part of the national reform in teacher education. The rationale for using performance-based measures is further discussed by Cochran-Smith (2001): "In teacher education, performance assessment is intended to evaluate teacher candidates' ability to produce "products" and complete "authentic tasks" that closely resemble the real work of teaching and do so in ways that are aligned with consistent internal and external standards and criteria" (p. 29).

The move to performance-based standards in teacher education, as evident in the newer national and state licensing standards, impacts not only how pre-service teachers are evaluated throughout their teacher preparation programs but also how the programs are reviewed for accreditation. According to Darling-Hammond, Wise, and Klein (1999) performance-based standards "describe what teachers should know, be like, and be able to do rather than listing courses teachers should take in order to be awarded a license" (p. 45). Cochran-Smith (2001) extends the importance of performance-based standards to performance-based outcomes by noting the connection among goal setting, instruction, and assessment: "As we enter the twenty-first century, the outcomes, consequences, and results of teacher education have become critical topics in nearly all of the state and national policy debates about teacher preparation and licensure as well as in the development of many of the privately and publicly funded research agendas related to teacher and student learning. If the major question that drove the field during the last fifteen years was,

'What should teachers and teacher candidates know and be able to do?' then the driving question for the last three or four has been, 'How will we know when (and if) teachers and teacher candidates know and can do what they ought to know and be able to do?'" (p. 6). These questions demand assessments that are both quantitative and qualitative in nature and provide data that shows the complexity and richness of teaching in today's classrooms.

Trice (2000) provides a substantial discussion of the characteristics and types of performance-based assessment in Part II of *A Handbook of Classroom Assessment*. Examples of activities that lend themselves to performance-based assessment include journals, written work, projects, oral reports, collaborative group work, drawings, and portfolios; Trice (2000) discusses measurement issues related to each of these activities. A notable characteristic of performance measures is the potential to use a variety of modalities during the completion of the performance task; the appeal to "multiple intelligences" (Gardner, 1982) generates more complex responses that show problem-solving capabilities and deeper analysis of issues and tasks than traditional measures.

Development of a Performance-based Assessment in Connecticut

The goal of this Title II research project was the development of a performance-based assessment for pre-service teacher candidates in secondary-level English language arts Teacher Preparation Programs, who are at the "gate" of entry to student teaching. The process of the development of this assessment first involved an analysis of national and state standards describing what teachers should know and be able to do. Instrumental in this analysis were the standards developed by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association.

Essential to the development of the performance task was the articulation of expected competencies, as voiced by representatives from university programs and from those in secondary schools. These competencies guided the process of creating a task that was authentic, valid, and reliable. The session presenters will also describe the results of their piloting project, which informed the development of the performance-based task, the development of the scoring rubric, and the development of anchor sets for the rubric.

In this session through combined lecture/discussion and audience participation the presenters will provide the following:

Presenter 1: An overview of the project and a summary of decisions for the assessment's validity, reliability, and worth as a gate for teacher candidates entering student teaching field experiences;

Presenter 2: The linkages of the assessment with national standards and accreditation standards;

Presenter 3: Issues of validity in task development and rubric development from the perspective of a secondary-level English language arts teacher and high school department chair;

Reactor/Recorder: Perspectives of the Connecticut Title II Project Director and the overall challenges and issues of developing performance-based assessments for the new accreditation standards.

In conclusion, as teacher preparation programs revise their programs to meet the newer NCATE standards, essential questions need to be faced: Are the performance-based assessments appropriate? Are they valid? Are they reliable? Will they inform us about candidate performance? Hopefully, the lessons learned from this Connecticut initiative will inform others in the development and revision of their own English language arts teacher preparation programs.

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