

SECTION V

Use of Assessment Results to Improve Candidate and Program Performance

The teacher preparation program at Keene State College for Secondary Social Studies provides a combination of strong content and fosters the professional and pedagogical knowledge skills and dispositions necessary for success in the future classrooms where our teacher candidates will be teaching. That commitment to excellence is demonstrated in our dedicated Secondary Social Methods course taught by professional and highly credentialed Social Studies educators. These same educators follow and supervise the teacher candidates during their student teaching. We have established a wide network of highly qualified, credentialed cooperating teachers who work collaboratively with KSC and the teacher candidates to ensure optimal mentoring and guidance.

We are confident in the elements of good practice in our program completers. Because we stay in touch with many of our graduates, and know that they are readily hired as teachers in a content area where employment is sometimes difficult to obtain due to the high numbers of Social Studies teachers coming out of teacher preparation programs. We are so confident in their abilities that it has recently become a common practice to place our student teachers with our graduates serving as their cooperating teachers. Our graduates have consistently demonstrated the ability to plan, execute & assess student learning that is carefully aligned with the standards.

The data collected during this past year (2005-2006) has been analyzed and reflected upon as is congruent with sound educational practice. As with all assessments that are utilized for the first time, modifications and revisions must be made to better ascertain student understanding of the desired knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Additionally, clarity of expectations in each assessment itself must be analyzed and modified if necessary. During and following analysis the following findings and necessary modifications have either already been made or will be made during the course of the 2006-2007 school year:

Content Knowledge:

- We are generally pleased with the teacher candidate PRAXIS II scores and subscores, but we wish to continue with practice PRAXIS II activities. (Assessment 1)
- As we move to a campus-wide new 4-credit model next year, we will refine our required content courses to better meet the needs of the Secondary Social Studies preparation program; e.g., making sure that the political science requirement includes adequate government and civics content, assuring that both macro- and micro-economic concepts are included in required economics courses, etc. (Assessments 1 & 2)
- Our required coursework common to all four pathways of majors leading to the Teacher Certification option are directly correlated with the standards. However, because of the four different majors, it is impossible to use grades as an assessment since there are a variety of required courses in the four majors leading to certification and electives do not provide an equitable comparison across all teacher candidates.
- Clarity of expectations, particularly in the areas of “Procedures” and aligned standards in the lesson plans, will allow a clearer and more accurate assessment of teacher candidate knowledge. Continuous feedback to teacher candidates will be given throughout the semester on the demonstration of their content knowledge. (Assessment 2)

Professional and Pedagogical Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions:

- We strive for continuous improvement of our Secondary Social Studies teacher preparation program and find that the assessments we have developed are strengthening that program through actual data analysis and less reliance on anecdotal information and observation. To that end, we are making the following modifications:
 - In the assessment of the ability to plan for instruction based on the standards, more continuous feedback will be given as the teacher candidates plan and execute their lessons. (Assessments 3)
 - The Clinical Practice Assessment will also include a standard specific element in I.B. for each observation. (Assessment 4)
 - The Dispositions Assessment has already been modified (See Section IV, Assessment 6, Attachment C) to include a clear rubric. This rubric will ensure better interrater reliability as well as clear expectations for the teacher candidates themselves. We also have included self-assessment on this instrument. We have also eliminated the “Not Observed” scoring so that all the personal and professional dispositions must be observed. Only slight modifications (e.g., re-ordering and minor word changes) have been made to the assessment itself.

Student Learning:

- Modifications have been made in Assessment 5 rubric to not only require a quality, standard-aligned assessment of student learning, but to stress the need for reflection on student learning on the various standards.
- In order to facilitate more definitive information on student learning, there will be consistent mentoring and feedback on student lesson plans aligned with the standards, so that any deficiencies may be corrected throughout the semester.

As with all good assessment practice, our program, our students, and ultimately the students in the secondary classrooms have been enriched by the reflection offered by good assessments and reflective practice.