

Section V: Use of Assessment Results

Some of the data findings indicate a need for some changes in our program.

Content Knowledge

1) Grammar

Three assessments—#2 Content Knowledge (i.e., the grades in the required Descriptive Grammar course), #4 Student Teaching (i.e., the final assessments from the college supervisor and the cooperating teacher), and #6 Portfolio Presentations (the use of grammatically correct constructions in candidates' oral presentations) point to the need for further grammar instruction.

Response:

The Secondary Education Committee has proposed a new curriculum in response to the campus change from 3 to 4-credit courses. The primary change in terms of improving candidates' preparation will be that they will take two Methods courses instead of one and that the first of these will come in their junior year. This change has the potential for improving grammar in two ways. First, it will enable the Methods instructor to detect weakness in this area a year earlier and to recommend remediation, including field placements that include grammar lesson observations and teaching. Second, the first Methods course will focus on teaching reading and literature. The second will focus on teaching writing and grammar. This additional time spent in this area will provide candidates who are weak in grammar a chance to improve. The new curriculum begins in Fall 2008.

2) Writing

Assessment #7 indicates that our candidates do less well when asked to communicate their content knowledge through essays rather than on multiple choice tests.

Response:

Besides having the Methods instructor institute regular practice essay tests in Methods, the English Department is conducting its own writing assessment to discover how to improve our writing instruction. In May 2003, we collected student essays from our introduction to the major course, ENG 209 Literary Analysis. This was our first attempt at data gathering, and we discovered that the assessment instrument needed to be revised. Working with Institutional Research, we did this revision, and collected and assessed another set of essays from ENG 209 in 2004-05. Unfortunately, staff changes have made Institutional Research work very slow, and they are still in the process of compiling that data for us. We plan to base future curricular changes on the results.

Professional and Pedagogical Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions

1) Predicting Success in the Program

Assessment #3 indicates that some candidates reach Methods without really being ready for the professional work. While these candidates are few in number, senior year is a difficult time for them to be facing this news, and they are, understandably, reluctant to change career paths at this stage.

Response:

The new Secondary curriculum, in which candidates will take their first Methods course in their junior year, will provide candidates with in-school fieldwork that will both help them make a good career choice and alert the Methods instructor to problems the candidates might have.

2) Dispositions

Assessment #6 showed that candidates did not bring the level of professionalism to their portfolio presentations that the college supervisor expected.

Response:

In fall semester 2006, the current class of Methods students will be invited to the presentation so that there will be an audience of students who are looking to the candidates as models for their own future work. In the spring, several English Department colleagues will be invited to these presentations.

3) Increasing Content Knowledge

Assessment 4 showed that it may be more difficult for a candidate to do well in student teaching who has not finished coursework, especially in the major.

Response:

This is exactly the type of issue that the Secondary Education Committee deals with. We need a policy statement about how many credits within the major (and perhaps overall) a candidate must have completed before student teaching.

Effect on Student Learning

1) Assessment Project:

Assessment #5 of the Assessment of Student Learning Project did not produce the desired professional reflection based on Danielson.

Response:

Two changes should remedy this problem. First, the most successfully completed project can be distributed as a model. The model will show how the Danielson form should be used for reflection. Second, the form itself should be attached to the assignment sheet and sent to candidates electronically so they are seeing its connection to the project from the beginning and have an easy way to complete it.

NCTE Standards

All assessment instruments will continue to be revised to reflect NCTE standards more directly and new ones will be developed. For example, the unit has designed an assessment instrument for Dispositions that all instructors will incorporate into their courses beginning Fall 2006.