

***Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan – Literacy Specialist Education***

***Department Name:*** Literacy Specialist Teacher Education

***Date Submitted and Academic Year:*** Fall 2009 for AY2009-2010

***Department Mission Statement:***

With the decision to pursue NCATE accreditation in 2000, the MSED Literacy Specialist program embraced the process as a timely opportunity to transition our program from a focus on remediation to a focus on the more current interventions perspective. At that time, instructional delivery models that were proving to be successful were intervention approaches that emphasized the role of the literacy specialist as collaborator and curriculum leader, integrating the specialist's knowledge and expertise with that of the classroom teacher and collaborating with families and communities, rather than working separately, and often disjunctively, towards the same ends. Also, at this time, literacy research had begun to impact the ways educators responded to socio-cultural aspects of literacy. Given the increasing number of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, it became evident that a new generation of literacy teachers was needed who were knowledgeable of and skilled at meeting the needs of all learners, through carefully designed and well orchestrated interventions, rather than attempting to remediate isolated reading skills, deficient motivation and habitual reading and writing avoidance. Intervention models have been developed as a solution to these problems. Effective interventions can result in improved literacy proficiency for all students **when** literacy programs in schools are integrated programs that emphasize the links between on-going assessment and responsive instruction, and **when** classroom instruction is supported by knowledgeable and skilled literacy specialists who work collaboratively with teachers, parents and the community. Our graduate literacy program, which focuses on building these competencies, is designed to insure that all students receive intensive and appropriate interventions that prevent them from continuing to struggle as readers and writers.

Our program includes a course in literacy foundations that helps candidates re-familiarize themselves with major theorists in the field and the seminal studies that have greatly impacted literacy education. In this course, candidates also learn about successful intervention programs and the principles that underpin their design. A course in literacy research helps candidates explore current issues in literacy education while enabling them to become more critical consumers of the research. Coursework in literacy assessment and intervention strategies provides our candidates with considerable knowledge and skills for using formal and informal assessments to inform instructional programs. The course in family/school/community collaboration introduces candidates to the importance of viewing literacy and literacy education through a wider lens. This course, coupled with a course in literacy and linguistically diverse learners, provides candidates with knowledge about how socio-cultural aspects underpin literacy and schooling. The practica help assure that our candidates are able to use their knowledge and skills to impact student achievement and work collaboratively with colleagues.

***Faculty Member Completing this Form:*** Dr. Lynn Hall

***Update on prior years' "Application of Assessment Results:***

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**Intended Student Learning Outcome #1**

Students will demonstrate content knowledge in Literacy Education.

**Measurable Criteria and Assessment Method(s)**

**Direct Assessment #1: Content Specialty Test – Literacy**

***SUBAREA I- FOUNDATIONS OF LITERACY***

0001 Understand theories of literacy acquisition and development.

0002 Understand the relationships among reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

0003 Understand individual differences in literacy development.

0004 Understand formal and informal techniques for assessing literacy skills.

0005 Understand how to use and communicate the results of literacy assessments.

***SUBAREA II- READING INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT***

0006 Understand phonological and phonemic awareness.

0007 Understand the development of concepts of print.

0008 Understand the development and application of phonics skills.

0009 Understand a variety of word identification strategies.

0010 Understand the development of vocabulary knowledge skills.

0011 Understand reading comprehension skills and strategies.

0012 Understand reading skills associated with content-area literacy.

0013 Understand the development of effective study skills.

0014 Understand the role of oral and written language in the development of reading proficiency.

0015 Understand strategies for promoting the reading development of students with reading difficulties.

***SUBAREA III- THE ROLE OF THE LITERARY PROFESSIONAL***

0016 Understand how to organize effective literacy environments and to manage literacy programs.

0017 Understand curriculum development and instructional planning for literacy programs.

0018 Understand how to select and use diverse instructional materials to promote literacy development.

0019 Understand how to collaborate and communicate with colleagues, parents, caregivers, and members of the educational community to promote students' literacy development.

0020 Understand professional responsibilities of literacy professionals.

***SUBAREA IV- READING INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT:***

***CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE***

***ASSIGNMENT***

**Direct Assessment #2: Theory to Practice Essay**

The project is aligned with IRA Standards 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 (Foundational Knowledge), and 5.1 (Professional Development). In this essay, candidates focus on major theory/theorists and how theory is linked to seminal research that has informed reading educators, then link the practices in their own work to major theories and seminal research studies.

**Data Source/Results & Analysis**

**Direct Assessment #1: Content Specialty Test – Literacy**

The New York State Content Specialty Test – Literacy (CST) is a comprehensive examination of content and professional knowledge that our candidates have the opportunity to take at the completion of the program.

Please note: Only those candidates seeking initial certification as Literacy Specialists are required to take the CST. Nearly one-half of our candidates who successfully complete the graduate literacy program requirements do not choose to seek initial certification as Literacy Specialists,

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but instead meet their professional goals by earning the master's degree for the purpose of obtaining a professional certificate in their general education certification area. For this reason, the number of candidate scores in each year is far less than total program enrollment.

**Direct Assessment #2: Theory to Practice Essay**

The Theory to Practice Essay is an assessment of foundational knowledge that candidates complete prior to enrollment in GRDG 690 and 691 or GRDG 696 and 697: Literacy Practicum, which are the culminating courses candidates take in their last semester of study. Successful completion of this assignment is required to begin the practicum experience. In the Theory to Practice Essay candidates once again examine the psychological, sociological, and linguistic foundations of reading and writing processes and instruction, connecting major theories to instructional practices.

**Application of Results/Action Plan for Improvement**

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**Intended Student Learning Outcome #2**

Students will demonstrate pedagogical and professional knowledge, skills and dispositions.

**Measurable Criteria and Assessment Method(s)**

**Direct Assessment #1: Literacy Interventions Project**

The project is aligned with IRA Standards 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 (Instructional Strategies and Curriculum Materials), IRA Standards 4.3 and 4.4 (Creating a Literate Environment) and IRA Standard 5.3 (Professional Development). In this project, candidates focus on the use of assessment data to devise meaningful and effective literacy instruction. Candidates consult assessment reports and conduct their own comprehensive evaluations of learners to create comprehensive intervention plans with emphasis on different grouping options, range of curriculum materials, approaches and methods for learners at differing stages of development and from differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Planning emphasizes the importance of promoting lifelong readers. Candidates consult with classroom teacher colleagues for constructive feedback.

**Direct Assessment #2: Practicum Portfolio**

The practicum portfolio is aligned with the IRA Standards 3.3 and 3.4 (Assessment, Diagnosis, and Evaluation), and 5.2 and 5.4 (Professional Development). In the portion of this portfolio, which focuses on assessment, diagnosis and evaluation, candidates administer comprehensive assessment and communicate that assessment information to various audiences (i.e. parents, administrators, school psychologists, clinical specialists, classroom teachers). Candidates use the assessment information of these individual struggling readers to plan and provide instruction. Candidates collaboratively plan with other literacy specialists and classroom teachers to implement appropriate instruction for these individual struggling readers and to assist classroom teachers in using assessment to plan instruction. Candidates write a report which uses assessment data to evaluate a school wide literacy program and provide recommendations for changes to strengthen a school program. For the portion of the portfolio which focuses on professional development, candidates assist a classroom teacher in planning and implementing a personal professional development plan. Candidates conduct a professional study group and plan, implement, and evaluate a professional development workshop.

**Direct Assessment #3: Assessment Profile Report**

This assessment is aligned with IRA Standards 1.4 (Foundational Knowledge) and IRA Standards 3.1 and 3.2 (Assessment, Diagnosis and Evaluation). In this report candidates focus on the meaningful use of assessment data to inform instructional decisions. Candidates conduct a comprehensive assessment (B-2/3-6 or 5-8/9-12) of learners' literacy competencies of the major components of reading using a wide range of formal and informal assessments, tools, and practices. Learners are then placed along a developmental continuum and literacy proficiencies and differences are identified. An evaluative report is drafted that includes recommendations for supporting classroom teachers' capacity to foster each learner's literacy development. Candidates are required to show how the recommendations are in keeping with the purposes and practice of the learners' school-wide reading program. Assessment data and instructional plans are presented to classroom teacher colleagues for discussion, critical feedback, and reflection.

**Data Source/Results & Analysis**

**Direct Assessment #1: Literacy Interventions Project**

The Literacy Interventions Project is an assessment that candidates complete in GRDG 655/656, Literacy Intervention Strategies Birth-6/5-12, which is a required course that candidates take during their second semester of study. Successful completion of this course is a requirement for entering into the capstone course, Literacy Practicum. In the Interventions Project candidates build on foundational knowledge acquired in GRDG 600, Foundations of Literacy and

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pedagogical and professional knowledge, skills and dispositions acquired in GRDG 605, Literacy Assessment (see Assessment #7). Candidates use data from a comprehensive assessment of a student's literacy competencies and accompanying evaluative reports with instructional recommendations to develop comprehensive intervention plans that consider appropriate grouping options, curriculum materials, instructional approaches, and teaching methods.

**Direct Assessment #2: Practicum Portfolio**

The practicum portfolio is a clinical assessment that candidates complete during GRDG 690 and 691 or GRDG 696 and 697: Literacy Practicum, which are the culminating courses candidates take during the final semester of study. In the practicum portfolio candidates show how they have implemented literacy assessment, evaluation, and instruction, collaborated with other educational professionals, and exhibited leadership in professional development.

**Direct Assessment #3: Assessment Profile Report**

The Assessment Profile Report is an assessment that candidates complete in GRDG 605, Literacy Assessment, a required course that is taken in the first semester of the program. This course is the first course in our clinical sequence and is a pre-requisite for GRDG 655/656, Literacy Interventions (second semester) and the capstone practicum (third semester). In the Assessment Profile Report candidates are introduced to literacy assessments and processes and then use their knowledge and skills to conduct a comprehensive assessment of learners' literacy competencies. An evaluative report is written that includes instructional recommendations. The candidates review their analysis of assessment data with classroom teacher colleagues for constructive feedback and to collaborate on instructional planning.

***Application of Results/Action Plan for Improvement***

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**Intended Student Learning Outcome #3**

Teacher candidates will demonstrate effects on student learning.

**Measurable Criteria and Assessment Method(s)**

**Direct Assessment #1: Reflection: Instructional Effectiveness**

The essay is aligned with IRA Standards 1.4 (Foundational Knowledge), 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 (Assessment, Diagnosis, and Evaluation), and 5.3 (Professional Development). In this assignment candidates explain their choices of assessment tools and assessment findings. They tell how they used the assessment findings to guide their choices for instruction and how instructional choices may have changed due to ongoing assessment. Candidates use final assessment findings in combination with student work, lesson plans and journals to constructively evaluate their own instructional effectiveness.

**Direct Assessment #2: Literature Review/Thematic Unit**

This project is aligned with IRA Standards 4.1 and 4.2 (Creating a Literate Environment). In this project candidates focus on the use of texts, technology-based information, and non-print materials that address diverse learners' needs, interests, and abilities, including various cultural and linguistic backgrounds in a classroom setting. Candidates author a thematic literature unit with lessons that target students' interests, reading and writing abilities, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

**Data Source/Results & Analysis**

**Direct Assessment #1: Reflection: Instructional Effectiveness**

The *Reflection: Instructional Effectiveness* assignment is an essay in which candidates examine the effect their instruction has had on the literacy development of the students they have worked with during the practicum experience. Candidates complete this assessment of effects on student learning in GRDG 690/691 or GRDG 696/697: Literacy Practicum which are the culminating courses candidates take in their last semester of study.

**Direct Assessment #2: Literature Review/Thematic Unit**

The Literature Review/Thematic Unit Project is an assessment that candidates complete in GRDG 640, Literature-based Literacy Instruction, a required course in the program. In the Literature Review/Thematic Unit Project, candidates, in collaboration with classroom teachers, select diverse and developmentally appropriate literature for inclusion in a unit of study around a theme that targets learners' interests.

**Application of Results/Action Plan for Improvement**

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<i>Summary of Action Plans for upcoming Academic Year</i> _____
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**Closing the Loop:**

**Use of Candidate Results to Improve Candidate and Program Performance**

Our program’s systematic use of assessment data for improving our effectiveness and helping our candidates meet professional standards (IRA 2003 Standards for Reading Professionals – Literacy Specialist/Literacy Coach) is in its beginning stages. During the 2005 - 2006 year, we collected data from assessments that measure candidate performance on each of the IRA Standards. Consequently, results of our analysis are derived from a very narrow window of observation from which to view ways to strengthen our program by means of making revisions. We believe that, however limited the scope of our analysis might be at this point, the data provide useful information about program strengths and has helped us to identify aspects of our program in need of improvement.

It should be noted too that our work at the earliest stages in our process of devising our system of program assessment has already led to significant and important changes that we as a faculty intuitively felt needed to be made. These include revisions to the content of our courses, changes in program structure (i.e., sequencing courses), and the development of new academic program policies. For example, we now require that candidates complete GRDG 600: Foundations of Literacy in their first semester in order to insure that they have a base of content knowledge to bring to other coursework. We also established a **clinical sequence** to insure that our candidates acquire professional and pedagogical knowledge, skills and dispositions that are applied in a sequence of teaching contexts that increase progressively in their complexity and in terms of our expectations for candidates. We believe that this will provide an opportunity for candidates to enjoy a more meaningful and successful practicum experience. A good example of how the work of designing and implementing our assessment system has led us to reconsider certain academic program policies is our decision about transfer courses and course substitutions. Candidates are no longer allowed to transfer in or substitute coursework for required courses in which program assessments are embedded as core assignments. This decision was made in order to insure that all candidates are systematically reviewed in our assessment system.

What follows is analysis of our first set of data and a description of how improvements will be made in 1) content knowledge, 2) professional and pedagogical knowledge, skills, and dispositions and, 3) impact on student learning.

**Content Knowledge**

The MSED Literacy Specialist program leads to certification as a specialized professional. Our program builds on a base of knowledge about literacy and literacy education that our candidates have acquired from study in their initial, general education program. Based on concerns that our first semester candidates’ content knowledge base was, at best, broad and at worst, fractional, the course GRDG 600: Foundations of Literacy was developed and required for candidates in their

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first semester. In this course, a core assignment, the Foundation Landmarks Project was developed. This core assignment is included in all course sections and is the first of two program assessments of content knowledge (IRA Standards 1.1, 1.2, 1.3). Candidate performance on these standards is assessed again, during the final semester as the initial assignment in GRDG 690/691 or 696/697: Literacy Practicum. Before engaging in collaborations with school colleagues in the practicum, we wanted assurance that our candidates have a base of foundational knowledge, but moreover that they can access their knowledge and apply theory and research to their practice. Candidates are required to submit a reflective essay in which they critically analyze clinical work with students they have completed in GRDG 605: Literacy Assessment and in GRDG 655/656: Literacy Intervention Strategies. In this essay they show how their work is grounded in theory and research.

Data from Spring 2006 show that all of our candidates were meeting Standards 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 at both assessment points. While we are pleased with these results, we wonder how we might ascertain value added attributes of coursework that candidates take following GRDG 600 and prior to Practicum. We have determined that in order to know this information, we need to develop a different rubric for assessing the knowledge base in GRDG 600 – one with criteria that will insure an appropriate starting point for candidates, but which will serve as a formative assessment of our candidates' content knowledge with summative information acquired from the later assignment/assessment – the reflective essay completed at the start of practicum. Modifications to the GRDG 600 Landmarks Project assessment scoring guide will be made and in effect for the 2006-07 academic year cohort.

**Professional and Pedagogical Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions**

As noted in Section IV of this report, a major focus of our more recent program revisions has been to improve our candidates' understandings about the assessment/planning/intervention cycle as well as their knowledge of and ability to use current assessment tools – both informal and formal. Our coursework that directly supports candidate learning in this area is what we now refer to as our clinical sequence – GRDG 605: Literacy Assessment, GRDG 655/656:

Literacy Intervention Strategies, and GRDG 690/691 or 696/697: Practicum. We have revised the content in these courses to include current and more classroom-based assessment tools.

Moreover, in keeping with IRA Standard V, Professional Development, we have incorporated more opportunities for our candidates to share and acquire professional knowledge through collaborative activities both in the college classroom and in the schools.

The data from 2005 - 2006 consistently show that our candidates are meeting the IRA Standards that are addressed and assessed in our clinical sequence courses. Unlike our assessment of content knowledge, described above, our assessment of standards in the area of professional and pedagogical knowledge, skills and dispositions is constructed in a manner that allows the program to view candidates' progress as they move through the clinical sequence. Our program will continue to study this data, and as a whole faculty, we will conduct analysis of candidate work samples in order to insure the validity of assessment of the evidence. This whole faculty review will also help us to continue to maintain that course content is current and course delivery is optimally well orchestrated to support candidate learning.

**Impact on Student Learning**

Candidates' impact on student learning is most directly assessed from their work in the practicum. Candidates complete a reflective essay in which they present and discuss examples of their work with students (assessments and/or student work). While the data from this assessment show that all candidates are meeting this standard, faculty have noted that there is considerable variation in the evidence pieces the candidates provide. For example, some candidates may choose to include only samples of student work while others may include only comparative assessment data. Also, the types of student work and assessment data selected may present only a very narrow perspective of the candidates' impact on student learning. Evidence may only include writing samples and no assessment of a student's reading competencies. Also, assessment

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data might include only assessment of discrete skills rather than a more comprehensive assessment. Our plan is to make the evidence pieces more consistent by categorizing the types of evidence that candidates may select for inclusion. Faculty will modify the reflective essay assignment for candidates in the 2006-07 academic year cohort.

Also, we wonder if our candidates should be required to present evidence of impact on student learning at earlier points in the clinical sequence. Candidates interact with students both in GRDG 605 and in GRDG 655/656 and assignments in these courses require them to analyze student learning for revising instructional plans. Faculty will discuss revising the current assessments and scoring guides in these courses to include more emphasis on how data can show impact on student learning.

Finally, we wonder how we might restructure our practicum to extend the span of weeks over which our candidates interact with students. Under the current structure, candidates can complete practicum hours in schools in a concentrated block of time. The program plans to pilot a full-year internship in schools where candidates will complete clinical work for all courses in the clinical sequence. We believe that by extending the span of time that candidates work with students, they will be able to more clearly reflect on and document their impact on student learning. In sum, the Spring 2006 data, though limited in scope, nonetheless provides some useful information for making some immediate changes that will improve candidate performance and strengthen the program. As a faculty we plan to continue to meet frequently and to build construct validity into the assessment process by reviewing candidate work. Also, we are instituting an annual faculty retreat to discuss assessment results and plan program revisions.