Welcome to 2009! With this first issue of the new year, I want to take the opportunity to share information in three areas.

First, I want to share an update on our 2008-2009 colloquia. During the fall semester we had four sessions; each was attended by 60-75 participants! We piloted an evaluation form which seemed to work quite well. In the spring semester, we will have six sessions. Among the presenters are Dr. Arthur Eisenkraft, Distinguished Professor of Science Education at UMass Boston and Dr. George Noell, professor and director of the School Psychology Program at Louisiana State University. Others presenters include Dr. Thanos Patelis (Vice President, The College Board), Dr. Hariharan Swaminathan (Chair, Department of Education Psychology), Ms. Janet Jordan (IRC), and Ms. Samantha Kennedy (Achievement First). The titles, session descriptions, and date/time will be announced at the end of January.

And finally, I wish to share the progress of the Neag Assessment Committee (NAC). We have had a very active fall semester. By objective, here is what has been done and the current/future status.

- Providing final edits and communicating with faculty on our Neag School of Education Assessment Plan

What has been done:
Committee members were provided the final version of

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The 3rd Colloquium
Measuring Student Responsiveness to Reading And Writing Instruction
By Scott McCarthy

What if a teacher could assess students’ reading expertise in just one minute per week? What if these assessments were sensitive to the point that they could inform intervention? Is it too good to be true?

Not according to Drs. Michael Fagella-Luby, Natalie Olinghouse, and Michael Coyne, who on October 31st, presented on the topic. The presentation stressed the importance of utilizing a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework to ensure that assessment is useful.

Dr. Fagella-Luby opened the talk by outlining the specific need to decrease the reading achievement gap in Connecticut: not one state in the U.S. has a larger achievement gap at grade four. Though RTI (see slide on page 6) was originally used as a public health and disease prevention model, Dr. Fagella-Luby outlined its effectiveness as an assessment model in education.

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We asked a veteran in the teacher education program ...

**Think about your favorite assessment that you gave your students this past year. Briefly describe the assessment and why you felt it was so effective. You can include the course and the type of students.**

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**Concept Mapping**

**Dr. David M. Moss**  
*Environmental Education, Teacher Education*

In Environmental Education, EDCI 5555, I make use of concept maps as tools for formative assessment and to promote reflective learning for the participants in class. On the very first day of the course I require students to develop a concept map around the idea of environmental education. The maps help students organize and represent what they know – or think they know – about the field. The concepts themselves are represented as words or phrases in “bubbles,” and for this initial application typically include such concepts as nature, global warming, and recycling. The words are connected to each other with arrows and linking words. These linking words show the relationship between the concepts themselves. For example, the concept of “curriculum” may be connected with “outdoors” with the linking phrase “should be taught.” Here we begin to see evidence of a student’s thinking of the importance of the role of field-based teaching.

It is critical that these maps are not portrayed as being right or wrong, but merely as representing one’s thinking at the present moment. I explicitly note that maps will likely change over time and rarely remain static from week to week in an intense learning environment such as a graduate level class. The maps help students organize for themselves their own thinking in a given domain. In my environmental education class, I require students to generate maps at the conclusion of the class. They are surprised not only at the dramatic increase in the number of concepts they generate at the end of the semester but the increased complexity of links. They generally see ideas as more connected, which is perhaps a sign of beginning to develop expertise in this area. I review the maps at the conclusion of the class to gauge my own effectiveness as an instructor in meeting my articulated course goals, and am usually pleased with the richness and sound theoretical perspectives students develop in this class.

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**The 4th Colloquium**

**Response to Intervention: School-Wide Behavioral Assessment**  
*By Scott McCarthy*

Office referrals down, teacher satisfaction up, increased learning, more family involvement...and better yet, all accomplished without an “intervention”? In the fourth colloquium of the fall semester attendees learned just how this is possible.

Dr. George Sugai, Carol J. Neag Endowed Chair in Behavioral Disorders, presented the third in a series of Response to Intervention (RTI) talks highlighting its utility to be efficient, effective, relevant, and durable. Dr. Sugai stressed that RTI is not a strategy, intervention, or curriculum, but rather a framework for redesigning and establishing teaching and learning environments.

The presentation highlighted the need for a schoolwide implementation of the framework, as individual student behavior is highly linked to the school climate. School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support should therefore be pervasively implemented, inside of the classroom and out. Outside of the classroom strategies including developing positive expectations and routines, ensuring supervision at all times, implementing precorrections and reminders, and utilizing positive reinforcement can help schools benefit from an RTI framework.

To support the efforts being made outside of the classroom, schools need to make changes in the classroom. These changes include using cues, redirecting behavior, making frequent precorrections for chronic behavior, and having an effective curriculum.

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**Office Referrals per Day per Month**

*Last Year and This Year*

`Office Referrals per Day`  
*School Months*

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IB/M students in Dr. Jason Stephens class were recently asked to tell us about their most memorable assessment. Their answers are provided below.

**Student High Stakes**

My most memorable test in school was actually a test that determined my career. I knew I wanted to be a teacher, but I didn’t know whether I would teach history or math. I took a final in calculus, studied endlessly, and completely bombed it. From that point, I knew history was the way to go.

**Student Distracted**

In AP Psychology the title of the test was “I Test Just Like Candy,” a play on the title of a popular song at the time. Having ADHD I was irreversibly distracted for the remainder of the period by the song looping in my head.

**Student Sweets**

In a general psych class we were assessed on our knowledge of different parts of the brain by building a model out of candy. We used different types of candy (shapes and colors) to represent the different parts of the brain, and then gave written explanations of each part and function. Loved it!

**Student Actor**

As a culminating project instead of a final exam in my 8th grade history class, I had to do a debate re-enactment. We did the Roe v. Wade case and got to dress up as significant figures involved in the case – but our arguments were our own. We had to use research and supporting facts to make our arguments and construct formal opening and closing written statements.

**Student Worldly**

In eighth grade Geography, I had to memorize the names, capitals, and locations of every country in the world along with the major mountain ranges and rivers. I remember studying for hours for the test and felt very accomplished after taking it. I would not be as solid as I am in Geography today without this test, though I admit, much of the detail such as the capitol names is forgotten.

**Student Representative**

My most memorable assessment was in US Civics. We were to pretend that we were senators and try to pass legislation. We researched problems in our states and tried to work with other senators to get them passed. We would hold mock senate hearings and vote. Our grade was based on how well we worked with other senators, our research, and whether our bill was passed. This was much better than reading about how legislation gets signed.

**Student Musician**

My most memorable assessment was a soundtrack project that I had to do for an English class. We had to create a soundtrack using any genre of music and we had to pair songs thematically with each act of MacBeth. I really liked this project because I was able to use my knowledge of music and apply it to another subject.

**Student Author**

My most memorable assessment was in my AP Biology class. We had to write a children’s book with pictures about photosynthesis and cell respiration. This assignment was difficult because in order to write creatively about the processes you really had to understand them. The assignment was therefore extremely beneficial to me.

**Student Fooled**

In 7th grade I had a Social Studies teacher play an awful April Fool’s Trick on our class. We didn’t realize it was April Fool’s Day, and our teacher told us we were having a pop test. She made us stand in the front of the room until she called us one-by-one to the front. She asked one question, and your grade depended on how many times it took you to answer correctly (A = one time, B = 2, etc.). She even made a few of my classmates cry even after she said it was a joke!
Point of View

We asked two of our veterans with a combined 55 years of experience at UConn the question ...

Thinking about your years in education, what do you feel is the most significant change in student assessment; and what impact has this made in the education of these students?

Dr. Sally Reis; Gifted Education

Assessment practices have changed a great deal in the 37 years since I started teaching high school English. Almost four decades ago, there was much less focus on statewide assessment. During my years of teaching reading in middle school, I did not have access to individual reading fluency or comprehension scores for my students, and rarely had the opportunity to learn how my students compared with other students in the school, district or state. Assessment practices today enable teachers to be better at knowing how to challenge their students and how to make decisions about what curriculum and learning opportunities work and which do not.

Assessment has also changed in that more advanced assessment techniques enable teachers to be more confident and questioning consumers of programs and curriculum. The more teachers are trained in assessment strategies and research methods, the better questions they will be able to ask.

I hope that graduates of our Neag School of Education learn to use assessment to ask difficult questions. I hope they inquire about why their district or school adopts a certain reading or math program by asking about the assessments conducted on the program.

Before spending millions of dollars on a new basal reading program, we should ask if the use of the program results in higher student achievement than the program that is already in use. In this way, assessment can help teachers overcome the problem of being a victim to the newest fad or sales pitches about new products with little research showing benefits to children.

What do teachers have to know today? A focus exists in learning how to assess within content areas. For example, in the reading research I do today, we have found a shocking range of 12 grade levels in reading that teachers face in an average fifth grade class. Knowing the grade level reading equivalencies for each student in the class will help teachers to understand the range of differentiated reading experiences and instruction that is required to challenge students and encourage them to read at levels that will enable them to make continuous progress.

Dr. Scott Brown; Cognition & Instruction

As an educational psychologist for the past 25 years, I have seen several changes in the field of assessment.

First, the need for knowledge and skills with the assessment and evaluation process, and associated outcomes, has never been more important for educators at all levels, K-12, through college, and into business and industry. There is an increased impact of state and federal agencies on education at all levels, from the implementation of NCLB to “the age of accountability” and accreditation procedures. Educators, whether K-12 teachers or
Brown

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university professors, must be able to effectively use assessment and evaluation procedures as a regular part of their educational practice. They must be able to employ assessment results in their educational practice to promote student learning and performance. Increasingly, educators also need to be able to interpret the results from assessments in a meaningful way to lay people; parents, students, and the general public. This requires a significant increase in assessment knowledge and skill for today’s educators.

Second, there is an increased need to be able to effectively use assessment techniques for formative as well as summative decisions for a diverse student population. Educators need to be knowledgeable in order to critically apply assessment techniques used to interpret the outcomes and to promote learning for all students. With the dramatic increase in the diversity of our student population at all levels of education, educators need to be aware of assessment procedures appropriate for our diverse population of students in order to promote both learning and opportunities to learn for all our students.

Finally, we have seen a broader array of assessment techniques available to educators: the number of assessment tools have increased. These new techniques include qualitative, quantitative and mixed approaches. These include portfolios, concept maps, and performance-based assessment, to name just a few. With new techniques and approaches, comes a corresponding increase in the training and preparation of educators on their effective implementation.

In summary, educators today are faced with increased assessment demands and an increased set of tools to meet these demands, with the goal of promoting learning and achievement for all students, at all ages. As we prepare the next generation of educators, we must be sure they are prepared for these demands so that the students in educational settings are prepared to meet their own challenges as they become functioning productive members of our society; locally, nationally and globally. With the new assessment challenges come new opportunities which should be used to promote optimal learning environments for everyone.

Reflections

Continued from page 1

the draft and had the opportunity to go through it for final modifications. These modifications were made. Copies were widely distributed to committee members, department/program leaders, and the dean’s office. A PowerPoint presentation was created and distributed to committee members. This PowerPoint captured the highlights of the plan. Faculty who are committee members were asked to share it with respective departments. Additionally, the Annual Assessment Program Report and School Improvement Report which were mentioned in the plan were introduced. More specifically, in the Fall, the Annual Assessment Program Report was distributed and collected. At our October meeting, the committee saw an updated draft of the School Improvement Report.

Current/Future: Faculty members have been asked to forward the minutes from the department meeting where the plan was shared with faculty. During the winter break, the 2008-2009 Assessment Program Report was distributed and will be collected in May. Similarly, the final School Improvement Data Report was sent to committee members, and program and department leaders.

- Providing feedback on the employer survey report

What has been done: The draft of the employer survey report was shared electronically and in-person at our...
Reflections

Continued from the previous page

October meeting. Feedback was given by the committee to the draft of the employer survey report and this was incorporated into the final version. The report has been widely distributed to those involved in Teacher Education, Physical Therapy, School Counseling, School Psychology, and Administrator/Superintendent Programs. At the October meeting, the committee members pointed out that school psychology, athletic training, and physical training programs would like to customize the employer survey as each program is undergoing accreditation.

Current status: The School Psychology Doctoral Program developed an electronic survey, aligned with APA, and distributed it the beginning of January. The results will be available in mid-February. The Physical Therapy Program will re-administer the survey developed in 2007-2008 with statements that are connected to their accreditation. Discussions with the Athletic Training program also have begun.

• Discussing and determining plans for our next alumni survey

What has been done: At our October meeting, this issue of when we will resurvey graduates across each of our five departments was discussed. The survey was last distributed the spring of 2006 and results report in fall of 2007. The committee is recommending that we will re-administer the survey in 2011 right after the NCATE visit.

Current status: The School Psychology doctoral program needs to have an alumni survey tied to APA accreditation. A survey has been developed and is on Checkbox. It has been developed and distributed in early January and results shared mid-February.

• Providing feedback to the faculty and staff climate survey and report

What has been done: The committee members gave feedback to drafts of the climate survey. The final survey was distributed to the faculty and staff, with reminders distributed. Various departments discuss the need to complete the survey. The preliminary results were shared and discussed with the committee at the October meeting. The results were shared with the dean’s office. Associate Dean Thomas DeFranco made an announcement during the November faculty meeting that there are two recommendations tied to the results that we will address through committees: the mentoring program and communication.

Current status: The tenure vs. tenure-track analyses will be conducted. The two committees established by Dr. DeFranco will convene this spring.

• Providing feedback to the Neag Department/Assessment Review report

What has been done: The committee received a draft report. In this presentation, members were told that within the report by school and by department, we will have enrollment and graduation patterns, faculty numbers and scholarship, grade distributions, and NEASC Assessment Plan information. There will be a wealth of information in the multiple appendices. The report focused on three years trends.

Current status: The final report has been distributed during the winter break. It went to the committee, program and department leaders, and the Dean’s Office. This report may help program leaders complete the Program Report this semester.

• Ensuring that each department has developed NEASC Assessment Plans in the fall and report findings in the spring

What has been done: In October, we were notified that we were the only school submitting NEASC assessment plans for every program and the undergraduate and graduate level in 2007-2008! Department leaders received two notices with the timeline for 2008-2009.

Current status: This year, our focus will be to involve even more people, limit the number of metrics devoted to class grades, and ensure timeliness of the reporting. An email was distributed during the winter break to department and program leaders. It specifies to review your mission, goals, objectives and measure in January/February, and complete the data section the end of the spring semester.
The RTI framework stresses that about 80% (tier 1 or primary) of students will respond to the comprehensive and coordinated instruction given to all students, 15% (tier 2 or secondary) of students will need additional or supplemental instruction, and 5% (tier 3 or tertiary) of students will need intensive, specialized, and individualized instruction. Assessment, then, must be multifaceted to fit into this framework.

Assessment, in an RTI framework, can be defined through its four purposes. First, assessment can be used for screening. Screening assessments are used to determine which children are at risk and who will need additional intervention. Second, assessment can be used to diagnose. Diagnostic assessments provide in-depth information about students’ skills and instructional needs.

Third, assessment can be used as a progress monitoring tool to determine if instruction or intervention is enabling students to make adequate progress. Last, assessment can be used in an evaluative capacity. Evaluative assessments provide a bottom-line evaluation of the effectiveness of a program.

Although it may seem daunting to need four types of assessments, it should be noted that certain assessments can be used in multiple ways. For example, Oral Reading Fluency is a Curriculum Based Measurement that can be used for screening, progress monitoring, and evaluation. Oral Reading Fluency is an assessment in which an evaluator counts the number of words the child reads correctly from a grade-level text in a one minute span. Reading fluency is important because, for example, even if a child comprehends information well she will have difficulty if she cannot read fluently (two graphs which highlight the effectiveness of Oral Reading Fluency assessments can be found to the right).

Next, the presenters highlighted the benefits, limitations, and assessment utility of various reading assessments (e.g., Gates-MacGintie Reading Test) and writing assessments (e.g., Test of Written Language-3, Woodcock-Johnson-III, and Wechsler Individual Achievement Test-2).

The take-home message of the presentation was that in considering an assessment tool, educators should consider the students’ needs, the purpose of the test, how the data will be used, and what resources are available in attaining the test.

The full PowerPoint presentation from this colloquium can be found at: http://www.education.uconn.edu/events/soa/0809archive.cfm