No Child Left Behind: Positives, Obstacles and Lots of Solutions

On March 19th the Neag School of Education was host to the conference, No Child Left Behind (NCLB): Positives, Obstacles, and Solutions, as part of the Spotlight on Assessment initiative. The NCLB conference gathered presenters from both national and state levels. It was co-sponsored with the Teachers for a New Era and the Connecticut Testing Network. Plenary presenters included Dr. Zollie Stevenson of the U.S. Department of Education, Mr. Gene Wilhoit of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and Dr. Mark K. McQuillan of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). Additional presenters from the U.S. Department of Education, the CSDE, the CCSSO, and others from Connecticut also joined us.

Within this News Brief, you will find summaries submitted by our graduate students who attended the conference. Each student shares the perspective they had from each presenter.

The conference began with introductions and a warm welcoming by Dr. Scott Brown, Director of Teachers for a New Era. Dr. Schwab following by discussing why we should hold a statewide conference for NCLB. He shared that during the conference we would discuss both the positive aspects of NCLB as well as the challenging aspects of this “comprehensive law that effects so many of our lives - but more importantly the lives of today’s children and adolescents that populate our nations schools.” He continued by stating, “Having worked in the area of school reform for more than three decades I am constantly reminded that solving our nations educational challenges make solving global warming look simple....I do believe the nation needs to continue to address closing the achievement

Continued on page 2.

Dr. Scott Brown at podium prior to introducing Dean Richard Schwab and Dr. Shuana Tucker waiting to introduce Dr. Zollie Stevenson.
No Child Left Behind (continued from p. 1)

gap as a central component of our national agenda. Consequently, landmark legislation like NCLB is needed to help us solve the problem, not solve the problem as we all hold major responsibilities in not only closing the gap but raising the bar for all students.”

Dean Schwab explained that although NCLB has to work more effectively, any “major federal piece of legislation targeting such a vexing problem requires continuous evaluation and revision to achieve the intended goals.” He welcomed individuals and expressed his desire that this dialog will help influence the changes tied to the law. With Dean Schwab’s remarks, the conference was ready to begin.

In addition to graduate student articles, you can access all PowerPoint presentations at: http://www.education.uconn.edu/conferences/assessment/presentations.cfm

Plenary Session A

Studies of Title I Program and State and Local Implementation of NCLB: What We Know of Its Impact

Introduction
Dr. Shuana Tucker, Department of Educational Leadership at the Neag School of Education
Presenter
Dr. Zollie Stevenson, U.S. Department of Education

Plenary Session B

What Are the Positives, Obstacles, and Solutions from Across the States?

Introduction
Ms. Frances Rabinowitz, Hamden Superintendent of Schools; Connecticut Testing Network
Presentation
Mr. Gene Wilhoit, Council of Chief State School Officers

Plenary Session C

What Are the Positives, Obstacles, and Solutions from Across Connecticut?

Introduction
Dr. Robert Colbert, Department of Educational Psychology at the Neag School of Education; Teachers for a New Era
Presenter
Dr. Mark K. McQuillan, Commissioner of Education for the Connecticut State Department of Education

Breakout Sessions

Issues in Analyzing Student Achievement Trends Tied to NCLB

Introduction
Dr. Yuhang Rong, Assistant Dean of the Neag School of Education
Presenter
Dr. Rolf Blank, Council of Chief State School Officers

ESEA Politically Untouchable: A Superintendent's Panel

Introduction
Dr. Shuana Tucker, Department of Educational Leadership at the Neag School of Education
Presenters
Dr. Harvey Polansky, Milford Superintendent of Schools
Ms. Mary Cortright, Meriden Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Joshua Starr, Stamford Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Salvatore Pascarella, Danbury Superintendent of Schools

What Are We Learning about Including All Students in Assessment and Accountability

Introduction
Ms. Frances Rabinowitz, Hamden Superintendent of Schools; Connecticut Testing Network
Presenter
Dr. Sue Rigney, U.S. Department of Education

NCLB in Connecticut: Implementation, Current Procedures, and Proposals for Growth

Introduction
new name, The College Board; Connecticut Testing Network
Presenters
Mr. Gil Andrada, Connecticut State Department of Education
Ms. Sarah Ellsworth, Connecticut State Department of Education
Mr. George Michna, Connecticut State Department of Education

Partnering with Parents for Success under NCLB

Introduction
Dr. Robert Colbert, Department of Educational Psychology at the Neag School of Education; Teachers for a New Era
Presenters
Ms. Judy Carson, Connecticut State Department of Education
Ms. Rosalina Mendoza, Connecticut State Department of Education

Greeting registrants were Tina Kim, Donalyn Maneggia, Kara McKenna, and Mallory Coleman
Dr. Stevenson’s began the first plenary session by focusing on national studies funded by the U.S. Department of Education that analyzed the impact of the NCLB on Title I program implementation and accountability. This included results of research studies on school choice, supplemental educational services, and teacher quality.

Dr. Stevenson explained that Title 1 funding of 12.8 billion is the biggest part of the USDE budget. This money is used for instruction, support, and administrative costs to support about 20 million students, primarily at the elementary and middle school levels.

NCLB requires all students to be proficient by 2013-2014. Dr. Stevenson spoke to the issue by discussing Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). Seventy-two percent of schools missed AYP in 2004-05 either the “all students” group or “two or more” subgroups. Students with disabilities subgroup had the largest percentage (38%) for schools that missed AYP.

Thirteen percent of our schools were identified as needing improvement. “High poverty, high minority, middle schools, and large schools in urban areas, were more likely than other schools to be identified for improvement for 2004-05. Similarly, schools with more student subgroups and greater proportions of students with disabilities were more likely to be identified for improvement” indicated Stevenson. Technical assistance included support teams, individual school improvement specialists, regional centers, statewide meetings and resources were recommended to support these schools.

On teacher quality, Dr. Stevenson stated: “The percentage of teachers who are not highly qualified under NCLB is higher for special education teachers, teachers of LEP students, and middle school teachers, as well as for teachers in high poverty and high minority schools.” Stevenson believes that NCLB has created an opportunity to carefully look at the current U.S. education system and examine the best way to support the children in education.
What Are the Positives, Obstacles, and Solutions from Across the States?
By Wei Xia

This is a presentation summary of Mr. Gene Wilhoit, Council of Chief State School Officers who was introduced by Ms. Frances Rabinowitz, Hamden Superintendent of Schools and past president of the Connecticut Testing Network.

In Mr. Gene Wilhoit’s presentation he began by presenting the positives in NCLB from across the states. He addressed that there are some positive changes in the foundation of institutional development and evaluations for student performance standards and teacher qualifications. He also pointed out that the country has moved from reporting overall success to reporting the performance of every child, and every state has its own system of institutional accountability at different state level. He said that assessments were playing the much more important role in education, and teacher requirements are moving toward the trend which is aligned with what students need.

Mr. Wilhoit then talked about some obstacles from across the states. He mentioned that there are no common standards for students across the country because of the tradition and history. According to Mr. Wilhoit, it is difficult to achieve a general goal with the variety of backgrounds, specific skills and various implementations from each state. Also, he noticed that the federal government does not understand about each state’s requirements while each state has to deal with the increasing burdens and responsibilities.

The last part of Mr. Wilhoit’s presentation is about the possible solutions from across the states. He encouraged educators to be innovative, learn from failure, and do more assessment practices. He also talked about the rising issues in Professional Development programs, family resources and appropriate assessment for LEP (Limited English Proficient) students and students with disabilities. Finally, he suggested that we should improve teacher quality, have high-quality instruction, allow student diversity, re-design the assessment, allocate the educational resources more properly, and try to align the state requirements with the federal requirements.
What are the Positives, Obstacles, and Solutions from Across Connecticut?
By Kara McKenna

This is the presentation summary of Mr. Mark McQuillan, the Commissioner of Education at the Connecticut State Department of Education who was introduced by Dr. Robert Colbert from the Department of Educational Psychology.

Mr. Mark K. McQuillan gave an informative and timely presentation on Connecticut and the NCLB. His presentation, entitled “What is Connecticut’s Role in Implementing NCLB Successfully?” discussed Connecticut’s plan for implementing NCLB.

Mr. McQuillan began his presentation by describing the current status of Connecticut schools. NCLB sanctions for schools and districts “in need of improvement” have been steadily increasing. For example, in the 2004-2005 school year, 136 Connecticut schools, 27 districts, were “in need of improvement.” Alarmingly, it is projected that in the 2010-2011 school year 568 Connecticut schools, 100 districts, will fall under this category. With the number of schools and districts in need of improvement on the rise, work must be done to help districts turn around.

With this in mind, the Connecticut Department of Education underwent a reorganization which restructured existing divisions and created two new bureaus: Accountability, Compliance, and Monitoring and School and District Improvement. Both bureaus were created to address and focus on the school districts within the state that are in need of improvement.

Additionally, an accountability plan was devised to align Connecticut directly with NCLB accountability standards. Among its many features, this accountability plan includes a Response to Intervention framework, providing a tiered system of interventions to districts in need. Additionally, the plan involves former superintendents, many interagency teams and support structures, as well as pilot schools in “reciprocal responsibility.” In this plan, all groups are expected to participate to help boost schools and districts out of the “in need of improvement” range.

While there is much optimism about these changes, Mr. McQuillan also cited foreseeable obstacles. Mr. McQuillan acknowledged that finding sufficient resources to boost schools is an issue in this process. Additionally, he stated that local resistance to make changes within struggling schools is a challenge that must be overcome to turn schools around. In order to increase the amount of available resources, Mr. McQuillan proposed fostering external partnerships with other organizations. Additionally, he offered the use of holistic interventions, such as Positive Behavioral Supports, multicultural awareness, and the use of instructional best practices, as well as professional development and leadership training to help decrease school resistance.

Currently, The Connecticut State Department of Education is working to implement the Connecticut Plan with the hope that this structure and its interventions will help turn the tide for struggling schools.
This is the presentation summary of Dr. Rolf Blank, the Director of Education Indicators for the Council of Chief State School Officers who was introduced by Dr. Yuhang Rong, the Assistant Dean of the Neag School of Education.

Dr. Blank focus was the analysis of student achievement trends in relation to NCLB legislation. Dr. Blank began his discussion by reviewing the major premises of NCLB legislation: NCLB makes all schools and students accountable, the goal of NCLB is to improve individual student and student groups performances to the proficient level by 2014, NCLB identifies schools that need improvement (determined after at least 2 years of not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)), and that NCLB accountability provides incentives toward improved system performance.

The presentation continued with the comparison of Connecticut’s NCLB summary statistics to those of Massachusetts and Wisconsin. According to Dr. Blank, Connecticut has more schools achieving AYP than Massachusetts, but less than Wisconsin. This same trend continues when the number of schools needing improvement, number of schools needing restructuring (4 consecutive years of not meeting AYP), and the percentage rates of schools achieving AYP across 4 years are all compared across the three states. Dr. Blank attributed Massachusetts’ lower performances to the state setting harder targets to reach and Wisconsin’s higher performance on their setting of lower targets and the administration of easier state tests. Further analysis of the achievement trends in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin reveal that Connecticut and Massachusetts have stayed fairly stable in their achievement levels since the implementation of NCLB in 2003. Wisconsin, on the other hand, has shown some improvement in achievement since 2003. To supplement his presentation, Dr. Blank offered sample questions from state tests for all 3 states.

After completing his discussion on the comparison of Connecticut to other states based on their AYP rates, Dr. Blank wrapped up his discussion with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and different state definitions of proficiency.
Dr. Sue Rigney is responsible for monitoring state implementation of the standards, assessment and accountability requirements under NCLB. She does that by providing support and technical assistance to nine states as they work to implement NCLB and by serving as the assessment specialist on Title I monitoring teams. NCLB requires that all students, those students with disabilities and limited English proficiency, be included in statewide assessments and accountability calculations. As state’s work to develop practical assessment strategies for these students they are gaining new understanding of the students, the impact of test accommodations, and the implications for test design.

The recent research from the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing (CRESST) from UCLA, reports 731, 732, and 737 are a comprehensive resource for states that includes a literature review, overview of state practices and recommendations for how best to include all students in state assessments and accountability. Some methods of accommodations discussed were simplified English, customized English dictionaries, bilingual dictionaries, glossary, extra time, dual language test booklets, and translation into the native language of the learner. Dr. Rigney noted that some of these accommodations helped both the English Language Learners (ELL) and the Non-ELL students.

Dr. Rigney spoke about how Connecticut has been one of the lead states in developing a comprehensive state system to monitor the use of accommodations in testing. Connecticut has an electronic data entry system, district coordinator training, state mandated IEP forms and IDEA focused monitoring which provides a follow-up. Dr. Rigney is encouraged by the research and work Connecticut is doing with Title 1 students and hopes that other states will follow Connecticut’s examples to provide support for English Language Learners. In the last 5 years the student population has changed dramatically and these students must be given support in our education system.
Partnering with Parents for Success under NCLB
By Qing Li

This is the presentation summary of Ms. Judy Carson, Ms. Rosalina Mendoza, and Ms. Marlene Padernacht, all of the Connecticut State Department of Education, who were introduced by Dr. Robert Colbert of the Department of Educational Psychology at the Neag School of Education and also Teachers for a New Era.

NCLB has changed the environment for parental involvement by strengthening requirements for schools and districts to actively engage parents in the education of their children. However, national Title 1 reports indicate that these requirements are not consistently met. This session highlighted the key leverage points in NCLB that are useful to parents, innovative policy strategies, and Connecticut’s efforts to build effective school-family-community partnerships. Participants were informed about resources available through the Connecticut Parent Information and Resource Center.

Ms. Judy Carson’s presentation focused on parental involvement under NCLB. She emphasized that successful programs should encourage linking family involvement to learning; focusing on involvement at home; recognizing that all parents are involved in their children’s learning; addressing specific family needs; embracing partnership and making families feel welcomed. She particularly stressed the key principle of providing timely information and options for parents. Parents have the right to request their child’s teacher’s qualification as well as district and school “report cards” which show data on school and student performance, graduation rates, teacher qualification, etc.

Ms. Rosalina Mendoza presented the key leverage points for parents. Under NCLB, all Title 1 schools and districts must have clearly written parent involvement policies and procedures that establish the vision, plan, capacity and responsibility for parent involvement. These policies and procedures are developed jointly with Title 1 parents, are distributed to and evaluated with Title 1 parents.

Ms. Marlene Padernacht introduced Connecticut Parent Information and Recourse Center (CT PIRC). Guided by the overarching principle that all families have strengths and play a critical role in their children’s educational success, CT PIRC builds on these family strengths to ultimately increase student academic achievement. The goal of PIRC is to improve parents’ access to information and resources that will assist them in becoming active participants in their children’s educational lives. The objectives of PIRC are to increase parents’ capacity to understand school systems, their rights and responsibilities under NCLB; to provide information and training to school personnel and service providers to build the capacity of professionals to work effectively with families; to support school districts in the development and implementation of effective parent involvement policies, programs and activities; to provide funding, on-site training, and technical assistance to targeted communities. She also addressed the partners of PIRC, the offerings provided by PIRC and how parents can use PIRC service.
NCLB in Connecticut: Implementation, Current Procedures, and Proposals for Growth
By Mallory Coleman

This is the presentation summary of Mr. Gil Andrada, Ms. Sarah Ellsworth, and Mr. George Michna, all of the Connecticut State Department of Education, who were introduced by Dr. Arthur Doyle of the Connecticut Testing Network and The College Board.

Ms. Ellsworth began the group’s presentation by discussing the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) analysis for all districts across the state and the criteria that Connecticut laid out for determining AYP when implementing NCLB legislation. In the continued implementation of NCLB, the Connecticut Department of Education recently requested and received permission for the exemption of English language learning students from the writing and reading components of state testing until they have been in the country at least 3 years.

Another area of NCLB legislation Ms. Ellsworth discussed was the Safe Harbor standard. Safe Harbor is an alternate, but just as good, way for schools to make AYP. Although a school may not have achieved AYP, making a certain amount of improvement (a 10 percent reduction in the percent not proficient) is sufficient for Safe Harbor. It was also announced at the presentation that Connecticut will be included in a pilot program that will explore the use of differentiated consequences for schools in need of improvement in the future.

Next, Mr. Andrada discussed new developments in Connecticut’s implementation of NCLB. The State Assigned Student Identifier (SASID) system is being developed to monitor student progress on state testing. Each student will be given an identifying number that all of their testing scores will be catalogued under. With this system, student progress on state testing will be able to be monitored even if a student changes schools or even states. In addition to new developments, Mr. Andrada also discussed growth calculations and vertical scales.

To wrap up the presentation, Mr. George Michna discussed NCLB initiatives in the state of Connecticut, specifically modified assessments, benchmarks, and formative assessment. According to Mr. Michna, the goal of these initiatives is to improve data collection and dissemination. Some ways Connecticut is achieving these goals is through the development of a data dictionary, where terms will be defined, and a data warehouse where all data will be accessible. The state’s data warehouse is scheduled to be complete by the end of 2009.

Teachers for a New Era Reports of Teacher Education Alumni from IB/M and TCPCG

Teachers for A New Era (TNE) recently conducted a survey of the 1994-2006 graduate. The purpose of this study was to gather information from alumni of the Neag Teacher Preparation Programs in order to improve the programs and enhance pupil achievement. This survey was designed to provide evidence on the value of teacher preparation in promoting pupil learning and relates to all tenants of the TNE initiative, funded by the Carnegie Corporation with additional funding from the Annenberg and Ford Foundations.

The participants in this survey were alumni from 1994 to 2006 from the Neag Teacher Preparation Program, both the Integrated Bachelor’s/Master’s Teacher Education (IB/M) and Teacher Certification Program for College Graduates (TCPCG) components. The original sample consisted of 1,460 alumni of which 71.5% were from the IB/M program and 28.5% from TCPCG. The total response rate estimated was 19%.

Research questions focused on alumni satisfaction with multi-faceted aspects of their teacher education program including diversity. As part of this survey, alumni were given the opportunity to provide written reflections on both the strengths and areas for improvement to the Teacher Education Program. They were also posed with open-ended questions posed below.

Q1. What did you find most valuable about your teacher education program?

The most common response given was the clinical and student teaching experiences. Approximately half of the responses referred to these experiences as being the most valuable in preparing them as teachers. This is consistent
with quantitative survey data. In relation to this response, the second most common was that of the variety of experiences (i.e., teaching in different grade levels, urban areas). Respondents referred to their variety of diverse experiences as preparing them best for real world teaching. The next most common theme among the respondents was their relationships with teachers and peers. Many respondents named specific professors who inspired them and modeled effective teaching strategies within an optimal learning atmosphere. Student collaboration was also found to be very valuable. Respondents found that being in a small setting with other students in a related field allowed them to grow as teachers.

Q2. What did you find least valuable about your teacher education program?

The most common response was that the program required certain classes that seemed irrelevant and redundant. Respondents found themselves spending their time learning about things in which they had already studied as undergrads and that were not relevant to their given specialization. Specifically, the one-credit morning classes were commonly mentioned among responses as being broad, repetitive and effectively useless with no sense of application. A related theme among the respondents was that some classes were too large. Within these large classes, there was no group work. The respondents seemed to value group work, and having that eliminated in large lecture classes was a flaw in the program for them. A third common theme relates directly to the professors, but more commonly mentioned, the advisors in the program. Students stated that some professors/advisors in the program did not seem involved and were unapproachable. The respondents claimed that they provided minimal feedback and were poor role models.

Aside from these three large themes, there were multiple responses that fit into smaller groups, but weren’t necessarily large themes. Such responses were: how the program didn’t cover enough topics with a narrow focus in some classes (i.e., special education classes); and being forced into internships that were not in one’s projected area (i.e., teaching in elementary school).

Q3: What, if anything, was missing from your teacher education program?

The most common theme among respondents was that of class management. Approximately half of the responses stated in one way or another that class management skills were not taught by the program. As beginning teachers, they found that dealing with behavior management and paperwork were among the things in which UConn did not prepare them for. They suggested the program make an attempt to teach some type of classroom management skills to better prepare students for real-world teaching. The second most common theme was that of dealing with parents. Respondents claimed that they were not prepared to deal with parent complaints and basic interaction. They felt that UConn could have better prepared them as teachers if a simple lesson had been taught on how to deal with a student’s parents.

There were three other themes that were not as common as the previous two, but were equal among them. Respondents wished the program had offered classes in more diverse fields such as math/chemistry teaching. They felt that graduating with the ability to cross over from one content area to another would have better prepared them and would have given them more opportunity as teachers. Respondents felt that more instruction could have been given for meeting the needs of special education students and students with learning disabilities. And, respondents felt that the program lacked courses on tech training. They would have preferred to have been taught how to properly create Power Points and effectively use technology to supplement their teaching efforts.

Q4: If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution, why?

The most common theme among the responses was that they would return because the program left them...
very well prepared to do their jobs. Most responses contained the words “well prepared” or in some cases “more prepared” than their colleagues. The second most common theme was that they would return because of the program’s reputation. The respondents felt that it was “an honor” to go through Neag School and that it was such a respected program that allowed for many job opportunities. The third and fourth most common themes, but not nearly as common as the previous two are that they would return because the program: had inspirational professors within it. Respondents felt that they’ve made friends/resources for life after attending the program and working along side their helpful professors; was a good education for the price. Respondents to this theme were all in-state students who felt that the program was both a convenient and cost effective way of receiving a good education; and, within most of the responses containing the themes above, many respondents simply stated that they thoroughly “enjoyed their experience” at UConn and felt that it’s program was exemplary.

Q5: What three professional development opportunities would you be interested in?

There were many common themes tied to professional development among the responses given. The most common of those themes was the development of classroom management skills. Respondents felt that the development of skills in such areas as motivating students and teaching those who are low/high level learners would be most beneficial to a teacher. The second most common theme, almost as common as the one above, was the teaching of reading and writing skills. Respondents believe that the development of the skills required to help struggling readers/writers is an extremely important factor. Some claimed that reading/writing workshops should have been implemented into the program in order to successfully prepare teachers for struggling readers/writers. The third most common theme, again almost as common as the first, is the development of technology integration. Respondents stated a desire to become acquainted with assistive technology in teaching. A development of these technological skills is something that was a clear consensus among the respondents. Another common theme, not as common as those stated above, is that of differentiated instruction. Respondents simply stated differentiation of instruction as an area of development in which they were interested in. Other common themes, that were not as common as the previous ones, are: development with parental interaction skills; outreach and involvement; development of skills in working with those in special education, and development of effective assessment strategies.

Q6. Please tell us anything else tied to your teacher preparation program or your career that is relevant that you would like to share.

The most common response given concerned the education and preparation received through Neag School. Respondents were very well prepared as teachers upon entering the real world and believe that preparation was due to their great experiences at UConn. Overall, they are happy as teachers and feel that they are where they want to be. A second most common response was that of the teaching and guidance in the program. Respondents were more than pleased with their professors and advisors. They viewed these teachers and advisors as caring, professional, and assets to their career. On many occasions, respondents specifically named two to three names of individuals who inspired and guided them. Aside from these two common themes, it was difficult to find any other common theme as most answers were extremely specific to the given individual. However, we would like to alert you to some responses that came up at least twice by a few respondents: they wished the program was less idealized and more realistic in its instruction and disappointment in the BEST program as it involved too much busy work. A few respondents felt that more could be integrated into the program, i.e., foreign language/technology. And, a couple respondents felt that students should be placed within suburban and urban settings in order to see first hand diverse teaching.

For additional information about this study, please contact Dr. Mary Yakimowski.
Employer Surveys to Find Out How Neag School is Doing

Add text
Spring Assessment Colloquia Series Continues

The spring colloquia series on assessment continues throughout 2007-2008. As part of the Spotlight on Assessment initiative, the Neag School of Education is sponsoring a series of presentations with topics covering many different areas of assessment.

The spring series was kicked off in January with a presentation by Dr. Gail Tomala of the Connecticut State Department of Education. Her presentation: “The BEST Teaching Portfolio: Is it Really a Professional Development Experience for Beginning Teachers and for the Educators Who Score Them?” covered the advantages and disadvantages of requiring the development of a portfolio for licensure as well as modifications being considered for the portfolio requirement.

Additionally, Dr. Julie Coiro, of the University of Rhode Island, delivered a presentation entitled: “How does the internet impact our thinking about effective literacy assessment?”

Finally, Dr. Jeff Greig gave a presentation on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) and its relationship to No Child Left Behind legislation.

Upcoming presenters include: Dr. Thanos Patelis from the College Board and Dr. Scott Brown with Mr. Anthony Artino from the Neag School of Education.

For more information on upcoming presentations including descriptions, or to register, please visit the colloquia website at: ww.education.uconn.edu/events/soa/index.cfm.

Did you know... What were the demographics of graduates last year?

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The BEST Teaching Portfolio: Is it really a professional development experience for beginning teachers and for the educators who score them?

By Mallory Coleman

Gail Tomala, Ph.D. currently works as an Education Consultant and BEST Social Studies Project Leader for the Connecticut State Department of Education. In her presentation on the BEST (Beginning Educator Support and Training) Program, she gave a thorough overview of the teaching portfolio process and requirements. The BEST Program is a two-year program that requires the construction of a teaching portfolio designed to help new teachers develop a detailed account of their lessons and the impact they have on students. Every new teacher in the state of Connecticut must submit a portfolio in order to gain licensure from the state. According to Dr. Tomala, the average teacher portfolio is approximately 150 pages.

To familiarize her audience with the information needed for teaching portfolios, Dr. Tomala used two examples of teaching units. After reviewing each unit, the audience was invited to offer the strengths and weaknesses of the example units based on the design, implementation and assessments utilized. Ways to improve each sample teaching unit were also addressed with Dr. Tomala requesting input from the audience in addition to her own suggestions.

The scoring of portfolios was also discussed by Dr. Tomala. Portfolios are scored by trained scorers on a scale of 1 to 4. A score of 1 is a failing grade and the subsequent scores are all different levels of passing. Dr. Tomala told her audience that scorers go through rather extensive training to become capable scorers.
**How does the Internet impact our thinking about effective literacy assessment?**

**By Wei Xia**

The colloquium presented by Dr. Julie Coiro discussed how the internet impacts people’s thinking about effective literacy assessment. The purpose of this presentation was to aid people in understanding the issues that cause them to think differently about literacy assessment, to show current practices on assessing the new literacy of online reading comprehension, and to address some of the concerns and challenges related to measuring online literacy and learning.

Dr. Coiro first explored some of the challenges associated with developing valid and reliable measure of the complex literacy strategies and dispositions required to search for, comprehend, and respond to information on the Internet. She summarized that at least eight issues impact our thinking about literacy assessment in the digital age, including new literacy skills and strategies, new dispositions, new processes to add to products, new developmental differences to capture, new group measures to add to individual measures, new authentic problems to solve across disciplines, new tools and technologies for school, work, and daily life.

Dr. Coiro also shared some task examples and student responses from several assessments developed to measure online reading comprehension and communication skills.

At the end of the presentation, Dr. Coiro invited participants to share their own thoughts about how they may rethink the ways of evaluating the skills, strategies, and dispositions associated with reading and learning online, as well as their reflections on connections to the issues in their own teaching/learning context.

**The CT Academic Performance Test**

**By Mallory Coleman**

Dr. Jeff Greig, the Connecticut Academic Performance Test Program Manager for the Connecticut State Department of Education recently spoke about the CAPT as part of the Spring colloquia series. First implemented in 1995, the CAPT is the primary means of assessment at the high school level in Connecticut. The state currently requires all students to perform at the proficient level or higher in order to graduate from high school. Dr. Greig discussed the four areas of the CAPT:

- Reading Across the Disciplines
- Writing Across the Disciplines
- Mathematics
- Science

Dr. Greig also spoke about was a newly raised bill that would provide full college scholarships to high school students that score in the top 25 percent of students in each their school district on the CAPT and maintain at least a “B” average in high school. While this bill has not yet been passed, Dr. Greig is hopeful that it will be implemented by July 1, 2008.

The final part of Dr. Greig’s presentation was the current high school reform that is being debated in Connecticut. This proposed reform, which could mean the end of the CAPT program, would ensure that all graduating students would be prepared for the global marketplace. The reform calls for increasing the number of classes students need to graduate, the creation of a core curriculum of required courses, 21st Century learning skills to be embedded in State-developed model curricula, the requirement of end-of-course examinations and performance tasks, the development of student success plans, and the requirement of a senior demonstration project. The need for this reform is depicted in the current economic value of a high school diploma and the dwindling need for workers with only a high school education. After having already been approved by the State Department of Education, this proposed reform will be sent to the Governor and Legislature for approval in December 2008.
The Neag School of Education across All Departments: 1994-2006 Program Graduate Survey Results

The Neag School of Education administers a survey periodically to program graduates of the five departments: Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Leadership, Educational Psychology, Kinesiology, and Physical Therapy. The following results summarize the alumni from 1994 to 2006.

The participants in this survey were Neag program graduates from 1994 to 2006. The names of 3,800 students were extracted from the student database from the UConn Graduate School. With the option to complete the survey either by mail or online, a total of 507 program graduates completed the survey by May 8, 2007, yielding a response rate of 18%.

Research questions focused on program graduate satisfaction with multi-faceted aspects of their program.

Program graduates reported a mean of over 4.0, on a 1-5 scale, for each statement assessing their satisfaction with experiences. The highest rated variables were overall quality of instruction (4.48), accessibility of faculty (4.40), quality of teaching (4.36), up-to-date courses and finding relevant employment after graduation (4.31), and course content (4.29). The lowest rated variables consisted of a range of courses and sense of community with other students (4.19), job readiness (4.18), clinical, practicum, or internship experience (4.14), up-to-date equipment (4.05), and quality of advising (4.04).

In examining statements on diversity, program graduates rated the Neag School of Education highest on cultural sensitivity (4.04) and promoting an understanding of diversity and cultural differences (3.92). The two variables that yielded significant differences between importance and satisfaction were understanding people from other racial/ethnic backgrounds (.29) and promoting an understanding of diversity and cultural differences (.33).

The highest rated statements on preparation was getting students to learn on your own (4.44), thinking analytically and logically (4.39), collaborating effectively with other adults (4.36), solving problems (4.26), formulating creative and original ideas (4.25), and conducting research (4.13). The lowest rated were lacking of preparation to adapt to changes in working environment (4.09), using different approaches (4.08), understanding research in professional journals (4.07), supervising groups of people (3.90), and effectively using technology (3.65).

In qualitative questions, program graduates offered that they felt the faculty and their program were excellent. Course dissatisfaction and poor preparation for employment were the school’s areas for improvement.

Overall, 92.6% of program graduates reported that they would recommend the Neag School of Education to someone else; and, 87.3% of program graduates stated that they would return to the Neag School of Education if given the chance to start again.

In sum, 87.7% of program graduates gave the Neag School of Education an “A” or “B” grade in reference to their overall satisfaction with the Neag School of Education.

All assessment is a perpetual work in progress.
Linda Suske

The overall quality of the teacher preparation survey as stated by 1994-2006 alumni.
Major themes of the program graduate survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Educational Psychology</th>
<th>Educational Leadership</th>
<th>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</th>
<th>Kinesiology</th>
<th>Physical Therapy</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Overall quality of instruction</td>
<td>4.64 0.78</td>
<td>4.55 0.77</td>
<td>4.37 0.83</td>
<td>4.22 0.99</td>
<td>4.18 0.98</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Range of courses</td>
<td>4.33 0.91</td>
<td>4.33 0.80</td>
<td>4.02 1.02</td>
<td>4.00 0.86</td>
<td>4.27 0.65</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Course content</td>
<td>4.44 0.82</td>
<td>4.39 0.77</td>
<td>4.09 0.93</td>
<td>4.19 0.92</td>
<td>4.36 0.81</td>
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<tr>
<td>D. Up-to-date courses</td>
<td>4.53 0.71</td>
<td>4.39 0.80</td>
<td>4.15 1.03</td>
<td>4.00 1.04</td>
<td>4.18 0.87</td>
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<tr>
<td>E. Quality of teaching</td>
<td>4.51 0.86</td>
<td>4.37 0.85</td>
<td>4.29 0.85</td>
<td>4.13 1.04</td>
<td>4.36 0.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>F. Accessibility to faculty</td>
<td>4.56 0.81</td>
<td>4.32 0.87</td>
<td>4.35 0.94</td>
<td>4.14 1.11</td>
<td>4.72 0.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>G. Quality of advising</td>
<td>4.30 1.08</td>
<td>4.18 1.13</td>
<td>3.83 1.30</td>
<td>3.97 1.25</td>
<td>4.00 1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Courses challenged you to meet your fullest academic potential</td>
<td>4.44 0.85</td>
<td>4.32 0.95</td>
<td>4.00 1.06</td>
<td>3.97 1.02</td>
<td>4.18 0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Program challenged you to meet your fullest academic potential</td>
<td>4.47 0.91</td>
<td>4.37 0.96</td>
<td>4.06 1.06</td>
<td>3.91 1.05</td>
<td>4.27 0.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. Faculty involvement with students</td>
<td>4.45 0.93</td>
<td>4.26 0.87</td>
<td>4.13 0.99</td>
<td>4.08 1.07</td>
<td>4.45 0.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. Faculty experience as practitioners</td>
<td>4.50 0.94</td>
<td>4.43 0.89</td>
<td>3.99 1.14</td>
<td>3.91 1.07</td>
<td>4.63 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Up-to-date equipment</td>
<td>4.29 0.89</td>
<td>4.00 0.92</td>
<td>3.93 1.03</td>
<td>3.94 1.01</td>
<td>3.54 1.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>M. Sense of community with other students</td>
<td>4.25 1.05</td>
<td>4.28 0.96</td>
<td>4.12 1.03</td>
<td>3.86 1.19</td>
<td>3.90 0.83</td>
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<tr>
<td>N. Clinic/Practicum/Internship experiences</td>
<td>4.15 1.10</td>
<td>4.13 1.00</td>
<td>4.20 1.04</td>
<td>3.94 1.23</td>
<td>4.36 0.81</td>
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<tr>
<td>O. Job readiness</td>
<td>4.32 1.09</td>
<td>4.33 0.87</td>
<td>4.11 1.07</td>
<td>3.88 1.06</td>
<td>3.90 1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Finding relevant employment after graduation</td>
<td>4.39 1.06</td>
<td>4.40 1.02</td>
<td>4.26 1.17</td>
<td>3.88 1.14</td>
<td>4.63 0.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Educational Psychology, Educational Leadership, Curriculum & Instruction, Kinesiology, and Physical Therapy has sample sizes of 138, 109, 181, 36, and 11, respectively.