Motivating a Culture of Assessment at Neag School

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Director of Assessment

In the 2008-2009 academic year, the Neag School of Education will continue to move towards fostering a culture of assessment with the Spotlight on Assessment initiative. Our “spotlight” is getting brighter. We have very active participation from the Neag community on the Neag Assessment Committee and the TNE Teacher Education Assessment Committee exploring assessment topics, agenda items at department and faculty meetings focusing on assessment-related issues, our colloquia series on assessment-related topics, and planning for our annual assessment conference. Most recently, we initiated the News Brief last spring and are introducing a bulletin board on assessment in the first floor of Gentry this fall.

But what is a culture of assessment?

During the summer this listing appeared on an assessment listserv for those in higher education, as assessment culture involves the full community. Read the text below and help us make a culture of assessment and consider how we “assess” how we are doing.

1. Communication in a multitude of forms is vital. Having assessment items appear on staff, student, faculty, cabinet, and board meeting agendas, and having a variety of people addressing assessment in different contexts at these meetings is important. New student and faculty orientation may be good places to initiate conversations about assessment or to provide training.

2. Create opportunities where faculty can talk and exchange ideas about assessment. Brown bag lunches with faculty and/or student speakers on assessment may be helpful. The lunches could be a series devoted specifically to assessment themes or could dovetail on established brown bags that focus on pedagogy or learning. An annual Chairs meeting devoted to sharing assessment successes and failures may work.

3. Newsletters with local institutional or departmental success stories and bigger picture articles that provide both a local and global context for assessment may be interesting and helpful for some.

4. Bringing consultants to campus can be very inspiring.

5. Identifying a group of faculty who may serve as assessment exemplars, those who have some assessment experiences and are willing to be role models for others, has been helpful. Incentives may help in a recruitment effort. Outlining specific responsibilities for exemplars, such as speaking at a brown bag lunch, sharing assessment plans and tools, designing a reporting template, etc. may help in the recruitment effort.

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September and October are busy with assessment events:

- As part of the TNE grant, the Common Entrance Survey was administered to the Teacher Certification Program for College Graduates (TCPCG) students this summer. New Integrated Bachelor’s/Master’s Teacher Education (IB/M) and Music Education had until September 26th to complete this survey. This survey was designed to gain insight into the views, expectations, goals, and perceptions of students toward their teacher preparation program, and also their opinions on a number of related topics.

- Three forms of the Employer Survey were distribution last spring. The results were analyzed and a draft report is being reviewed by the Neag Assessment Committee.

- The 2nd edition of the Neag School of Education Assessment Plan has been approved by the Neag Assessment Committee. The committee members will share the plan with their departments in October/November.

- Surveys have been sent to the 2004 through 2008 graduates of the Teacher Education Program. They are due October 10.

- A school/departmental report is being prepared. A total of three years worth of data will be contained in this report. This will facilitate each department to examine data to address their strengths and areas of improvement regarding assessment.

- Many faculty members have been involved with their “SPA” report in preparation for the NCATE accreditation review in 2010. As part of their SPA reports, they need to report on 6 or more assessments. These reports are due this fall.

- During September/October the faculty and staff are taking the school climate survey. The last time we examined climate was 2005. The survey results will be used for school improvement purposes.

- The program leaders in all departments will be completing their annual report on assessment. As part of the Neag School of Education Assessment Plan, a report will be submitted in October. This very brief annual report that captures the meetings where assessment is discussed, summarizes some of the most pertinent data examined, and describes what has been done as a result of examining data. This form has been designed to take 5-20 minutes. The program leaders can use some of the data that may be captured by the NEASC Assessment Plan in OATS or the SPA reports. And, it complements rather than adds to the information collected elsewhere. Also, it allows for this assessment information to exist for accreditation purposes.

- A large number of faculty and students are presenting at the annual NERA conference this month. Many of these presentations are on assessment.

- Many departments have worked diligently on developing their NEASC Assessment Plans and placing in into the OATS database system. They were due to the university by October 1st. We were the only school successfully completing the assessments at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

- The alumni survey report that was distributed last spring to the Teacher Education Program cohorts of 2003 through 2007 has been released this month. Within that report, we have results disaggregated by program (IB/M, TCPCG) and by field.

- The next meeting of the Neag Assessment Committee is Wednesday, October 29.

- The assessment colloquium has been announced for this fall. At the first two colloquia, over 70 individuals signed up for each session.

For further information about any of these items, contact Mary Yakimowski at 486-2848 or mary.yakimowski@uconn.edu.
Successful assessment requires developing meaningful assessment plans for courses.

- Planning may occur at the institutional, division, and departmental levels.
- Institutional planning may be involved with general education assessment, campus-wide assessment activities, and establishing requirements for unit plans.
- Elements of an assessment should include such things as the purpose for assessment, methods that will be used, the timeline for administration, the framework for using the assessment information, and provisions for administering the plan.

(Assessment Essentials: planning, implementing, and improving assessment in higher education by Palomba and Banta 1999)

Components of an Assessment

| Learning Objectives | How is this objective aligned with the curriculum? | How will this objective be assessed? | Who will be involved in the assessment? | A summary of what was learned about each objective and the impact of these findings could go in this column to provide a written record of the assessment.

Objective #1 | Entries in this column identify courses and other aspects of the curriculum that help students master each objective |

Objective #2 |
Etc.

Program or Course Assessment Planning Matrix *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Performance Criteria</th>
<th>Implementation Strategy</th>
<th>Assessment Methods</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What should your students know and be able to do? | How will you know the objective has been met? | What learning activities will help students meet each objective? | What assessment methods will you use to collect data? | When will you collect data? | Who needs to know the results? How can you improve your program/course and your assessment process?

Dr. Jeff Greig, Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) Program Manager for the Connecticut State Department of Education, recently delivered a presentation as part of the ongoing Spotlight on Assessment colloquia series. His presentation gave a detailed overview of the CAPT and discussed newly proposed legislation concerning secondary level education in Connecticut.

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, and Science and presented sample questions from each section. He stressed that the questions from these sections focus on skills students will need in the real world and will provide teachers the opportunities to do interesting things in class, rather than have their students memorize facts. Dr. Greig also noted a study that recently found the CAPT to be a “better predictor of success in college than the SATs.”

According to Connecticut state law, all grade 10 students must take the CAPT, with a few exceptions. Due to the fact that the CAPT is currently not available in languages other than English, students whose primary language is not English may be exempt from the Reading and Writing portions of the test if it is their first year in a United States school. While they still must take the Mathematics and Science portions of the CAPT, the word problems may be read to them in English. Students in special education and those with physical disabilities are also given accommodations for the CAPT. Within the next academic year, special education students working off of a different curriculum than other students will hopefully be given a modified version of the CAPT test. This modified assessment is similar to the CAPT only with the harder questions removed to give those students a chance to reach the proficient level as well. Only 2 percent of students within a district are allowed to take part in this assessment. For 1 percent of students within a district that have significant cognitive impairments, a CAPT Skills Checklist may be performed by their teacher as a replacement for the CAPT.

Another topic Dr. Greig 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 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, 2009.

In its relationship to NCLB legislation, 50 public high schools, out of 182 in Connecticut failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress last year, 10 more high schools than in the previous year. The rising number of schools not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress indicates that some changes need to be made in Connecticut high schools.

Currently, a new high school reform 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.

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.

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**CAPT and No Child Left Behind**

- CAPT is used as the high school assessment for Adequate Yearly Progress under NCLB.
- NCLB Goal – all students proficient in Math and Reading by 2014.
- Each district and school is expected to make adequate yearly progress toward meeting state standards. Progress is measured for all students by sorting test results for students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial or ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English proficiency.
- If the district or school continually fails to make adequate progress toward the standards, then they will be held accountable.
Assessing All Three: Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviors

By Katherine Picho

The colloquia on assessment, presented by Dr. Scott Brown and Anthony Artino, Jr., focused on interdisciplinary research examining gains in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors of learners. Specifically, they discussed the importance of using all three domains - knowledge, attitudes and behavior - as a metric for assessing learning objectives.

Bloom’s domains of learning: the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains, are the bedrock of Knowledge, Attitudes and Behavior (KAB) as units of assessment in education. Dr. Brown noted that most assessments almost always utilize one of these three dimensions (KAB) to assess learning, but not all three together, when in fact, together Knowledge, Attitudes and Behavior provide a more holistic view and approach towards accurately assessing learning objectives. He argued that while effective assessments are most useful in terms of demonstrating change, refining curricula, documenting effective practices, and enabling transfer to other settings, the multi-purpose characteristics of assessment require that it be conducted in a triangulated manner in order to provide a more accurate representation of the learning outcomes. In other words, measuring knowledge alone, or behavior in itself without the other components is not likely to yield an all-round perspective of the issue being assessed. A tripartite approach that involves the measurement of Knowledge, Attitude and Behavior, is therefore important because it gives educators or researchers alternative ways to reframe problems and create interventions that target specific problem areas.

Artino and Brown demonstrated the utility and generalizability of this approach to assessment across four different domains: GlobalEd, Classroom of the Sea, the Husky Educational Technology Assessment program, (HETAP), and self-paced online learning with college undergraduates.

GlobalEd is an interdisciplinary, problem-based simulation related to international studies and embedded in the social studies curriculum, that assesses students’ decision making and negotiation skills. Students from a class negotiate treaties concerning current world issues, while they represent real-world countries and negotiate these issues through synchronous “live” conferences and e-mail communication. At the end of the simulation, learning outcomes are measured based on how much knowledge they have acquired, how they feel about negotiating and decision making and how well they think that they can transfer these skills to an authentic setting.

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Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviors
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HETAP is a three-tiered model grounded in the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) to evaluate the effective integration of technology in education. Educational Technology Assessment is conducted at three levels: Initial, Developing, and Proficient, with different expectations of KABs at each level. Each of the 3 levels contains 4 strands; Educational Technology Concepts and Operations, Creating Learning Environments and Experiences, Productivity and Professional Practice and Social, Legal, Ethical, and Human Issues.

Classroom Of the Sea, (COS), is problem-based learning module, created for deaf students at the American School for the Deaf, and is based on an environment that focuses on real world problems associated with the habitat for the Harbor Seal in Long Island Sound. It is interdisciplinary and involves drawing knowledge from the fields of biology, chemistry, physics, social studies, mathematics, and English which students use to prepare reports and study the seals from different points of view. COS impacts the KABs of the students in the area of science and technology, and raises the scientific literacy for the students, better preparing them for assimilation into college and universities.

Artino discussed the importance of KABs and their role in assessing online learning. In a study he conducted to address this under-researched area, he explored the relations between students’ KABs in a self-paced online course. He found that there are important outcomes, other than just knowledge, that are worthy of assessment in online learning situations; task value and self-efficacy beliefs appeared to be important proximal predictors of KABs since they occur during (and following) online learning. In a nutshell, his findings suggested that to positively influence KABs in a self-paced online course, developers should consider addressing students’ attitudes (specifically, their motivational beliefs).

“Good teaching is about motivating and helping children to learn. ... Teachers typically treat assessment as a necessary chore rather than an intrinsic part of the process.”
Gipps & Stobart, 1997

The GlobalEd Project at UConn

Problem-based learning environment using an online simulation.
Embedded in the social studies curriculum.
Interdisciplinary
Students from a class negotiate treaties concerning current world issues, while they represent real-world countries.
- Students are assigned to “issue area” groups (4-5 students)
- Synchronous “life” conferences and e-mail communication
- Simulation controllers (SIMCON).
  • A doctoral student in international relations

HETAP

Need for Assessment
- United States is spending upwards of $5 billion a year on technology
- Questions on the effective integration of technology in education
  • Is it working?
  • How would we know?
- Less than 50% of public school teachers are sufficiently well qualified in educational technology use.
  (Mursund & Beilefeldt, 1999)
- Movement to preparing Connecticut’s educators to effectively use educational technology to promote student learning

The Classroom of the Sea PBL Module

CSS PBL module is based on an environment that focuses on real world problems associated with the habitat for the Harbor Seal in Long Island Sound.
- they are sensitive to changes in
  • the environment
  • their physical habitat
  • their food source will also impact the size, fitness and activities of their colonies
**Assessment Colloquium: Response to Intervention: Behavioral Assessment at the School-wide Level**

**Date/Time**  
November 13, 2008  11:30-1:00

**Presenter**  
Dr. George Sugai  
Professor, the Carole J. Neag Chair in Special Education, and the CBER Director

**Session Description**

The Center for Behavioral Education and Research (CBER) research scientists have adopted a school-wide continuum of assessment and intervention practices that address the needs of all students called Response to Intervention (RtI). During this session, the defining features of RtI will be reviewed from a problem-solving perspective, and guidelines and examples of how social behavior data can be collected and utilized at the school-wide level will be described. Team-facilitated data-based decision making and the selection of evidence-based interventions will be emphasized.

**Assessment Colloquium: How Do I Know If They Are Getting It?: Measuring Student Responsiveness to Reading and Writing Instruction**

**Date/Time**  
October 31, 2008  11:30-1:00

**Presenters**  
Dr. Michael Faggella-Luby, Assistant Professor in Special Education  
Dr. Natalie Olinghouse, Assistant Professor in Special Education  
Dr. Michael Coyne, Associate Professor in Special Education

**Session Description**

The Center for Behavioral Education and Research (CBER) research scientists have adopted a school-wide continuum of assessment and intervention practices that address the needs of all students called Response to Intervention (RtI). This session will address formative and summative assessment to help teachers ensure that students are learning critical literacy content in K-12 settings. Assessment informs instructional decision making about the appropriate intensity and explicitness necessary to meet the literacy needs of academically diverse groups of students, including high achieving students and students with disabilities. Specific measures (including some standardized measures) will be shared that are relevant to elementary and secondary schools and within the context of actual Connecticut schools.

**Registration**  
[http://www.education.uconn.edu/events/soa/](http://www.education.uconn.edu/events/soa/)

There is no charge for assessment colloquia; however, participants must preregister. For more information, including course credit information for students, contact mary.yakimowski@uconn.edu or call 860-486-2848.
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6. A fairly good degree of diversity on the assessment committee helps – faculty with and without assessment experience; senior and younger faculty; faculty representing the major divisions; a faculty link/liaison with the education policy committee and/or the allocation resource committee; as well as student representation.

7. Talk to faculty and find out how they currently assess students. Often it is a matter of documenting or formalizing efforts already in place. Thanking faculty and staff who help in the assessment effort with a personalized note, a brief visit, or a box of assessments is important.

8. Having an assessment director who is accessible is important. If you have an assessment office, you may want to house it with faculty and keep the door open. A resourceful website with examples, links, communications, and information will also be helpful for some.

9. Try to be somewhat pro-active, yet flexible, with assessment planning and initiatives so that you are not forced to be re-active.

10. Find ways to communicate specific strong and weak student learning outcomes with appropriate academic support and administrative offices on campus. Communicate them in the catalog and on the college's/university's website.

The College Board on College Readiness: New Trends and Research
Qing Li

Dr. Thanos Patelis, the vice president of The College Board from the Department of Analysis, Research and Analysis, gave a assessment colloquium presentation titled “Information from the College Board on College Readiness.”

In this talk, Dr. Patelis provided an overview of the data and reports available from the College Board to educators. Samples of the information were presented, and the ways that schools, districts, and colleges/universities obtain this information were also explained.

Dr. Patelis also provided an overview of the research and analyses associated with college readiness. Additionally, some ongoing research studies about defining college readiness and examining the extent college readiness relates to college outcomes were also introduced.

Finally, Dr. Patelis ended the presentation with a solicitation for collaborations in exploring the nature of high school preparation and college outcomes.

To access the PowerPoint, please see: http://www.education.uconn.edu/events/soa/0708archive.cfm

It is by good teaching and learning that standards rise, not by summative or short-term measures to boost attainment. Clarke, 2001