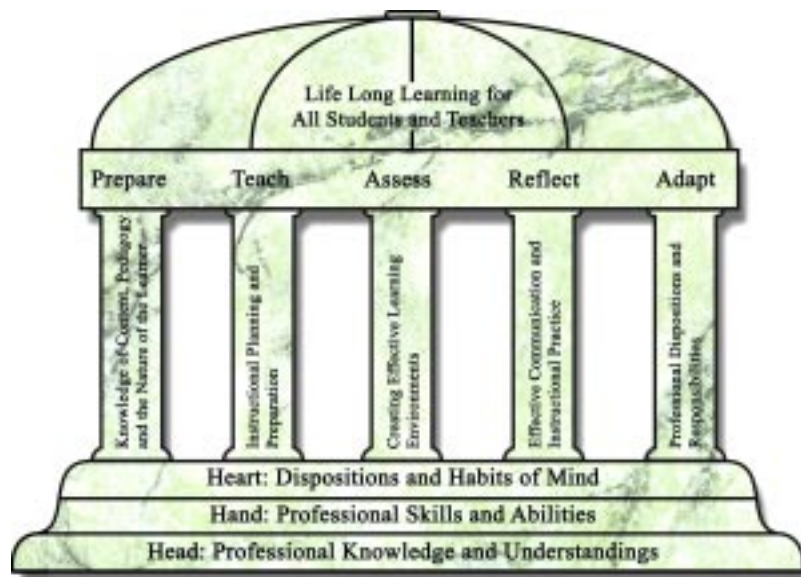


An Overview of the SUU Professional Education Unit's

Plan for Assessing Candidate Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions



**Head, Hands, and Heart: Empowering
Students and Teachers
To Make Learning Live Forever**

The Professional Education Unit's Assessment Model

As a professional education unit, we are committed in philosophy and in practice to purposeful, systematic, and ongoing evaluation not only of candidate performance but also of the effectiveness of the unit itself. Program effectiveness, faculty performance, alignment of curriculum and instruction and assessment of the assessment system itself are under constant scrutiny by unit faculty, the Professional Education Coordinating Council (PECC) and other stakeholders including candidates and P-12 teachers and administrators. The system outlined in the section which follows represents our endeavor to adopt a methodical and deliberate approach to planning, implementing and evaluating an assessment system which insures that every candidate who exits our program possesses the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to facilitate learning for all students in P-12 classrooms.

A Candidate-Centered Approach to Assessment

Candidate-involved record keeping is an essential component of our unit assessment plan. Candidates learn to be reflective practitioners by monitoring their own performance through repeated self-assessment utilizing core standards, and a uniform and constant set of performance criteria. Candidates are required to complete a series of progressively more complex and rigorous teacher work samples and to build professional portfolios which provide evidence of their success over time. Included in the portfolios are self-reflections about best practice and the changes they see in their own performance. In this way, unit faculty essentially employ a system of repeated, candidate-involved classroom based assessments. This candidate-centered approach as well as the complexity of our unit's core standards and the multifaceted nature of our program's classroom and field based experiences, mandates a system of multiple assessments which utilize a wide variety of assessment modes and strategies. To insure that measures provide a fair representation of actual candidate performance, traditional testing and grading are supplemented by numerous performance tasks and self-assessments completed in both simulated and authentic contexts. Candidates preparing to work in schools as teachers and other professional school personnel need to know and demonstrate the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn. Multiple assessments and decision points ensure that all candidates meet professional, state and institutional standards.

Assessment of Content Knowledge for ALL Teacher Candidates

Initial and advanced teacher candidates at Southern Utah University are expected to demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of the content that they will teach. To insure this outcome, the Unit has included a number of measures of mastery of content knowledge in its assessment system.

Grade Point Average: Candidates seeking recommendation for licensure by the Utah State Board of Education must have a minimum grade point average of 3.0 in all professional education courses. In addition, candidates are required to complete a professional growth plan to overcome deficiencies in any course in which they fail to receive at least a grade of "B." No grade lower than a "B" will be accepted for graduate credit in advanced programs.

PRAXIS I Content Area Tests: Prior to admission to the Integrative Studies (Block) portion of the Professional Education Program, candidates must achieve an acceptable score on the PRAXIS II Subject Assessment test for the content area that they plan to teach. (The Unit Assessment Committee will establish cut scores for these tests based on the results of a pilot study in the Spring of 2002). Candidates pursuing elementary certification must attain a minimum score of 135 on the PRAXIS Elementary Education: Content Knowledge test. Unit faculty are provided data about the performance of the candidates and, when appropriate, professional growth plans are developed collaboratively by the candidate and professional education faculty. Reports of the data are forwarded to the Assessment and Program Review Committees of the Professional Education Coordinating Council (PECC) following each administration.

Course-Based Performance Assessments: Embedded in every content course taken by candidates at both the initial and advanced levels of our program are performance tasks aimed at insuring mastery of content knowledge.

Professional Portfolios: Candidates must demonstrate mastery of content area knowledge in the professional portfolios they maintain throughout the professional education program. The portfolio is assessed using validated rubrics by a panel of at least three Unit faculty members, including a representative from the Candidate's content area.

Teacher Work Samples: Candidates must demonstrate mastery of content area knowledge through preparing four teacher work samples during the Pre-professional, Professional, Instructional and Integrative phases of the professional education program. Content portions of the teacher work samples are assessed using validated rubrics by a panel of at least three Unit faculty members including a representative from the Candidate's content area.

Field Experience and Clinical Practice Evaluations: All candidates are supervised and evaluated by content area faculty and their mentor/cooperating teacher during the Clinical Practice phase of the program. Rubrics used in assessment are validated through correlation with the results of the PRAXIS II Content Knowledge tests taken by all candidates..

Follow-up surveys of graduates: During the candidate's Entry Year Experience (EYE), principals and other supervisors are surveyed by the PECC Assessment Committee. Items on the survey address candidates' mastery of content.

Professional and Pedagogical Knowledge and Skills for ALL Teacher Candidates

Teacher candidates in the professional education program are expected to reflect a thorough understanding of professional and pedagogical knowledge. To insure this outcome, the Unit has included a number of measures of mastery of pedagogical knowledge into its assessment system.

Grade Point Average: Candidates seeking recommendation for licensure by the Utah State Board of Education must have a minimum grade point average of 3.0 for all courses taken. In addition, candidates are required to complete a professional growth plan

to overcome deficiencies in any course in which they fail to receive at least a grade of “B.” No grade lower than a “B” will be accepted for graduate credit in advanced programs.

PRAXIS II Principles of Teaching and Learning Test: Prior to exiting the program, candidates in initial programs must register for and take the PRAXIS II PLT exam. Students who score below the state cut score on the test will be required to develop a professional growth plan addressing deficiencies and will be required to retake the test before being awarded a Level II license in accordance with Utah State Office of Education guidelines.

Course-Based Performance Assessments: Embedded in every course taken by candidates at both the initial and advanced levels of our program are performance tasks including individual and group projects, case studies, and problem based activities. All performance tasks focus directly on the development of reflective practice, critical problem solving, and the ability to deal effectively with ambiguity. Performance tasks are scored using validated rubrics and are also reflected in grades earned in required courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Rubrics, ratings, checklists and other instruments provide feedback to faculty and the PECC Assessment and Program Review Committees for the purpose of program improvement.

Professional Portfolios: Candidates must demonstrate mastery of professional and pedagogical knowledge in the professional portfolios they maintain throughout the professional education program. The portfolio is assessed using validated rubrics by a panel of at least three Unit faculty members including at least one clinical faculty member..

Teacher Work Samples: Candidates must demonstrate mastery of pedagogical knowledge through preparing four teacher work samples during the Pre-professional, Professional, Instructional and Integrative phases of the professional education program. The teacher work samples are assessed using validated rubrics by a panel of at least two professional education faculty members and one clinical faculty member.

Field Experience and Clinical Practice Evaluations: All candidates are supervised and evaluated by professional education faculty and their mentor/cooperating teacher during the Clinical Practice phase of the program. Rubrics used in assessment are validated through correlation with the results of the PRAXIS II PLT tests.

Level II State Licensure Exam: Additional evidence of candidate’s professional and pedagogical knowledge is collected using statistics provided by the Utah State Office of Education. Pass rates of Unit candidates who take the exam required for state licensure are reported to the Unit and data is used in the decision making process for program improvement.

Assessment of Pedagogical Content Knowledge for ALL Teacher Candidates

Teacher candidates in the professional education program are expected to reflect a thorough understanding of pedagogical content knowledge. To insure this outcome, the Unit has included a number of measures of mastery of pedagogical content knowledge into its assessment system.

Grade Point Average in Methods Courses: All candidates must achieve a minimum a grade point average of “B” in all professional development courses, including teaching methods courses. The primary focus of the teaching methods courses is relating content to specific instructional methods to enable all students to learn. During methods courses, candidates produce lessons and units to demonstrate their ability to plan, design, deliver and assess instruction in their content area. Assessments of these products are conducted jointly by pedagogical, content area and clinical faculty. Elementary candidates are required to take methods courses in languages arts, mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts and physical education. Secondary candidates take one methods course in their primary field of licensure.

Professional Portfolios: Candidates must demonstrate mastery of pedagogical content knowledge in the professional portfolios they maintain throughout the professional education program. The portfolio is assessed using validated rubrics by a panel of at least three Unit faculty members including a representative from the candidate’s content area.

Teacher Work Samples: Candidates must demonstrate mastery of pedagogical content knowledge through preparing four teacher work samples during the Pre-professional, Professional, Instructional and Integrative phases of the professional education program. The teacher work samples are assessed using validated rubrics by a panel of at least two professional education faculty members (including a faculty member from the candidate’s content area) and one clinical faculty member.

Field Experience and Clinical Practice Evaluations: All candidates are supervised and evaluated by professional education faculty and their mentor/cooperating teacher during the clinical practice phase of the program. Rubrics used in assessment of pedagogical content knowledge are validated through correlation with the results of the PRAXIS II content area tests and other measures.

Assessment of Dispositions for ALL Teacher Candidates

Initial teacher candidates at Southern Utah University reflect the dispositions expected of professional educators, are able to recognize when their own dispositions may need to be adjusted, and can develop a plan to do so. There are several indicators that are used to assure the faculty that candidates have the dispositions expected of professional educators.

Professional Disposition Assessment Protocol. This instrument is a course requirement for the EDUC 4520 Practicum course, which is required of all initial teacher candidates and reflected in the course grade. In addition, candidates are required to include the Assessment Protocol in their professional portfolio as partial evidence for Unit Standard 5: Professional Dispositions and Responsibilities. In this methodology, the candidates first states a goal related to a one of the professional dispositions outlined in the INTASC Principles for beginning teachers. For example, a candidate might select "The teacher makes students feel valued for their potential as people and helps them learn to value each other.") Next, a personal objective related to the goal is stated. (For example, a candidate might state: "I will never intentionally embarrass a student in front of his peers"). For each objective, the candidate then reflects on and describes an incident during his/her clinical practice when he/she was deficient in meeting the identified objective. Finally, the candidate constructs a hypothesis

explaining why he/she failed to meet the objective and prepares a plan for changes to be made and/or steps to be followed to successfully change the undesirable disposition.

Professional Progress Report (PPR): The professional dispositions of candidates are assessed by Unit faculty using an instrument based on INTASC principles in each of the courses taken as part of the professional education program. The instrument offers faculty the opportunity to acknowledge positive dispositions or report instances when negative or unprofessional dispositions were observed. The Professional Progress Report is tracked by the PECC Student Recruitment, Admission and Retention Committee and candidates receiving three or more commendations during a semester receive a congratulatory memo from the Dean of the College of Education. Candidates receiving more than three negative PPR reports are referred to the Unit's Professional Practices Committee, and the candidate is required to develop a professional growth plan addressing the deficiency.

Professional Portfolios: Candidates must demonstrate appropriate professional dispositions in the professional portfolios they maintain throughout the professional education program. The portfolio is assessed using validated rubrics by a panel of at least three Unit faculty members. Rubrics are validated through correlations with other instruments aimed at assessing candidate dispositions.

Field Experience and Clinical Practice Evaluations: All candidates are supervised and evaluated by Unit faculty and their mentor/cooperating teacher during the Clinical Practice phase of the program. These observations provide university and clinical faculty an opportunity to assess candidate dispositions through direct observations. Items addressing appropriate professional dispositions are included in Clinical Practice and Internship observation and evaluation forms.

Follow-up surveys of graduates: During the candidate's Entry Year Experience (EYE), principals and other supervisors are surveyed by the PECC Assessment Committee. Items on the survey address candidates' professional dispositions.

Dispositions of Candidates in Advanced Programs: The professional dispositions of candidates in advanced programs are assessed in a variety of ways depending upon the particular program. All of the graduate programs have either an internship experience or a capstone project or thesis which allows faculty to determine the professional dispositions of the candidates. In the case of an internship, these dispositions are observed directly through the intern's work in his or her respective setting. Projects and theses reflect the candidate's commitment to inquiry and their ability to carry through with a project from conception to completion.

Assessment of Impact on Student Learning for ALL Teacher Candidates

Initial and advanced teacher education candidates are able to analyze student learning and to monitor and adjust instruction to meet the needs of all students in their classes. The Unit assessment plan includes measures that assure Unit faculty that candidates can have a positive impact on student learning.

Teacher Work Samples: Candidates must demonstrate the ability to have a positive impact on student learning through preparing teacher work samples during the Instructional and Integrative phases of the professional education program. Each teacher work sample includes a plan for assessing student learning developed by the candidate and requires that the candidate collect and analyze samples of student work and use the results of this analysis to evaluate his/her teaching performance. The teacher work samples are assessed using validated rubrics by a panel of at least two professional education faculty members and one clinical faculty member.

Field Experience and Clinical Practice Evaluations: All candidates are supervised and evaluated by professional education faculty and their mentor/cooperating teacher during the clinical practice or internship phases of the program. Rubrics include an assessment of the candidate's impact on student learning based on appended samples of student work.

Professional Portfolios: As a requirement for Level II licensure, candidates must maintain a professional portfolio during their Entry Year Experience. This portfolio is evaluated by a panel of educators representing the Utah State Board of Education Licensure Division and focuses on INTASC standards for beginning teachers. Results of this assessment are used to determine qualifications for Level II licensure and will be used by the PECC assessment committee as confirming evidence of the candidate's ability to impact student learning.

Follow-up surveys of graduates: During the candidate's Entry Year Experience, principals and other supervisors are surveyed by the PECC Assessment Committee. Items on the survey address candidates' ability to have a positive impact on the learning of all students.

Assessments of Professional Dispositions: Professional dispositions of all candidates are assessed using a variety of methodologies including: (1) the Professional Progress Report; (2) the Professional Disposition Assessment Protocol; (3) observations by university and clinical faculty during practica, internships and clinical practice; (4) professional portfolio artifacts which address INTASC principles, and; (4) follow-up surveys of principals and other supervisors which include items addressing professional dispositions.

Instructional Technology: Unit faculty will evaluate candidate proficiency in the use of technology by assessing: (a) required technology projects embedded in various professional education courses; (b) electronic portfolio artifacts which address International Society for Technology Education (ISTE) standards, and; (c) observations of candidate use of technology during practica, internships and clinical practice.

Conclusion

This assessment plan summary represents the first steps in our movement as a Unit from a highly traditional and informal process of program review to a performance based assessment system linked to candidate outcomes and professional standards. We believe that the plan outlined has the potential to develop into an accessible and inclusive process for decision-making and change that is focused on the continuous improvement of our candidates and our Professional Education Unit. The final outcome, we believe, will be stronger candidates, faculty, and programs and stronger relationships among stakeholders and members of our community of learners.