

## **EDUC 611: L1 & L2 Language & Literacy Assessment & Evaluation\***

\*Formerly

EDUC 692X: Testing, Assessment & Evaluation-Bilingual/ESL,

EDUC 783A: Assessing and Supporting Literacy Learning

Fall Semester 2005

Wednesdays, 3:30 – 6:30 p.m.

Lynch Middle School Library, Holyoke, MA

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appointment

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The following is a general description for the semester's topics, activities, and requirements. The instructor will modify these in response to licensure needs, interest, and concerns of class members. Class members are encouraged to log onto to the WebCT in order to stay abreast of any modifications, readings, or support materials.

This course is designed as an introduction to the field of testing, assessment and evaluation in language and literacy education. We will specifically examine these issues for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students in classroom settings that range from K-12.

Throughout this semester, our readings, activities, and discussions will help us examine the complexities of monitoring student progress and achievement in order to inform appropriate instructional decision making about content, language, and literacy objectives. The goal is to learn how to use assessment, testing and evaluation to increasingly build from what students already know in order to expand their content knowledge, increase language and literacy development and build strong identities as capable learners and contributors to their local and wider communities. Using evidence from both sociocultural and psycholinguistic research, we will introduce basic technical principles of assessment, and tools for us to judge and construct tests, assessments, and evaluations.

A second major goal is to critically examine both formal and informal assessments to prepare students to be academically successful. We will analyze these assessments for the types of literacy, content, and thinking demands that are required and the types of strategies necessary to make meaning from academic texts. As part of these discussions, we will also plan how to communicate results to students, their parents and administrators, in order to document progress, identify needs, and negotiate for additional support when necessary for children with special needs. Through our activity we will set criteria for quality assessments/testing and program evaluations that are helpful in providing information to inform program development that leads to increased levels of student achievement.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The goal of the class is to provide teachers with the content and thinking that will help them be effective teachers of second language learners and equip them to qualify for the licensing exam. The objectives include:

1. to help teachers gain an understanding of the principles of language & literacy assessment, testing, and evaluation in all four modalities: speaking, listening, reading and writing in the content areas
2. to provide practice in developing and critiquing a variety of classroom-based assessments and testing on oral and written language, including phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary development, genres for academic writing in the content areas
3. to familiarize teachers with standardized screening and diagnostic instruments and alternatives to measures
4. to develop critical and ethical procedures and instruments for assessing progress in the transition to English from the other language
5. to help teachers devise ways to deal with the biases in testing: content and techniques, and provide accommodations for special needs learners

## **OVERALL CLASS ORGANIZATION**

Each class is organized around review and discussion of the course readings and activity-based investigations of technical, practical, and ethical issues concerning the use of reading/writing/speaking and listening tests and assessments. From these experiences you will work with class members in exploring these issues through project-based activities in various institutional settings where assessment takes place. Through the course activities you will gather information for closely examining: tests of language and literacy, how tests are used for educational placement, and how various formal\*, informal\*, and performance-based assessments link to classroom instruction for diverse learners.

\*Examples of formal and informal tests that are used in the field of language & literacy: Miscue analysis (running records, DRA), story retelling, DIBELS, LAS R/W, MCAS, MELA-O, MEPA, Writing Assessments (e.g. six-trait rubric), Basal Reading Program assessments, Clay's Observation Survey, standardized achievement tests (e.g. Stanford 10), Woodcock-Johnson, Portfolio, teacher created, performance-based

The work for the course will include critical evaluation of a variety of assessments, looking at student work as assessment data, and critiques of professional books about language and literacy assessment. In addition, as part of their final project, participants

will gather data on two students throughout the course in order to enhance their capacity to identify what the students know and how best to support them throughout the semester. The final self-evaluation is a reflection piece that will be due after class meetings are over as per arrangements with the instructor.

## **GRADING**

Grading will be determined in the following manner:

30% Class Preparation: Completion of assignments by due dates. Class preparation also includes application of readings in class discussions and activities

20% Attendance and thoughtful contributions to the full class and in your smaller teams.

30% Final Project (10% Field Work, 10% Oral Presentation, 10% Written Report)  
This includes your Group Presentation of the Book Critique and the Final Data Collection Project.

20% Final Self-Evaluation of your learning and participation in the course  
You may use the following suggested guidelines to reflect on your learning process throughout the class and on your achievement of course goals. Discuss your ability to:

- a. assess oral language, reading, and writing
- b. monitor student progress through grade level content instruction
- c. assess student achievement through various complementary measures
- d. evaluate usefulness and appropriateness of various formats for assessments for a culturally and linguistically diverse population – such as: projects, games, and portfolios in the content areas
- e. engage students in active peer and self-assessment
- f. evaluate grading practices for fairness to all learners
- g. critique assessments and construct alternatives
- h. critically use criterion-referenced vs. norm-referenced tests
- i. develop ways to help students make standardized tests work for them
- j. understand the teacher's role in pre-referral and meeting students with special needs
- k. collect and share evidence for program evaluation

It is important to understand that although completing all the work is both useful and necessary, such completion alone does not necessarily qualify anyone for an A. It is necessary to satisfy the quantity as well as the quality requirements. Work which merits an A must be pushed to levels of excellence. Work which is good merits a B and so on. When you complete work use the questions above to evaluate the level of effort and original contributions you have made to your individual and group assignments. Reflect on these areas in the self-evaluation both ongoing and summative to get the most out of and contribute to others in the course.

You may opt for a non-graded mark – Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. Please notify the professor by the second week of class if you are seeking this option in order to understand the requirements. Please note that you are still required to fulfill the same requirements, and the following criteria apply:

### **SATISFACTORY**

Thoughtful completion of the weekly assignments

- Active participation in weekly discussions and groupwork
- Accurate and thorough planning and completion of all assignments and final projects outlined in the syllabus

### **UNSATISFACTORY**

- One or more missing or incomplete assignments
- Low participation in or frequent (more than 2) from weekly discussion and group work
- Inaccurate or poorly conceived and executed final project

### **TEXTBOOKS**

Most books have been ordered through the Amherst Bookstore on Main Street in Amherst (413) 256-1547. The Farr & Trumbull will be available through the Holyoke Barnes & Noble Bookstore (413) 532-3200. You may use [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) to order out-of-stock or second--hand books.

### **REQUIRED BOOKS**

Farr, B., & Trumbull, E. (1997). *Assessment alternatives for diverse classrooms*. Norwood: Christopher Gordon Publishers.

O'Malley, J. M., & Pierce, L. V. (1996). *Authentic assessment for English language learners: Practical approach for teachers*. USA: Addison-Wesley/Longman.

(Also choose one of the Barr books below according to your grade level)

Barr, M., Craig, D., Fisette, D., & Syverson, M. (1999). *Assessing literacy with the learning record: A handbook for teachers, Grades K-6*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Barr, M., & Syverson, M. (1999). *Assessing literacy with the learning record: A handbook for teachers, Grades 6-12*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

**Professional Books for Critique (choose one to critique with your group):**

Calkins, L., Montgomery, K., & Santman, D. (1998). *A teacher's guide to standardized reading tests: Knowledge is power*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Hoyt, L. (2002). *Make it real: Strategies for success with informational texts*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Johnson, M. (2001) *The art of non conversation. A reexamination of the validity of the oral proficiency interview*. Yale University Press, (foreign language)

Stefanakis, E. H. (2002). *Multiple intelligences and portfolio: A window into a learner's mind*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Thomason, T.& York, C. (2000). *Write on target: Preparing young writers to succeed on state writing achievement tests*. Norwood,MA:Christopher-Gordon Publishers. (elementary,secondary)

Taylor, K., & Walton, S. (1998). *Children at the center: A workshop approach to standardized test preparation, K-8*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

English as a second language Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (2002). Scenarios for ESL standards-based assessment. TESOL Press. National Study of School Evaluation, Program evaluation: English as a second language Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.

**Additional Articles and Chapters:**

Artiles, A. J., & Ortiz, A. (2002). *English language learners with special education needs: Identification, assessment, and instruction*. Washington,D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Butler, F.A. & Stevens, R.(1997). *Accommodation strategies for English language learners" Understanding and using assessment: Student characteristics and other considerations*. CSE Technical Report. Los Angeles, CA: CRESST.

Carter, G. R. (2003). *Is it good for the kids?: They passed the test but can they teach?* Retrieved January 27, 2003, 2003, from <http://www.ascd.org/cms/index.cfm?TheViewID=1570&ContentBor>

Christensen, L. (2003). The politics of correction: How can we nurture students in their writing and help them learn the language of power. *Rethinking schools*, 18(1), 20-24.

Delandshere, G. (2002). Assessment as inquiry. *Teachers College Record*, 104(7), 1461-1484. [Available on-line: UMASS Libraries, Databases, EBSCO/ERIC]

Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. (2003). *Making Content Comprehensible for English Language Learners: The SIOP Model*, Second Edition, Allyn & Bacon

Emihovich, C. (1994). The Language of Testing: An Ethnographic-Sociolinguistic Perspective on Standardized Tests. In K. Holland, D. Bloome & J. Solsken (Eds.), *Alternative Perspectives in Assessing Children's Language and Literacy* (pp. 33-54). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Fitzgerald, J., & Graves, M. (2004). *Scaffolding Reading Experiences for English Language Learners*. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon.

Luna, C. S., Solsken, Judith, Kutz, Eleanor. (2000). Defining Literacy: Lessons from High-Stakes Teacher Testing. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(4), 276-288. [Available on-line: UMASS Libraries, Databases, EBSCO/ERIC]

Platt, R. (2004). Standardized tests: Whose standards are we talking about? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 85(5), 381-382, 387. [Available on-line:UMASS Libraries, Databases, Education Complete]

## **REQUIRED COURSE WORK:**

### **1. Reading Assignments**

Maintain a record of your written responses to the reading assignments (one page, single space should suffice). These will support the development of your final project. Often these will anchor class discussions and are places in which to identify new ideas, language, concepts, terms that are new or challenging to you or the field. In each response show evidence of the quality of your thinking, explain what you value about the readings, connect ideas discussed in classes or group, relate ideas to your final project. The instructor may ask to view your written responses. All responses should be brought to class in order to guide discussion. Your reflections and notes will serve:

- a. as a reference for choosing appropriate assessments for your final assessment project, as well as
- b. to critique the strengths and weaknesses of the assessments for the analysis of your final project (see below).

### **2. Group Book Evaluation (Teams of 3-4) Due November 9**

With your group, you will choose one of the professional books listed above. Evaluate and critique the book with your group. Present a clear and brief overview and critique of the book in a conversation with other class members along with a one page informational handout or 5 slide Powerpoint presentation. You can view a sample student presentation on WebCT (Search for Class4\_Presentation).

### **3. Final Data Collection Project: Written Portfolio & Summary Due December 7**

Your final project will be to conduct a semester-long case study, including observations, multiple assessments, and analysis of two students in your classroom. Collect data throughout the semester on two students: one a second language learner (ELL), and another who is a struggling reader but not ELL. Project assistants will help you put together 3 complete data sets for each student throughout the year, both for this class and the subsequent assessment class that will be offered in the ACCELA program. One complete data set should be collected in October for this class.

Each data set will include work samples and observational data about what you see developing over time. You will begin to identify what considerations for the ongoing (running) records and other required assessments need to be taken into account for these learners beyond vocabulary. (e.g. conventions for noting native language use in writing or read-alouds or dramatic play, literacy development, development as an author, interactions with peers as a critical friend, as an editor, as a public speaker, etc. You may draw on the assessment tools available in the required and professional books as well as the assessment tools required in your schools. You should refer to the assigned literature and class exercises to adapt and supplement the assessments in order to fully capture the two students' progress in one specific language area. Your observations should develop complexity and understanding as we read about the assessments of different modalities, special needs, etc. Make sure you have sufficient opportunities to observe using informal assessments within the instructional context as well as formal assessments. You will receive a list of suggested types of data. Each of the following assignments will build an entry for your final portfolio for this class:

- a. Test Dig & Inquiry: Identify a range of assessments being used in the school for grade placement – oral, written, language, content, etc. Find out how tests are administered and how results are used in the school to identify the two focal students as learners.
- b. Create a student demographic file for your class. Include # of students, male/female, ESL learners (their languages, countries of origin).
- c. Determine a need for assessment by:
  - Mapping out what types of tests/assessments are used for what purposes
  - Examining the curriculum and the reading and writing standards to understand the class objectives and align these with the assessments being used

In class, we will use these observations and notes as a basis for providing feedback on your final project. Checking the accuracy of your map through

dialogue with your peers in the class will help you identify which assessments serve your purposes well, which do not, and why.

Your final project will be:

- **an oral presentation** of the portfolio-in-progress to the class. Presentations will be scheduled towards the end of the semester and will serve as formative assessment of the focal students and to as an opportunity to receive feedback from colleagues. This will be discussed in further detail in class.
- **a written portfolio** (which will serve as a base for the next semester's class) containing steps in the process, including the test dig, demographic file tests, assessment maps produced for the assignments and during class activities, assessments you've used, modified and developed, student products and observational data as evidence, and
- **a written summary** with an analysis of the two students' learning, your instructional adaptations if relevant, and your reflections on the use of assessments to capture and enhance students' learning.

#### 4. Final Self-Evaluation (see above under GRADING)

#### ADDITIONAL REFERENCES:

Blaz, D. (2000). Collection of performance tasks and rubrics: Foreign languages. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Cummins, J. (2000) Critique of the conversational/academic language proficiency distinction in *Language, Power and Pedagogy*: 86-111.

Hales, L., & Marshall, J. (2004). *Developing effective assessments to improve teaching and learning*. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon.

Harp, B. (2000). *The handbook of literacy assessment and evaluation* (Second ed.). Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon.

Hargreaves, A., Earl, L., & Schmidt, M. (2002). Perspectives on alternative assessment reform. American Educational Research Journal [H.W. Wilson - EDUC/, 39(1), 69.

Mackey, B. (2001). Can you beat guessing in multiple-choice testing? J. E. Alatis & A. H. Tan, (Eds.). Round Table on Languages and Linguistics 1999. Washington D.C.: Georgetown Univ. Press, 59-70.

- Peregoy, S., & Boyle, O. (2001). *Reading, writing, & learning in ESL: A resource book for K-12 teachers* (Third ed.). New York: Addison-Wesley Longman.
- Santman D, 2002. Teaching to the test? Test preparation in the reading workshop. *Language Arts*, Jan. 79(3), p 203-211.
- Schnitzer, S. (1993). Designing an authentic assessment. *Educational Leadership* 50:7, 32-35.
- Schechter, S., & Cummins, J. (Eds.). (2003). *Multilingual education in practice: Using diversity as a resource*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Serafini, F. W. (2002). Dismantling the Factory Model of Assessment. *Reading and Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 18(1), 67-85.
- Stefanakis, E. H. (1998). *Whose judgment counts: Assessing bilingual children, K-3*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Tierney, R., Crumpler, T., Bertelsen, C., & Bond, E. (2003). *Interactive assessment: Teachers, parents, and students as partners*. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon.
- Valdes, G. (2003). Expanding definition of giftedness. The case of young interpreters from immigrant communities
- Vialpando, J. & Linse, C. (2005). *Educating English Language Learners: Understanding and using assessments*. Washington, D.C. National Council of La Raza. online at [www.nclr.org/files/32971\\_file\\_Eng\\_Lang\\_Learners\\_Assessment\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.nclr.org/files/32971_file_Eng_Lang_Learners_Assessment_Guide.pdf)
- Wiggins, G., & McTigue, J. (1998). *Understanding by design*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD. [section on Thinking like an assessor]