

## **EDUC 611 – Testing, Assessment & Evaluation: Language and Literacy**

\* Formerly 692X and 793A

Fall Semester 2004

Wednesday, 3:30 – 6:00p.m.

Gerena School, Springfield

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Hours. Tues. 2:00 –4:00 pm.

& by appointment

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The following is a general description for the upcoming semester's topics, activities, and events. The instructors will modify these in response to the licensure needs, interests, and concerns of the class members. The following sections outline the course's major objectives and assignments. To stay abreast with modifications made, class members are encouraged to regularly logon to Web-CT, obtain clarification from peers, as well as, from the instructors. Enrollment and participation in Web-CT is a significant aspect of this course.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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 (grade-level settings, transitional bilingual, dual immersion bilingual, and sheltered content ESL, foreign language )

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**

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 assessment 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, as well as assessing progress in dual or two way literacy programs
5. to help teachers devise ways to deal with the biases in testing: content and techniques, and provide accommodations for special needs learners
6. to provide practice using technology to access and retrieve relevant current assessment resources from electronic databases and effectively use technology to maintain student records.

## **OVERALL CLASS ORGANIZATION**

Our course begins with technical, practical, and ethical issues concerning the use of reading/writing/speaking and listening tests and assessments that you have experienced in your life history. From these experiences, we will generate questions that will be explored in various institutional settings where assessment takes place: elementary, middle and secondary schooling for grade level, dual language immersion, sheltered content instruction for English Language Learners and language for specific purposes for adults. This examination will occur throughout the semester as we engage in discussions about the readings and your classroom experiences. Through your observations and dialogues with us about your classroom, or own schools, you will gather information for closely examining the use of standardized tests to diagnose and place students. These include a variety of formal tests, such as miscue analysis, story retelling, the DIBELS, TROLL, Language Assessment Scales- R/W, MCAS, MELA-O, MEPA, MTEL, PRAXIS, DRA, District Writing Assessment (DWA), basal reading program assessments, Clay's Observation Survey, etc. that are currently used in the fields of reading & writing, bilingual, ESL, and foreign language education. Then we will discuss methods of conducting teacher and

course evaluations using observation protocols, such as Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) or questionnaires, as used at UMASS (e.g. SRTI).

Next we will devote time to learning about innovative approaches to assessment in first language literacy, ESL, bilingual education, foreign language classrooms. In particular, you will select and use or design a new performance assessment for learning interdisciplinary content, language and literacy development. We will continue with the issues of assessment-over-time and through instruction, particularly through systematic observation and running records, student conferencing, portfolio assessment (include e-folios, electronic gradebooks, report cards, etc). Following up, we will discuss how alternatives such as these pose challenges to assessing linguistically diverse students and how they function to capture selective types of language and literacy development in learning disciplinary knowledge in academic settings.

Finally, we will end with presentations on your projects designed to improve assessment of content instruction and learning for first language and second language learners.

Successful completion of this class is demonstrated by presentation and submission of a completed class group assignment, a book critique, and a final assessment project based on your case study experience.

The case study will include a full description of a learner or an issue. If a learner, then one whose performance is assessed using procedures and assessment tools that meet your criteria for a valid, reliable, and efficient measure of desired student performance. Each study will have authentic purpose, assessment items, and written description of the administration procedures and scoring. A description of the decisions regarding the content (what has been included and not included in the assessment(s) needs to be provided as a history of the development of the assessment. This will include a discussion about the potential strengths and weaknesses of the assessment(s) drawing upon the ideas that have been explored in this course with a special emphasis on the readings that have been assigned.

At mid- semester, we will be scheduling mini-conferencing with each project. This is when you will be able to gain helpful feedback to check your understanding of concepts, check how the collaborative process is working, and refine efforts for your final project that will be used in demonstrating competence for licensure as a teacher in the state of Massachusetts.

Oral presentations to the whole class, as well as in small groups, will receive our oral feedback (and where possible written) and serve as informal performance assessments that will inform both of progress towards the final project. After these, your class members and the instructors will provide feedback to help you to meet the course objectives and refine your projects. A final oral presentation to a wider audience of educators **at** is required at the Bilingual/ESL/Multicultural Project Faire in May 10<sup>th</sup> (MONDAY) from 6:45-9:00 pm in Furcolo Hall.

A UMASS computer account is needed for Web-CT class communication and assignments. This account is free to all registered students and can be obtained by going to the lowrise section in Lederle Hall, Room 101. Anyone having difficulty complying with this requirement or with any

technology-related assignment, including such things as access to a computer or printer, should contact the instructors for alternatives.

## **TEXTBOOKS**

### **Required**

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

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.

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

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

**Additional Required Readings available on WebCT after Sept. 10.**

## **RESOURCE OPTIONS (Choice according to licensure or interest: Use for Book Critique)**

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

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

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)

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.

## **MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS**

Through the major assignments in this class, we hope to create a cycle of activities that will help you:

- a. articulate a purpose for assessment, testing, evaluation and understand tools to gather this information (tests, alternative assessments-games, portfolios, debates. simulations, projects, etc.)
- b. determine content and procedures for confirming students' understanding ways of knowing content for diverse audiences- student, parents, administrative, etc (fair, defensible, valid, reliable, catalytic, formats- projects, games, debates & exhibitions, quests)
- c. understand the language, literacy, identity and power demands placed on diverse students and to prepare them to become more successful meeting these challenges
- d. understand and use the information generated to improve instruction for individual and groups learning- issues of assessing understanding through sampled language versus behaviors (learning to learn what counts, how to show what counts, etc)
- e. collaborate with students. parents, other teachers, and administrators in decision making regarding high stakes testing and assessment
- f. become familiar with accommodations and laws regarding standardized testing for all students, as well as those in special education
- g. evaluate the assessment procedures for programs' books, technology, material and curricular decision making, hiring and mentoring new teachers, retaining and developing teachers and staff.
- h. share what you have learned through designing or using an assessment

For these purposes the following major assignments are outlined below:

### **1. Weekly Reading/Writing Assignments Portfolio**

We ask that you maintain a record of your written responses to the reading assignments that will support the development of your final project (2-3 pages). These writings are not given feedback from the instructors per se, rather serve to anchor our discussions in class. These writings are intended to serve as legitimate spaces to admit what is challenging you, difficult to accept or new. The writings are due Monday evening by 5:00pm. Many find that by reading these by next class as helpful to participating in the discussions.

As a guide for your written response to the readings, we will ask you to consider the following (attempt to address one of these at minimum):

- a. provide evidence of the quality of your thinking
- b. probe a concept, question, issue relevant to the topic
- c. connect ideas that you have read about or listened to in class
- d. provide appropriate examples, details, citations, etc.
- e. explain cogently what you understand/value about the reading
- f. relate the ideas to your Final Project
- g. other: \_\_\_\_\_

- h. read to interact with the author of the text
- i. answer how you approached this text:eg.: What terms were new to you? Were these important to the whole message of the text? How did you figure out their meaning? How would you retell the message of this text in your own words?
- j. express your doubts, questions, or concerns about the topics introduced
- k. meet the deadlines for submission for each class 5:00 pm Mon prior to class meeting.

## 2. Book Evaluation (Team of 3-4) Professional Book Critique–

Choose a professional book on assessment from the list provided by instructors (or other applicable book approved by instructors). Critique the book with a group. Present your critique in a conversation with other class members along with a one page informational handout or 5 slide Power point presentation. **(Due Class#, /11/04)**

## 3. Description of In-Class Group Presentations- Choose one.

In order to prepare for professional licensure, you will conduct a presentation on one of the following:

- a. **Matching test objectives project presentation:** After examining test objectives for ELL, MTEL, Reading Specialist Licensure Tests, or TOEFL test, find sample questions and match to objectives. Do the items match up to the objectives? Engage class in an analysis of what you found. **(Class #6,)**
- b. **IEP project presentation:** For those working in schools, arrange to sit in on an IEP (Individual Educational Plan) meeting for a student. Take field notes of participant structure, decisions made about/for student, and analyze documents used for decision making. Engage class in a critical discussion of this process for the student involved, and for the other participants (teachers, parents, specialists, administrators, outside consultants). **(Class#8,)**
- c. **Writing sample project presentation (Collected samples from classrooms):** For those with access to classroom writing instruction. Collect a sample set of writing for a particular student over time and across disciplines. Record contextual observations of student engaged in writing instruction (such as conference notes, student feedback, rubrics constructed and used for analysis). Provide a set of writing samples for a class analysis activity. Engage class in discussion using contextual information after activity. **(Class#12)**

## 4. Case Study:

Conduct a semester-long observation of an bilingual, a dialect speaker or special needs student in your classroom. This running record would include work samples and what you see developing overtime. The first analysis would be an early assessment which will be revisited at the end of the course as a second visit. Thus you will need to begin identifying what significant considerations for the running records need to be taken into account for these learners beyond vocabulary. eg. conventions for noting native language

usage in writing or read-a-louds or dramatic play, literacy, syntactic development, development as author, as feedback giver, as editor, as public speaker, etc. Your observations should develop more complexity and understanding as we read about assessments of different modalities, special needs, etc. through each of the readings. Make sure you have sufficient opportunities **to observe** using informal assessments **through the instruction** for each subject or interdisciplinary lesson and **using formal assessments**: e.g., **tests** on vocabulary, speaking, listening, writing or reading; **project /performance, evaluations**. Each of the following assignments will build an entry for your final portfolio for this class:

- a. **Test Dig & Inquiry**: Identify the 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 at the school level to identify this student.
- b. Create a **student demographic profile** for your class. Include # of students, #male/female, ESL learners (their languages, countries of origin, and prior grade level attained in their country of origin)
- c. **Determine a need for assessment** using your own observations and our discussions you will develop an assessment by:
  - i. **Mapping out what types of tests/assessments** are used for what purposes
  - ii. **Examining the curriculum** (proposed lesson plans) to understand the class objectives for this semester and align these with the assessments being used.
  - iii. **Noting where there is no assessment** or where potential misalignment may occurs
    1. for each assessment, identify and map the types of language performances: reading/writing/listening/speaking and content demands (concepts and thinking) are required. Your team will use these observations as the basis for making determining your final project.
  - iv. **Checking the accuracy of your map** through dialogue with peers in our course, and identify which assessments serve the your purposes well, which do not and why.

## 5. Final Project

- a. **Oral presentations** of your **Final Project** (in small group, whole class, and at Administrator Faire – during next class of **Content-based instruction**)
- b. **Written report** (Developed fully in next course of **Content-based instruction**)

## GRADING

This is a letter-graded course. Grading will be distribution in the following manner:

30% preparation: Completion of assignments by the dates due.  
20% attendance & thoughtful contributions to the full class and small team  
30% term project – (10 field practicum, 10 for oral presentation, 10 written report)  
20% self-evaluation

You may opt for non-graded mark, eg. Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. In this case, the following criteria will apply:

**Satisfactory –**

Thoughtful completion of the weekly assignments  
Active participation in weekly discussions and group work  
Accurate and thorough planning and completion of all assignments and final project outlined in the syllabus.

**Unsatisfactory –**

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

Through class discussion and the instructors' approval, the criteria for each of the above categories will be constructed with class members to demonstrate an understanding of valid, fair and reliable rubrics.

Class members are required to accomplish the course assignments by the established deadlines. Individual term projects are to be turned in the last day of class. Students who require additional time to complete the written term project must make a written request for an incomplete grade with a projected completion date.

This course prepares teachers who are teaching English language learners and reading and writing at the elementary level, sheltered content ESL, dual language immersion and foreign language instruction. It is required for licensure in Massachusetts and for the M.Ed. for specialists in bilingual and ESL education. Furthermore this course also meets requirements in understanding assessment and understanding the relationship of second language to reading for teachers who are candidates for the special subject license in reading.

The University of Massachusetts/Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), Learning Disabilities Support Services (LDSS), or Psychological Disabilities Services (PDS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify us within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements.

## HELPFUL PRIOR LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Knowledge and understanding of L2 language and literacy development, content-based instruction, and theories of communication in bilingual/multicultural settings.

## REFERENCES (selected)

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- Leontiev, A. A. (1981). Recent developments in speech activity theory and its relevance for the teaching of Russian as a foreign language in Psychology and Language Learning Process. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 91-99.
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- Wiggins, G. Thinking Like an Assessor in Understanding by Design.
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## VIDEOS

- English as a Second Language. Assessing the Needs of Culturally Diverse Learners. (1998) Proserve Television. Manhattan ,Kansas.
- English as a Second Language. Making the Right Choice: Distinguishing between ESL and Special Education (1998) Proserve Television. Manhattan ,Kansas.

Our Gang- Readin & Writin

## WEB RESOURCES

<http://putwest.boces.org/standards.html>

To obtain different states and content area standards

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/>

To access sources on the web, type: Massachusetts comprehensive assessment system.

[www.masterteacher.com/guidelines](http://www.masterteacher.com/guidelines)

To obtain Office of Civil Rights regulations

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/technology/libraries/>

To obtain the state of Texas library standards

<http://www.ira.org>

To obtain information regarding International Reading Association position statement on teaching of reading and other resources relating to the teaching of reading and writing

## INDICATORS OF LEARNING & UNDERSTANDING

**Upon success completion of the readings, active participation in discussions and assessment project, class members will demonstrate ability to:**

- a. assess oral language, reading, and writing to monitor student progress through grade level content instruction
- b. assess student achievement through multiple complementary measures.
- c. evaluate usefulness and appropriateness of various formats for assessments for a culturally and linguistically diverse population: projects, debates, demonstrations, games, and portfolios in the content areas
- d. use assessment results to provide quality feedback for further instruction and future student self-guided instruction.
- e. develop valid and reliable rubrics for performance-based scoring
- f. engage all students in active peer and self-assessment
- g. evaluate grading practices for fairness to all learners
- h. critique language proficiency tests to construct alternatives
- i. understand the 'logic' of multiple-choice tests
- j. critically use criterion-referenced vs. norm-referenced testing
- k. develop ways to prepare students to make standardized tests work for them.
- l. understand the teacher's role in pre-referral and meeting learners with special needs
- m. collect and share evidence for program evaluation

## **POSSIBLE IDEAS FOR FIELD-BASED FINAL PROJECTS**

1. Design Teacher workshop on a tests or assessment: To set Portfolio Review criteria and inter-rater reliability, analyze MTEL in relation to licensure, MCAS content areas in relation to school instruction
2. Design an assessment/test based on a need that is not currently being met in the school
3. Review materials for test prep in relation to actual test demands for a diverse student population
4. Collect students' responses to a standardized test to analyze their strategies, understanding of the test procedures and items. Help them create alternatives
5. Find out parents/administrator concerns and plan a series of activities to address these

## **STUDENTS' SELF REFLECTION GUIDE**

What evidence (in my participation in discussion, logs, presentations, project,) is there of my having:

1. thoughtfully linked a variety of assessments logically to students' developmental learning in instructional activities for academic content? (listening/ reading/ speaking /writing/strategies/collaboration)?
2. critically examined and developed assessment procedures and tools that are biased for the students' best performances for (a) the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and (b) the content areas (c)analysis (d) creativity (e) strategies
3. developed assessments that provide students, parents and other teachers feedback to plan further short term and long range instructional goals
4. helped students to learn to value helpful feedback from parents, peers, teachers for language learning in content areas and provide helpful feedback to others that promotes further learning;
5. identified defensible performance criteria for academic language learning (eg.: supported by evidence from students work, theory, national and state standards, etc)
6. collaborated with peers to design fair and valid assessment portfolios for diverse learners and involve learners meaningfully in self- assessment
7. demonstrated ability to critically review assessment measures and provide suggestions for alternatives or modifications
8. understood and critiqued standardized tests and high-stakes statewide assessments in order to better prepare students to take these, or to demonstrate through valid alternative means how students have meet these skills & knowledge demands
9. accurately identified purposes, advantages, and limitations of standardized achievement tests as compared to those of alternative assessments.
10. accurately understood concepts and terminology used in traditional assessment and evaluation and in innovative approaches to assessment to be able to explain these to students, parents, and administrator, etc.
11. included the following information in my final project
  - a. the characteristics of the students in this setting and how are these factors taken into consideration i(i.e., the diverse levels of bilingualism, literacy, content knowledge, and cultural backgrounds)?

- b. tasks that will be assigned & how do these relate with the language learning and content knowledge needs of the learners?
- c. instructional strategies will be needed in the teaching of these lessons?
- d. test strategies will be evoked in the learners and how do these relate with the goals of the lessons?
- e. how the assessment instruments that have been designed for this project relate with the principles of authentic assessment drawing on fieldwork, course readings and class discussions,?
- f. Other insights/struggles/ concerns that have emerged in the process
- g. Originality/creativity
- h. Polished communication that is appropriate to the audience and format