

EDUC 611 - L1 & L2 Language & Literacy Assessment & Evaluation\*  
Spring Semester 2006  
Thursdays 3:30 – 6:30 p.m.  
Pottenger Elementary School, Springfield, MA

\*Formerly:

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

EDUC 783A: Assessing and Supporting Literacy Learning

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## **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 involved in 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. Throughout the course we will discuss the 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. We will also examine the principles of assessment in light of both sociocultural and psycholinguistic research.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework of this course reflects the LLC's concentration on language and literacy as social and cultural processes. High quality and responsive instruction that provides equitable access to academic literacy draws upon the "funds of knowledge" – that is, the cognitive, cultural, social, and linguistic resources- that all students bring to the classroom. Critical literacy practices in such classrooms challenge teachers and students to explicitly study and, when necessary, "transcend existing assessment paradigms to devise measures that are more valid and viable for ethnically, racially, socially, and linguistically diverse students" (Farr & Trumbull (1997), p. xiv). Assessing student learning is always a reciprocal process of assessing learning and adjusting instruction to the needs of these students.

## **GUIDING QUESTIONS**

The main goal of the class is to provide teachers with the content and thinking that will support them as responsive teachers of second language learners and equip them to qualify for the licensing exam. The questions that will guide us towards this goal are:

- What are the important issues educators need to understand about assessment of students' literacy development in K-12 in the current climate of standards-driven curriculum and high stakes accountability?
- How can educators adapt, accommodate, and create assessments and assessment practices that lead to fair and equitable access to high quality literacy education for all students?

## **ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:**

Addressing the above guiding questions involves a set of competencies, or enduring understandings that include:

Understanding what constitutes language and literacy and its relationship to assessment and learning.

Understanding the relationship between ideology and assessment practices.

Considering the role of native language in the development and assessment of second language in all four language and literacy area (speaking, listening, reading and writing in the content areas).

Understanding and critiquing the variety and purposes of assessment practices used in for developing instruction that meets students' language and literacy learning needs.

Understanding the critical role of educators in dealing with the biases in testing: content and techniques, and provide accommodations for second language learners and learners with special needs.

Analyzing the influence of sociocultural and sociopolitical variables such as race, ethnicity, gender, and social class background on the learning of Puerto Rican/Latino and other ELL students, and to gain an understanding of how the structures, policies, and practices of schools can serve to maintain, perpetuate, or challenge unequal power relations.

## **OVERALL COURSE 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.

The work for the course will include critical evaluation and adaptation of a variety of assessments, looking at student work as assessment data, and critiques of professional books about language and literacy assessment. Throughout the semester, and as part of their final project, participants will gather data on one focal student in order to enhance their capacity to identify what the students know and how best to support them. We will examine ways to build on and assess both the strengths and the challenges of the focal students, and track their progress in language and literacy development with responsive assessment tools and processes.

The course has been designed to be flexible in structure. The professor will modify these in response to licensure needs, interests, and concerns of class members. Class members are encouraged to log onto to the WebCT in order to stay abreast of any modifications, missed assignments, classes, readings, or support materials.

## **REQUIRED COURSE WORK:**

### **1. Reading Assignments & Attendance**

Weekly assignments include brief reflections and analyses as well as readings. Some of your readings will be on WebCT or online at UMass' EBSCO journal database. If you cannot have regular access to computers and the Internet in any way, including using the university computer lab, please speak to me about alternate arrangements. I will make every effort to help you connect with the needed resources or alternative arrangements, but you must take the initiative to contact me or your classmates. In fairness to all, assignments are due on the date indicated, whether you are present in class or not. You can choose to send completed assignments via email, post on WebCT, or use regular mail (addressed to the course instructor's home address). Please keep copies of anything you send in the mail.

*If you have any visual, cognitive, linguistic, or other sensorial issues that interfere with your meeting the course requirements outlined in this syllabus, please let me know so I can make the necessary adjustments for you.*

### **2. Group Book Evaluation (Teams of 3-4) Due April 27**

With your group, you will choose one of the professional books listed below. 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 PowerPoint presentation (5-8 slides). You can view a sample student presentation on WebCT.

### **3. Final Project: Portfolio, and Written Report due June 15**

The purpose of your final project is to inform the ACCELA community about how assessment practices in the district, schools and classrooms shape the learning and teaching of ELLs and to envision how to transform these practices to better support ELL students. Specifically, the case study will address (a) How assessment practices shape teachers' views of ELL students, how ELL students view themselves, and ultimately how these views shape teaching and learning, (b) How to better appreciate what ELL students know and can do with language and literacy, (c) how to modify/adapt current assessment tools or create authentic assessments that will better capture what ELL students know and can do, giving teachers and learners the information they need to support continued development.

### **CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUR FINAL PROJECT**

1. What do current assessment practices reveal about what ELLs know and can do with literacy? (Document current practices)
2. What's missing from current practices? What do ELLs know and what can they do with literacy that current assessment practices do not capture? (Critique current practices based on observations and interviews of the focal student and insights from the research literature).
3. What assessment practices might more equitably capture your focal student's literacy development? (Revise current practices based on observations and interviews of the focal student and insights from the research literature read in class).
4. Based on these insights, what changes in assessment practices do I plan to make in my classroom next year? How can I re-design assessment to better support students like my focal student (e.g. how can we learn something more general about assessment based on what was learned about your focal student)

Please note: You will have an opportunity to use your proposed action plan (see # 4) in the fall.

- a) Your final project will be to conduct a semester-long case study, including observations, multiple assessments, and analysis of one student in your classroom. Collect data throughout the semester on one second language learner (ELL), or one who is a struggling reader, or in an IEP program but not ELL.

Your data set should 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 students' progress in each specific language area (oral language, listening, reading, and writing). 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 and instruction— oral, written, language, content, etc. Map out what types of tests/assessments are used and for what purposes. Find out how tests are administered and how results are used in the school to identify the focal students as a learner.
- b. **Create a student demographic profile for your class.** Include # of students, male/female, ESL learners (their languages, countries of origin). Provide a profile of your focal student which includes age, grade level, first language, English language ability, home/school relations, country of origin, length of time in the United States, and any other sociocultural, psychological, or historical factors affecting the quality of life and funds of knowledge of the student and her or his family.
- c. **Collect, adapt, and analyze multiple assessments --formal, informal, and authentic-- on your focus student in each language area.** Using information from both (b) and (c), provide an analysis of how these variables may affect your focal student's learning and responses to assessment.

In class, we will dedicate time to giving and receiving feedback on drafts of a), b), and c) in order to improve your final project.

Your final project will include:

- **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 student and to as an opportunity to receive feedback from colleagues. This will be discussed in further detail in class.
- **a written portfolio** including the test dig, demographic profile, and the assessments you've used, modified and developed, student products and observational data as evidence, and

- **a written analysis** of your focal student’s learning, your instructional adaptations if relevant, your action plan and your reflections on the use of assessments to capture and enhance students’ learning.

You will be expected to cite relevant literature to support your analysis.

The final project should be typed and generally follow the *American Psychological Association Manual (5<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. In particular, all assignments should:

- Be typed and double-spaced.
- Use 12-pt font, and a serif typestyle (e.g. Times New Roman).
- Have 1 inch margins on all sides.
- Have the text lined up/aligned on the left margin only (“left justified”). Leave the right margin ‘ragged.’
- Use section headings as needed.
- Include a separate reference page at the end of your assignment, which includes all of the sources cited in the paper and is formatted according to APA guidelines.
- All references used in the final project must be appropriately attributed.

## **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

50% Final Project (20% Data Collection, 10% Oral Presentation, 20% Written Report)

This includes the collection and analysis of data for your focus child, your group presentation of the Book Critique and your oral presentation of your final project and the written report

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 that merits an A must be pushed to levels of excellence.

You may opt for a non-graded mark – Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. Masters students need to take 18 credits with a letter grade. Please notify the professor by the second week of class if you are seeking a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory option. 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 group work
- 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
- Not enough evidence to make a judgment.

## TEXTBOOKS AND READINGS

Books have been ordered through the Amherst Bookstore on Main Street in Amherst (413) 256-1547 and through the Holyoke Barnes & Noble Bookstore (413) 532-3200. Other readings are available on WebCT and Ereserves through UMass or through the web pages cited in this syllabus.

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

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.

## PROFESSIONAL BOOKS FOR CRITIQUE (CHOOSE ONE TO CRITIQUE WITH YOUR GROUP)

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

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

Conley, M.W. (2005). *Connecting Standards and Assessment through Literacy*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

First Steps Materials – Reading, Writing, and Oral Language, First and Second Editions, Dept. of Education and Training in Western Australia: <http://www.stepspd.org/>

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

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.

## **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, Chapter 5.

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.

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.

Klingner, J.K. & Artiles, A.J. (2003) When Should Bilingual Students be in Special Education? *Educational Leadership*, 61 (2). [Available on-line: UMASS Libraries, Databases, EBSCO/ERIC]

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]

Serafini, F. W. (2002). Dismantling the Factory Model of Assessment. *Reading and Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 18(1), 67-85.

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)

## **WEB RESOURCES**

Massachusetts standards: [www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu)

Site for ELA standards: [English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes for English Language Learners: June 2003](#)

Look in the same homepage under assessment/accountability for test items and information on MCAS , MEPA, and MCAS Alternative

Student work:

[www.multiliteracies.ca](http://www.multiliteracies.ca)

This site contains bilingual books made by students and discussions on multiliteracies (developed in collaboration with Jim Cummins).