

Continuous Assessment Plan 1998-1999

Early Elementary Education, P-5, Initial Certification Program

I. Conceptual Framework:

A. The College of Education at the University of Kentucky has adopted the model of "Professional Educator as Reflective Decision Maker" as the conceptual framework for its professional education programs. The characteristics of reflective decision making included in professional educational programs in the College are derived from concepts of reflective practice as espoused by historical and contemporary leaders in education. As such, reflective thinking is based on the individual's open-mindedness, that is, the ability to actively challenge personal beliefs by continually seeking new information. This open-mindedness goes hand-in-hand with wholeheartedness and intellectual responsibility. Wholeheartedness is an absorbing enthusiasm for and dedication to one's work. Intellectual responsibility includes caring enough about the consequences of one's professional duties and actions to seek necessary information on which to base intelligent decisions.

Reflective decision-making guides proactive practice as differentiated from reactive practice. Reflective decision making in professional education programs at the University of Kentucky includes knowledge of and attention to Kentucky's New Teacher Standards, Experienced Teacher Standards, and Administrator Standards; contemplation of possible long-term consequences of professional actions; evaluation of the appropriateness of these actions and the effects of these actions on student performance; and maintenance of an informed perspective concerning all aspects of teaching and instruction.

B. The restructured elementary education program at the University of Kentucky will prepare reflective decision makers who can facilitate the learning and development of all children. Recent research in cognitive psychology makes it clear that teachers do not simply transmit information to students. Rather, learners construct meaning from their experiences in the environment through the analysis of data to detect patterns, forming and testing hypotheses, and integrating new knowledge with previous understandings in a process of schema development that moves learners from **novice** to more **expert** understandings (Caine & Caine, 1994; Chi, Feltovich, & Glaser, 1981; Condon, Clyde, Kyle, & Hovda, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978). Such learning does not involve the same all-or-nothing mastery as remembering isolated facts; rather, in-depth understanding is more likely to develop when students direct sustained attention to a set of concepts, relationships and questions and are able to reflect on the meaning and significance of what they've studied (Newmann, Secada, & Wehlage, 1995; Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992). We see this kind of purposeful learning as taking place in a sociocultural context that helps determine what knowledge is worth having, how to acquire it, and how to use it. Understanding theory, research, and practice in teaching is framed in the context

of the questions, procedures, and debates characteristic of the field of education (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Resnick, 1987; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). Meaningful teacher education, then, involves not just mastering content and pedagogical strategies (although these are necessary and important aspects of expert teaching), but understanding the nature and purpose of both, so that teachers are better able to recognize, reflect on, and solve the problems encountered in practice.

This constructivist, reflective practitioner model is inherent in the New Teacher Standards adopted in June 1993 by the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board as well as in the emerging teacher and student standards from national boards and professional organizations (International Reading Association (IRA)/National Council for the Teaching of English (NCTE) Standards for the English Language Arts; the National Council for the Social Studies; the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics; National Science Education Standards), and the Academic Expectations of the Kentucky Educational Reform Act passed into regulation in 1994. In keeping both with a constructivist and a reflective practitioner model of teacher preparation, the revised program emphasizes teachers as researchers - students will research their own practice - and researchers as teachers - students will work with faculty who conduct research on teaching and learning at the elementary level.

The model presumes a more collaborative relationship between school and university personnel focused on ensuring a high level of individual attention to the mentoring and socialization of teacher candidates. We recognize that this is a labor intensive process, requiring sustained time and effort by all parties. In sum, our work must be guided by two principles: First, a commitment to continuous improvement based on reflection, evaluation, and on-going research; second, a commitment to peer collaboration as a source of professional growth for teacher candidates as well as school and university faculty (Swanson, 1995).

III. Assessment:

The Elementary Education Program implements a continuous assessment plan that begins when students apply for admission to the Elementary Education Program and continues until these students graduate from our program. This continuous assessment plan is grounded in the New Teacher Standards adopted by the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board as well as standards developed by national standards boards and professional organizations in the areas of Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies (International Reading Association/National Council for the Teaching of English Standards for the English Language Arts; the National Council for the Social Studies; the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics; National Science Education Standards). In what follows, our continuous assessment program will be outlined, with an emphasis on demonstrating how we ensure that students master the New Teacher Standards as well as the standards established by national standards boards and professional organizations through our continuous assessment program and our course content.

Admissions Procedures

Applicants for the Elementary Education Teacher Education Program must submit the following information:

1. Verification that they have met all basic requirements, including: A composite score of 20 or above on the ACT (21 or above on the ACTE; 840 or above on the SAT), or, if their scores are below these cutoffs, evidence of passing scores on the reading, spelling, language, and math sections of the CTBS); A 2.5 GPA or better across 60 hours of coursework (The students may also be in the process of completing 60 hours of coursework during the semester they apply);
2. At least 3 recommendations from individuals who can attest to the candidate's potential success in teaching. This must include at least one college instructor in the candidate's area of specialization.
3. An Admissions Portfolio that includes: A "best piece" sample of writing in a content area (preferably in the candidate's area of specialization). This paper should demonstrate the candidate's ability to research a topic in some depth.
Evidence of multicultural/cross-cultural experience, and a written reflection on that experience addressing the following issues: "In one page, list your multicultural and cross-cultural experiences and your role(s) in each setting. In three remaining pages, discuss how your experiences have informed your understanding about what classroom teachers need to know about students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and also discuss how this knowledge might influence their teaching."
Evidence of experience with elementary age children, and a written reflection on that experience addressing the following issues: "In one page, list your experiences with elementary age children and your role(s) in each setting. In three remaining pages, discuss how your experiences have informed your understanding of the most effective means of sparking student interests and developing long-term motivation toward learning." Candidates must also provide a **written autobiography** and complete an **on-demand writing task**. This writing task requires the candidates to critically analyze multiple perspectives on a current educational issue and make a strong case for supporting one particular perspective on that issue. Candidates must then complete an **interview with members of the Elementary Program Faculty**. The Elementary Program Faculty then uses the aforementioned data to evaluate the potential success of this students in the Elementary Program and in elementary classrooms.

NOTE: These final two pieces in the admissions portfolio related to our field experience and community service requirements, which will be summarized in what follows. It is important for students considering a career in education to have experience with students in school settings before they commit to the path of teacher education. Such experiences help prospective teachers: decide if they are making a wise career choice, present examples of human growth and development, demonstrate examples of the full range of diversity represented in school settings, and provide examples of various instructional, assessment, and management techniques that are appropriate for meeting the needs of particular students, and begins the process of meeting the New Teacher Standards 1.6, 2.2, 2.3, 3.5, 3.8, 3.10, 3.12, 4.2, and 4.6. Toward that end, students must have completed the following field experiences and community service prior to admission to the Elementary Teacher Education Program: Students must complete **30 clock hours of community service** prior to admission to the elementary teacher education program. Students can work as a tutor, camp counselor, religious class instructor, Big Brother/Big Sister, etc. Candidates might also participate in more general community service, including such things as Habitat for Humanity, Hope Center, the Nest, and so forth. They may elect to live with international students, or participate in overseas programs. Students must provide evidence that these experiences include work with persons from whom they are different in race, religion, SES, and/or nationality. Students must complete **20 clock hours of field experience** in an elementary school, supervised by a qualified person. Several pre-professional courses at UK might count toward this component (e.g., EDP 202; EDP 203; EPE 301; EDC 270; EDC 272; the elementary field component of EDS 357).

Professional Introduction Semester

The professional coursework during this semester (EDC 329 - Teaching Reading and Language Arts; EDC 323 - Classroom Management and Discipline; EDC 317 - Introduction to Instructional Media; LIS 510 - Children's Literature and Related Materials) are intended to be coordinated so that they complement each other. The EDC 323 and 329 classes have a joint field placement for six weeks, one morning a week. During this semester, students not only develop their understandings of language arts methods, management and discipline systems and techniques, children's literature, and instructional media, they also begin their exploration into the development of interdisciplinary, inquiry-based thematic units.

Assessment During the Professional Introduction Semester

Assessment of progress in the Professional Introduction semester includes assessment strategies specific to individual courses, but also includes an overall **Professional Introduction Portfolio**. This portfolio is intended to be an extension of the students' admissions portfolios, adding the following exhibits:

- Philosophy of education statement (this will be modified as candidates move through the program).
- "Best piece" samples from coursework that show evidence of content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and effective practice (given the students' level of experience).
- Evidence of competence in instructional applications of technology and systems of information management.

Professional Block Semester

All of the courses during the professional block semester (EDC 322, 326, 328, 337, and 339 - Elementary Practicum and Methods Courses in Social Studies, Science, Mathematics and Language Arts respectively) promote students' abilities to meet the New Teacher Standards as well as the professional standards endorsed by the major organizations in each particular discipline. During this semester, in addition to learning a vast array of teaching techniques as well as other information, students deepen their understanding of the theory and development of interdisciplinary, inquiry-based thematic units. This semester involves a field placement in which students are in an elementary classroom for five weeks, four and one half days a week (175 clock hours), under the supervision of school based and UK faculty. During their field placements, students will be in placed in teams of 4-5 teacher candidates. These teams will consist of 2 student teachers and 2-3 students completing the professional block semester. Each team will be supervised by a UK faculty member. Together, the teacher candidates, the UK faculty members, and the school based faculty members will form a professional network and teacher candidates will have the opportunity to work as part of a professional team. Field placements will be selected to ensure that teacher candidates have placements in both primary and intermediate classroom settings across their PI, PB, and student teaching semesters. The schools for these placements are also selected carefully to include a variety of sociocultural settings.

Assessment During the Professional Block Semester

Assessment of progress in the Professional Block semester includes assessment strategies specific to individual methods courses that confirms content as well as pedagogical knowledge. It also includes some additional assessments. At the beginning of the semester, students' Professional Introduction Portfolios are reviewed and placement needs are discussed. Once the semester begins, students are observed throughout the semester by their supervisor and are assessed using an observation form which directly reflect the New Teacher

Standards. Students also submit videotapes of themselves teaching and analyzing their own lessons. The supervisors provide feedback on these lessons as well. The faculty also reviews students' Professional Development Plans. Each student develops a Professional Development Plan in cooperation with UK faculty and school based faculty. The PDP includes reflections on the student's strengths and areas that need further work. This document serves as a planning tool for student teaching. Students also continue the development of their teaching portfolio, adding information that demonstrates competence on tasks related to the New Teacher Standards for each Professional Block course.

Student Teaching Semester

During the student teaching semester students attend seminars related to various KERA-related and professional topics, but the central focus of the semester is the completion of a 450 hour field placement in which students apply the content and pedagogical knowledge they have learned throughout the program to teaching language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and interdisciplinary lessons and planning all aspects of an interdisciplinary, inquiry-based thematic unit.

Assessment During the Student Teaching Semester

Students are assessed in a variety of ways during this semester. Student assignments include: observations reports, developing a thematic unit, critiquing their own teaching using videotapes, completing a solo week, and further developing their teaching portfolios. Of course, an important focus of the assessment during this semester involves observations of the teacher candidate's teaching too. Some time before the completion of their programs, students also take the NTE (Core Battery and Early Childhood Specialty Area).

In addition to this description of the continuous assessment program that is part of the Elementary Education Program, it may be helpful to see a listing of how the New Teacher Standards and Professional Standards are assessed within the coursework of our program. The matrix that follows clarifies this issue.

How the New Teacher Standards and Professional Standards are Assessed within the Coursework of the Elementary Education Program

Standards

New Teacher Standards (NTS) for Preparation and Certification

Courses

FAM 554 - Standard 6.
EDC 329, EDC 323, EDC 317, & LIS 510 (The Professional Introduction) - Standards # 1-5.
EDC 322, EDC 326, EDC 328, EDC 337, & EDC 339 (The Professional Block) - Standards 1-8.

EDC 433 (Student Teaching) - Standards 1-8.

International Reading Association/ ENG 101 & 102 or 105 - Standards 4, 5, 6, 7, 12.

National Council for the Teaching of COM 181 - Standards: 4, 12.

English Standards (IRA/NCTS) for ENG 261 & 262 or ENG 251 & 252 - Standards

1, 2,

the English Language Arts 3, 9, 11.

PHI 100 or 130 - Standard 2.

FAM 554 - Standard 4.

EDC 329 - Standards 1-12.

LIS 510 - Standards 1, 3, 6, 9, 11.

EDC 339 - Standards 1-12.

EDC 433 - Through various means, the university and school faculty work to assure that all of the teaching and content standards of this group are addressed.

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

Social Science Courses for University Studies section IIIB. - Various themes that form the framework of the social science standards. Which themes are addressed depends of the courses taken.

HIS 104 & 105 or HIS 108 & 109 - Most of the themes to some extent, particularly 2, 3, 5, & 6.

Cross-Cultural Course - Various NCSS themes depending on the particular course taken.

Social Science Course in the Related Studies Area - Various NCSS themes are addressed. Which themes are addressed depends of the course taken.

EDP 202 & 203 - Theme 4.

EPE 301 - Theme 5 to some extent.

EDC 326 - Themes 1-10.

EDC 433 - Through various means, the university and school faculty work to assure that as many of the themes as possible are addressed.

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)

MA 201 & 202 - These courses address the content that the NCTM states needs to be covered in the elementary school.

EDC 337 - All of the NCTM Standards and K-4 mathematics content are addressed.

EDC 433 - Through various means, the university and school faculty work to assure

that all of the teaching and content standards for this group are addressed.

National Science Education Standards

GLY 160 & PHY 160 - These courses address the Science Teaching Standards as well as many of the K-4 Science Content Standards that are part of the National Science Education Standards.

EDC 328 - All of the Science Teaching and K-4 Science Content Standards are addressed.

EDC 433 - Through various means, the university and school faculty work to assure that all of the teaching and content standards for this group are addressed.

III. Program Continuous Assessment Plan

In order to continue to help preservice teachers address the New Teacher Standards as well as standards from appropriate professional organizations, the undergraduate elementary education program will need to be evaluated and revised frequently. To this end, the following data will be gathered and acted upon.

A. Student Portfolios

People Responsible: Elementary Program Faculty, Student Teaching Coordinator and Student Teaching Supervisors

Students portfolios are submitted for admission to the elementary program, and are reviewed at the end of the Professional Introduction Semester, the Professional Block Semester, and during Student Teaching. The admissions portfolio provides baseline data regarding students' previous experiences with elementary aged children, community service activities, and content knowledge relative to their area of specialization. Beginning with the Professional Introduction Semester and continuing for the rest of the program, students structure their portfolios around the New Teacher Standards and include documentation of progress toward meeting each of these standards.

Portfolio review will involve looking for overall areas of strength and concern. At the end of each semester, the Program Faculty Chair and Student Teaching Coordinator will meet to discuss overall strengths and areas of concern relative to portfolios. A brief report will be constructed and distributed to faculty teaching in the Professional Introduction Semester and the Professional Block Semester so that appropriate adjustments in courses may be made. Looking at patterns of strength and concern over time will indicate whether program changes are making a difference.

B. Observation in Field Placements
People Responsible: Program Faculty Chair, Student Teaching Coordinator, Practicum Coordinator

During the Professional Block Semester and Student Teaching Semester, students are formally observed and their instruction evaluated by a university coach. These are written evaluations and are followed up by conferences between the coach and the student. Evaluations will be examined for patterns of strength and concern related to students' performance in the field.

The Program Faculty Chair, Student Teaching Coordinator, and Practicum Coordinator will meet at the end of each semester to review these data and note patterns in students' behavior. A report will be passed on to faculty teaching in the Professional Block courses as well as those supervising during either the block or student teaching semesters, so that a plan may be made to bring about appropriate changes in courses and supervision to address areas of concern. Patterns will be examined over time so that improvements may be noted.

C. Course Evaluations
Person Responsible: Department Chair

Students' evaluations of program courses taught within the department will be carefully monitored by the Department Chair. The Department Chair will look for patterns of strengths and concerns across courses for the Professional Introduction Semester and the Professional Block Semester. A report addressing strengths and concerns will be distributed to faculty teaching these courses at or before the yearly departmental retreat in August.

Based on the report from the Department Chairperson, faculty teaching in these two semester blocks will develop a plan to address student concerns, and submit this plan to the chair. Evaluations for the following year will be compared to previous evaluations and this plan in order to note improvements. Such a process will be ongoing.

D. On-demand Tasks
People Responsible: Faculty teaching methods courses, Elementary Program Faculty, Department Chair

On-demand tasks will be embedded throughout the program based on KDE guidelines. These tasks will be administered and evaluated by faculty teaching the methods courses. Performance on on-demand tasks will be also evaluated by program faculty members for the purpose of noting patterns of strength and weakness. The Department Chair will be informed of these patterns, and will in turn report areas of concern to faculty members involved with the appropriate course(s).

As with the course evaluations, faculty members associated with courses in which students have exhibited difficulty with on-demand tasks will develop a plan of action to address this concern and submit it to the Department Chair. Evaluation will be ongoing, looking for improvement over time.

E. Feedback from Public School Teachers

People Responsible: Faculty in Professional Introduction Semester, Practicum Coordinator, Student Teaching Coordinator, Program Faculty Chair

Cooperating Teachers complete formal, written evaluations on the university students placed in their classrooms during the Professional Introduction Semester, the Professional Block Semester, and Student Teaching. Since these cooperating teachers observe every lesson the students teach, as well as their collaboration with others, professional behavior, etc., their feedback is crucial to the continuous assessment of our program. Faculty associated with the Professional Introduction Semester will review cooperating teacher evaluations looking for patterns of strength and weakness. As a group, they will decide on appropriate action to address concerns, and monitor for progress the following semesters.

Evaluations from cooperating teachers during the Professional Block and Student Teaching Semesters will be reviewed by the Practicum Coordinator and Student Teaching Coordinator, and Program Faculty Chairperson. These three individuals will write a report denoting patterns of strengths and weaknesses, and this report will be distributed to faculty teaching in the Professional Block Semester. An plan to address these weaknesses will then be written by faculty involved in the Professional Block Semester. The plan will be consulted when reviewing feedback in the following semesters.

F. Exit Interviews

People Responsible: Student Teaching Coordinator, Student Teaching Supervisors, Program Faculty Chair

At the end of the Student Teaching Semester, exit interviews are held with each student. The purpose of these interviews is to review students' teaching portfolios, provide overall feedback about students' success during this semester, and students' feedback on the effectiveness of the program in preparing them to meet the demands of elementary classrooms.

Student Teaching Supervisors will take notes during these exit interviews, and submit these notes to the Student Teaching Coordinator for the elementary program. The Coordinator and Program Faculty Chair will review these interview notes and establish patterns of program strengths and weaknesses as seen by the students. Such patterns will be summarized in a report distributed to all faculty

associated with the elementary program. Faculty associated with the program will develop a plan to address any weakness patterns noted by students. This plan will be reviewed at the end of each semester as additional sets of student feedback are gathered.

G. Standardized Assessments

People Responsible: Director - Office of Student Services and Certification, Program Faculty Chair

Scores on standardized assessments are compiled in the College of Education Office of Student Services and Certification. These scores will be reported to the Program Faculty Chair. In turn, any area in which students exhibit difficulty will be shared with faculty associated with the program. In such instances, a plan will be constructed to insure that test areas in which students exhibit difficulty are imbedded within coursework. Test scores of subsequent groups will be watched for improvements.

H. Follow-up Surveys

People Responsible: Elementary Program Faculty

One year after graduation from the program, a survey will be sent to each student. This survey will ask respondents to again rate the program's ability to prepare them for elementary teaching, and in particular, meet the New Teacher Standards.

Survey data will be compiled by the Elementary Program Faculty and distributed to all faculty who teach in the program at or before the annual departmental retreat in August. At that time, faculty will meet to formulate plans to address any program weaknesses noted by former students. The following year's data will be examined to insure that improvements have occurred in weak areas.

IV. Summary

This document describes the multiple data sources that will be gathered in order to continually assess the effectiveness of the undergraduate Elementary Program. The general tenor of these assessments rests on the fact that such feedback will inform program changes. Data collection will begin upon students' application/admission to the program and continue through their internship year. Data will include feedback from students (course evaluations, exit interviews, follow-up surveys), cooperating teachers (Professional Introduction Semester, Professional Block Semester, Student Teaching Semester), university supervisors and coaches (Professional Block Semester, Student Teaching Semester), and standardized assessments. A key to dissemination of these data and program improvement is open communication among all involved with the program. The plans for acting on feedback will provide a structure for this ongoing communication.