

5-2014

When Assessment and Accountability Intersect, Good Things Can Happen

Connie Schaffer

University of Nebraska at Omaha, cschaffer@unomaha.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/tedfacpub>



Part of the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

Please take our feedback survey at: https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE

Recommended Citation

Schaffer, Connie, "When Assessment and Accountability Intersect, Good Things Can Happen" (2014).
Teacher Education Faculty Publications. 71.

<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/tedfacpub/71>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Teacher Education at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Teacher Education Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.

When Assessment and Accountability Intersect, Good Things Can Happen

Connie L. Schaffer
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Abstract

A process implemented in a large teacher preparation program simultaneously addressed demands related to improving pre-service teacher assessment practices and program accountability. The process, called Assessment Presentations, led to (a) more systematic incorporation of assessment instruction into the program's curriculum, and (b) the refinement of a program accountability measure. As part of the Assessment Presentations, pre-service teachers gave oral presentations during which they demonstrated assessment practices and offered evidence for program accountability by including data related to P-12 student learning. The Assessment Presentations also provided program-specific data that led to individual program revisions and a stronger overall teacher education program. Discussion of the procedures, scoring criteria, results, and outcomes of the Assessment Presentations provides information that may be beneficial to other teacher education programs.

Within teacher preparation programs, assessment and accountability garner a great deal of attention. While at times the terms are used interchangeably, they represent two distinct concepts. Each concept, to varying degrees, is embedded in individual programs and is represented in national standards and discussions regarding the expectations of teacher preparation programs.

Teacher preparation standards established by national accreditation organizations such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), delineate requirements for pre-service teachers to understand and apply classroom assessment practices (CAEP, 2013; NCATE, 2008). Assessment expectations for pre-service teachers are also outlined in the standards set by the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC). The InTASC standards, developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), include the understanding and use of assessment practices as the sole focus of one of its ten guidelines regarding the preparation of pre-service teachers (CCSSO, 2011). These various standards make the intentional teaching of assessment practices a reality for teacher preparation programs and their faculty members.

Assessment, as represented in these standards, includes classroom-based practices and draws heavily from the work of Stiggins (2002) who outlined assessment as a two-fold process. First, formative practices gather evidence during instruction and are used by classroom teachers to guide teaching and motivate students. Secondly, summative assessments gather evidence at the conclusion of teaching and provide indication of student learning related to specific objectives or goals (Popham, 2009; Stiggins, 2002).

In addition to the national influences impacting teacher preparation programs, P-12 education partners of individual programs expect pre-service teachers to have a thorough knowledge of assessment (Stiggins, 2005; Wiliam, 2011) and its relationship to effective instruction and measurement of student learning as soon as they enter P-12 classrooms - even as early as student teaching. There is little latitude for student teachers who have significant struggles with assessment practices because this shortcoming could potentially compromise the learning of P-12 students. That is a risk few P-12 administrators and classroom teachers are willing to take (Selwyn, 2007).

Teacher preparation programs have responded to the assessment landscape by intensifying the focus on pre-service instruction regarding effective assessment practices in a variety of ways (Deluca & Bellera, 2013; Shepard, Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Rust, 2005). Programs have accomplished this by incorporating assessment topics when teaching the concepts of planning, instruction, or grading; developing a signature program requirement or various course assignments which involve the analysis of P-12 student learning; and/or offering an entire course on assessment (Deluca & Bellera, 2013; Shepard et al., 2005).

Although teacher preparation programs have embedded the teaching of assessment practices within their curricula, they have only recently begun to traverse the accountability landscape. Teacher preparation accountability refers to processes implemented and used by stakeholders to (a) make decisions regarding a program's quality; (b) inform their decision making, and (c) hold programs responsible for the learning of pre-service teachers (Cochran-Smith, Piazza, & Power, 2013; Dillon & Silva, 2011; Ginsberg & Kingston, 2014).

Teacher preparation programs listening carefully over the past decades heard a forewarning drumbeat of accountability originating from sources such as *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), *Tomorrow's Schools of Education* (Holmes Group, 1995), and the *No Child Left Behind* legislation (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). The intensity and quantity of calls for increased accountability, however, have only recently risen to such a level that the once faint cadence for reform has become a clamor of poorly synchronized rhythms.

In one of several similar speeches given in 2009, U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan called for "revolutionary changes" in teacher preparation programs (Duncan, 2009). Duncan's message has been echoed, albeit in a more tempered manner, by organizations including the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), National Education Association (NEA), NCATE, and CCSSO. Add to the fray the proposed rankings or grading of teacher preparation programs coming from the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), and the cacophony of accountability seems deafening (AFT, 2012; CCSSO, 2012; Commission on Effective Teachers and Teaching [CETT], 2011; Greenberg, Pomerance, & Walsh, 2011; NCATE, 2010).

The reforms and approaches advocated by the various organizations differ somewhat, but the idea that teacher preparation programs must find ways to adequately measure the performance of pre-service teachers in or during student teaching is a consistent element included in their reports. Furthermore, the reports imply, if not explicitly state, that accountability measures for teacher preparation programs should be performance-based and in some way be tied to P-12 student achievement (Cochran-Smith et al., 2013).

Assessment and Accountability: Two Parallel Realities of a Teacher Preparation Program

Like most teacher preparation programs, the program featured in this article included assessment topics in the curriculum and instruction of a number of required teaching pedagogy courses. It also offered a stand-alone assessment course - but only as an elective. Satisfied the concept was adequately taught, the program faculty did little to measure the assessment knowledge and skill of its pre-service teachers other than to include five Likert-rated items related to assessment on its student teaching evaluation.

The reality of this approach was problematic given the scope of the program. With over 1,000 education majors progressing at differing paces through various stages of the program, required courses had numerous sections and were taught by myriad full-time and adjunct faculty members. This made consistency throughout the program difficult. In addition, the assumption that the program's existing approach adequately addressed assessment practices was faulty. Improving pre-services teachers' assessment practices became an emerging theme in the feedback from the program's P-12 school partners. As a result of task force discussions that included representatives from a consortium of local school districts, program administrators identified the need to address the haphazard approach to teaching assessment and increase the specificity of its evaluation of the assessment knowledge and skills of its pre-service teachers.

As the issues related to assessment were surfacing, the program was also facing a separate need to develop a student teacher work sample in response to calls for increased accountability. The student teacher work sample was a particularly significant reality for the program, as the state in which it was located had historically set minimal requirements in terms of content and pedagogical testing necessary for certification and did not participate in standardized performance-based assessments, such as the Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA).

Assessment Presentations - Intersecting the Realities

In a tandem response to both its assessment and accountability realities, the program instituted a unique program-wide performance measure, referred to as Assessment Presentations. The purposes of the Assessment Presentations were to (a) appraise the assessment knowledge and skills of its pre-service teachers, and (b) develop an accountability measure of the program. The process addressed assessment by measuring pre-service teachers' application of effective assessment practices during their student teaching experiences. To address accountability, the process incorporated P-12 student achievement results, collected data to inform improvement efforts of the overall teacher preparation program, and gathered evidence of program quality within a number of specific content areas.

Context

The Assessment Presentations were implemented within an initial teacher preparation program comprised of undergraduate pre-service teachers at a large public university. Approximately 1,100 education majors were enrolled in the program completing traditional, initial certification programs in the areas of early childhood, elementary, middle grades, and secondary education. The middle and secondary education programs included the content areas of business, science, social studies, health, language arts, mathematics, and several world languages. The program also included pre-service teachers in art, music, and physical education pursuing comprehensive certification covering both the elementary and secondary levels.

Procedural Methods

The program scheduled the Assessment Presentations just past the midpoint of its semester-long student teaching experience. Each semester, approximately 125 student teachers returned to campus for an afternoon and were divided into groups of five to ten student teachers, all of whom were in similar content areas. This small group of student teachers, their university supervisors, and two evaluators served as the audience for the pre-service teachers' presentations.

Preparation. Prior to the day of the presentations, the coordinator of student teaching provided several training sessions for the student teachers. During these large group sessions, the coordinator outlined the requirements of the Assessment Presentations, reviewed the scoring criteria, and showed recorded examples of past presentations. In addition to the formal training sessions, many university student teaching supervisors used portions of their monthly seminars to hold small group discussions regarding general assessment practices as well as the specific expectations of the Assessment Presentations.

Presentations. On the day of the presentations, each student teacher gave a 10-12 minute, video-recorded, oral presentation supported by five electronic slides and a one-page lesson summary. Information presented beyond these constraints was not considered in the scoring of the presentations. Although the protocol was consistent for all student teachers, each individual selected specific assessment strategies based on the nuances and context of his or her student teaching setting and content area.

The content of the presentations was based on a lesson or series of lessons that the pre-service teachers had delivered during their student teaching experiences. During the Assessment Presentations, the student teachers provided a brief background of their classroom settings, as well as the featured lesson and its learning objective(s). Based on this information, the student teachers then presented (a) their assessment choices and the rationale underlying those choices, (b) how specific instruction was guided by formative assessment practices, and (c) how P-12 student learning was evidenced through summative assessments.

Student teachers were not given a template outlining the types or number of assessments to be used in the lesson(s) or shared in their presentations. Therefore, each pre-service teacher consciously chose the most appropriate assessment practices to implement as well as explained and justified these decisions during the Assessment Presentations. Many student teachers demonstrated their assessment skills and the learning of their P-12 students by sharing student work samples or pre- and post-instructional data to illustrate achievement in relationship to a specific learning objective. Other student teachers provided evidence of their assessment skills and P-12 student learning by presenting information from various formative assessments along with a summative project-based or criterion-referenced assessment.

Scoring. Two experienced educators specifically trained to evaluate the Assessment Presentations scored the presentations using a rubric. The validity of the process was established by aligning the rubric with the indicators outlined in the InTASC standard related to assessment as well as the state's assessment criteria established in its recently adopted Teacher Performance Framework outcomes. The reliability of the process was addressed by tightly adhering to the parameters regarding the length of the

presentations and lesson summary and the number of electronic slides as well as through the structured training for the evaluators.

Typically, the evaluator teams consisted of one full-time teacher preparation faculty member and one P-12 educator from the surrounding community. To promote scoring consistency, evaluator training was required each semester. The training was conducted by the coordinator of student teaching, the same person who provided the training for the student teachers. The training consisted of reviewing procedural issues, clarifying terminology, and analyzing the rubric. During training, evaluators scored two videotaped presentations. The first was scored as part of a large group activity. The second was scored individually with specific evaluation partners sharing their scores and explaining their ratings to each other. Following the dialogue between the paired evaluators, the coordinator facilitated a discussion of the scores with the entire group. The training also included how to use written comments to provide specific and informative feedback to the pre-service teachers.

During the scoring of the actual Assessment Presentations, evaluators provided individual scores and did not consult with one another regarding their scores. The two scores were provided to the pre-service teachers without evaluator identification. When a large discrepancy occurred between scores, a third evaluator viewed the recording of the presentation and provided a score. In conjunction with the rubric scores, evaluators provided feedback to pre-service teachers via written comments. The comments clarified the rationale behind the scores, provided valuable and individualized feedback to the pre-service teachers, and explained scoring variations between the two evaluators.

Performance criteria. Assessment Presentations were given by student teachers from early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school settings, and thus the content and teaching strategies of the featured lesson varied dramatically; however, the assessment practices outlined in the rubric were transferable to all settings and content areas. The rubric addressed the clarity of assessment purposes; understanding of assessment bias; alignment of assessments to state standards; use of assessments to inform instruction and motivate students; communication of assessment information to stakeholders such as parents, administrators, and other educational professionals; and evidence of the impact on P-12 achievement.

The Assessment Presentation Rubric (Figure 1), provided to student teachers well in advance of the presentations, delineated the criteria for a presentation to be considered marginal, satisfactory, strong, or outstanding. Any student teacher whose performance was evaluated by one or both of the evaluators as below the satisfactory level was scored as not meeting the Assessment Presentation requirements of the program.

The recordings of presentations scored as marginal were reviewed by the coordinator of student teaching. The program completion status of these pre-service teachers was determined on an individual basis by the program chair, coordinator of student teaching, and the university supervisor. At times, the response of the program was to offer remediation or additional support until the student teachers were able to evidence their understanding of assessment practices as well as their impact on P-12 student learning. In other cases, the score on the Assessment Presentation, taken in conjunction with other factors, led to unsatisfactory grades for student teaching.

Support. University supervisors, the full-time faculty members, and part-time university employees who directly observed, interacted, and mentored the student teachers as well as evaluated other aspects of student teaching, were not eligible to serve as evaluators for the Assessment Presentations. University supervisors were present when their student teachers gave their presentations, however, and because they were familiar with the student teachers and had knowledge of each student teacher's context, strengths, and weaknesses, their presence provided reassurance to the student teachers. University supervisors also facilitated the order of the individual presenters and served as timers for the presentations.

While the on-site presence of the university supervisors was helpful in calming the nerves of the student teachers on the day of the presentations, it was the support they provided prior to the actual presentations that was critical. From the beginning of the semester, the supervisors focused the student teachers on assessment practices. When they observed and provided feedback to student teachers, many purposefully referenced the Assessment Presentation Rubric or used language similar to that found on the rubric. Assessment was also a common discussion item in the small group seminars the supervisors conducted for their student teachers. These small group discussions heightened awareness of assessment practices and allowed the pre-service teachers to learn through interactions with their peers.

Marginal	Satisfactory	Strong	Outstanding
-----------------	---------------------	---------------	--------------------

Purpose of assessment is unclear or confusing, potentially biased	Purpose of assessment provided but limited, implies awareness of assessment bias issues	Purpose of assessment clearly stated with rationale, uses strategies to minimize bias	Purpose of assessment clearly stated with well-defined rationale, intentionally seeks to eliminate bias
Mismatch between activities & assessments when aligned with state standards	Some activities & assessments aligned with state standards	Assessments aligned with state standards	Assessments aligned with state standards
Limited understanding of importance of data & how to use various data sources	Ability to gather data for specific skill & use it to guide instruction	Ability to gather multiple data sources & use them to guide instruction	Multiple dimensions & differentiated instruction for students' successful performance at appropriate target levels
Minimally meets information needs of most students & teacher	Meets the informational needs of most students & the teacher	Meets the informational needs of students, teacher & most parents	Communicates assessment information to students, teacher, parents & others in a manner that satisfies most stakeholders
Limited recognition of role of assessment in student motivation	Recognizes role of assessment as student empowerment & possible motivational tool	Designs assessments with potential for student involvement & empowerment	Involves students in assessment/empowers to structure own learning
Impact on student learning is not evidenced	Impact on student learning is evidenced in a limited manner	Impact on student learning is clearly evidenced	Impact on student learning is clearly evidenced in multiple ways

Figure 1. Rubric used to score assessment presentations.

Results and Outcomes Related to Assessment and Accountability

The implementation of the Assessment Presentations intersected the topics of classroom assessment practices and program accountability within the teacher preparation program and provided an opportunity to strengthen the program in both areas. In terms of assessment practices, the process required pre-service teachers to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in P-12 classrooms and articulate this during the presentations. In addition, the process helped the program to identify individual pre-service teachers who did not fully grasp these practices and were in need of additional support in this area. The coordinator of student teaching and university supervisors were able to individualize the support based on what a specific student teacher's presentation revealed about his or her needs.

In terms of accountability, after several years of implementation, the Assessment Presentations became a signature measure of the program. Although the program avoided calling it a high-stakes evaluation, all pre-service teachers were expected to fulfill the requirements of the Assessment Presentations in order to successfully complete student teaching and graduate. In addition, the aggregated data were used in state and national accreditation processes as evidence of overall and specific content area program quality. Data also informed a number of program improvement decisions.

Reviewing the quantitative data. Aggregated quantitative results from four years of the Assessment Presentations are represented in Table 1. Other than in Semester 2, the percentage of scores in the four ranges remained reasonably consistent with most scores falling in the strong and satisfactory ranges. Data from individual programs such as early childhood education, elementary education, or the various middle and secondary education content areas were also routinely tabulated and reviewed by faculty members associated with the various programs and used for specific program accreditation and authorization processes.

Table 1
Unit-level Assessment Presentation Results

	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Number of Students			
		Outstanding	Strong	Satisfactory	Marginal
Semester 1	111	8	76	17	1
Semester 2	122	35	49	16	0
Semester 3	81	11	62	27	0
Semester 4	138	6	60	33	2
Semester 5	114	11	60	29	<1
Semester 6	129	11	62	27	<1
Semester 7	139	13	48	39	0
Semester 8	153	9	52	39	<1

Beyond the Data: Identifying the Lessons Learned

Although the unit-level quantitative data remained consistent over four years, the program learned a great deal in terms of both assessment and accountability. These lessons subsequently resulted in a number of significant program improvements.

Lesson One: The program needed a common assessment language. In the first several semesters of implementation, pre-service teachers had to be given numerous explanations and clarifications regarding assessment practices as they often misused assessment vocabulary during the training sessions for student teachers. The majority of the training time was spent reviewing assessment terminology and practices. As they prepared for their Assessment Presentations, the student teachers also relied heavily on their university supervisors and P-12 cooperating teachers to explain assessment terminology.

The need for a common language also became evident as sample presentations were scored during the training sessions for evaluators. Not only did faculty members have varying perspectives regarding the language used in the rubric, so too did the evaluators from the P-12 community and the university supervisors who also attended the training.

The lack of a clear and consistent language offered an explanation regarding why the scores of the Assessment Presentations represented in Table 1 seemed to be trending downward. In the initial semesters of implementation, evaluators themselves did not agree on the accurate use of assessment terminology. This made it extremely

difficult for them to identify the pre-service teachers' appropriate application of assessment practices as presented during the Assessment Presentations. Not wanting to downgrade pre-service teachers because of their own confusion, many evaluators openly stated they "scored high" because of their own uncertainty related to assessment language. This led to score inflation in the initial stages of implementation.

Lengthy discussions at the training sessions and subsequent departmental meetings began to unify the various viewpoints related to assessment. As a result, a common assessment language emerged that was (a) influenced by the evaluators from the P-12 environments, and (b) consistently used by both full-time faculty members and part-time university supervisors. As the common language began to emerge, so too did the confidence of the evaluators. Evaluators became more critical consumers of the assessment information and the evidence the pre-service teachers presented during their Assessment Presentations. A presentation given in the early stages of implementation and scored as a strong performance was likely to be scored as a satisfactory performance in later semesters. There was also a change in the written feedback evaluators provided. Comments became much more specific to assessment and included more explicit references to effective assessment practices.

Lesson Two: The program needed to scaffold opportunities for pre-service teachers to apply assessment skills prior to student teaching. Initially, pre-service teachers nearly begged to be provided a template for the Assessment Presentations that precisely outlined the methods of assessment they should incorporate, the number of assessments they should include, and what type of data would most clearly evidence P-12 student learning. They had little confidence in their ability to choose and implement classroom assessments that best matched their P-12 curriculum and classroom context, and they had even less confidence in their ability to articulate these practices to the evaluators during the Assessment Presentations.

The faculty members who served as evaluators in the initial phases of the Assessment Presentations quickly realized the pre-service teachers had limited experiences with applying assessment practices. Recognizing the gaps in the curriculum, faculty evaluators were hesitant to strictly adhere to rubric indicators during their scoring. This was another contributing factor causing the scores of the Assessment Presentations to fall in the strong, rather than the perhaps more accurate satisfactory, category during the early implementation.

Subsequently, faculty members began to discuss, develop, and standardize course assignments which required pre-service teachers to make and justify assessment decisions. As a result, pre-service teachers were required to integrate multiple assessments into the first lesson plans they wrote in introductory courses. The focus on assessment continued through other pedagogical courses with more rigorous

expectations as pre-service teachers advanced through their course and practicum sequence. By the time they completed their teacher preparation courses, pre-service teachers had been required to provide tangible evidence of P-12 student learning in multiple pre-student teaching courses and practica. Because faculty evaluators had increased confidence that the program's curriculum adequately addressed assessment practices, their evaluations of the Assessment Presentations became more rigorous.

Lesson Three: The program needed to foster more productive dispositions regarding accountability. In the initial semesters, pre-service teachers, faculty members, and university supervisors were quite apprehensive about the accountability associated with the Assessment Presentations, so much so that their anxiety stood in the way of their assessment practices. In the early implementation of the Assessment Presentations, many of the pre-service teachers' questions focused on the *cut score* and the implications of not reaching it. As they prepared for their Assessment Presentations, pre-service teachers had great difficulty reconciling the requirement to evidence their impact on P-12 student achievement with the requirement to demonstrate effective assessment practices. For example, they struggled to understand that they would not be penalized for sharing information from formative assessments which indicated some of their P-12 students were struggling to meet an objective or were not learning the material as expected.

The pre-service teachers' willingness to share assessment information they had used to make instructional decisions and adjustments to their teaching was intersecting with the accountability pressure they felt. Their assessment practices tangled with their angst related to what they perceived to be a high-stakes accountability measure. For some pre-service teachers, the apprehension and anxiety were so great that their emotions interfered with their presentations.

Likewise, the accountability factor was not overlooked by faculty members or university supervisors. The faculty members, some with reluctance and resistance, realized they and the programs they represented were entering, or at the very least breaching, the plane of high-stakes accountability. They too questioned the repercussions for individuals as well as the programs they represented if the pre-service teachers did not meet the minimum score requirements.

University supervisors worried that scores on the Assessment Presentations would inaccurately reflect the skills of student teachers and that a marginal score on one measure might prevent a student teacher from graduating. The unease of the university supervisors was not only centered on the student teachers, but also the supervisors expressed concern that poor performances on the Assessment Presentations would reflect negatively on themselves and their effectiveness as supervisors.

As was the case with the emergence of the common assessment language and the improvements in the scope and sequence of the curriculum, the dispositions impacted the overall scores of the Assessment Presentations. Eventually, the evaluators and supervisors moved beyond their initial anxieties about *unfair* or *unreasonable* accountability. The result of this shift was that pre-service teachers began to receive more honest and candid feedback in the context of their student teaching supervision, as well as through the Assessment Presentation scores and corresponding written comments.

Changing the Trajectory

It was not until the third and fourth iterations of the Assessment Presentations that most of the faculty members and university supervisors realized the process went beyond accountability and also offered an authentic opportunity to evaluate what the pre-service teachers knew about assessment practices. It was then that the above lessons were truly realized, changes began to take hold, and the Assessment Presentations began to become a more reliable and valid measure. What had started as a distinct conversation about accountability related to the Assessment Presentations was now intersecting with the discussions centered on the pre-service teachers' knowledge and skills regarding assessment practices.

From an accountability and program improvement standpoint, the faculty began to discuss the program's course work in regard to potential gaps, redundancies, and misalignment related to assessment practices. Because faculty had been trained to use the Assessment Presentation Rubric, the common language based on that instrument provided a foundation for these discussions. This was followed by the creation of assignments, developmentally implemented throughout the program's curriculum and intentionally designed to prepare the pre-service teachers to meet the expectations of the Assessment Presentations.

The faculty, having shifted its anxiety-laden perspective related to accountability to one focused on improving the teaching of assessment practices, triggered a similar change for the pre-service teachers. As the pre-service teachers began to experience more intentional exposure to assessment practices within the structured and supportive setting of their coursework and practica, they built confidence and competence in their knowledge and application of effective assessment. They no longer needed remedial sessions on assessment during student teaching. Simple reminders of their prior knowledge and experiences sufficed, allowing them to expend their energy on improving their assessment practices rather than worrying about *passing* the accountability measure of the Assessment Presentations. Unsurprisingly, as the pre-service teachers' confidence increased, their nervousness and unease related to the accountability associated with Assessment Presentations decreased.

Benefits for the program and the pre-service teachers also resulted from the involvement of the university supervisors. Because the Assessment Presentations required the participation of the university supervisors, the common assessment language naturally carried over to the student teaching experience. This provided a more coherent connection between the program's curriculum and the P-12 classroom. Finally, more direct contact and strengthened relationships between the faculty and the part-time supervisors were unplanned outcomes of the training sessions that brought the two groups together.

As the process evolved, the scores became more representative of the assessment knowledge and skills of the pre-service teachers. The improved authenticity of scores and the increased specificity of the feedback via the written comments enriched the quality of the information provided to individual pre-service teachers, which then informed their practice. The scores also became a more accurate measure for the program to use in its on-going program improvement efforts.

Making Good Things Happen

Assessment and accountability are no longer parallel realities for this teacher preparation program. Assessment Presentations have changed the trajectories of each and resulted in an intersection of the two concepts. While at an initial glance, the pre-service teachers, faculty, and university supervisors viewed this interconnection as unwanted and uncomfortable, the impact of the intersecting concepts ultimately yielded positive outcomes. The challenge of accountability in the teacher preparation program did not have to be separated from what most faculty members viewed as their primary purpose: to improve the practice of pre-service teachers so that they in turn improve the performance of P-12 students.

When Assessment Presentations were first initiated, the reality of accountability structures received the greater focus; however, when brought together with the need to improve the program's teaching of assessment practices, the end result was improved practices in both areas. With time and perseverance, the apprehension of accountability evolved into enhanced assessment practices for the faculty, university supervisors, and most importantly, the pre-service teachers. The overall lesson to be learned is that teacher preparation programs can intersect accountability with assessment practices or other components of effective teaching. The potential value of doing so extends well beyond the accountability of an individual program or evaluating the specific skills related to a singular aspect of the program's curriculum. The benefits, including improved performance of pre-service teachers, ultimately impact their future P-12 students. And... that is when good things can happen.

References

- American Federation of Teachers. (2012). *Raising the bar: Aligning and elevating teacher preparation and the teaching profession*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Cochran-Smith, M., Piazza, P., & Power, C. (2013). The politics of accountability: Assessing teacher education in the United States. *The Educational Forum*, 77(1), 6-27. doi:10.1080/00131725.2013.739015 [GS Search](#)
- Commission on Effective Teachers and Teaching (CETT). (2011). *Transforming teaching: Connecting professional responsibility with student learning*. Washington, DC: National Education Association. Available from <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Transformingteaching2012.pdf>
- Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. (2013). *CAEP accreditation standards*. Retrieved from http://caepnet.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/final_board_approved1.pdf
- Council of Chief State School Officers. (2011). *The InTASC model core teaching standards (April 2011): At a glance*. Washington, DC: Author. Available at <http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2011/InTASC%202011%20Standards%20At%20A%20Glance.pdf>
- Council of Chief State School Officers. (2012). *Our responsibility, our promise: Transforming educator preparation and entry into the profession*. Washington, DC: Author. Available from http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2012/Our%20Responsibility%20Our%20Promise_2012.pdf
- DeLuca, C., & Bellara, A. (2013). The current state of assessment education: Aligning policy, standards, and teacher education curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 64(4), 356-372. doi:10.1177/0022487113488144 [GS Search](#)
- Dillon, E., & Silva, E. (2011). Grading the teachers' teachers. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 93(1), 54-58.
- Duncan, A. (2009). Teacher preparation: Reforming the uncertain profession (Remarks of secretary Arne Duncan at Teachers College, Columbia University October 22, 2009). New York, NY. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/teacher-preparation-reforming-uncertain-profession> [GS Search](#)
- Ginsberg, R., & Kingston, N. (2014). Caught in a vise: The challenges facing teacher preparation in an era of accountability. *Teachers College Record*,

116(1).Retrieved from
<http://www.tcrecord.org.leo.lib.unomaha.edu/library/Content.asp?ContentId=17295> [GS Search](#)

- Greenberg, J., Pomerance, L., & Walsh, K. (2011). *Student teaching in the United States*. Washington, DC: National Council on Teacher Quality Author. (ED521916). Available from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED521916.pdf>
- Holmes Group. (1995). *Tomorrow's schools of education*. East Lansing, MI: Author.
- National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Available from <http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/risk.html>
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (2008). *Unit standards*. Washington DC: Author. Available from <http://www.ncate.org/Standards/UnitStandards/UnitStandardsinEffect2008/tabid/476/Default.aspx>
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (2010). *Transforming teacher education through clinical practice: A national strategy to prepare effective teachers*. Washington, DC: Author. Available from <http://www.ncate.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=zzeiB1OoqPk%3d&tabid=715><http://www.ncate.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=zzeiB1OoqPk%3d&tabid=715>
- Popham, W. (2009). Assessment literacy for teachers: Faddish or fundamental? *Theory into Practice*, 48(1), 4-11. doi:10.1080/00405840802577536 [GS Search](#)
- Selwyn, D. (2007). Highly quantified teachers. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 58(2), 124-137. doi: [10.1177/0022487106297842](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487106297842)
- Shepard, L., Hammerness, K., Darling-Hammond, L., & Rust, F., with Baratz-Snowden, J., Gordon, E., Gutierrez, C., & Pacheco, A. (2005). Assessment. In L. Darling-Hammond & J. Bransford, (Eds.), *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do* (pp. 275-326). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Stiggins, R. J. (2002). Assessment crisis: The absences of assessment for learning, *Phi Delta Kappan*, 83(10), 758-765. Retrieved from <http://beta.edtechpolicy.org/CourseInfo/edhd485/AssessmentCrisis.pdf>
- Stiggins, R. J. (2005). From formative assessment to assessment for learning: A path to success in standards-based schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87(4), 324-328.

U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *Meeting the highly qualified teachers challenge: The secretary's annual report on teacher quality*. Washington, DC: Author.

William, D. (2011). *Embedded formative assessment*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.



About the Author



Connie L. Schaffer, EdD is an assistant professor in the Teacher Education Department at the University of Nebraska at Omaha where she also serves as the College of Education's Assessment Coordinator. Her research interests include early field experiences and urban education. Email: cschaffer@unomaha.edu