

College of Menominee Nation's Teacher Education Program

Early Childhood/Elementary Education

Evidence-Based Decision-Making:

Data Retreat to Assess Teacher Education Preparation

To assess the effectiveness of the College of Menominee Nation's (CMN) Teacher Education (TE) program in Early Childhood/Elementary Education, three sources of data were instrumental in creating evidence for the faculty to consider in making needed improvements. They are: the Title II Institutional Program Report Card (IPRC), the Follow-Up Survey for Graduates and Employers of Graduates, and CMN's program assessment embodied in student portfolios.

TITLE II—INSTITUTIONAL REPORT CARD

The Title II IPRC for the US Department of Education was reviewed regarding CMN's admission requirements, enrollment, supervised clinical experience, teacher preparedness, program completers, annual goals, assurances, pass rates for both PPST (Pre-professional Skills Test) and PRAXIS II (which measures content knowledge), use of technology, and teacher training. The main topic of discussion centered on CMN's pass rate in PRAXIS II (100% for CMN 2010-2012 graduates; however, there were lagging scaled scores). For CMN, the scaled score was 159 while the state's was 166; the cut score was 147. PPST pass rates for CMN 2010-2012 graduates were competitive with the State of Wisconsin rates in mathematics 180/180; in writing 178/ 177, and reading 177/177.

The IPRC reported that students (the next graduates of 2011-2012) who have completed all but the clinical (Student Teaching) passed their PRAXIS II. For the PPST, the pass rates were .47/.42/.29 compared to the state pass rates of .95/.93/.90. These scores appear more dismal as re-takes of test were not reported if taken in the summer or fall of 2011. Therein lies two problems: recorded PPST scores of this year's graduates (which they have since passed) and those students who CMN named as having been admitted to the Teacher Education program as of 2011 (reported in October, 2011). Since Title II asked for all other students admitted to Teacher Education, the October report included those who were still working to pass the PPST and those who were fulfilling 200 level emphasis coursework. In this regard, unpassed tests significantly showed unsatisfactory results for CMN. Concomitantly, scaled scores show CMN/WI scale scores as 172/181 for mathematics; 172/176 for reading and 173/179 for writing. Even for students who did eventually pass the PPST battery, the pass rate and scaled scores would not have changed much.

Discussion of this issue has been a monthly topic among faculty throughout the year, and the appearance of the IPRC proved the importance of TE adhering to a strict interpretation of its admission policy by not accepting conditional admittance based on passing the PPST. All Teacher Education applicants must pass the PPST prior to admission. This change was unanimous given the recent hire in Institutional Support Services for the second semester of 2012. TE students needed assistance with registration, test anxiety counseling, scheduling test practice sessions, and professional tutoring. Institutional Support Services now includes improved scheduling for services; recruitment for services;

counseling for Test Anxiety; students opting for taking one test at a time; access/use of PLATO (a course specific software program); Tutorials; an AceReader for speed reading. In addition to upgrades in procedures and placement of mathematic tutoring, a newly established Writing Center will open soon.

The IPRC showed the importance of adhering to a strict policy regarding the PPST, those scores that show one's proficiency in basic skills of mathematics, reading, and writing. On the other hand, just passing the PPST and PRAXIS II is not the only concern for CMN's Teacher Education program: the scaled scores indicate that content knowledge is also a concern. CMN's average scale scores rest below those of the state. The place for attending to content knowledge is more so in methods courses that precede Student Teaching. The practice tests should not be left to Institutional Support alone. Every discipline for methods needs to encourage students to use the practice tests for the PRAXIS II and to make sure those concepts are incorporated in the appropriate course.

FOLLOW-UP SURVEY FOR GRADUATES AND EMPLOYERS OF GRADUATES

The Follow-up Questionnaire for Employers of CMN's Teacher Education Graduates was issued to six graduates from the Spring Class of 2011. A similar questionnaire was issued to employers of each graduate. All graduates have found employment. One graduate is employed in a local public school—Keshena Primary School teaching Kindergarten; four graduates are employed at the Menominee Early Start/Head Start (two are continuing employees and two are new employees). One continuing employee has been elevated to a management position and is not teaching. The second continuing graduate is now a Lead Teacher for 4 and 5 year olds and the two new employees each teach 3 year olds. The sixth graduate is employed at the College of Menominee Nation, working as the Skills Lab Coordinator. Thus, employers of graduates number four—a PK-5 public school principal, a Head Start manager, a Head Start administrator supervisor, and a CMN dean.

The graduates consist of five females (four--ages 25 to 35 and one--over 35) and one male (age 25 to 35). Three graduates are enrolled Menominee; one is American Indian and White, and two are White. None have earned additional licenses since earning their Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood/Elementary last year.

The follow-up survey measures the preparedness of graduates according to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's Ten Teaching Standards. Overwhelmingly graduates rated themselves better than their employers rated their new teachers (herein referred to as graduates). While graduates thought they were doing very well in standard bearing -- knowledge, skills, and dispositions -- than those competencies cited by employers, employers did not always agree with graduates.

The degree to which ratings differed between employers and graduates is reported here as gaps. The gaps are the distances in ratings between employer and graduates. Ratings consist of determinants of graduates being "very well prepared" (1), being "fairly well prepared" (2), being "poorly prepared" (3), or "not prepared" (4). Another response allowed for a "not applicable" (NA). After tabulating the data, the gaps between employers and graduates were considered meaningful by the distance between ratings of agreement and disagreement. For instance, if employers rated five graduates as "very well prepared" in *knowledge of the community in which they teach* and four graduates rated themselves as "very well prepared," the rating difference would be 1. If only one employer thought graduates were "very well

prepared” to *live out ethical beliefs and values of the teaching profession* and six graduates felt they were “very well prepared,” the gap in this instance would be 5.

The difference or what could be termed a measure of intensity represents grades of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. One and two grades indicated slight differences as opposed to those with 3 and 4 gradation—large differences. There were no differences of 5 as no respondent reported “not being prepared” or “not applicable.”

The intensity or difference of 1 accounted for 32% of survey items; the intensity of 2 accounted for 29%. So, 61% of items with intensities of 1 or 2 represented a small gap. The smallest gaps resided across teaching standards.

From the first run through of data analysis, employers of the College of Menominee Nation’s Teacher Education program thought that the CMN graduates were “very well prepared” especially in knowing how to teach – *using a variety of instructional strategies, integrating technology in teaching, promoting positive behaviors, having knowledge of the community where she/he teaches, and being prepared to assess student learning – the strengths and needs of children*. In these areas, the graduates also agreed they were “very well prepared.” Graduates also agreed with their employers who indicated they were “well prepared” in *teaching students with disabilities and understanding the politics of public education and could work within its limits*.

In comparison to the preceding paragraph on the success of the program where employers and graduates agreed, much less agreement was found in standards concerning classroom management, planning, self-assessment, and professionalism. Among respondent disagreement (intensity of 3) and accounting for 18% of survey items, specific competencies were – *promoting individual and group individual motivation, communicating with students, how well graduates were prepared to connect with school colleagues and community agencies to support her/his students and how to work with parents and families*. The largest gaps, (intensity of 4) accounting for 21% of survey items, were found across standards: *promoting critical thinking and problem solving, student engagement and promoting social development, goals and standards, and using parent and students feedback for self-assessment*.

While a gap analysis showed markers of success and markers in areas needing improvement, inter-rater agreement also showed the consistency of employer’s responses agreeing with each other. Comparing employee responses amongst each other, employees strongly agreed in planning for *goals and standards* and strongly agreed on professionalism regarding *understanding politics/working within its limits and living out ethical beliefs and values of the teaching profession*. Furthermore, employees agreed in knowing how to teach for *performance skills in promoting critical thinking and problem solving* and on classroom management for *engagement, knowledge of students, and social development*. Four employers agreed about competencies within Standard 9 and 10 concerning self assessment and professionalism: Standard 9 Teachers are able to evaluate themselves, meaning -- *How well were you prepared to continually evaluate the effects of your choices and actions on others? To use student and parent feedback for self-assessment? To evaluate and modify your own teaching?* Standard 10 Teachers are connected with other teachers and the community, meaning -- *How well were you prepared to connect with school colleagues and community agencies to support your students? To work with parents and families? To live out ethical beliefs and values of the teaching profession?*

With gaps and inter-rater agreement, employers not only disagreed with graduates but all employers were unanimous in agreeing with each other about *goals and standards*; likewise disagreeing with graduates and agreeing with each other appeared in -- *promoting critical thinking and problem solving, engagement in learning, social development, self assessment in terms of using student and parent feedback for self-assessment, and living out the beliefs and values of the teaching profession.*

Analysis of gap dimensions provides just one perspective and is based upon the assumption that employers are the most and only expert. However, graduates note particular areas that they felt they were not “very well prepared” which signaled some things that are of concern to them as many agreed with each other. By examining incidence – four graduates ranked only “well prepared” for teaching students with *disabilities, using different media for communication, and teaching students who are English Language Learners (ELL)*. Both employers and graduates unanimously agreed that *teachers need to be connected with other teachers and the community and they need to understand the politics of public education and work within its limits.*

The value of using gaps is to show differences between employer and graduate responses to provide evidence of what standards (knowledge, skills, and dispositions) show success and what standards need examination and possible change. The inter-rater agreement showed what items loaded on the gap analysis and those items could be prioritized. In this fashion, the most important items could be discerned and responded to by Teacher Education.

Before listing the TE response to evidence, notes of caution should be made. One graduate did not enter a classroom situation. Another caution is that one graduate supervised fellow graduates (this graduate/supervisor was also an employee when pursuing her Bachelor’s Degree and was elevated to a supervisory position after her graduation.) One was a recent hire at Head Start while also completing her Bachelor’s Degree, and two, who were former classmates, became newly hired at Head Start after graduation. The changeover in administration at Head Start should also be remembered. The employer in this case was interim. Another issue to note, although not necessarily cautionary, is the number of items used in the survey. Originally, the survey contained 30 items: one was inadvertently omitted from graduate surveys; another received just two responses. Thus, the items analyzed numbered 28.

In the data retreat held to discuss needed changes, the TE faculty heeded the evidence and considered the upcoming changes at the state level – Common Core Standards and new Literacy Standards. There was some difficulty in analyzing data. For example, take the overwhelmingly agreed upon item employees “strongly agreeing” to needing improvement in planning for *goals and standards*; the item referred to no specific competency. It merely read “National, state, and district curriculum goals or standards.” It is also unclear if responders interpreted “local” standards for participating school interpretation of standards or the uniqueness of the local tribal community. The TE faculty could only guess what “local” meant to respondents. Given that the standards CMN TE will be using, there will be a change and proper attention given to standards at all levels. CMN’s syllabi consider program and course outcomes as well the adding the Menominee Language and Culture Standards. Additionally, syllabi mark assignments and assessments that correspond to those standards and outcomes. Given the upcoming change to Common Core Standards and Literacy Standards, new tables and maps will be needed in course outlines and syllabi. CMN needs to process those curricular changes through its internal committee structure.

Another topic of discussion centered around the definition of English Language Learner (ELL) since part of the curriculum focus at CMN centers on cultural aspects in terms of tribal languages. In learning another language, children use many of language strategies used to help ELL students by infusing culture in the curriculum. However, the faculty agreed that CMN needs to define ELL and include strategies to facilitate all languages and assess those strategies.

Finally, responding to what was learned from student agreement on the surveys responses, Teacher Education considered changes related to the following three issues: on *children learning differently*, TE will bring in agency experts from Menominee/Shawano Clinics, Menominee and County Social Services, and CESA, all of whom can, not only list services and how to connect, but also report on their successes; on *English Language Learners*, TE will articulate the definition of ELL in syllabi and implement assessments; on *Professionalism -- understanding of public education and working within its limits*, TE will emphasize the topic in Foundations of Education and suggest a mentoring system in Head Start similar to DPI's Initial Teacher Professional Development Committee PK-6.

In response to employer agreement with other employers especially those that appeared in both gap analysis and inter-rater agreement, on *planning lessons – the issue of goals and standards*, Teacher Education considered the change over in standards. Certainly the issues will be attended to in methods classes (mathematics and language arts); and as other disciplinary standards (reading, science, social studies) appear on the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) website, the remaining methods classes will follow. The change over in standards [changing from the Wisconsin 10 Teacher Standards to the National Association for the Education of Young Children Standards (NAEYC) and Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI)] will provide consistency across CMN's program of study. Changes will evolve as courses are offered during the fall and spring semesters to prepare for Literacy Standards across all disciplines and to fully implement Common Core Standards by 2015. To begin change over, TE needs to resubmit Methods Course Outlines to Faculty, Assessment of Learning (ASL), and Curriculum Committees for approval of curriculum changes in the Program of Study. To obtain approval, Curriculum Change forms need to be submitted; syllabi need to be changed to reflect new standards that are "clear, understandable and consistent; include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills; build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards; are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and are evidence-based" (<http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards>). Once new standards are inserted in syllabi, assignments, assessments, and artifacts created and collected in practicums will reflect these standards.

To respond to *ethical beliefs and values of the teaching profession* cited as critical need for improvement, TE will work on stricter reporting, monitoring, and follow through with behavior and academic alerts within the department. Responding to *knowing how to teach – the performance item of promoting critical thinking and problem solving*, TE will have methods classes assess student proficiency with a progressive rubric showing levels of understanding when teachers work with children. To respond to *classroom management* concerns, TE will place attention to this matter in the Classroom Management class, methods classes, Student Teaching, Initial Teacher PD committee, although knowing that time as a practitioner is what improves classroom management regarding engagement, knowledge of students, and social development. For *self-assessment*, TE will promote honest appraisals in peer evaluation in all classes.

Being true to the item that everyone agrees within gap analysis and inter-rater agreement – *politics of education and working within its limits* seems to deserve special consideration and more discussion than in all TE classes rather than just forwarding it to the mentorship idea for Head Start and Initial Teacher Professional Development Committee in cooperating public schools.

PORTFOLIO – PROGRESSIVE AND CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENTS

The College of the Menominee Nation’s Mission Statement proclaims what teacher dispositions are needed for the 21st Century:

The College of Menominee Nation’s Teacher Education program prepares teachers as decision makers who are reflective, collaborative, educational leaders committed to equity and social justice for families and community and dedicated to maximizing the potential of all children, especially American Indian children.

To validate the preparation of teachers in CMN’s Teacher Education program, CMN’s portfolio progression provides physical evidence of learning earned and owned by students. The portfolio shows that teachers possess knowledge, skills, and dispositions (NAEYC and DPI’s 10 Teacher Standards, CMN Program Outcomes) necessary to plan developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive curriculum; to create healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging environments for all children; to situate critical thinking/problem solving in inquiry based settings and plan assessments for teacher’s questions and measure children’s thinking; to collaborate to establish positive relationships with peers, students, and families; and to monitor caring ways to promote social justice. Within the conceptual framework of CMN’s Teacher Education program, the teacher is positioned as a decision-maker making minute by minute decisions as well as daily, weekly, monthly, and annual decisions to plan lessons, manage a classroom, promote critical thinking and problem solving, collaborate with others, and monitor their own sense of social justice. The dispositions of upcoming graduates are evident in reflections in their final portfolio and are articulated in their final presentation showing pictures of lesson plans, video clips of interactions between student and teacher describing the classroom environment, pictures and clips of lessons taught using technology, of school events they’ve participated in, and artifacts showcasing their experience at CMN. It’s the competencies they’ve gained; it’s their interpretation of how they’ve grown in not just knowledge and skills but also how they’ve grown in caring, reflective, respectful, risk-taking, and collaborative ways. The final portfolio is posted on the CMN website to provide evidence of the upcoming graduate’s potential.

The progression of portfolio development for students by the faculty begins with work in EDU250 assembling the Admissions portfolio according to NAEYC Standards; next, in EDU311/312 Practicums, artifacts from methods courses include Wisconsin’s 10 Teaching Standards which become part of the Application to Student Teaching portfolio, and in EDU402 Student Teaching Seminar, constructing the final CMN portfolio, reflections of the Student Teaching experience are written in terms of CMN’s TE dispositions as well as DPI’s 10 Standards. More formatively, evaluations from cooperating teachers during field experiences have been reviewed by each faculty from methods and Student Teaching courses as well as by the field coordinator. Progress in completing/assessing portfolios is discussed in monthly department meetings (linked to minutes), and recorded monthly reports sent to

the Dean of Letters and Science. This is information that faculty brought to the table for the data retreat to discuss the next steps.

Portfolio progressions represents the Teacher Education experience in evaluating portfolios and with the faculty's knowledge of various standards – lower division coursework (NAEYC standards) in the Admissions portfolio formally evaluated by a principal and other TE faculty; in the portfolio of artifacts evaluated in methods classes according to Wisconsin 10 Teacher Standards; in the practicums by the Field Coordinator and practicum teacher; and finally the post Student Teaching portfolio evaluated by all faculty in concert with dispositions stated in CMN's TE mission statement. At each stage in the portfolio progression, rubrics are used by evaluators, reflection papers of artifacts are written by students, and evaluations of field experience are rated by cooperating teachers (methods and Student Teaching). In the data retreat some of the portfolio issues discussed included: accumulative assessment; whether of rubrics or rubric's rating; reflections on each artifact accumulated to form a final reflection by students or tabulations of Cooperating Teacher Evaluations informing preparation of students to validate how CMN is meeting all the state's educational training requirements for initial certification or licensure to teach in the state's elementary and early childhood schools. While no plan was made to ascertain changes, more discussion is needed as faculty will have two new hires next fall given two retirements this spring.

By holding a Data Retreat to assess the effectiveness of the College of Menominee Nation's Teacher Education Program in Early Childhood/Elementary Education, the three sources of data were instrumental in creating evidence for the faculty to consider in making needed improvements. What CMN Teacher Education learned from selected documents – Title II's Institutional Report Card; Follow-Up Survey analysis, and the portfolio assessment system is that multiple, continuous, and accumulative data is important, useful, and critical to knowing what is needed, where it's needed, and how to process needed changes. The IPRC informed CMN of what to change and where change needed to be addressed for improvement; who will make the change, and watching for next year's report showing evidence of improved pass rates and scaled scores competitive with the State of Wisconsin's. The Follow-Up Surveys showed us the necessity of listening to/learning from our major stakeholders; to focus on ways to improve CMN TE program individually, as a department, institution, or within each faculty members own professional arena, showing stakeholders we are accountable at all levels and appreciative of their candor. The Portfolios represent student learning with multiple assessments (Admission, Application to Student Teaching, post Student Teaching). Just having completed the second run of final portfolios, the next step is to review processes, products, and rubrics for evaluations in some overall assessment of assessments system for both an individual look at students (case study) and for future institutional program review.

What was most useful was ease of which faculty agreed knowing that information was evidence based from CMN's most important stakeholders and would affect CMN's status especially on a national report. Also compelling is how it is important to show how graduates and employers are a veritable part of teacher preparation, reporting to graduates and employers of graduates, knowing TE takes their input seriously and works to make appropriate change.