Project Report

Assessment of Student Learning in English Education Option BA Program

2015-2016 Project

Project Goals:

* Assess Program using historical 2014-15 portfolio data (narrative assessments alone)
* Design better tools for assessment of student learning on department SOAPs and California State Subject Matter Program Learning Outcomes (SMPLO):

culminating electronic portfolio, face to face interview, standardized assessment rubric and narrative guidelines

* Pilot new rubric and narrative assessment process to be used annually
* Use assessment findings to make recommendations for revision of English Education BA program coursework and sequencing
* Use process to make decision about the learning potential in making the culminating portfolio/interview a requirement of all English Education majors
* Revise piloted assessment process for future years as indicated by faculty and student feedback

**Summary of Assessment Project Activities and Outcomes**

Assessment tools:

* Department SOAPs
* Rubric based on state subject matter competency requirements

Form of assessment

* Qualitative written narrative
* Scoring from rubrics (SOAPs and Subject Matter Competency)

Historical Assessment:

In early summer 2015, I used the narratives written by faculty reviewing student portfolios in English Education to assess the program based on the four domains for the subject matter program. Because of the limited data the narratives provided, I chose to create a far more comprehensive rubric for use in 2015-16.

Rubric and Narrative Guidelines Development for Electronic Portfolio and Interview Assessment

In Fall 2015, I developed a new comprehensive assessment rubric based on the California State Subject Matter Program Learning Outcomes, which overlaps with English Department SOAPs for the core English major. I also created simple but structured guidelines for the narrative portion of the assessment.

Culminating Electronic Portfolio and Interview Process

During Fall 2015 and Spring 2016, 18 seniors in the English Education major planning to enter the teaching credential program submitted a culminating electronic portfolio demonstrating their learning in four required domains of the program (Reading Literature and Informational Texts; Language Linguistics and Literacy; Composition and Rhetoric; Speech, Media, and Creative performance).

Although only students intending to enter the credential program currently complete this portfolio and interview process, this represents nearly 60% of students graduating with a BA in English Education this year, a significant sampling for assessment purposes.

Students included an introduction to their portfolios reflecting on the process of compiling artifacts and reflecting on their learning. They also were asked a question in the interview about the process of creating the portfolio which asked them to consider the value of the process.

Rubric Piloted

In teams of two, 7 English faculty who advise or teach coursework in the English Education program reviewed the 18 submitted portfolios and conducted 45 minute interviews with each student. They completed the extended rubric for each students and wrote a brief narrative summary of their assessment of student learning and professional preparation in the four domains.

Faculty gave feedback on the new draft rubric and narrative guidelines.

Data collected and analyzed

***Rubric and Narrative Guidelines development:***

I decided to use the new more comprehensive rubric (see attached) both Fall and Spring so data collected would be comparable across terms for the year. This rubric yielded significantly more and more specific data about about student learning. However, it proved time-consuming and unwieldy for faculty using it because I had included all the learning outcomes sub-categories. With feedback from faculty, I am currently revising and streamlining the rubric for use next year. The narrative assessment guidelines were brief and worked well, requiring minimal revisions (see attached).

***Assessment Data Findings – Electronic Portfolio and Interview Process***

These are abbreviated findings. Complete findings with quantitative data will be presented to department and college along with program revision recommendations Fall 2016.

There are two sets of assessment goals and outcomes for English Education: English BA SOAPs and California State Subject Matter Program Learning Outcomes (SMPLO) that overlap in the areas of:

1. Critical reading and knowledge of literature;
2. Literary theory and application and research methods
3. Writing process

In addition, English Education students study Language, Linguistics, and Literacy; Rhetoric; and Speech, Media, and Creative performance where these are applicable to the English Language Arts middle and high school learning environment.

(SOAPs and SMPLO that overlap)

Reading Literature, Informational Texts, and Textual Analysis

Based on their portfolios and interviews, students graduating in English Education have a good knowledge of the traditional canon of literature. They are mostly able to demonstrate capable analysis of this literature (development of themes, central ideas) through their writing. Students also showed significant strength in the craft and structure of literature.

Students were somewhat less able when it came to applying literary criticism and critical frameworks to their readings. They often seemed rigid in their understanding of literary theory, sometimes seeming to believe a “reading” was always through a very specific critical lens (like psychoanalytic) and they often lacked awareness of theory as dynamic, and of the relation of these theoretical lenses to each other.

Students were often lacking in significant awareness of the breadth of literary traditions in English – most of their submitted writing samples were square in the center of the mainstream literary canon. We would like to see students’ understanding of the breadth of literature in English be broader (outcomes in both the SOAPs and SMRs). Often students’ only experience of literature from “marginalized” groups came from their “literature of diversity” class.

Students also were lacking in their awareness and facility with Young Adult literature and informational texts (beyond literary criticism).

Last, few students demonstrated awareness of “movements” within traditions of literature, focusing mainly on isolated texts. This may be a problem with how the portfolio itself is framed.

Research Methods

Students overall demonstrated competency in basic research in the field, with a good understanding of using and presenting scholarly sources in their writing. The range of sources used has tended, however, to be limited. This intersects with their general weakness in working with informational texts, especially those beyond literary criticism. We would like to strengthen student confidence in accessing a broad range of scholarly source materials through more use of library resources.

Writing Process Awareness and Application

Overall, students’ writing process awareness is quite good. In interviews, most students were able to articulate a recursive process of drafting, feedback, and revision, and they were able to cite specific examples from their writing and classroom experiences as evidence of their learning and practice as writers. Not all were capable of transforming this self-awareness into thinking about applying this knowledge as educators, something we may want to address as we think about revisions to the English Education Subject matter program. And several students were only able to describe this kind of a powerful writing process in terms of work for one or two of their courses. More efforts to emphasize a recursive writing process in all our courses may be helpful.

Most students demonstrated competency in academic writing conventions.

(Additional SMP Outcomes Only)

Language, Linguistics, and Literacy

The ENGL 131: Literacy Studies course appears to do a good job of introducing students to the concept of literacy and literacy education. Students were reflective in their portfolios about their own literacy process and were beginning to think about how this may apply with their future students.

Despite required coursework in Linguistics, students overall had a very limited understanding of or vocabulary for language acquisition and teaching English to speakers of other languages. A few students were strong in this area, but this is an area at which we need to look closely as we review the program. While students demonstrated basic understanding of grammar through their own writing and an example of an assignment or quiz from their LING 146 class, they had less explicit awareness of academic English grammar conventions, or the variety or “grammars” in English.

Many students did not demonstrate competency in awareness of academic literacy development, specifically. They also did not demonstrate awareness of the strategic place of grammar in effective writing. They have little or no understanding of analyzing text complexity (a key area of state subject matter requirements).

Communications, Speech, Performance

Nearly all students articulated sound theoretical and practical understanding of the role of speech and performance in the language arts and literature classroom. They had excellent awareness of how to use literary drama in the classroom. However, students rarely gave examples for using performance outside the sphere of literature, nor did they draw significantly on their learning in Communications when asked to discuss their thinking in these areas. More work to help students connect their learning across these disciplines (Communications and Performance) would be helpful.

**Project Outcomes and Recommendations Based on Findings**

Electronic Portfolio and Interview Process as an Assessment Tool

The culminating Electronic Portfolio and Interview Process is proving very helpful in assessing student learning in the English Education major and subject matter program. Based on both faculty and student feedback, the process is also useful to students as a reflective learning and professionalization tool and should be extended as a required part of the English Education. Additional resources may need to be provided the department if all students are to participate in this process, which requires significant additional faculty time (approximately 2 hours per student, per faculty).

Rubric Piloted and Narrative Assessment Guidelines

* The rubric piloted is too “granular” for regular use and needs to be streamlined. Using faculty feedback, I will revise again this summer and ask faculty to use the newer version for assessment of portfolios and interviews in the fall.
* The narrative assessment guidelines worked well and can be used as drafted.

Data Analysis and Recommendations

1. Based on data from assessment, I recommend some significant changes to the English Education Major Subject Matter Program to offer better alignment with Department SOAPs and California State SMP requirements for English:
* New service learning course ENGL 132: “Rhetoric, Grammar, and Writing Instruction” that explicitly teaches practical rhetoric for writing instruction (including the variety of text types and purposes) and rhetorically based grammar instruction (in context of writing process), and that helps students connect their learning about writing and writing process to thinking about literacy and academic literacy. This course will be based in English, taught by experts in rhetoric, rhetorical grammar, and writing instruction. It will replace LING 146: English Grammar for Language Teachers.
* New course ENGL 133: “Texts for Younger Readers” that helps future teachers consider the younger reader in learning about both canonical texts (including myth and folklore, Shakespeare, and commonly taught classic American literature) and more contemporary literature. This course would also cover text-complexity analysis. This course would replace ENGL 167/ENGL 112 (Myth and Folklore/Ancient World Literature) requirement.
* Make ENGL 197T: Culminating Portfolio in English Education a regular and required course in the English Education major. The course gives students significant reflective learning in their subject area, offers practice in the reflective work required of professional educators, and provides an excellent opportunity for program assessment.
1. More general recommendations to the department on core English outcomes are to make more explicit the “movements” within traditions of literature, and to provide additional learning opportunities for developing critical thinking through close reading and writing about literature.