

2007-2008 Annual Program Review Report Reading Specialist Program

Review information was gathered from Reading faculty, information from graduates of the program, public schools administrators, and ETS Praxis scores.

1. Assessment of Candidates

The program has moved from having the Comprehensive Examination and the presentation of the Practicum results (Reading 5860) being used for the final evaluation of candidates completing the program. Presently, Praxis scores, Milestone review of the Portfolio and a formal presentation of the Practicum results have moved to the forefront for the evaluation of the candidates. Students have been taking the Praxis, at the end of the program course work, since fall, 2006. Six have taken the test and five have passed with an average score of 600. The highest score received by a student, to date, is 720 and the lowest is 500. Eighteen students have completed the program course work/degree between fall, 2006 to summer, 2008. Two students live in Kentucky and two have moved to other states. Two students are taking the test this fall and attempts to contact others about their plans for taking the test are ongoing.

Students are successfully completing the Milestone reviews as evidenced by the chart on p. 43 of the Data Retreat Report, (DRR) August 2008. They have also been successful with the Practicum results and presentation. They did show a lack of understanding about being a reflective practitioner, as evidenced in their portfolios.

During the spring of 2008, an evaluation survey of the program was sent to candidates completing the course work for the program. Unfortunately, only five graduates completed and returned the survey. All of these students are employed in lower elementary classrooms Tennessee and Kentucky. All hope to acquire positions that rely heavily on the reading degree, such as, Title 1, Literacy/Academic coach or Reading Specialist. The respondents believed they were most prepared in 18 of 20 areas with Literacy at the Secondary level the area of least comfort. One candidate felt unprepared in several areas: diagnosis, intervention, using assessment results and knowledge about the professional organizations.

Although specific data for the Reading Specialist was not gathered from administrations, they were grouped with other professional personnel, p. 25 of the DRR. The candidates in the elementary group range from 3.45 – 3.7 and the middle school group range was 3.6 – 4.0 on a 4 point scale. The majority of the candidates work in elementary buildings with three in middle school and two are in reading positions.

Actions to Improve Candidate Performance

Short Term, 2008-9

- Continue contacting candidates who have not taken the Praxis to determine their plans and encourage them to do so. Complete by mid October 2008.
- Provide/require more experience in secondary classrooms. Candidates will be required to visit, observe reading, plan and teach three lessons relating to the needs of the students.
- Include more secondary emphasis in the five core courses: Reading, 5820,5830,5840, 5850 and 5860.
- Require all candidates to take one of the two courses that specifically focus on Secondary Reading, Teaching Reading in the Secondary School or Explaining Literacy Across the Content Area.
- Yearly contact with program completers.
- Provide opportunities for candidates to plan and work with paraprofessionals in their school districts. Began summer, 2008.
- Help candidates get a broad base of knowledge pertaining to learners who have reading needs by observing in: Special Education, Title 1 and other intervention situations, in classrooms and levels different from where they teach.
- Develop and administrator an exit survey based on the International Reading Association Standards.
- Identifying key assessments and evaluative tools for each course's key assessment.

The above changes will enhance the candidates' knowledge and background experiences for all K-12 levels as well as special needs classrooms. They will be better prepared and more confident to teach any level and hopefully apply for positions that are enhanced with a Master's Degree in Reading and Reading Specialist licensure. The department will be better able to keep abreast of what the candidates are doing professionally and through their feedback revise, change, or enhance what is presently being done.

2. Assessment of Program Operations

The survey results indicate the graduates were satisfied with the program and the knowledge gained but they were not as comfortable with secondary and special needs students. They identified the areas of strength as: understanding reading, how children learn to read, and the use of various strategies, and techniques to improve students' reading success.

The portfolio Milestone review show Standard 15, working with the paraprofessionals, as an area of need. This was the only standard that had students (11%) score developing. The other standards were identified as candidates meet or exceeds. Standards five, creating a literate environment, and seven, comprehension, receiving the score that indicates more candidates receiving exceeds. These two standards had 33% of the candidates rated as exceeds. (DRR p.43)

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Actions to Improve

Short Term, 2008-9

- Reading 5850 was designated as the course to include specific time for developing content for working with the paraprofessionals. This was implemented during the summer, 2008.
- Candidates are scheduled to work with paraprofessionals during the practicum course, Reading 5860. The first candidates are completing this during the fall, 2008.
- Yearly exit survey for program completers, fall, 2008.
- Ongoing work for the Praxis test.
- Working with local school districts, where Master's students are employed, to enhance the development of paraprofessionals.
- Identify key assessments and evaluative tools for each course's key assessment.

These changes will enhance the skills and knowledge of the candidates as well as increase the number who complete the Master's degree, take the Praxis test, pass it, receive the Reading Specialist license, and move on to other positions with a reading focus. Identifying key assessments for each course will have a positive effect on the quality and content of the portfolios and courses.

3. Assessment System

Needed Data and Other Changes

- Administrative feedback specifically relating to the Reading Specialist.
- More students taking the Praxis and receiving a passing score.
- Follow up with students after taking the Praxis.
- Exit survey from every student.

- More frequent program survey sent to students with increased number of returns.
- An end of course evaluation completed by the course instructor for each student which can be used during a faculty meeting that discussed each candidate for dispositions, skills, and knowledge.

Other Changes

- Personal and continued contact with past candidates. It is important to learn what the former students career plans are to help determine why more are not taking the Praxis.
- Special sessions for preparing the portfolio, including: acceptable and appropriate artifacts, being reflective, gathering data, and other necessary topics.
- Improve the cohort group concept with the next group of students beginning the program.
- Schedule a cohort meeting with students and reading faculty to develop the cohort group concept and plan schedules. Have faculty become designated mentors for certain students.