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ABSTRACT

As a consequence of the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990, which brought outcomes-based education to P-12 students, the Kentucky Professional Standards Board mandated a process by which teachers will receive state certification after successfully completing performance assessments. This article lists the eight teacher expectations and the seven areas of responsibility and competencies of the health educator as defined by The Role Delineation Project. The Health Education Assessment Task Force, representing all levels of education, created "on demand" assessment tasks and "portfolio tasks" based on the content required of a health educator. A candidate would be required to demonstrate satisfactory performance on three to five tasks to enter the Internship Program; a candidate for certification would be required to submit portfolios containing examples of their best work. A five-step process for certification was developed: completion of training program, submission of portfolio, completion of on demand assessment, internship year, and issuance of certificate by the Education Professional Standards Board. The process has been pilot tested. It is concluded that it is too early to know how well the system will work. (Contains 10 references.) (MAH)

PERFORMANCE BASED TEACHER CERTIFICATION IN HEALTH EDUCATION: THE KENTUCKY EXPERIENCE

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Performance-Based Teacher Certification in Health Education: The Kentucky Experience

REVIEWED ARTICLE

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In the last decade, many efforts have been undertaken to review the processes used to certify teachers in order to ensure that those certified will be successful teachers. As a consequence of the Kentucky Education Reform Act which brought outcomes-based education to p-12 students, the Kentucky Professional Standards Board has mandated a process by which teachers will receive state certification after successfully completing performance-based assessments. This article describes the development and implications of this process.

"It appears that there is no great rush toward CBTCR (competency based teacher certification requirements) by most states and only a few feel it is necessary to check competencies eternal to the teacher training institutions. All states that now require 'external' testing (or plan to do so in the near future) are in the southern part of this country" (Villeme, 1982).

In Kentucky the near future is now. Several states during the last decade have undertaken a review of the processes used to certify teachers in order to ensure that those certified have "what it takes" to be a successful first year teacher. Those efforts raise the following questions: 1) does the ability to perform on admission, certification, or recertification tests relate significantly to classroom performance? 2) do existing observation instruments accurately indicate everyday classroom behaviors? 3) which other modes of assessment beyond paper and pencil tests can be used for improved teacher testing? 4) what are the minimal levels of knowledge and skill necessary to teach different ages and different subjects effectively? 5) do teacher testing programs actually yield improved public confidence (Rudner, 1987).

Certification agencies want to be able to identify candidates most likely to succeed in the classroom, as well as those who do not belong. Before the work of assessment review and possible revision for teaching certification can begin, standards defining a common core of teaching knowledge and skills that should be acquired by all new teachers must be articulated and agreed upon. Once standards have been developed, the critical issue becomes one of the assessment process.

Several research groups have recommended a three pronged approach for effective assessment: 1) a test of literacy and writing skills that all applicants for teacher preparation programs must pass; 2) creation of alternative training programs for certification; and 3) a system of performance-based assessments that new teachers must undergo in order to be certified (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1992; Murname, 1991).

This paper will discuss issues related to the third prong of the approach—performance-based evaluation of teachers. "This approach should clarify what the criteria are for assessment and licensing, placing more emphasis on the abilities teachers develop than the hours they spend taking classes" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1992). Applicants should know in advance the nature of the assessment task and what criteria will be used to determine a successful performance. The tasks should measure skills that indicate effective teaching. Classroom teachers, the "experts," should have a central role in designing the tasks and reviewing the assessment procedures. This kind of assessment strategy has the potential of improving the quality of teachers staffing our schools (Murname, 1991).

The pilot program of Long and Stansbury (1994) evaluated twelve different performance assessments with more than 500 beginning teachers over a three year period. They included a broad range of assessment strategies, such as high-inference classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, structured simulation tasks, performance-based assessment center exercises, portfolio submissions, videotaped teaching episodes, and multiple-choice examinations. The findings of Long and Stansbury provide valuable insights into performance-based assessment for teacher certification: 1) there is no one perfect approach, as each assessment strategy has advantages and disadvantages; 2) an assessment is only as good as its scoring system; 3) developers of assessments and scoring systems must be aware of their own biases; 4) assessors must be adequately trained; and 5) assessment should identify areas needed for staff development.

Performance-Based Beginning Teacher Certification in Kentucky

The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA) generated massive changes in public education in Kentucky; among them was outcomes-based education for students P- 12. It follows that education students in Kentucky should be prepared to teach and be assessed in a performance-based system. Likewise graduates of teacher education programs should demonstrate what they know and are able to do in order to receive teaching certification.

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As part of KERA, the state legislature established the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board, whose mandate was to review/revise certification requirements and related professional development for teachers. The Kentucky State Department of Education listed four goals as part of the Board's mandate: 1) assure that only appropriately qualified and certified individuals hold professional positions in public schools; 2) promote and support development of preparation and assessment programs that address the knowledge, skills and ethical dimensions of teaching; 3) promote programs that sustain professional development and career advancement; and 4) determine and monitor standards and policies related to the profession (Leighton and Sykes, 1992).

Recommendations were developed by the Board as a basis for teacher certification. The first and most critical recommendation for teacher certification was development of a statewide framework of performance standards which included the following components: delineation of levels or stages of competence; creation of role-based and classroom-based standards; inclusion of a willingness to do research about characteristics of professional effectiveness; balance between generic and situation-specific knowledge in teaching; and the relationship of standards to teaching to KERA academic expectations for students.

The Council on New Teacher Performance Standard, a committee composed of 20 educators and parents from across Kentucky, recommended to the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board "New Teacher Standards or Preparation And Certification" be adopted as part of a "results oriented, primarily performance-based teacher preparation and licensing; and institutional accreditation system by 1996." The New Teacher Standards are all designed to develop student abilities to use communication skills, apply core concepts, become a self-sufficient individual, become a responsible team member think, and solve problems, and integrate knowledge. The following eight new teacher expectations are the result:

1. The teacher designs/plans instruction and learning climates that develop student abilities.
2. The teacher creates a learning climate that supports the development of student abilities.
3. The teacher introduces/implements/manages instruction that develops student abilities.
4. The teacher assesses learning and communicates results to students and others with respect to student abilities.
5. The teacher reflects on and evaluates specific teaching/learning situations and/or programs.
6. The teacher collaborates with colleagues, parents, and other agencies to design/implement, and support learning programs that develop student abilities.
7. The teacher evaluates his/her overall performance with respect to modeling and teaching Kentucky's Learning Goals, refines the skills and processes necessary, and implements a professional development plan.
8. The teacher demonstrates a current and sufficient academic knowledge of certified content areas to develop student knowledge and performance in those areas.

In 1983, after the new teacher standards were approved by the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board, task forces were appointed to develop performance-based assessment tasks specific to disciplines and create an instructions booklet for initial teaching certification. The author served on the health education task force.

The Health Education Assessment Task Force had ten members; three university faculty who prepare health education teachers; two Kentucky Department of Education personnel, who work with health education curriculum and instruction; a public school district director for comprehensive school health; and four health education teachers from middle and high schools across the state.

This committee began by reviewing the eight New Teacher Standards noted above and the seven areas of responsibility and competencies of the health educator as defined by The Role Delineation Project in 1980 (Greene and Simons-Morton, 1990). Those include the following:

1. Assessing individual and community needs for health education.
2. Planning effective health education programs.
3. Implementing health education programs.
4. Evaluating effectiveness of health education programs.
5. Coordinating provision of health education services.
6. Acting as a resource person in health education.
7. Communicating health and health education needs, concerns, and resources.

Over several months, the committee created "on demand" assessment tasks which could be completed in under two hours and "portfolio tasks" which would take up to two weeks to complete. These tasks were based on content required of a health educator. Some of the tasks could be completed during student teaching; others could be completed during the internship year of teaching.

The assessment tasks were formatted so that candidates would have no difficulty understanding what they were to do. Included in the instructions were a description of the content of the task, a description of the specific performance or expected product, a description of the criteria for judging the task performance, a timeline for task completion and any special conditions or parameters to be considered. Each task was to be accompanied by a scoring rubric or system that would enable an assessor to place a value on the task performance. Four performance categories were to be described in a scoring

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guide with expectations above those required for exit, at exit performance expectations, below but near exit performance expectations, and considerably below exit performance expectations. The candidate had to demonstrate satisfactory performance on 3-5 tasks in order to be eligible to enter the Internship Program. All on demand assessments were to be rated by a trained panel of classroom practitioners and university faculty.

Candidates for certification had to submit portfolios containing examples of their best work. A typical portfolio for a health educator might include a thematic unit of instruction, a semester plan for instruction that addresses at least four of Kentucky's learning goals, evidence of successfully managing a conflict situation among learners or between learners and teacher, managing instruction that involves a cooperative group learning activity, reflection/evaluation of instruction, evaluation of a student portfolio with feedback, contributing to a collaborative team teaching/learning effort, and implementing a plan for professional development based on teaching areas to be strengthened.

Once the assessment components were established, a five step process for certification was developed: 1) completion of a training program (usually from a university); 2) submission of a certification eligibility portfolio; 3) completion of on demand assessment at a designated assessment center (sites at state universities); 4) internship year; and 5) issuance of certificate by the Education Professional Standards Board.

In Spring 1996, in a pilot study conducted by the Kentucky Department of Education, portfolio tasks were given to a sample of student teachers, who volunteered to complete five randomly assigned tasks and have them scored by both their university supervisor and their cooperating teachers. The evaluation data collection forms for the task

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samples were sent to the Office of Teacher Education and Certification at the Kentucky Department of Education for review. The Kentucky Department of Education plans further evaluation of its assessment procedures and will begin certifying graduating students with the performance assessment format in this coming year.

Summary

It is too early to know how well this performance-based system of teacher certification will work. Based on experiences with performance-based assessment, several difficulties can be anticipated. This is a time consuming, labor intensive process. University faculty need to be trained to assess portfolios, both those submitted for health education certification and ongoing portfolio entries. Trained assessor panels will need time to assess performance-based tasks at university assessment centers. Candidates will need to devote a great deal of time to completing portfolio entries during undergraduate course work, during student teaching, at a university assessment center, and during the internship year. Cooperating teachers may need to contribute assessment time as well. If tradition continues, there will be no compensation for the additional time needed and this may undermine implementation of this new system.

For performance-based teacher certification in health education to work well, assessments must meet established professional standards and be relevant to the practice of teaching. Kentucky has established professional standards and an evaluation system. It will be interesting to watch the progress of performance-based assessment used to certify teachers in health education.

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