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Unifying Our Profession Through Standards: Writing the ACTFL/NCATE Report

Judith L. Shrum
Virginia Tech

Rebecca Fox
George Mason University

Abstract

Accreditation and accountability recently have been prominent in national conversations about the preparation of teachers. Members of our profession have developed standards to which we will hold ourselves as we prepare foreign language and world language (F/WL) teachers for the 21st century. As a participating Specialized Professional Association (SPA), ACTFL has joined the conversation with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). In this article, we describe the standards that are most applicable to our field and provide suggestions for those who are compiling their ACTFL/NCATE reports seeking national program recognition. We offer comments and suggestions based upon our work presenting ACTFL/NCATE workshops on this topic for the past three years.

Introduction

Whether you read this article as a beginning or veteran teacher, a supervisor or school principal, a teacher educator or a language student, you have heard about assessment, accreditation, standards, and learning outcomes. As educators, we often feel that assessment, standards, and accreditation are imposed upon us from some outside source, leaving us to wonder if these standards have anything to do with what we as professional educators value and teach our students. At the same time, we want to know whether our students are really learning and whether they can do what we think they can do. Standards can help us identify and agree upon desired outcomes, especially if they are shaped in the context of a national assessment that has been developed and valued by members of our own profession.

The best assessment practices emerge from within the profession. They are an honest response to our desire to understand what and how our students and teachers are learning and teaching. As Graff (2008) points out, the recent emphasis on outcomes assessment within the educational community denies the complacent belief that nothing in our house needs to change. Our standards have been developed over a period of three decades by those who teach and learn languages, with periodic revision and verification by those who are working actively in classrooms. The standards are high but attainable. They simultaneously respond to needs in the field and provide leadership for the profession. Through the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the profession has developed standards for students and teachers and has affiliated with a national accreditation organization that recognizes high quality teacher education programs, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). In order to seek national recognition, programs that prepare teachers submit reports of what their graduates know and are able to do. In this way, programs measure themselves against a nationally agreed-upon set of standards. As a result, language education programs have goals to work toward within a clearly articulated professional context. In this article, we will describe the sets of standards in foreign and world language (F/WL) teacher education, with particularly detailed attention to the writing of the report submitted to ACTFL/NCATE by teacher education programs.

An Overview of the Relevant Standards

Our profession has developed several documents that guide us in assessing the performance of our students, teachers, and academic programs. As a backdrop for standards of what students and teachers should know and be able to do, our profession laid the groundwork for what performance looks like at various levels of accomplishment and study. More than 25 years ago, ACTFL developed the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Speaking, Writing, Reading, and Listening* (1982, 1999, 2001). The *Guidelines* provided descriptions of the linguistic performance of learners in K-16 schools at various levels of proficiency, along with the kinds of errors likely for each level. In addition, ACTFL developed the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners* (1998), which show how well students who have studied the language at various grade levels are likely to perform in each of three modes of communication—interpretive, interpersonal, or presentational. For further historical description of the development of standards for language learning and teaching, see Glisan (2006) and Shrum & Glisan (2010).

The profession also described what language education should look like in the context of instruction in schools. Called the Five Cs, the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project [NSFLEP], 2006) lay out what students should know and be able to do in the languages taught most frequently in schools. These standards were developed by professionals teaching in the field and were piloted throughout the profession in a draft version prior to final adoption. The first ver-

sion appeared in 1996 in a generic format and was followed by another version in 1999. The most recent revision was published in 2006.

The profession has set forth its expectations for teachers in three sets of standards designed to be descriptive of teacher performance across the career continuum. The first set of standards describes the expectations for what teacher candidates need to know and be able to do as they enter the classroom upon completion of a teacher preparation program. These standards are related to accreditation through the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and the standards have been published as the *ACTFL/NCATE Program Standards for the Preparation for Foreign Language Teachers* (2002).

The second set of standards was developed by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), under the auspices of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The INTASC Standards (2002) are model descriptions and illustrative examples for novice teachers of what good teaching looks like in a classroom. Intended for teachers in their first through third years of teaching, the 10 principles reflect state licensure requirements for 38 states, described generically and in terms of each content specialty.

The third set of standards, developed by the *National Board for Professional Teaching Standards* (NBPTS), sets forth a clear vision for accomplished teaching (2008). The Five Core Propositions supported by discipline-specific standards form the foundation and frame the knowledge, skills, dispositions and beliefs that characterize National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs). Those individuals who achieve National Board Certification represent the pinnacle of accomplishment among expert teachers. Experienced F/WL teachers who wish to know more about the discipline-specific standards for their field should review the *World Languages Other Than English Standards* available at the NBPTS Web site http://www.nbpts.org.

This article will focus on the first set of standards, the *ACTFL/NCATE Program Standards* (2002), the nexus between what students learn as language learners and what candidates learn to do as language teachers. This set of standards also provides a common set of competencies that can serve as a forum for dialogue among the various stakeholders in our field, including K-12 teachers, college language faculty, teacher education faculty, supervisors, mentors, and employers. The graphic on the following page shows the cyclical relationship between and among these various professionals.

Standards and the Classroom Connection: An Example

The various sets of standards do not function as separate requirements but are intended to complement each other. To illustrate how they contribute to the development of a competent French teacher, we offer the following example of Cindy, a pseudonym for an American student majoring in French at a U.S. university. During her study of French and Francophone civilization, literature, and culture, one of her Francophone literature classes was taught by a professor whose research is focused on the Senegalese female author, Mariama Bâ. Cindy completed

Figure 1.

The Circle of Foreign/World Language Teacher Preparation & Development
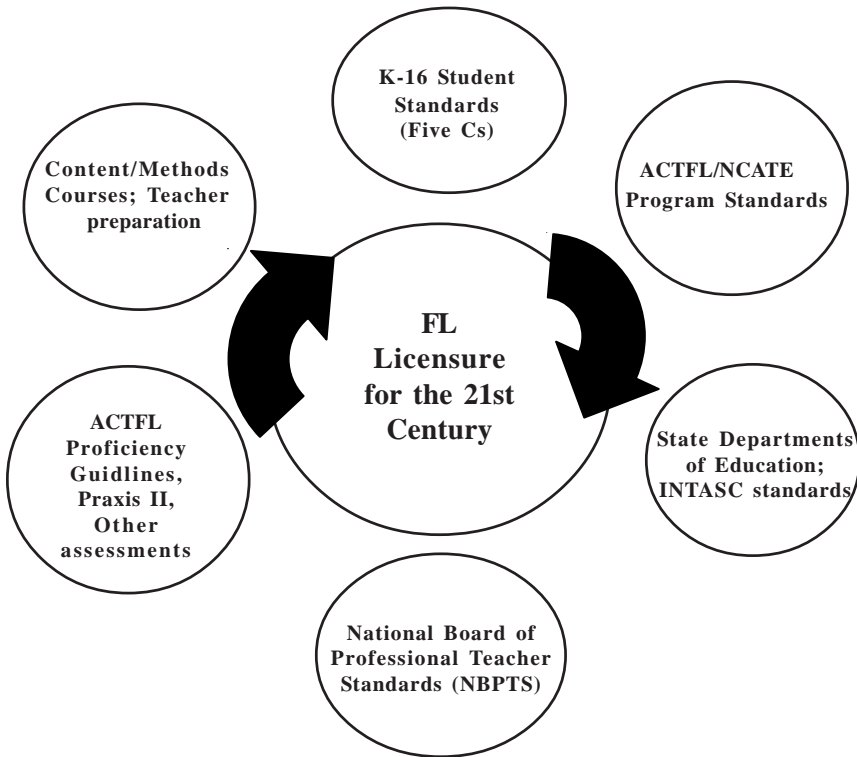
Source: D. C. McAlpine (personal communication, January 18, 2006); McAlpine & Shrum (2007); revised by Shrum & Fox (2009).

her French major and began her preparation to become a French teacher by enrolling in a teacher education program. She took the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview and the Writing Proficiency Test, scoring Advanced Low on both. She now is a *teacher candidate* about to begin her student teaching experience. As she and her cooperating classroom teacher discuss the lesson she might prepare for the French IV class she will teach, it comes to light that this environment provides Cindy the perfect opportunity to use her experience in Francophone literature to engage all of her students in meaningful communication.

Foremost in Cindy's mind as she plans her lessons is her wish to enable her students to communicate. She remembers from her teacher education courses that Goal Area 1of the Five Cs is about the interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational modes of communication. Cindy knows that Goal Area 2 of the Five Cs is about enabling students to demonstrate understanding of the relationships between products, practices, and perspectives of the target culture. Armed with information in the standards for student learning, she brings together these two Goal Areas for what her students should be able to do by building lessons around the novels she read in her literature class. She designs lesson plans around authen-

tic materials that facilitate students' communication and cultural understanding, asking students to read and interpret a selection from one of Mariama Bâ's novels. Her students then analyze the selection from the perspective of products, practices, and perspectives and then exchange information about their viewpoints on narrating a life story. Cindy was eager to see what her students knew and were able to do when they presented their slide shows about what they had learned. Because Cindy was also highly proficient in speaking French, she was able to conduct her class entirely in the target language, model the use of authentic language to her students as she conversed easily in French, and involved all students in meaningful conversations. Her content knowledge in the area of language proficiency connects directly to ACTFL/NCATE Standard 1.

We have seen how the standards for student learning affected the development of a beginning teacher's lesson plans, but that's only a third of the story. We must not forget the stakeholders in the school where Cindy is student teaching. The cooperating classroom teacher shared with Cindy her experience by providing sample age-appropriate communicative activities and guidance to keep students engaged in their work. As a result of Cindy's lessons, this teacher may modify her lessons to include a selection from a Mariama Bâ novel the next time she teaches this topic. Language learners in this French IV class will anticipate their studies at the university where they will learn more about Mariama Bâ. Cindy's literature professor is intrigued by the ways in which Cindy organized the material she learned in his class to make it accessible to high school students. He collaborates with the teacher education professor to make certain that French majors who want to teach can demonstrate content knowledge about the French language, civilization, and culture, thus addressing ACTFL/NCATE Standards 1 and 2. Along the way in this professional journey, the teacher candidate has taken and passed a variety of nationally recognized examinations to demonstrate her proficiency in French listening, speaking, reading, writing, and culture. The teacher candidate, the classroom teacher, and the literature professor may have also participated in a professional language or literature conference to improve their skills, maintain their levels of professional knowledge, and share their research on their respective fields, thus addressing ACTFL/NCATE Standard 6 on Professionalism.

The ACTFL/NCATE Review: Why It Matters

To support the development of a teacher candidate, a full cycle of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and practical knowledge will have been delivered by several different agencies and in various settings. The ACTFL/NCATE report is a way to demonstrate how those agencies and settings are orchestrated to function smoothly at the crucial point where content and pedagogical knowledge come together in an applied setting where teacher candidates acquire practical knowledge.

Accountability is an omnipresent factor in the 21st century. All types of agencies, including educational institutions, are being asked to demonstrate that they deliver what they promise. For academic institutions, NCATE accreditation is a powerful return on the investment of time and expertise because it can improve

teacher preparation programs, benchmark the program against national expectations, strengthen interactions among academic faculty, and provide faculty development opportunities, among other professionalization benefits (NCATE, 2007). While improving the quality of university-based programs, the process increases collegial conversations and collaboration between departments and units of the university, as well as with school-based stakeholders, by providing "the opportunity to work in the context of evolving professional consensus" (NCATE, 2007, ¶ 2). By meeting common goals and promoting the use of data to demonstrate and examine candidates' knowledge attained as a result of coursework and teacher preparation, essential conversations can promote shared accountability to provide K-16 learners with the best possible education.

The quality of the teacher preparation program is crucial to students' academic success (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005; Mitchell, Allen, & Ehrenburg, 2006). Teacher preparation programs that seek national recognition open their practices and procedures to peer review. At the same time, by demonstrating how they address the national standards, they participate in shaping these very standards. In the field of foreign/world language (F/WL) teacher education, the ACTFL/NCATE standards and the Five Cs have brought about consensus of what we believe is important, as predicted by Schulz (2000) and as reported by Dhonau, McAlpine, and Shrum (2007), and Wilbur (2007). By participating in an ACTFL/NCATE program review, teacher education faculty members plan their program to be consistent with national goals, and they develop assessments and collect data to inform their decisions and practices. Because the ACTFL/NCATE Standard 1 requires a minimum oral proficiency level of Advanced Low on an official ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview, employers will know that their new teachers are proficient speakers of the language they teach. Faculty in ACTFL/NCATE approved programs can be assured that their graduates have a competitive edge in the employment market, and school division personnel who hire teachers from accredited institutions can be assured that they are hiring highly qualified teachers whom their learners deserve (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005).

A Paradigm Shift and Closer Look at the Standards

There are several tiers of standards that frame our work with K-16 language students. Whether standards for K-16 students, teacher education standards for beginning teachers, or advanced teacher standards for practicing teachers, each set is interconnected to the others in its content requirements. These standards state clearly what students and their teachers should know and be able to do, and they ensure the quality of the teachers who complete nationally recognized teacher education programs by meeting the stated goals and objectives for K-16 learners. Institutional or program standards thus serve to define the expectations and parameters and to delineate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that program completers should hold. These national standards, adopted in 2002, have

been part of a paradigm shift in the U.S. that has changed from an emphasis on teaching to a focus on learning (Sandrock, 2000; Shrum & Glisan, 2010).

Until the 1990s, teacher education programs seeking NCATE recognition submitted the resumés of their faculty, syllabi of their courses, outlines of their curriculum, and other evidence of the input they provided their teacher candidates. ACTFL was not yet a Specialized Professional Association (SPA) member of NCATE; thus, a brief report describing the faculty members and courses taught was the only requirement. In the late 1980s, SPAs such as those in math and science defined standards for student learning, and the general paradigm for teacher education programs shifted from a focus on input to a focus on output.

This paradigm shift has been a radical departure from the previous input-based system. It requires programs to think in new ways about what candidates know, what they are able to do, and what they are disposed to do. When presenting program evidence for national recognition, programs now must think beyond course syllabi and faculty vita. Programs must provide output, or performance-based evidence, by means of a series of program assessments and documentation of candidate performance on those assessments. In this way, the paradigm shift affected both teacher education programs and the K-16 setting. The requirement to provide evidence or output caused programs around the nation to ask, "How do we *know* that our students and teacher candidates have understood what we have taught them? What do our K-16 students and teacher candidates know, and what can they do?" Evidence-based practice is a driving force in the program recognition process. Performance-based assessment is now providing a vehicle by which programs can measure the degree to which their learners have met the standards. Aligning program coursework with standards and then measuring the results of those efforts has become the cornerstone upon which program recognition and accreditation are now based.

The first tier of performance standards is comprised of sets of content-specific student standards prepared by teams of professionals for each language. These standards state succinctly what students should know and be able to do. The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning for the 21st Century* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project [NSFLEP], 2006) define learning outcomes for F/WL learners. Often referred to as the Five Cs, the goal areas for foreign language learning are: (1) Communication, (2) Cultures, (3) Connections, (4) Comparisons, and (5) Communities, with supporting standards for each goal area. While the standards do not specify course content or prescribe a recommended sequence of study, they do delineate a framework for teachers from which they can then construct the content for a curriculum at each level of study. The standards are accompanied by benchmarks and performance expectations for grades 4, 8, and 12, and they include sample learning scenarios to show how teachers might implement them.

The second tier, the teacher professional standards, is comprised of sets of pedagogical and content area standards for the teachers. These standards clearly state what teachers should know and be able to do in order to facilitate learning in the K-16 setting. The standards for our F/WL teacher preparation

programs, overseen by ACTFL and NCATE, are often referred to as the *ACTFL/ NCATE Standards*. The six principal areas contained in these teacher standards are: (1) Language, linguistics, comparisons; (2) Cultures, literatures, cross-disciplinary concepts; (3) Language acquisition theories and instructional practices; (4) Integration of standards into curriculum and instruction; (5) Assessment of languages and cultures; and (6) Professionalism. Each standard contains a description, justification, analytical rubric, and suggestions for how programs might provide evidence of what their teacher candidates know and are able to do and how their performance addresses the standards. Teacher education programs use these standards as a framework for their programs of study and design their program's learning outcomes around them. To ensure the efficacy of teacher education programs and the quality of the teachers who exit these programs, those teacher education programs seeking national recognition by ACTFL/NCATE must be able to show the degree to which their teacher candidates meet the professional standards and provide evidence of the implementation of K-16 student standards in their classrooms.

Organizing Programs in Preparation for the Program Report

Although this article is primarily for the person who will take lead responsibility for writing the ACTFL/NCATE report, each faculty member is a key resource in a program's ongoing development, the completion of the report, and the ultimate success of the program. The report on F/WL teacher preparation program addresses the ACTFL/NCATE standards, and it is called a Specialized Professional Association (SPA) report. While the institution will prepare a unit report for the entire institution, the SPA report for the specific program is submitted in advance of the unit report. National recognition for the program is contingent upon accreditation for the unit. Thus, a unit may be accredited while a program may not be nationally recognized. Smooth preparation of the ACTFL/NCATE report requires engaging all faculty members in the process of examining their program and using assessment data to meet national and local goals and inform program update.

Essential Conversations

One key benefit to seeking national recognition is a series of meaningful conversations within and across agencies, and generally one person brings together all the various groups. In today's higher education structure, the F/WL programs and departments are commonly found in different units from colleges and programs of education. Since the ACTFL/NCATE program standards bring together content and pedagogy, these departments need to find pathways for communication that result in a cohesive program that provides candidates with opportunities to master identified learning outcomes. Programs whose candidates are housed in different departments or colleges should hold essential conversa-

tions about the ACTFL/NCATE standards early and often. These conversations should focus on how to bring together the content and pedagogy by addressing ways each department can support candidates' knowledge in the target language, its cultures, and literature with pedagogical knowledge. As programs begin these conversations about the ACTFL /NCATE Standards and the accreditation process, they work to form a seamless progression from a candidate's proficiency and mastery of material to its application with learners in the K-12 setting. These conversations simultaneously facilitate the full learning cycle for candidates and create powerful communication pathways among faculty. Topics of conversation might focus on how coursework and opportunities for language immersion help candidates achieve the Advanced Low level on the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (ACTFL OPI). They should also address formative opportunities for language proficiency assessment so that candidates can take part in their own learning along the way toward reaching targeted goals. It is important for all faculty to understand how language proficiency comes to bear in a communicative-based K-12 classroom so that candidates are able to conduct lessons in the target language and engage students in learning authentic and meaningful activities. Therefore, the essential conversations should be grounded in how content learned in the language program complements the pedagogy and professional knowledge in education to prepare candidates in the best possible way. Understanding the sets of standards themselves, performance-based assessment, rubric alignment with the standards, and language proficiency goals are the essential elements.

Program leaders also must facilitate essential conversations across agencies to make decisions and align program goals and learning with the ACTFL/NCATE Standards. As a program, it is important to keep multiple faculty members involved in the full process, and an action plan might include developing faculty roles and timelines for accomplishing the various aspects of data collection and drafting the report. Keeping records of the process is also a good idea. Documenting the steps taken along the way and keeping a semester-by-semester record indicating who is in charge of which aspect will keep everyone informed and document the steps that have been accomplished as the report is completed.

Engaging faculty members from departments of education and foreign languages to work together in the program recognition process will support the responsibility of writing the report across units of the college or university. As faculty members engage in cross-college discussions about foreign language preparation, they build capacity in their understanding the teacher preparation standards. Operationalizing the process within and across programs is critical. According to McAlpine and Dhonau (2007), there are at least six major considerations that a foreign language department should anticipate and actively plan while preparing the program review and report: (1) engaging all faculty members in the process, (2) establishing a culture of oral proficiency in colleges of education as well as in language departments, (3) educating faculty about the standards, (4) revising curricula to align with the standards, (5) preparing the seven assessments for the ACTFL/NCATE program review, and (6) archiving student performance assessment scores using technology.

Once an institution's program is in place and its faculty members are ready to begin writing their report, there are several steps in the submission process that are very important to know about in advance. A program's process of data collection and improvement should be ongoing and iterative. The report captures these elements, as well as candidate data submitted as evidence of the quality of the program. The remainder of this article will help describe the essential elements of the report and its submissions process.

Writing the Report: Required and Helpful Documents

The report itself will be posted to the NCATE Web site at http://www.ncate.org under the heading "institutions." It is best to write a draft of the report ahead of time as an electronic document and then transfer text and documents to the Web site. It is recommended that all members of the team preparing the report possess a copy of the documents described below. The report must show what students should know and be able to do, and the best guide is *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (NSFLEP, 2006). The report must also show what teacher candidates should know and be able to do according to the *ACTFL/NCATE Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers* (2002). This document is available for download at http://www.actfl.org/files/public/ncate2002.pdf. The report must follow a specified template, which is available for download from ACTFL or from NCATE at http://www.ncate.org/ProgramStandards/actfl/actflWebReport-July1.doc. The ACTFL/NCATE Program Self-Assessment Table, commonly referred to as Attachment C, is a self-assessment of eight essential components of your program. The table is available for download at http://www.ncate.org /programreview/programStandards.asp?ch=90. In addition, frequently asked questions about the ACTFL/NCATE process can be downloaded from http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/Index.cfm?pageid=3385. *New guidelines for preparing the ACTFL/NCATE report* (Glisan, Headrick, Levy, McAlpine, Olson & Phillips, n.d.) is available for download at http://w.actfl.org/i4a/pages/Index.cfm?pageid=3387. Sample successful reports are available at http://ww.nacte.org/programreview/programReport-Samples.asp?ch=37.

Contents of the Report

The ACTFL Web Report template provides instructions for each part of the report that must be posted to the NCATE Web site along with designations of character limits and other specifications. A description of the six sections of the report follows.

- **Section I. Context:** This section includes a cover sheet that describes your program and the kind of licensure for which you are preparing teacher candidates. This section has five questions to which the program responds, with character limits on length. The sections are: (1) description of state or institutional policies that may influence the application of ACTFL/NCATE Standards, (2) description of field or clinical experiences,

(3) description of criteria for admission, retention, and exit from the program, (4) description of the relationship of the program to the unit's conceptual framework, and (5) description of the program's assessments as they are uniquely related to the ACTFL/NCATE Standards, and how they are related to the assessments of the unit. It also includes a program of study, a chart of candidate data, a faculty information chart, and ACTFL/NCATE Attachment C Self-Assessment Table.

- **Section II. List of Assessments:** Using the chart included in this template, indicate the name, type, and administration point for each of the six to eight assessments documented in the report.

- **Section III. Relationship of Assessments to Standards:** Using the chart included in this template, indicate which of the assessments listed in Section II provide evidence of meeting specific program standards. While a single assessment may address more than one standard, determine which standards that assessment addresses most directly.

- **Section IV. Evidence for Meeting Standards:** For each assessment, provide a narrative and describe how it addresses the standards, the documentation the teacher candidates received as the assessment itself, and a scoring guide or rubric with performance criteria, data tables, and an interpretation of the scores. Each assessment will be discussed in detail later in this article.

- **Section V. Use of Assessment Results to Improve Candidate and Program Performance:** Describe how faculty members are using the data from assessments to improve candidate performance and the program, as they relate to content knowledge; pedagogical and professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions; and student learning.

- **Section VI. For Revised Reports Only:** List the sections of the report being resubmitted and the changes that have been made in the program to address the standards that were not met in the original submission. Specific instructions for preparing a revised report are available on the NCATE Web site at http://www.ncate.org/institutions/process.asp?ch=4.

Overall Assessment Design

A program's overall assessment design should be created in a way to provide evidence of the degree to which its program candidates meet the six ACTFL/NCATE program standards. The assignment design should include required and optional assessments, supporting explanations, rubrics aligned with the standards, and data about the candidates. The following components will be submitted with the program report: (1) Attachment C: The ACTFL/NCATE Self-Assessment Table, (2) seven required program assessments, with an optional eighth assessment, providing evidence of candidate knowledge, and (3) a discussion on how a program uses candidate results to inform both program and candidate improvement, included in Section V of the Report.

Attachment C

First, programs should complete a self-assessment table, known as Attachment C, which is to be submitted with the program report as an attachment. This table is a self-check that asks if a program includes the eight essential components in order to qualify for ACTFL/NCATE accreditation. This document illustrates requirements that are necessary to meet the ACTFL/NCATE Standards in the preparation of F/WL teachers. Other SPAs do not submit an attachment C. Commonly referred to as *The Big Eight*, Attachment C addresses issues of development and ongoing assessment of proficiency; language, linguistics, culture, and literature; qualifications of methods and supervisory faculty; requirement of early field experiences in F/WL classrooms; candidates' use of technology; and structured study abroad or immersions experiences.

Required and Optional Program Assessments

As previously indicated, a program must submit seven required assessments and is allowed to submit an optional eighth item. These assessments are linked to and provide evidence of the degree to which a program's candidates meet the six ACTFL/NCATE standards. The first two standards focus on candidate content knowledge; standards three, four, and five focus on pedagogy and the instruction and assessment cycle; and Standard six focuses on professionalism, reflective practice, and professional development goals. When considering the evidence and planning for improvement, program faculty should consider whether their candidates have the necessary knowledge for the subjects they will teach or the jobs they will perform, if they understand teaching and learning, if they can plan their teaching skillfully and fulfill other professional education responsibilities, if they can implement their teaching philosophy with students and colleagues, if they can apply their knowledge in classrooms and schools, and whether they meet state licensure requirements. The assessments required for the report will serve to answer these questions.

Following is a list of the assessments that should appear in Section II of the report and the corresponding standard(s) with which they align. The assessments will be discussed in greater detail later in this article.

1. Content Knowledge (state licensure test - Standards 1 and 2)
2. Content Knowledge (Standards 1 and 2)
3. Pedagogical and Professional Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions (Focus on Planning - Standards 3, 4, and 5)
4. Pedagogical and Professional Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions (Focus on Teaching - Standards 3, 4, and 5)
5. Effects on Student Learning (Focus on Assessment - Standard 5)
6. Content Knowledge (Official ACTFL OPI, Standard 1)
7. Additional Assessment (Program choice - May focus on any of the six standards)
8. Additional Assessment (optional)

Explaining Your Program's Assessments

As program faculty members plan the seven or eight assessments, they should design a template for their colleagues to use. This ACTFL/NCATE Assessments Template should be used for each assessment and include the following five elements:

A.   The assessment number and the name of the assessment
B.   A brief description of the assessment and an explanation of how it aligns with the ACTFL/NCATE Standards. Programs may include a graphic depiction explaining the alignment of the assessment with the Standards
C.   The assessment itself, which may be an assignment or instruction sheet given to teacher candidates outlining the tasks of the assessment. Programs should address the six content standards in a holistic way. It is not necessary that assessments address each of the supporting standards individually.
D.   The scoring guide or rubric and candidate data table(s) are very important. The rubric or scoring guide should be aligned with the ACTFL/NCATE Standards. Elements within the rubric or scoring guide should indicate the degree to which candidates meet the standards, and they should be F/WL specific. If a program is required to use a more general, unit-based rubric (e.g., one used across programs), an additional section devoted to F/WL should be added for both the assessment and its accompanying rubric or scoring guide. Examples are provided on the NCATE Web site indicated in the Resources section of this article.
E.   A data table indicating candidates' scores for these assessments for each year and each language.

Description of the Assessments

Assessments one and two are focused on presenting candidates' content knowledge. Specifically, Assessment 1 should provide data from a state licensure test or examinations of content knowledge of the target language, including proficiency in the language, linguistics, civilization, culture, and literature (Standards 1 and 2). The most frequently required state test is Praxis II, which, in its current version, is not aligned with ACTFL/NCATE Standards. Faced with this circumstance, a program should include candidate data from the Praxis II in the report in order to comply with NCATE's requirement for Assessment 1, and then provide additional data to supplement the evidence from Praxis II. Supplemental evidence may include, for example, scores from the ACTFL Writing Proficiency Test (WPT) or another content test developed by the program that is aligned with the standards.

Although some states require a test that has been developed within their state, at this time, there are very few such tests that have been aligned with the ACTFL/NCATE standards. Sandarg and Schomber (2009) describe the process of

preparing teacher candidates for licensure tests that are designed to assess content knowledge for Standards 1 and 2, along with recommendations for how to help candidates succeed. If there is no state test, the program should designate another assessment, perhaps developed in collaboration with the foreign language department, as Assessment 1. The program may also choose to designate the ACTFL Writing Proficiency Test (WPT) as Assessment 1. If the state's designated test is the OPI, the program should report those results as Assessment 6, with an option to use the WPT or another test of content knowledge for Assessment 1. In addition, if a program has more than 10 completers over 3 years, 80% must pass the licensure test required by the state; but if there are fewer than 10 completers, the program need not meet the 80% requirement.

Assessment 2 also focuses on candidate content knowledge in the languages to be taught, particularly in the areas of cultures, literature, and cross-disciplinary concepts. Comprehensive examinations that address communication, culture, and interdisciplinary content or portfolio evidence of interpretive/interpersonal/presentational tasks are often the assessments that provide evidence of standards one and two. These assessments might also be designed by a program as a cultural or literature capstone project conducted in the target language.

Recently, NCATE has indicated that grades for program coursework may be presented as evidence; however, there are specific guidelines that have been developed to lead programs through the compilation and reporting process should they decide on this option. First, grades might be submitted for Assessment 1 if there is no state test, for Assessment 2, or as an optional assessment for Assessment 7 or 8. The grades can only be for courses required of every F/WL teacher candidate, courses in the major, or a required cluster of courses. The courses' numbers and titles must be listed, and if a title is unclear, the report must include a brief, two-sentence description of the course. The list of courses must include the program or institution's curriculum requirements and match the stated Program of Study. The program must also include the composite GPA of candidates, grade policy, minimum expectations, and definitions of grades. Data should be disaggregated by program (BA/MA), grade level (elementary, middle, or high school), licensure category (language), and program site, if applicable. Syllabi are not sufficient evidence and should not be submitted. Accompanying the description of courses, a rationale for selection and alignment of the courses with the ACTFL/NCATE Standards should be included, along with an analysis of grade data. Reports should include a statement of the alignment of courses transferred into a Master's program, a statement regarding the program's grading policy, and a clearly articulated statement of program expectations. In addition, data tables, grade distributions, and mean course grades must be part of this section. For more detailed information, refer to http://www.ncate.org/institutions/GuidelinesGrades.asp?ch=90. In addition, Mitchell, Allen, and Ehrenburg (2006) provide sample assessments and case studies for Standards 1 and 2.

Assessment 3 focuses on candidates' ability to plan instruction. This assessment should provide evidence of ACTFL/NCATE Standards 3, 4, and 5 and demonstrate that candidates have knowledge of language acquisition theories and can use this knowledge to plan effective classroom instruction and to inform in-

structional decisions. Evidence is often provided by lesson or unit plans, individualized educational plans, needs assessments, or intervention plans. The evidence often is gathered in methods classes or during student teaching. If a program utilizes general assessments with other programs, sections specifically addressing the ACTFL/NCATE Standards must be included, and the ACTFL/NCATE Standards also must be clearly aligned in the rubrics.

Assessment 4 is often referred to as the assessment of student teaching. It should demonstrate that candidates' knowledge, skills, and dispositions are applied effectively in teaching practice and that they align with ACTFL/NCATE Standards 3, 4, 5, and 6. Programs should submit the assessment instrument used in student teaching or internship as modified to address ACTFL/NCATE standards. If a program uses a generic student teaching evaluation form, there should be a section specifically aligned with the ACTFL/NCATE standards, and it must use the terminology of the standards and the Five Cs.

Assessment 5 focuses on the candidate effect on student learning, and it is aligned with ACTFL/NCATE Standards 3, 4, and 5. Programs might demonstrate how their candidates affect learning among K-12 students by providing work samples, portfolio tasks, or case studies. Data gathered from student teaching and other field experiences are other possible sources. See Wise, Ehrenburg, and Leibbrand (2008) for additional information about how these effects can be demonstrated.

Assessment 6 is an official ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), which addresses Standard 1. This assessment is critical to a program's recognition decision. The program's report must state that the official OPI is required and that the minimal acceptable level of proficiency has been set at Advanced Low. There must also be an articulated remediation plan for those candidates who do not achieve the level of Advanced Low. ACTFL offers several forms of the OPI, including a face-to-face interview, a telephone interview, and a computerized OPIc interview. More information is available at http://www.languagetesting.com. The Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) and the Modified Oral Proficiency Interview (MOPI) are not official forms of the OPI, but they can provide excellent formative assessment opportunities for teacher candidates. Additional information is available from ACTFL.

Assessment 7 is a required component of the report that allows the program to focus on any standard that was not clearly addressed in the previous required assessments. For example, a program could provide additional content evidence to supplement the Praxis II scores, as mentioned earlier. It might include a language analysis of a learner in evidence of candidates' knowledge of language acquisition theory, a service learning project, a philosophy of education that includes an articulated professional development plan, or other assessment developed by the program.

Assessment 8 is optional but provides a program the opportunity to present additional supporting evidence of any of the standards that it identifies as needing additional supporting documentation. Projects and program assessments not previously presented in the report for Assessments 1through 7 could be offered here.

What Happens to the Report?

Once the report and related documents have been posted to the NCATE Web site, a team of two or three ACTFL-trained reviewers will read and study the report to determine the degree to which the program addresses the ACTFL/NCATE standards. The process includes multiple reviewers and has been designed to be transparent in nature in order to support the positive development of programs engaging in ACTFL/NCATE review. Thus, each reviewer writes an analysis that mirrors the format of the report. Their comments are available for viewing after they are posted to the NCATE Web site. The lead reviewer then compiles a team report that is also available on the Web site. The six members of the audit team then review the report, supporting documents, and the lead reviewer's report, and they compile and post feedback and a final auditor's report indicating the recognition decision for the program. There are three possible recognition decisions, as described below.

1. *Nationally Recognized.* The program meets the standards, no further submissions are needed, and the program will receive full national recognition once the unit has been accredited. The program will be listed on the NCATE Web site as nationally recognized.

2. *Nationally Recognized with Conditions.* The program generally meets standards, but a *Response to Conditions* report must be submitted within 18 months to remove the conditions. Typically, conditions noted are insufficient data, insufficient alignment of standards with scoring guides or assessments, or insufficient pass rate of teacher candidates. The program has two opportunities to resubmit within 18-months. If successful, the program will be listed on the NCATE Web site as *Nationally Recognized with Conditions.* If its resubmissions are successful, the status will be changed to *Nationally Recognized.* If the program is not successful after two resubmissions, the status will be changed to *Not Nationally Recognized.*

3. *Further development required.* This indication means that Standards that are not met are critical to a quality program or that too few standards are met. A program may resubmit twice within 12 to 14 months. If the standards are not met, the recognition decision is changed to *Not Nationally Recognized.*

In Part B, the reviewers and auditors provide feedback about the degree to which the program has addressed each of the six ACTFL/NCATE Standards and suggestions for modifications to align the program more closely with the standards. For example, a typical suggestion might be to modify the generic student teaching evaluation form to include specific wording related to the ACTFL/NCATE Standards.

Part C of the report written by reviewers and auditors is an evaluation of the evidence contained in the program report, and it addresses candidates' knowledge of content; candidates' ability to understand and apply pedagogical and

professional content knowledge, skills, and dispositions; and candidates' effects on K-12 student learning. Reviewers and auditors offer guidance in ways the program can provide stronger evidence of their candidates' content knowledge, such as using the OPI or developing assessments that show candidates' cultural, cross-disciplinary, or literary knowledge. These comments frequently encourage the program to use the specific wording contained in the ACTFL/NCATE Standards, and they remind programs to focus on how teacher candidates' work affects learning among students in K-12 schools, rather than the effects of the program on the teacher candidates.

Part D provides comments on how the program has used its assessment results to inform program update and change, Part E summarizes the areas for additional consideration, and Part F provides an area for additional comments.

Tips from the ACTFL/NCATE Audit Team

The audit team meets twice annually to review reports in order to ensure consistency and reliability across program reviewers. Since 2005 this team has reviewed nearly 200 reports and offered 5 workshops per year to help institutions prepare the SPA report. In the fall of 2005, when the first 15 reports were submitted, only 13% were *nationally recognized* or *recognized with conditions* on their initial submission. By the following spring, there were 20 reports and 25% were *nationally recognized* or *recognized with conditions.* By the fall of 2008, 47% of programs were *nationally recognized* or *recognized with conditions* on their initial submission and 100% were *nationally recognized* or *recognized with conditions* on their revised submissions (NCATE, 2009). This trajectory provides clear indication that programs are responding to the standards and making the necessary changes to attain accreditation. Although many changes are structural and foundational, in many instances the manner of presentation helps reviewers understand the program more clearly. Here we offer some helpful tips.

Terminology

Use *students* to refer to preK-16 students; use *teacher candidates* to refer to those enrolled on teacher preparation programs. Use *completers* to refer to those who finish a program. Use a consistent format and labeling for all assessments, tables, and data reporting. Label uploaded documents that accompany the SPA report with titles that refer to the number and name of the assessment, e.g. "Assessment#2 CultureProject." Use terminology in rubrics that appears in documents listed under *New guidelines for preparing the ACTFL/NCATE report* (Glisan, et al., n.d.), or in the *ACTFL/NCATE Program Review Standards* (ACTFL, 2002) or in the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (NSFLEP, 2006).

List of Program Faculty

Provide only information about those who deal directly with teacher candidates, e.g., the professor of the methods class or the person who supervises

student teaching from the institution. Do not list the faculty members who teach language, literature, and culture courses, or those who teach the general educational foundational courses, or the cooperating teachers in the schools where student teaching takes place.

Successful Program Reports

Look at sample successful program reports available on the NCATE Web site at http://www.ncate.org/programreview/programReportSamples.asp?ch=37. Give credit to the authors of the reports if you adapt any of their materials.

Align Assessments with Standards

There are seven required assessments, an eighth optional assessment, and six standards. While a single assessment may address more than one standard, on the list of assessments, you should not check all the boxes for all standards. Check only those standards that the assessment primarily addresses. Be sure that the description shows how the assessment and the standard(s) are aligned. Typically a single assessment will align with 2 or 3 standards. For reference of assessments and standards, please refer to the list of assessments provided earlier in this article.

State Report

Coordinate the program report for ACTFL/NCATE with the reporting the program prepares for the state. Some states have agreements with NCATE that allow for the state report to stand as the evidence of meeting ACTFL/NCATE standards. See the NCATE Web site for more information about states' programs.

Teacher Work Sample and Electronic Portfolio

Consider developing a teacher work sample (TWS) to design tasks that address Standards 3, 4, and 5. For additional assistance in this area, see http://www.uni.edu/itq for the manual prepared by the Renaissance Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality Project. Consider using electronic portfolios as a way to collect information, documents, and assessments that address standards. There are examples available from George Mason University at http://mason.gmu.edu/~rfox, from Indiana University of Pennsylvania at http://www.coe.iup.edu/pttut/Portfolios.html, from Virginia Tech at http://www.soe.vt.edu/secondlanguage/portfolios.html, and at a shared wiki site at http://flvateacheredanddvlp.pbworks.com.

Conclusion

The national standards movement has united our profession in historic ways. Instead of seeing our differences based on the language of our specializa-

tion, teaching level, or program in which we teach, we have many opportunities to collaborate to provide high-quality instruction as we prepare F/WL teachers. By working across disciplines, we help each other ask and address the hard questions about the teaching and learning process. As research emerges, programs are sharing new types of assessments, work samples, and electronic portfolios to assess whether or not candidates are meeting expectations of the standards. As in any profession, holding ourselves to a high standard benefits all stakeholders. Engaging in the ACTFL/NCATE program review process is clearly more than an exercise in compliance; it is an interactive opportunity for genuine engagement in program update and change. While connecting our individual programs to the broader professional context that is anchored by our national standards, we as ACTFL/NCATE programs can be part of a professional dialogue that will move our profession forward in supporting teachers and teacher candidates to meet the goals of preparing students to be competent in an increasingly global and intercultural society.

Acknowledgments

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