Section V. Use of Assessment Results to Improve Candidate and Program Performance (12,000-character maximum narrative)

Describe how faculty are using the data from assessments to improve candidate performance and the program, as it relates to content knowledge; pedagogical and professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions; and student learning.

Introduction
Our greatest challenge in using assessment results to improve candidate and program performance has been the small enrollment numbers within this program. The highest count for any one assessment in any given year has been 11 candidates. Our most recent assessments are currently analyzed on a semester by semester basis so that we may examine the results of revised scoring guides. This yields even smaller candidate counts. Beginning with the 2008-2009 academic year, these will be reviewed on an annual basis which will result in higher aggregated counts. The following improvements have been made based on the assessment results for candidates within this program and analogous Birth to Grade 6 program with greater enrollment numbers.

Content Knowledge (Assessments 1 and 2)
We have 2 core assessments of candidate content knowledge in reading/literacy education. The New York State Teacher Certification Examination Content Specialty Test – Literacy (Field 65) provides external validation of our program, as its data compares our program with other programs throughout New York State and demonstrates candidate knowledge of the foundations of literacy. The Comprehensive Portfolio completed and defended by all candidates at the conclusion of the program provides internal validation using authentic information about each candidate’s knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to program expectations.

We are pleased that 100% of our candidates have passed both assessments. The consistency across these two measures provides an indication of reliability and validity. The Content Specialty Test is revealing because it demonstrates that our candidates outperform the state average in their knowledge of literacy foundations. The Comprehensive Portfolio demonstrates the practical application of this knowledge base. Despite the concurrent validity evidenced by the scores on the CST, we have continuously structured the scoring rubric on the comprehensive examination and therefore over the 2007-2008 academic year developed additional detail in the scoring guide for this assessment. We believe the data indicating fewer “exceptional” ratings and more “satisfactory” ratings on the portfolio is a result of this effort. The final version of this rubric has been implemented with the fall 2008 portfolio candidates and we anticipate greater differentiation in scoring based on this more detailed calibration.

Although there is not any direct information from these assessments indicating a need to improve instruction in the area of literacy content knowledge, we have examined our programs according to IRA expectations and revised our elective offerings to focus more directly on issues of literacy. Currently, candidates entering the program have a more
restricted set of electives of which they choose three. We hope that this will further expand their knowledge and skills in the foundations of literacy.

**Planning (Assessment 3)**

We assess each candidate’s ability to plan literacy instruction using the Literacy Strategies Handbook. Since candidates enter the program with an initial general branch teaching certificate we assume that they know general lesson and unit planning and therefore expect them to broaden their planning skills by focusing on research-based, literacy instructional strategies. Candidates demonstrate their learning by developing lesson plans for 5 or more such strategies. We believe the results of this assessment indicate that our candidates are skilled at planning, identifying a wide range of curriculum materials, and assessing student learning within the context of a lesson or unit.

The assessment itself has been in existence for a number of years. In the fall of 2007 a more structured rubric was developed and aligned to IRA standards. This enabled us to gather information on specific sub-elements of the assessment and further detail candidate pedagogical knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Although this assessment indicates that our candidates are successful in planning literacy instruction, we believe, in the interest of continuous improvement, that 6 of the 7 more recently revised electives within this program will enhance our candidates’ abilities to plan using research-based reading strategies (EDU 515 and 516); that integrate math, science and technology (EDU 557) and multicultural literature (EDU 579); and develop students’ writing strategies (EDU 574).

**Practicum (Assessment 4)**

Candidates have continuously been successful in their literacy practicum field experiences as evidenced by the final Literacy Practicum Report. The one candidate not meeting all criteria on the practicum was rated as emerging in the “professional community” program expectation on the practicum report. All candidates enter the program with an initial general branch teaching certificate, but some have no independent classroom experience. As a result of New York State regulations requiring them to complete a master’s degree and 2 years of teaching within a five year time frame of initial certification, a small few have moved from full time undergraduate education students recently completing student teaching, to full time graduate students focusing on literacy instruction. Based on their level of experience these candidates are challenged to meet IRA Standard 5 initiatives such as evaluating and providing feedback on the practice of others, and implementing professional development programs. In addition IRA standard 3.4 communicating assessment results to colleagues, administrators, policy makers, officials and the community is difficult for novice teachers to demonstrate. To address these issues in Fall 2007 we revised Assessment 8 the Foundations of Literacy Project. See the information provided in “Other” below. We also included a new elective option for candidates; EDU 747 Consultation and Collaboration. This course offers candidates the opportunity to explore the role of the Reading Coach and the collaborative strategies that are required for improving student and faculty learning. We are advising our less experienced candidates to select this option.
Impact on Student Learning (Assessment 5 and 6)
Assessment of impact on student learning is integrated throughout the program and the 8 assessments we use for program review. More specifically, the Literacy Case Study in EDU 572 enables candidates to focus on assessment and instructional planning for a student with known or suspected reading difficulties. The Reading Assessment and Differentiated Instruction assignment in EDU 575 examines assessment and instruction from a developmental continuum. These assignments were revised in the fall of 2007 to include written reports that communicate the results of the assessments to specific individuals (IRA 3.4). Prior to this time, the program candidates did not consistently and specifically demonstrate this communication skill. In addition standard rubrics were developed to enable us to gather more structured information on specific sub-elements of the assessment and further detail candidate knowledge, skills, and dispositions in this area.

Other (7 and 8)
The Classroom Analysis and Motivation Plan completed by candidates in EDU 798 Literacy Seminar was revised in the fall of 2007 to focus more on the ability of candidates to enhance the literacy practices of school colleagues (teachers and paraprofessionals). In short, it requires candidates to foster literate environments and model strategies that will enhance the practices of others. A standardized rubric also implemented in fall 2007 enables us to more specifically assess candidate competencies on this assignment and therefore improve candidate practices and the program.

The Foundations of Literacy Project in EDU 555 charges candidates with accessing recent literacy theory and research and implementing a simulated professional development workshop to improve candidate competency in communicating and collaborating with other professionals and initiating professional development programs. This assessment was developed in response to candidates’ need to communicate with colleagues and other professionals, and institute professional development programs. A number of our literacy faculty have taken this a step further and in the summer and fall semesters of 2008 they have had candidates in EDU 555 Literacy Foundations plan and implement Professional Development Summits wherein candidates offer their workshops to individuals outside of the program including practicing teachers, teacher candidates, and faculty. The Summits have had impressive attendance and been very positively received by the professional community.

Summary of Program Changes
Revision of Elective Offerings
The program has offered 8 (3 credit hour) electives since its registration in 2002. These electives were recently revised and reduced to focus more directly on literacy foundations. There are currently 7 (3 credit hour) elective options. One is a new course in the Department and Unit EDU 557 Math, Science, and Literacy Technology. This course was developed and approved within the program in the fall of 2008 in an effort to enhance candidate knowledge, skills and dispositions in these areas (IRA 2.2, 3.1, and 4.2). Another course, EDU 747 Consultation and Collaboration has been an offering in
our special education programs for some time. After cross-program conversations it was decided that the course objectives and assignments matched well with IRA expectations for working with colleagues (IRA 5.3) and communicating the results of assessments to educational professionals (IRA 3.4).

**Standardization of Rubric Scoring Guides**
The signature assessments within the program have been existence in some form for many years. The scoring rubrics have been in an on-going refinement process of standardization. Faculty within the program have more clearly aligned the sub-elements of the assignments and rubrics to IRA standards. Their efforts have resulted in the data provided in assessments 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 from fall 2007 to present. Our focus is now on continuously improving the inter-rater reliability using the standardized assessment rubrics.

**Course-based Changes**
The final practicum report data provides some indication that a few of our candidates are less able to demonstrate their interactions with the professional community. It is for this reason that we have enhanced the assignment in EDU 555 Literacy Foundations. Candidates are now required to develop teaching guides and implement professional development workshops, therefore demonstrating their ability to communicate with other professionals. A similar revision was instituted in the Literacy Case Study assignment in EDU 572 and the Reading Assessment and Differentiated Instruction assignment in EDU 575 which requires candidates to develop a written report that communicates the results of assessments to various audiences for both accountability and instructional purposes. As a result, our novice candidates will have additional opportunities to gain experience in supporting the professional community.

**Conclusions**
All program completers have met or exceeded the IRA program standards. We are very satisfied with our candidate performance on the identified program assessments and the evidence of program quality the assessments provide related to IRA standards. We are focused on continuous improvement and will annually examine the assessments themselves, and the information they offer to us regarding our programs and candidates.