Masters of Science in Teaching Literacy B-12

The Literacy faculty is committed to making sure that our candidates are served well by our programs of instruction, and will be well-prepared to take on their responsibility as classroom teachers or professional developers. The literacy faculty conducts extensive and ongoing reviews of candidate performance on key assessments at bi-monthly program meetings and annual faculty retreats, and uses those data to find ways to improve its programs. As stipulated in our conceptual framework, we expect our candidates to demonstrate strength in areas such as the following: content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and diversity. We also expect our candidates to display excellent professional dispositions. We are pleased with many of our current findings in those areas, as summarized below from data that were collected from September, 2011 through May, 2013.

Content knowledge

Throughout the program, the candidates have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their content knowledge, and principal findings from our assessments indicate that indeed the majority of candidates have met or exceeded International Reading Association (IRA) Content Knowledge Standards. We measure candidates’ content knowledge in three ways: the New York State Licensure Exam Content Specialty Test (CST) in Literacy, the Curriculum Project and the evaluation of the program in exit and follow-up surveys.

Regarding the first measurement, during the period from 2009-2012, 87 candidates in our literacy program took the CST and 84% passed the test and our candidates scored higher than the passing score; while the passing score is 220, our students, on the average, had a score of 246.7—significantly above the pass cut-off rate.

On the second measurement, the Curriculum Project, most of the candidates received excellent scores, based on the analysis of the data from fall 2011 to spring 2013, indicating that our candidates have a solid understanding of the theoretical and research based foundations of literacy education. Through the creation and implementation of a literacy initiative in this assessment, the candidates link reading research to provide an avenue for reading success. Thus, candidates are able to effectively apply the knowledge gained in the program.

These findings are supported by the responses to the exit survey administered as candidates complete the program, which reveal that a majority of candidates found that they were well or very well prepared in the area of content knowledge.

Pedagogical and Professional Knowledge, Diversity, and Dispositions

Based on the review of candidates’ performance on an array of assignments, such as a thematic unit plan, case study, student intervention portfolio, diversity project, and professional dispositions, the faculty concluded that our candidates demonstrate their ability to meet IRA Standards as well as goals of Mercy College School of Education, including Pedagogical and Professional Knowledge and Skills, and Diversity.
Candidates demonstrated an understanding of the needs of struggling readers. They understand the need for and are able to administer a variety of assessments, analyze these assessments, and use them to plan for and provide in-depth instruction using a variety of resources, strategies, and technologies.

Our assessment results further indicate that our candidate understand how to meet the needs of diverse students through differentiated instruction. Their understanding of student diversity is not limited to ability, but also includes sociocultural elements that influence students’ lives and learning.

When prompted in an exit survey, administered in the summer of 2012, how well they were prepared in the areas of content knowledge, pedagogical and professional knowledge, diversity and dispositions, candidates’ evaluations of the literacy program were consistently positive: all respondents responded that they were adequately, if not very well, prepared to all these three areas.

**Emphasis on Student Teaching and Learning**

The data revealed that our candidates’ performance is strong on all assessments that are tied to field and clinical experiences working directly with students and school communities. Candidates have demonstrated their ability of making a positive impact on students’ learning through 200 hours of fieldwork, performance in key assessments such as Case Study and student Intervention Portfolio, and two practicum courses.

**Changes for Better**

The faculty continuously monitors the effectiveness of all measurements. For example, based on the results from key assessments, the Literacy program is continuously improved, including changes in key assessment rubrics to better assess the readiness of the candidates to become successful reading specialists/literacy coaches in the field, instructions and rubrics of Curriculum Project, Thematic Unit Plan, Student Intervention Portfolio, and Diversity Project were revised to address three reading specialist/literacy coach roles as defined by IRA in 2010; a) “The specialist may have primary responsibility for working with students who struggle with reading (p.49),” b) “The specialist may have primary responsibility for working to support teacher learning(p.50),” and c) “The specialist may have primary responsibility for developing, leading, or evaluating the school or district reading and writing program (p.50).” The faculty agreed that while the training our candidates to become reading specialists/literacy coaches has been effective, the language of the instructions and in the rubrics had not been clear enough to emphasize this aspect in the assessment of their learning outcomes. However, we are now confident, based on the data from the fall 2012 to spring 2013, during the time the newly revised assessments have been implemented, that our candidates are well prepared for the reading specialists/literacy coach roles.

Overall, most of our teacher candidates have met or exceeded all the IRA standards and we are very satisfied with their performance on the key assessments. To our continuous improvement and will regularly analyze data and therefore examine the assessments.