

Collaborating with Classroom Teachers to Improve Performance Assessments in Literacy Methods Courses

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Introduction

Very few topics have received as much attention in the education community as the question of how best to teach children to read and write. Equally important to this discussion is the question of how best to prepare new teachers to facilitate children's learning of these essential skills. Understanding the nature of literacy teacher educators' current practices is salient to any discussion of improving instruction and achievement in K-12 classrooms. In reviewing the knowledge base around learning to teach reading, Pearson (2001) has remarked that "we desperately need a basic database that will allow us to answer the question, What does reading teacher education look like?" (p.18). More recently, Risko and colleagues (2008) conducted a comprehensive review of the research on reading teacher education and concluded that there is still limited research available to guide the development of specific literacy courses and programs. It is our intention to provide some specificity to the on-going discussion about the preparation of literacy teachers by sharing the work we have done to guide the development of our courses and assignments. This article describes our collaboration with two practicing elementary literacy teachers to examine the performance assessments in our literacy methods courses, using their valuable knowledge of the field to inform and improve our instructional practices.

The past ten years have seen increased interest in the topic of literacy teacher preparation. Existing work has identified the features of high quality preparation programs, such as the number of required credit hours spent in literacy related courses and the effects of different programs on the teaching practices of novice teachers (Hoffman, et al., 2005; Maloch, et al., 2003). Additionally, studies have focused on the literacy teaching practices and beliefs of novice teachers in order to understand how to better prepare pre-service teachers for the "real world" (e.g., Grossman, et al., 2001; Harste, Leland, Schmidt, Vasquez & Ociepka, 2004; Massey, 2004; Pierce & Pomerantz, 2006). Other studies and reviews of the literature have identified qualities of highly effective teacher educators and discussed the implications for teacher preparation (Wold, Young, & Risko, 2007). The IRA Excellence in Reading Teacher Preparation Commission has also reported on current practices in reading teacher education, providing an overview of program contexts, resources, structures, content, and

philosophies (Hoffman & Roller, 2001).

However, what does literacy teacher education look like inside classroom contexts, both college and K-12 fieldwork settings? How are literacy teacher educators working to examine and improve their own practices? Hoffman and Roller noted in their report that "we are a community of reading researchers active in teacher education who have not been systematic about studying our own practices" (2001, p. 33). Hui and Grossman (2008) have recently noted the lack of action research by teacher educators in general, and the need for those of us involved in preparing teachers to study and improve our own practices.

Context

As faculty members involved in the preparation of elementary school teachers in an undergraduate program, we strive to study and improve our practices. We have honed our assignments in literacy methods courses and asked students about their usefulness through formal course evaluations and informal discussions. We also engaged in a longitudinal study of the evolution of three former students' approaches to teaching reading and writing as they went from undergraduate courses to student teaching to their first year of classroom teaching. Through this research we saw some support for the validity of our performance assessments and tasks, which include assessing a child's literacy strengths and needs, and reading aloud to a group of children and leading a discussion based on higher level thinking questions (Pierce & Pomerantz, 2006). However, we were not yet satisfied and wanted to ensure that we were not falling victim to the "Ivory Tower syndrome" that can sometimes plague even the most well-intentioned teacher educators. We still wondered: Do our performance assessments and tasks accurately reflect the realities of literacy teaching in today's elementary classrooms? How valid are these tasks? We agree that assessment of pre-service teachers should align "closely with what teaching literacy actually entails" (Crumpler & Spycher, 2006, p. 94), and recognize the need to engage in discussion with classroom teachers about what "teaching literacy" really means.

We are guided by our belief that strong teacher preparation includes performance assessments requiring "candidates to use their knowledge to produce

teaching actions and analyses” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 113). To this end, performance tasks in our two-course literacy sequence for undergraduates include assessing a child’s literacy development and skills, reading aloud and leading a discussion emphasizing higher level thinking, and collaborating with classmates in a variety of ways. The assignments in our courses are informed by the standards developed by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2008). These standards emphasize that teacher candidates should demonstrate the ability to collaborate with colleagues in order to contribute to school improvement (Standard 1c) and to identify and design interventions that support student learning (Standard 1d). The standards also indicate that teacher candidates must be able to assess student learning (Standard 1d) and select from a broad range of instructional strategies while providing explanations for their choices (Standard 1b).

Our assignments are also informed by the research literature on effective literacy teaching, which highlights specific aspects of high quality instruction. These aspects of teaching include using assessment as the basis for instruction, and posing higher level thinking questions in the context of authentic reading and writing tasks (Allington, 2002; Blair, Rupley, & Nichols, 2007; Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001; Taylor, et al, 2002). We are especially cognizant of pre-service teachers’ struggles to develop more than a surface-level understanding of how to assess students and use the information obtained to inform instruction. Volante and Fazio’s (2007) survey of teacher candidates reminds us of the need to model various assessment techniques and purposes for assessment within our courses, since novice teachers may tend to revert to assessment that is more traditional and summative in nature.

At our institution, a publicly funded college in the northeastern United States, undergraduate education majors take two courses aimed specifically at developing skill in the teaching of reading and writing. The first, *Language and Literacy Development*, is a foundations course that focuses on theories of literacy development and the reading/writing process; principles of phonemic awareness and phonics; and an introduction to children’s literature. The second, *Reading, Writing, and Children’s Literature*, is an elementary methods (grades 1-6) course emphasizing strategies for teaching reading, writing, and literature to all children in a multicultural setting. In the section that follows, we describe the key performance tasks in our courses and our efforts to explore the content validity of our assignments by inviting two classroom teachers to comment on and critique them.

Our Assignments & Courses

In the first course, *Language and Literacy Development*, a **Literacy Case Study** is the major course assignment. Students choose a child in grades 2-5 and focus their attention on his/her literacy development; work on the project is ongoing through 3-4 meetings with the child during the course of the semester. Background information is obtained through an initial meeting with the child. At a second meeting, the student elicits a sample of the child’s writing through the use of a carefully-chosen picture book, poem, or section of a chapter book that serves as the basis for pre-writing brainstorming. Students then use the general categories of the First Steps Developmental Writing and Spelling Continuums (Education Department of Western Australia, 1999) to identify and provide evidence for the stage of writing and spelling development their child falls into, based on his/her writing sample. At a third meeting with the child, nearer to the end of the semester, students meet with their case study child to administer the Qualitative Reading Inventory-4 (QRI-4). The final product for the Literacy Case Study is an 8-10 page narrative, which is assessed using a rubric designed by the course instructors (see Appendix A). Inter-rater reliability of 88% was established for this rubric, with college instructors and teachers serving as scorers.

In the second course, *Reading, Writing, and Children’s Literature*, students complete a **Literacy Assessment** of a child’s reading, writing, and spelling, which is designed to build upon knowledge gained in the Literacy Case Study from the previous course. During the methods block of courses, students complete a 75 pre-practicum field experience in an elementary school classroom. Students consult with their cooperating teacher to choose a child for the Literacy Assessment assignment, and background information is obtained from the teacher and observations of the child in the classroom. Completing the first part of the assignment involves assessing the child’s reading with the Developmental Reading Assessment (Beaver, 2006; Beaver, 2005), analyzing a writing sample, and analyzing spelling errors within a writing sample and/or spelling test. Students create a chart to illustrate the child’s strengths and needs in each area, and the evidence they gathered from the assessments to support their interpretation of the results. Students receive detailed written feedback on this part of the assignment from the instructor at mid-semester. They then identify instructional strategies for use with the child, drawing upon class discussions, course texts and videos, and their field placement experience. The final draft of the assignment is due at the end of the semester and includes the chart indicating 1) what the child can do in regard to reading, writing, and spelling, 2) what s/he needs to learn next, 3) the evidence that

shows how the student identified the need, and 4) the instructional strategies the student might employ. Students write a narrative section with reflections on the assignment and questions it raises for them. A scoring rubric is used to assess these aspects of the completed assignment (see Appendix B). Inter-rater reliability of 90% was established for this rubric.

The second performance task is a **Storybook Read-Aloud and Discussion**, in which students read aloud to a group or class of children in their field placement classroom and ask open-ended questions following the read-aloud. The session is audiotaped. The completed assignment includes an audiotape of the read-aloud and discussion in which students demonstrate their ability to engage children in a read aloud with expression and appropriate pacing, to ask open-ended questions promoting higher level thinking and discussion, to identify and teach key vocabulary words, and to encourage children to expand on their responses. Additionally, students write a reflection on their experience, focusing on their management of the discussion, their reading of the text, their assessment of the suitability of the text for a read-aloud, the children's level of participation and engagement, and the strategies they used. A scoring rubric is used to assess these aspects of the assignment (see Appendix C). Inter-rater reliability of 100% was established for the Storybook Read-Aloud and Discussion rubric.

Obtaining Feedback

Recognizing the importance of getting feedback from teachers who have proven themselves to be successful in the classroom, we chose Sarah and Colleen (pseudonyms), both of whom are certified as Middle Childhood Generalists by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), in addition to holding state teaching licenses. At the time of this project, Sarah was a fifth grade teacher in a suburban district but had also taught grades 3 to 6 in urban settings during her 18-year career. Colleen was in her sixteenth year of teaching third grade in a suburban district.

To facilitate the discussion of our course tasks and samples of students' work, we followed the Tuning Protocol developed by schools in the Coalition of Essential Schools Exhibition Project to obtain feedback and improve on their student assessment systems (Blythe, Allen, & Powell, 1999). First, the focusing question was written on the board: "To what extent do these tasks assess the skills needed in "real life" literacy teaching?" We then described the performance assessment to be evaluated – the assignment description, a sample of student work and the accompanying scoring rubric - and responded to clarifying questions from the elementary teachers.

This was followed by a period in which the instructors remained silent while the elementary teachers provided "warm" (supportive) and "cool" (challenging) feedback on the assessment. Finally, the instructors were allowed time to reflect on the feedback given. This procedure was followed for each of the performance assessments. The entire session was audiotaped and later transcribed so that we, the instructors, could look back at the insights and suggestions Sarah and Colleen had provided about necessary preparation for pre-service teachers, and both warm and cool feedback about the content validity of our course tasks.

Improving our Practices

When we began this study we wondered if we were assessing the "right" aspects of literacy teaching. What did we learn from Sarah and Colleen, two experienced practicing teachers, about our course assignments? What can other literacy teacher educators learn from our experience?

The discussion with Sarah and Colleen generally supported the validity of the performance assessments and tasks in our course; however, the teachers' suggestions led to improvements in the task descriptions and rubrics so that these more accurately reflect "real world" practices and concerns. The Literacy Case Study and Literacy Assessment tasks are ones common to many literacy teacher preparation courses. Both teachers agreed that this type of assignment represents a critical aspect of teaching and that the literacy assessment assignments in our courses provided our students with "solid, applicable exposure to something that they would encounter in the future." The teachers did remind us of the importance of pre-service teachers thinking and speculating about the significance of observations and assessment results, identifying *multiple* instructional strategies to address needs, and articulating clearly *why* certain strategies should be tried. As a result, these aspects of literacy assessment are now emphasized in the assignment description and scoring rubric used in *Reading, Writing, and Children's Literature*.

Additionally, Sarah and Colleen emphasized the importance of sharing and discussing assessment results with peers and the classroom teacher, and encouraged us to build this type of conversation into the assignments. Sarah explained, "You're saying to them 'It's okay to ask a colleague.' It's okay because in what profession do you truly work alone?" They suggested we introduce students to discussion protocols and strategies to encourage substantial practice responding in a tactful manner, and reflect on group dynamics. Colleen stressed the importance of familiarity with such protocols when she said, "That is what my principal looks for. She will not hire you if you haven't had a team meeting or [don't] know about protocols."

The instructor for the first course, *Language and Literacy Development*, took to heart these important points about collaboration and the need for students to learn about discussion protocols. She developed a **Collaborative Assessment Conference** task, in which students meet in groups of two or three and follow a protocol to offer feedback on their literacy case studies. A rubric was designed to assess the audiotaped conferences in three categories: preparation (how well students are prepared to offer relevant, specific feedback to their partner); responding and listening (how tactfully and respectfully students deliver feedback and receive constructive criticism); and self-assessment (how aware students are of their strengths and weaknesses as conference participants) (see Appendix D). Instruction and practice for the Collaborative Assessment Conference takes place in the course prior to the students' participation in the audiotaped conference. Students receive a sample case study from a previous semester and are asked to assess it using the Literacy Case Study rubric. Then, students practice offering "warm" and "cool" feedback to the author of the study using courteous phrasing tips provided on a handout (e.g., "I like the way you..." or "You might consider changing..."), following the same protocol that we used when we asked teachers to evaluate our assignments.

The activity has been so well-received by students that they are now asked to go through a similar process in the second course with a peer conference for the literacy assessment assignment (see Appendix E). The course instructors are pleased that these assignments allow students to get practice responding and listening to peers around work in which they themselves are invested. This helps to prepare them for the teamwork and collegiality required to be successful in today's schools, while at the same time enhancing the quality of their completed assignments.

Sarah and Colleen's concern with teaching pre-service teachers to consult with others also carried over to the Storybook Read-aloud and Discussion task in *Reading, Writing, and Children's Literature*. They suggested that the pre-service teachers confer with the classroom teacher prior to carrying out the read-aloud assignment to help them identify the purpose of the read-aloud and ways to engage the children. For example, Sarah said, "In the real world, it's all about purpose...it's not just to read the book." The teachers' suggestion that students formally confer with the classroom teacher prior to carrying out the read-aloud assignment led to a required conference with the classroom teacher. A teacher conference "form" is attached to the task description and rubric with suggested discussion questions to help students identify and articulate the purpose of the read-aloud

and ways to engage the children. Prior to adding this to the assignment, students rarely had substantive discussions with their cooperating teachers about the assignment. The teacher conference "form" facilitates communication between cooperating teachers and students about an important aspect of literacy teaching.

Implications for Literacy Teacher Educators

Discussing our work with classroom teachers was a valuable process, leading to improvements in our assignments and our courses. Like Vagle, Dillon, Davison-Jenkins, LaDuca, and Olson (2006), we found that a collaborative project "informs local knowledge of practice" and produces significant and positive changes (p. 338). Interestingly, the changes we made center around the theme of collaboration; students collaborating with each other and with their cooperating teachers. Sarah's comment: "You're saying to them 'It's okay to ask a colleague.' It's okay because in what profession do you truly work alone?" is an important message for teacher educators, as well as students. The implications of our project are that teacher educators need to 1) build opportunities for collaboration into course assignments in structured ways (e.g., the collaborative assessment conference, the tuning protocol, and the teacher-conference form) and 2) collaborate continually and reflect with expert classroom teachers to ensure that course assignments reflect the challenges of teaching in real classrooms. To this end, literacy teacher educators should ask themselves:

- 1) How can I create a collaborative network consisting of teacher educators and classroom teachers to routinely review courses, assignments, and students' work?
- 2) How can I build collaboration into my course assignments so that students learn that teaching is not about working alone and collaboration is part of the profession?

Involving excellent teachers in creating and discussing course tasks is a significant tool for improving teacher education. In an era when policy around reading and writing instruction sometimes seems to be made by those with little contact with actual classrooms, this study provides a window into how a collaborative project involving classroom teachers can productively inform our instruction. Hui and Grossman (2008) encourage teacher educators to conduct action research in to their teaching and assessment practices. They suggest that "the findings and conclusions from one project" should set "new beginnings for another" (p. 5). This project is a beginning for us, and we hope for our readers; a beginning for collaborating and reflecting with teachers to improve our practices.

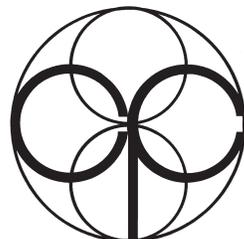
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Appendix A

Course: EDU 250A Language and Literacy Development

Task Title: Literacy Case Study

In a “case study,” you focus your attention on one person or classroom in order to learn about some phenomenon. In this course, your “case” is a child in grades 2 through 5 and what you are learning about is how a teacher assesses a student’s literacy development and needs. You will choose a child in second to fifth grade and will need to meet with your student at least three times, approximately 45 minutes each. At the first meeting you will gather some background information on your child and ask questions from a reading/writing interest and attitude survey. At the second meeting you will read a book with him/her and elicit a writing sample after brainstorming together about topics related to the book you read. At a third (and possibly a fourth) meeting you will administer the Qualitative Reading Inventory-4 assessment, which asks the child to provide a retelling and answer comprehension questions after reading aloud and reading silently.

	Incomplete	Developing	Proficient	Exemplary
Introduction and Conclusion	One or both of the sections are missing.	The introduction and/or conclusion are weak. Required information is barely visible.	The introduction and conclusion generally present the required information. However, there could be more description of the child or more conclusions drawn about his/her strengths, weaknesses, and target areas for instruction.	Introduction and conclusion are substantive and thorough. Introduction presents child’s background information and a summary of results from the reading/writing surveys. Conclusion summarizes the child’s strengths and weaknesses and suggests areas to target for instruction. The child’s reading level is noted.
Writing Sample	A sample of the writing is not provided, or a sample is provided with no comments.	A sample of the student’s writing is provided, but comments are inaccurate or do not reflect on what the writing tells you about the student’s developing literacy. OR Few details (less than five) of the writing are actually discussed.	A sample of the student’s writing is provided, and at least five details are highlighted for discussion. Comments are accurate and reflect on what the writing tells you about the student’s developing literacy and show a general understanding of concepts covered in class and in readings.	A sample of the student’s writing is provided. At least five details are highlighted for discussion. Comments are accurate and reflect on what the writing tells about the student’s developing literacy, showing exceptional understanding of the concepts covered in class and in readings. Summary provided of book read aloud to student and brainstorming conversation about writing ideas.
Oral Reading	Results of the student’s oral reading are not provided, or they are provided with no discussion or analysis.	Results of the student’s oral reading are not detailed enough. OR Fewer than five examples are highlighted. Miscue analysis is inaccurate or lacks reference to concepts covered in class and/or appropriate terminology. Lacks many of the completed forms.	Results of the student’s oral reading are presented, with at least five examples of what the text said and student’s miscues noted. Miscue analysis shows a general understanding of concepts covered in class with near-perfect use of terms and reference to cueing systems. Lacks some of the completed QRI forms.	Results of the student’s oral reading are presented. At least five examples of what the text said and student’s miscues noted. Exceptional miscue analysis with flawless references to cueing systems and concepts/terminology discussed in class. Description of session. Includes all required QRI forms, including administered vocabulary lists, scored reading passages, miscue analysis worksheet for each passage administered.
Silent Reading	Results of the student’s silent reading are not provided, or they are provided with no discussion or analysis.	Results of the student’s silent reading are not detailed enough. Discussion is inaccurate or lacks reference to concepts covered in class and/or appropriate terminology.	Results of the student’s silent reading are presented in detail. Discussion shows a general understanding of concepts covered in class with near-perfect use of terms and reference to literal and/or inferential comprehension.	Results of the student’s silent reading are presented in detail. Discussion shows in-depth understanding of concepts covered in class with flawless use of terms and references to literal and/or inferential comprehension. Includes description of session. Includes QRI scored reading passage for silent reading.
Overall Quality of Written Presentation	Errors are so numerous as to detract from the reading and comprehension of the text.	Substantial number of minor errors in capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and standard sentence structure OR several major errors.	Mostly effective, accurate use of capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and standard sentence structure (some minor errors).	Consistently shows effective, accurate use of capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and standard sentence structure (up to 1-2 very minor errors).

Appendix B

Course: EDU 300 Reading, Writing, and Children’s Literature

Task Title: Literacy Assessment

Collect data about a child’s reading, writing, and spelling abilities in your field placement classroom. Using this information, construct a chart that indicates for each of the preceding areas 1) what the child can do, 2) what s/ he needs to learn next, 3) the evidence that shows how you identified the need, and 4) the instructional strategies you might employ. Set up the chart so that for each need you identify, you indicate the instructional strategies to address the need immediately below or beside it so that the relationship between the need and the strategy is clear. Include a narrative section with your reflections on the assignment and questions it raises for you. Reflections and questions should focus on the child, literacy development, and teaching.

	Incomplete	Developing	Proficient	Exemplary
What child can do	No specific details or fewer than 2 ideas or no evidence presented	Some are specific and detailed or partial evidence presented	Specific and detailed list for reading, writing, and spelling Conclusions about what child can do are clearly linked to evidence	Same as “proficient” column but includes information about the child as a reader, writer, and speller from additional sources, such as your observations, teacher’s comments, or other assessment
What child needs to learn next	No needs are identified or specificity and detail are lacking or illogical or unclear relationship to assessment results	Only 1 need identified for each area or only some are specific and detailed or some are weakly linked to assessment results	At least two needs are identified for reading, for writing, and for spelling Specific and detailed Clearly linked to assessment results in “Evidence” section	Same as “proficient” column but takes into account information from other sources, as well as the assessment results
Proposed instructional strategies	No strategies proposed or specificity and detail are lacking or illogical or unclear relationship to assessment results	1-2 instructional strategies for each area or only some are specific and detailed or only some are linked with assessment results or contains partial or no references to text or some instructional strategies are not effective	Minimum of 3 effective instructional strategies for reading, for writing, and for spelling Specific and detailed Relationship between needs and instructional strategies is clear and consistent with assessment results References class texts (for each instructional strategy chosen, indicate the book title, and the corresponding chapter and page number in the book)	Same as “proficient” column but includes more than 3 instructional strategies for each area; provides multiple ideas for addressing student’s needs References multiple sources, including class texts, the field placement classroom teacher, class discussions, handouts, other texts and articles, and your own ideas
Professional presentation, supporting documents, and reflection	None of the specified assessments were used or no reflection is included or presentation is unprofessional (disorganized, significant errors, slang)	Some but not all specified assessments were used or reflection and questions address surface level issues (e.g., testing logistics), rather than the assessment itself or style, language, and presentation could be improved or significant grammatical and spelling errors	Specific assessments are attached and include an informal reading inventory (that assesses oral reading and comprehension and includes a miscue analysis), a writing sample analysis using the First Steps Continuums for writing and spelling, and a spelling test with analysis form. Reflections address what you learned about the child from doing the assessment and any other insights about literacy development and teaching gained from the experience; questions focus on the child’s learning Style, language and presentation are professional No significant grammatical or spelling errors	Same as “proficient” column but also includes sources for additional information used (your observation notes, additional writing samples, additional assessments, teacher interview notes, etc.) Reflections address what you learned about the child from doing the assessment, as well as any other insights about literacy development and teaching gained from the experience; questions focus on the child’s learning

Appendix C

Course: EDU 300 Reading, Writing, and Children’s Literature

Task Title: Storybook Read-Aloud and Discussion

You will prepare a book to read aloud to a small group or the whole class in your field placement classroom. You will also prepare 6-10 discussion questions to promote higher-level thinking and identify key vocabulary words for explicit teaching (as discussed in class). Audiotape the read-aloud and discussion. Prepare the following written products to accompany your audiotape: 1) A list of the questions you posed labeled according to Bloom’s Taxonomy, the key vocabulary words, your rationale for choosing them, and your teaching ideas, 2) A reflection about the experience (see the rubric below for specific instructions). The teacher conference form must be filled out prior to the read aloud and attached to the reflection.

	Incomplete	Developing	Proficient/Exemplary
Content of audiotape	It is not possible to assess the read-aloud due to poor tape quality or no tape was handed in.	Read-aloud is somewhat monotone and/or too fast. Limited use of strategies to engage or focus the children.	Read-aloud demonstrates expressive intonation, appropriate pacing and articulation You used strategies discussed in class or with the classroom teacher to engage the children and keep them focused.
Discussion and questions	No higher level thinking questions are included and/or questions are not labeled according to Bloom’s taxonomy. Key vocabulary words are not identified or no rationale or teaching ideas are included.	Only one or two higher level questions are included or there are less than 6 questions or questions are labeled incorrectly. Key vocabulary may be identified but without a sound rationale or teaching ideas. Discussion sounds like a “quiz” instead of a conversation.	Questions are labeled according to Bloom’s taxonomy. There is a mix of higher level and literal questions but the majority of questions are open-ended and require application, analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation. There are 6-10 questions. Key vocabulary words are also listed with your rationale for choosing them and your ideas for explicit teaching of the words. Discussion sounds like a conversation, not a “quiz.” You encourage children to expand on their answers and you ask follow up questions based on their responses.
Written reflection	The reflection contains numerous mechanical errors or the reflection contains no insights about the experience or the reflection is not included. Teacher conference form is not included.	The reflection summarizes and describes the experience with little specific information about the components of effective read-alouds discussed in class or the reflection focuses on logistics (such as the working of the tape recorder) or there are significant mechanical errors. Teacher conference form is included.	The reflection contains insights about the experience, and specific information about what went well and what could be done differently next time. Reflections focus on the components of effective read-alouds discussed in class and include your reflections on your management of the discussion, your reading of the text, your assessment of the suitability of the text for a read-aloud, the children’s level of participation and engagement, and the strategies you used. Teacher conference form is included.

Teacher Conference Form – Read-aloud assignment

Your name _____

Teacher's name _____

The purpose of this form is to help you prepare for your read-aloud and discussion and to help you confer with your cooperating teacher about issues which may impact your read-aloud. **Please fill out the form after discussing the following questions and issues with the classroom teacher.**

Title of book:

Purpose for choosing this book for the read-aloud:

How will you use the pictures during the read-aloud?

What strategies might you use to engage the children prior to reading?

What strategies might you use to encourage reluctant children to participate in the discussion?

What strategies might you use to keep certain children from dominating the discussion?

What strategies will you use to keep children focused?

Appendix D

Course: EDU 250A Language and Literacy Development

Task Title: Collaborative Assessment Conference

Teachers do not work alone in schools; they often collaborate with colleagues to discuss results of assessments and make informed instructional decisions on behalf of children. For this task, you will review carefully the results and case study write-up of one or more of your classmates. You will then meet together and provide feedback using the attached format, based on the Tuning Protocol developed by schools in the Coalition of Essential Schools Exhibition Project (Blythe, Allen, & Powell, 1999). This session will be audiotaped and assessed using the criteria below.

	Developing	Proficient	Exemplary
Preparation	It is not clear that you have carefully prepared for the conference. You do not seem able to offer much relevant, specific feedback. Feedback is minimal or general in nature.	You seem to have read your peers' work, although you are less prepared to cite examples or offer specific, accurate feedback pertaining to the focus questions.	You have clearly read your peers' work and are prepared to address his/her focus questions. You refer to examples from the work, and feedback is accurate, useful and relevant.
Responding and Listening	You do not participate enough or offer enough feedback to evaluate. OR The feedback you offer is not phrased so as to be supportive and constructive. OR You are defensive when it comes to receiving constructive criticism.	You have a slight tendency to dominate the discussion or to be a bit reticent. Nonetheless, the feedback you offer is phrased tactfully, and you receive constructive criticism without becoming defensive.	You are an active participant and an attentive listener; you allow others ample time to speak. You are respectful and can phrase "cool" feedback in a tactful, supportive manner. You welcome constructive criticism and respond to it positively.
Self-Assessment	You do not seem to be aware of your strengths and weaknesses as a conference participant.	You have a mostly accurate assessment of yourself as a conference participant.	You have an exceptionally clear and honest picture of yourself as a conference participant.

Blythe, T., Allen, D., and Powell, B. S. (1999). *Looking together at student work*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Appendix E

EDU 300: Peer Conference: Literacy Assessment Assignment

FORMAT/PROTOCOL for CONFERENCE

Bring two copies of the assignment to the conference and have your assignment description and rubric handy.

Present to your conference peers two or three “focus questions” that you would like them to concentrate on as they read your work (***to be prepared in advance of the class meeting***).

Read your partner’s literacy assessment assignment keeping the focus questions in mind.

Ask clarifying questions (yes, no, or short answers) to make sure you understand any relevant information (such as the grade level of the child). There is no discussion of the actual assignment results at this time.

Offer “warm” feedback related to the focus questions and the work at hand. This includes comments about how the work presented seems to meet the assignment guidelines, the quality of the writing, the specificity and appropriateness of the instructional strategies suggested, etc. The author of the work remains silent at this time.

Offer “cool” feedback related to the focus questions and the work at hand. This includes possible “disconnects,” gaps, or problems related to the work and the assignment description and/or the rubric. You might offer ideas or suggestions for strengthening the work presented. The author of the work remains silent at this time.

The author of the work now gets a chance to respond to the feedback, both “warm” and “cool.” He/she may choose to ask questions, to summarize what he/she learned from the conference, and to explain his/her next steps.

Adapted from: Blythe, T., Allen, D., and Powell, B. S. (1999). *Looking together at student work*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Note: At the end of the peer conference class, we will debrief the process. After we debrief, please respond to the following questions in writing:

Was the peer conference helpful to you? If so, how? If not, why not?

What kind of specific changes will you make as a result of the conference?

How did the structure provided by the professor assist you in giving and receiving feedback? Do you have any suggestions for improving the structure of the conference?

How would you structure peer conferences in the elementary school classroom?