

## Changes Based on Data

<b>PROGRAM: M. Ed. in Curriculum &amp; Learning (Concentration in School Library Media)</b>
---

### \*Summary of Overall Data as Evidence\*

Overall, in terms of (1) content knowledge, candidates evidence excellent ratings in each course documented herein. Candidate grades over a variety of courses (average 3.7 GPA) and ‘acceptable’ or above ratings of their performance a variety of projects (80% - 99%) consistently demonstrate attainment of content knowledge in the field of school librarianship. As content knowledge is acquired and refined throughout the program, candidates show a remarkable consistency in their performance program-wide.

Overall, in terms of (2) professional and pedagogical knowledge, skill, and dispositions, candidates achieve very good ratings on a variety of assessments (80% - 99% ) in various formats, which rate their professional knowledge as school librarians and their ability to implement that knowledge for K12 student learning. Specifically, in terms of (2) dispositions, school library media candidates’ self-evaluations reveal similar and relatively high achievement to those in other programs which prepare existing teachers with additional training, and these are reported elsewhere in the university’s NCATE review of advanced programs.

Overall, in terms of (3) assessing student learning, candidates are able to do so in admirably, as evidenced by elements in Assessments 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 with major elements, and in Assessment 7 for both student and faculty professional development learning. Candidates can thus successfully design and plan student learning, deliver and adjust student learning, and evaluate and reflect on student learning in a variety of ways. Candidates at WPU achieve ‘target’ ratings on a majority of the elements and overall assessment totals provided in our attached data. Overall, candidate performance in both ‘target’ and ‘acceptable’ categories over time -- with different instructors, amidst online or in-person versions of the courses, and even with different rubrics -- is clear evidence of their ability to meet each of the AASL standards for initial preparation of school library media specialists.

A description of more detailed use of data in particular areas, as well as these overall faculty interpretations, are provided below. Three areas warrant specific explanation, including our improved identification and new choices of critical assessments; our implementation of advanced data analysis procedures and reflections; and our added emphasis on diversity and ongoing field work. These actions were undertaken as part of the NCATE review process and were authentically developed as a result of the self-study process.

### \*Improved Identification/Choices of Critical Assessments\*

Assessment results for the school library media program have been analyzed at several junctures since our last review, in order to improve both candidate performance and the program. Our analysis of data occurs each year, and sometimes with each

administration of a critical assessment, and several steps have been taken each year toward improvements as a result of this data.

Within the two years prior to the data shown in this report, different critical assessments were selected as representative of program achievements, and to reflect higher standards expected of candidates in the field. For example, a prior assessment (unlike those listed in this report) had been administered to candidates earlier in their programs, and data on their performance was collected and analyzed through three administrations. (This particular assessment was the literature review with data analysis paper that is still assigned in the course ELLM 513 Foundations of School Librarianship, but is no longer a critical assessment).

This prior assessment, while indicating that candidates performed generally well, left a lingering doubt that candidates indeed knew how to conceptualize relationships about literature in the field, or analyze data from the field appropriately with such minimal training. ELLM 513 was their first and introductory course to the field of librarianship and for many, an introduction to graduate-level work. While candidates could mostly follow directions in completing this major paper, according to the directions given and with assistance from the instructor in class, the deeper meaning of the standards regarding content expertise and skill in analyzing data to inform decision-making was not best showcased by this particular assessment. The mastery suggested in the standards was not truly fulfilled, in our opinion, by a few months' work in an introductory course, no matter how well designed by the faculty or executed by the candidates.

Thus, in concert with an initiative to expect more of candidates in the field, we chose alternate assessments which would more significantly attest to candidate learning and an authentic impact of knowledge in the field and of the use of data for decision-making on K12 student achievement. Therefore, content knowledge of the field and collection and analysis of real student data is now demonstrated via Assessment 2, grades in the candidates' final thesis-writing course, and via Assessment 8, a portfolio rubric which evaluates candidates' documentation of their work during 150 hours of field experience in a school library media center.

Thus, this type of improvement we have made -- our change in selection of which critical assessments to offer for NCATE review purposes -- is one example of the ways in which we have used data to improve candidate learning and to improve the program's efforts toward quality outcomes. The change in critical assessments described here has indeed (1) increased the content knowledge of the candidates, and improved outcomes by teaching these particular items cyclically, and in more than one course before assessing attainment of the standards, (2) improved professional and pedagogical knowledge, skill, and dispositions, by modeling for students how things are done within real, authentic contexts and not just for learning exercises in the classroom, and (3) provided an opportunity for candidates to use their expanded content knowledge and skill in data collection and evaluation to impact student learning at a real library media center, and to actually do these processes as part of a later course, instead of merely talking about how to do them in an intro course. As a result, candidates' work in the field has been better informed, and their learning products more complex, despite still achieving similar

numbers of 'target' and 'acceptable' ratings as is common for graduate students. For our SLMS program, these steps have insured that the bar has been raised, and that candidates can indeed rise to meet it. Course outlines have also been updated to reflect these changes.

**\*Implementation of Advanced Analysis Procedures and Reflections\***

AASL standards are evaluated throughout the program, and not just via the assessments described here; most standards are addressed explicitly in almost every course and through multiple assignments and various end products. However, choices had to be made about which assessments would showcase the greatest efforts toward evaluation of candidate performance toward standards. Thus, the projects described here are only some of the many examples of authentic use of standards in teaching and learning in our school library media program. In adhering to the spirit of this review process, and of course a streamlining of paperwork, we chose to showcase two or three projects which help to meet each AASL standard. Rubrics and directions (or in some cases, rubrics which contain embedded directions) which are provided are in every case actual handouts given to students but with AASL standard references added and formatting/fonts changed to help fit the rubrics into the space allotted. Since these actual documents are often issued to students after many weeks or months of instruction and effort toward the ultimate product, and thus follow significant additional classroom directions, additional descriptions of the tasks at hand and their context in the course or program are offered where space was afforded.

Validity and reliability measures were performed on six of the eight assessments described in this report. Four assessments (Assessment #1, #3, #5 and a fourth major assignment not utilized as a primary assessment for NCATE purposes) were evaluated for validity and reliability with candidate work samples from four different courses, ELLM 514, ELLM 515, ELLM 611 (and the additional project in ELLM 513, a previously used critical assessment from the past). For these checks, three school library media faculty were brought together to evaluate three random samples of candidate work for each assessment; this group represented at least two faculty members who have taught each of the courses at hand. Instructors were asked a) to independently rate the candidate work sample given the existing assessment rubric, b) to disclose their rating and explain or defend it to the other instructors during a group meeting, and c) to suggest improvements to the most recent assessment rubric for future administrations. Inter-rater reliability was performed in the Spring of 2010 on candidate work from the most recent semester, either Spring 2010 or Fall 2009, depending on course offerings that year.

Results of reliability checks on these four assessments show that all three instructor raters were in agreement on evaluation of 11 of the 12 candidate work samples. One sample, from course ELLM 611, was considered 'target' by one rater and 'acceptable' by the two other raters. Although this was a minor disagreement given the 92% inter-rater agreement overall among many samples, a valuable discussion ensued among the instructors about whether to teach for Target competence or whether to teach in ways which insure Acceptable performances, thus leaving Target ratings for candidate work which is at the higher level of grading given institutional norms. Also, we utilized NCATE-inspired processes on curricula not evaluated formally, which helped us to align

additional aspects of our work and hold it to accepted standards in the profession. Thus, our NCATE process informed our assessment and teaching conversations in ways we may not have reached otherwise; this data helped us inform our teaching by providing articulated norms and goals among all instructors who teach in the program.

For two additional assessments (#4 and #8, which occur in the capstone course ELLM 621), reliability was determined by a) utilizing two raters' judgments of candidate performance during the semester in calculating an accurate rating of candidate performance in particular areas of competence, and b) having the two candidate evaluators follow-up with a conversation about difficulties in assigning ratings and making suggestions about rubric design and efficacy. These checks were performed in three of four semesters in which the assessments were given over the past two years covered by data in this report, and in three of the four semesters prior to this report, in the years preceding this most recent self-study. Further details about candidate data from these assessment rubrics, and revision of the rubrics based on data appear elsewhere in this report; inter-rater discussions about data, especially reasons for missing data, helped to inform elaboration of the rubric and embedded directions for differences in rating categories over time. Although formats of these two assessments also attempted to incorporate suggestions of senior faculty members, which sometimes moved the instrument away from its intended purpose in meeting statewide requirements as well, the various incarnations of the #4 and #8 rubrics were informed by many of the suggestions and validity conversations provided through authentic compliance with this review process.

Validity and reliability was not yet conducted for the two newest courses with the two newest assessments, which have been taught only twice each as of this writing; these tasks comprise some of our plans for the future, along with ongoing monitoring of data as it is collected, continuing conversation about the best ways to teach an ever-changing graduate student characteristics, and annual meetings such as these for more thorough review and documentation of findings.

**\*Added Emphasis on Diversity and Periodic Field Work\***

As described earlier, review of data and implementation of improvements are ongoing. Within the past year, formal implementation of diversity in field experiences and of field work dispersed throughout the program in addition to the 150 required hours near the end of the program were put in place. Data showed that while candidates as a group were successful in many aspects of field work, there was a bit of unevenness between 'target' and 'acceptable,' achievement regardless of candidate or course standard deviations in grades. Also, as candidates are successfully obtaining jobs under SLMS emergency certification and thus prior to completion of the program, the need becomes clear from a triangulation of sources, in essence the faculty's observations, the candidates demonstrated performance on assessments, and the needs and preferences of the marketplace.

Thus, school library media faculty implemented during the span of this review a formal indication of field experiences in a variety of courses, not simply the end-of-program ELLM 621 Field Experiences in School Library Media Centers course. It was

believed that having earlier and more frequent field work, including those in diverse locations, would a) help candidates feel more comfortable with diversity and learn skills related to dealing with diverse student populations in an authentic manner, and b) help candidates choose diverse locations as potential work sites either for field experience or for professional positions. Observational data shows that five candidates over the past two years chose a diverse school district for their first jobs as school librarians, even when other offers were made, but of course additional longitudinal data and studies on alumni and not just recent program completers will help quantify this early observation.

Similarly, an analysis of the field placement sites for candidates in this course, as reported elsewhere in the university's NCATE review report for advanced programs, contributed to the decision to increase field opportunities and to increase the diversity of those field sites selected. While candidates in the introductory course had always visited either one or two socioeconomically and ethnically diverse school library media centers early in the program (in course ELLM 513), additional requirements were recently added to the course outlines and the operating practices of several other courses (such as in courses ELLM 515, ELLM 517, ELLM 611). Thus, candidates also visit, as part of their coursework, three to five additional diverse libraries with socioeconomic and/or ethnic challenges, and in various areas of the northern part of the state. Previously, the program relied on a nearby urban district for site visits, but now WPU alumni and friends made through state and local library associations are being utilized as hosts for field work activities and projects. Examples of diversity in other aspects of coursework include multicultural lessons in ELLM 514; attention to diversity of religions, developmental challenges, and student mobility as they impact library scheduling, management, facilities and policies/procedures in ELLM 611; and creation of library web pages which are in ADA compliance in ELLM 516; selection and evaluation of resources and collections for various constituents in ELLM 517, among others.

Again, we have used data on performance of past candidates to (1) improve candidate content knowledge in terms of locally diverse school districts and their clientele, as well as diversity itself; (2) improve professional and pedagogical knowledge and skill in teaching and serving groups of various diverse backgrounds including abilities, ages, languages, and special needs, and in environments either more or less funded or technology-capable; and better enabled the acquisition of appropriate dispositions for learning and working in these diverse environments, and respecting the challenges of those already serving there, and (3) improving awareness and ability to design, deliver, and evaluate student learning when the students are clearly unlike us and/or clearly coming from home and school environments which may be unfamiliar to their teachers and caregivers. As evidenced by these three significant areas of action, as well as through many other program modifications over the last several years, the WPU SLMS program is able to meet and/or exceed criteria for self-study, and looks forward to additional opportunities to do so.