Improving Urban Teachers' Assessment Literacy through Synergistic Individualized Tutoring and Self-reflection

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Introduction

There has been substantial discussion in recent years regarding the importance of developing teachers' assessment literacy (Deluca & Klinger, 2010; Popham, 2009a; Volante & Fazio, 2007; White, 2009). In essence, "Assessment literacy is present when a person possesses the assessment-related knowledge and skills needed for the competent performance of that person's responsibilities" (Popham 2009b, para. 4). Assessment literacy entails understanding and proper use of assessments based on knowledge of theoretical and philosophical foundations of the measurement of students' learning (Volante & Fazio, 2007). It includes knowledge of formative and summative assessment, classroom and large-scale assessment, key psychometric concepts (Deluca & Klinger, 2010). Stiggins (1991) notes that assessment-literate educators must know "what they are assessing, why they are doing so, how best to assess the achievement of interest, how to generate sound samples of performance, what can go wrong, and how to prevent those problems before they occur" (p. 281). Assessment literacy is crucial so that educators can support and measure teaching and learning. In recent years, "given the increasing importance of both large-scale and classroom assessment, developing assessment literacy in teacher candidates needs to be an explicit component of teacher education programs" (Deluca & Klinger, 2010, p. 419). Several specific suggestions have been put forth regarding what teachers need to know to be assessment literate (Popham, 2004; Stiggins, 1991). However, discussion of procedures for the efficient development of pre-service candidates' assessment literacy in the limited timeframe of teacher preparation programs is more difficult to locate.

In this reflective piece, I provide an account of one method I am developing for fostering the assessment literacy of pre-service teachers' in an Master of Arts in Teaching program through individualized tutoring of K-6 learners that also incorporated collaborative reflection. This method was developed for a pre-service teacher education course on individualized literacy assessment and instruction. I incorporated the individualized tutoring sessions and candidate reflection activities to develop candidates' assessment literacy in response to several observations I made as I taught the class. The teacher research I consulted to address this challenge echoed my experience of the general superficiality with which assessment is covered in teacher education programs (Popham, 2004, 2010; Stiggins, 1999). Consequently, teacher candidates are graduating

with an inadequate grasp of key assessment concepts (e.g., validity, bias etc.) and low self-efficacy for using assessments (Volante & Fazio, 2007). In an effort to address this situation, I have integrated individualized tutoring and teacher reflection into the class. Scholars emphasize the benefit of teacher reflection for improving their understandings of instructional strategies, teaching challenges, and raising awareness of their own tacit beliefs (Brookfield, 1995) as well as the ability to integrate their growing knowledge into a coherent framework (Larrivee, 2000). Other researchers report that individualized tutoring can improve pre-service teachers' instructional technique (Schwartz et al., 2009). The central aim of this paper is to reflect on my experience using tutoring and reflection activities to improve pre-service teachers' understanding of key literacy assessment concepts, and their knowledge of administration and interpretation procedures for a variety of literacy assessment tools.

The development of assessment literacy is indispensable for teachers currently entering North American schools. These teachers require familiarity with the multiplying array of assessments available for a number of important reasons. First, the increasing diversity of "regular" classrooms leads to fewer special educators and ESOL supports so generalist teachers must learn appropriate special education and ESOL interventions to better serve these learners. Thus, greater assessment literacy will allow novice teachers to manage potential challenges in their increasingly diverse classrooms. Second, teachers' increased familiarity with important assessment concepts such as validity, reliability and bias will ensure their understanding of the large-scale standardized tests proliferating in many jurisdictions. Lastly, the majority of public school districts now require teachers to adapt their instruction to correspond with the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework. Effective implementation of RTI requires knowledge of a wide variety of assessments and instructional strategies for its successful implementation. This means teacher educators are expected to pack more assessment information into the same assessment courses. The procedure described below may allow teacher educators to more effectively accomplish this aim.

Review of the Literature

Three main concepts comprise the conceptual framework that informs the instructional methods being proposed here. These are assessment literacy, literacy tutoring and teacher reflective practice. Relevant research in each of these areas is reviewed below. Relevant themes and findings are identified that support subsequent suggestions about the use of tutoring and teacher reflection to develop assessment literacy.

Assessment Literacy

Stiggins (2005) argues that teachers require a more sophisticated understanding of assessment to help learners meet the increasing demands of the knowledge economy. Modern assessments are required that pinpoint learners' areas of strength and need in addition to measuring their level of achievement. Consequently, a new emphasis is beginning to be placed upon the use of teacher-administered, classroom-based formative assessments that can provide the rich and nuanced data required to effectively guide classroom instruction (Andrade & Cizek, 2010). In addition to the shift in types of assessments used, teachers have also become increasingly accountable to the public. Stakeholders now expect teachers to be able to provide an informed rationale for the assessment tools they use. Unfortunately, most of today's teachers know little about assessment because they were traditionally not trained in it (Popham, 2004,

2009a). In fact, "one of the most serious problems in today's education profession is that the level of educators' "assessment literacy" is so abysmally low" (Popham, 2010, p. 175).

Theoretical knowledge, formative assessment ability and instructional adaptation have been identified as crucial aspects of assessment literacy. Theoretical knowledge includes understanding of key concepts, methods, and standards of quality for a variety of assessment instruments (Paterno, 2001) that enables teachers to not be threatened by the technical aspects of assessment (Stiggins, 1995). Formative assessment ability encompasses the skill of designing, administering and interpreting a variety of valid, reliable and unbiased assessment tools (Stiggins, 2010). These skills help teachers engage in instructional adaptation whereby they "...use insights from assessment to plan and revise instruction and to provide feedback that explicitly helps students see how to improve..." (Shepard, Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Rust, 2005, p. 275). Significantly, Wiggins and McTighe (1998) also contend that these skills need to be explicitly taught because they do not come naturally to many teachers.

Popham (2009a) notes that "...in recent years we have seen the emergence of increased pre-service requirements that offer teacher education candidates greater insights regarding educational assessment" (p. 5). This observation seems encouraging but inclusion of assessment courses is teacher education programs may not be as widespread as we hope. Currently "the learning about assessment that has taken place [in teacher education programs] is still at a very unsophisticated stage" (MacLellan 2004, p. 531). Research investigating the growth in assessment literacy over the span of a teacher education program demonstrated that teacher candidates often finished their program with an inadequate grasp of key assessment concepts (e.g., validity, reliability and bias). In particular, the researchers pointed out that candidates tended to over-utilize summative assessment tools (while still lacking deep technical knowledge of these tools) due to insufficient knowledge of formative tools available (Volante & Fazio, 2007). Oddly, at least some pre-service teachers were also found to be being overconfident in their assessment literacy (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010). Judging by this insufficient amount of assessment literacy that appears to exist in many language teaching contexts (Popham, 2009a), we must begin to reflect on and improve assessment methods that will effectively provide teacher candidates with the assessment literacy they need to meet the accountability demands of today's classrooms.

Clearly, much can be gained from improved teacher assessment literacy. It offers some assurance that teachers can select assessment tools that demonstrate students are making adequate progress toward state learning standards (Gardner, 2006; Popham, 2011; Stiggins, 2005). It also allows teacher candidates to move beyond recognizing traditional tests as the only legitimate forms of assessment (DeLuca, Chavez, & Cao, 2013). Equally important, it protects teachers whose assessment illiteracy has historically allowed them to permit unfair accountability measures to judge their competence with negative consequences for them (Popham, 2011).

In a discussion of the essential elements of a teacher professional development program that foster assessment literacy, Popham (2009a) mentions the necessity of "[designing] and implementing formative assessment procedures consonant with both research evidence and experience-based insights regarding such procedures' likely success" (p. 9). This point seems to entail two equally-important outcomes. One is that the types of assessments introduced in these programs are consistent with research; the other is that candidates must be allowed to apply the assessments introduced so they can understand how these tools function. The challenge is determining how to provide candidates with the most productive opportunities to work with new assessments. The ultimate aim of teacher educators is to enable candidates to demonstrate

classroom assessment competence (Pollock, 2011). This is a significant amount of ground to cover in a short space of time.

Chappuis, Chappuis, and Stiggins (2009) point out several of the major limitations of assessment literacy-focused development for practicing teachers. These include:

> The amount of content to be learned often exceeds what a workshop can cover, even in a series of sessions. A passive "sit 'n' git" mind-set can permeate the environment, even with an engaging presenter and interactive agenda. In addition, there is no opportunity for the presenter to facilitate the reflection, the putting into practice, the collegial discussions, and the learning that can only take place when participants return to their classrooms (p. 56).

These challenges are often the same in pre-service teacher education programs. All of these limitations need to be addressed to ensure that teacher education programs are able to meet the unique needs of teacher candidates who typically have a short timeframe to assimilate the necessary information about assessment procedures required to be effective learning evaluators in their classrooms. The problem of how assessment literacy can be efficiently developed in the limited timeframe of teacher preparation programs has often been overlooked in previous discussion of the issue.

Tutoring to Improve Pre-service Teachers' Instructional Skill

Reflecting on assessment literacy professional development for in-service teachers, Chappuis et al. (2009) recommend that practicing teachers develop their assessment literacy through the use of learning teams to promote onsite continued learning. This seems to be a practicable approach to meet their unique circumstances. However, at present, dialogue regarding how pre-service teachers might similarly connect important assessment concepts to their practice appears to be lacking. One instructional technique that does not seem to have been seriously considered for developing assessment literacy is the use of individualized tutoring. Such an approach would allow pre-service teachers the opportunity to begin with a scaled-down implementation of their nascent understandings of assessment while having the occasion to continually reflect on their developing understandings of how and when to use the assessment tools.

Research investigating one-on-one tutoring shows that, when compared to traditional classroom learning, individualized tutoring is tremendously beneficial for both tutor (Schwartz et al., 2009) and learner (Bloom, 1984; Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik, 1982). Additionally, research exploring the benefits of tutoring for pre-service teachers revealed that field-based experiences provided candidates with a support system to help them understand the process of tutee development through the lens of their education course content (Hedrick, McGee, & Mittag, 2000). Investigators contend that "[t]he practical, hands-on nature of their experiences surely reinforced and illustrated the usefulness of theoretically based strategies and practices" (Hedrick et al., 2000, p. 59). Robbins (2008) found that "…elementary education pre-service teachers, after participating in a clinical practicum made significant [knowledge] gains in all five areas; miscue analysis, fluency analysis, data analysis, inquiry orientation, and intelligent action" (p. 128). Another review of literature for pre-service teacher self-efficacy reported that "…tutoring field experiences in particular … have a positive impact on pre-service teachers' abilities to teach particular content (e.g., reading) to the individual student and to put theory into practice" (Haverback & Parault, 2008, p. 237). Many of these same skills and areas of knowledge are also important components of assessment literacy.

Peck (2009) conducted one pre-service teacher tutoring study at an urban literacy clinic that partially addressed assessment literacy. She explored questions related to the features of the literacy clinic that best supported candidates' growth in understanding urban youth's literacy development. She also studied the course tasks that had an impact on candidates' learning in the clinic. Her main finding relevant to the present investigation was that critical dialogue around key teacher education literature stretched candidates' thinking and learning. Additionally, she noted that peer coaching (i.e., feedback on tutoring performance from peers taking the course) was a second crucial element of the program that pushed candidates' thinking in productive ways. Though this research supports many of the arguments being made in this paper, there is a distinctly different focus. As with most other previous research, Peck (2009) was interested in candidate knowledge informing the instructional piece of the tutoring experience. In contrast, the present discussion explores the development of candidates' assessment competence. While it must be acknowledged that instructional and assessment competence are inseparable, illuminating the assessment side of this phenomenon is nonetheless informative because it reminds us that instruction is only one side of the equation. We must remember that in order for instruction to be effective, it must be based upon valid and reliable data interpreted by an educator with adequate assessment competence.

Other research into a service-learning tutoring program for undergraduate prospective teachers reported that the experience had a positive effect on the tutors by fostering the development of skills and attitudes that they would need as aspiring teachers. Some other beneficial outcomes of the program included "…improving teacher quality by connecting theory to instructional practice, [and] helping to prepare teachers to teach children from diverse backgrounds…" (Jones, Stallings, & Malone, 2004). Research indicates that all of these characteristics of tutoring make it ideal to meet the needs of teachers who are striving to develop their instructional skills.

Despite the growth in the research literature documenting the benefits of tutoring, some work still appears to remain. There has been considerable investigation into the benefits of individualized tutoring for improving instructional skill. However, at present, there is very little discussion or guidance in terms of how tutoring might positively shape the development of pre-service teachers' assessment literacy. In light of current accountability measures in today's schools, it is more important than ever that we address pre-service teachers' urgent need for assessment literacy despite the constraints of traditional pre-service teacher preparation programs related to teaching about assessment discussed above. The techniques outlined below may provide teacher educators with a set of tools to leverage the little time they have available for maximum impact.

Teacher Reflection and Instructional Skill Improvement

A final concept addressed in a great deal of the research into pre-service literacy teacher education is the need for teacher reflection on the process. Research into this topic revealed the wide variety of forms that reflection can take. For instance, Clark and Medina (2000) introduced literacy narratives into their pre-service teacher classes. The process of candidates reading, writing and reflecting on these personal narratives of candidates' acquisition of literacy and a literate identity caused them to shift their understandings of what it means to be literate. Many moved from viewing literacy as simply the ability to read and write to seeing "definitions of literacy in a particular sociocultural context" (Clark & Medina, 2000, p. 68). Additionally, candidates began to recognize the difficulties of entering into literacy, as entry is affected by

social, cultural, institutional and economic factors. The creation and reading of these narratives also allowed students to make sense of the theoretical readings they were doing for the class.

Other research with pre-service teachers specializing in reading notes that teacher educators must create classroom experiences that challenge candidates' beliefs and push them to become more self-reflective to encourage their continued professional growth (Linek, Sampson, Raine, Klakamp, & Smith, 2006). Contrary to this, others have found that pre-service teachers were having difficulty integrating the content of their courses with their practicum experience. These researchers point out that:

> Pre-service teachers tended to rely heavily on their personal belief systems and the course texts. The almost complete lack of reference to the practicum classrooms shows that these students are not contemplating instructional issues at an application level, hence they often rely on generalized statements and platitudes to summarize their thinking. (Bean & Stevens, 2002, p. 215)

Bean and Stevens (2002) argue that teacher educator scaffolding was necessary to assist candidates with effective use of reflection opportunities to integrate theory and practice. This scaffolding may be achieved through ongoing instructor feedback.

Another important limitation of reflection is that there is no agreed upon conception in the literature of what reflection actually is. Roskos, Vukelich, and Risko (2001) observe that while the ideal of the reflective teacher is a noble one, the reality of how to create this mythical creature is yet not well established. The problem is that "reflection is a difficult concept for beginners to grasp in the practical activity of learning to teach"(Roskos et al., 2001, p. 617). Furthermore, the multitude of conceptions of what constitutes reflection varies widely across the empirical studies into the topic. Roskos et al., (2001) rightly point out that surely the wide variety of practices categorized as reflection cannot be equally helpful for teachers. The situation is such that, while few experts disagree that teachers need to be reflective in their practice, there is considerable disagreement over what the process would look like and "what role it assumes in a teacher's beliefs and practices, and how teacher educators can best facilitate its' uses" (Bean & Stevens, 2002, p. 215).

Integration of Tutoring and Reflection to Improve Pre-service Teachers' Assessment Literacy

This account describes a series of structured interventions introduced into a pre-service teacher education class in a literacy center housed inside a large urban state university in the southeastern United States. The literacy center is a space where teacher candidates who are in the process of receiving reading graduate-level endorsements or degrees in literacy education provide inner-city children from pre-K through middle school with free after-school literacy tutoring.

The process described below was implemented in an "individualized assessment for reading instruction" course that I, the author, taught in the literacy center. This is a required graduate level course that candidates take as a part of either a reading endorsement or a master's degree in reading education. Based on competencies drawn from the International Reading Association standards for the Reading Professional (IRA & NCATE revised, 2010), course participants are expected to: understand types of assessments and their purposes, strengths, and limitations; select, develop, administer, and interpret assessments, for specific purposes; and use assessment information to plan and evaluate instruction.

As the course instructor, my input primarily involved presenting key concepts in individualized literacy assessment such as how to collect valid and reliable assessment data that are used to identify appropriate research-proven reading instructional approaches. I focused primarily upon assessment techniques available to address the "big 5" components of reading (i.e., phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension)(National Institute of Child Health, 2000) that they could use with their learners. These included classroom assessment techniques such as: informal assessments of auditory discrimination, a "concepts about print" assessment, reading interest inventories, running records, cloze procedure and its variants, informal reading inventories and so forth. I also demonstrated a variety of instructional techniques such as rhyming games for phonemic awareness, echo reading to promote fluency, as well as think aloud and reciprocal teaching to develop reading comprehension strategies.

The readings I chose for the course text come from the text *Understanding Reading Problems: Assessment and Instruction, 8th edition* (Gillett, Temple, Temple, & Crawford, 2012). This text was selected because it contains an accessible presentation of many of the classroom reading assessment tools discussed in class as well as corresponding instructional techniques for addressing learners' challenges that are revealed through the use of the assessment tools. The accessibility of the text was essential because it was the first time that many of these concepts were being presented to a significant number of candidates and many did not have extensive teaching experience.

In addition to my role as the provider of much of the course content, I also oversaw the candidates' tutoring in the same space we held our classes. This allowed me to observe their assessment and instructional practice with their students. These observations provided me with additional information about their performance that I could compare with their weekly lesson plans and written reflections to assess their progress and adjust my lessons based on what I was seeing.

The class was primarily designed to provide candidates with an overview of the various types of individual literacy assessment tools that were available to assist them in differentiating instruction to meet their diverse urban learners' needs. However, another objective of the class was to introduce the candidates to instructional techniques that they could use to help address any reading struggles they identified through their assessments. The iterative cycle of activities used in the course outlined below began with candidates reading about a new reading assessment tool from the course text. This initial introduction to the assessment was followed by a lecture about a particular aspect of assessing and teaching reading. Examples of some of the assessments introduced in the class included assessments for emergent readers, including a story retelling rubric and a shared reading checklist, through to assessments for struggling content area readers, including graphic organizers and anticipation guides. The lectures included explanations and demonstrations of how and when to use the assessment procedure. A typical reading tutoring session consisted of three stages. The first was usually pre-reading activities to allow the learner to activate background knowledge and make predictions. The second was a during-reading stage that allowed the learner to read the text while the tutor evaluated and scaffolded his or her performance. This was then followed by post reading activities where the reader had an opportunity to interact with the content of the book through retellings and discussion of some of the book's themes.

In the weeks following the presentation of the assessment technique, the candidates were encouraged to try them with their students. Candidates worked one-on-one with an elementary-school level learner from a local after school tutoring program in the university's urban literacy

center. The literacy tutorial session was designed to provide the student extra individual attention and additional opportunities to practice reading. The session also allowed the candidates an opportunity to refine their assessment data collection and interpretation skills with the research-proven assessment instruments and techniques that they had been learning about throughout the course. The tutoring experience provided a scaled-down (and more manageable) version of their teaching practice in the sense that the candidate was able to focus her attention on one learner undistracted by the numerous demands typically present in a regular classroom environment. This experience allowed the candidate the opportunity to concentrate on the process of conducting the assessment while simultaneously making connections back to the readings and class activities. This tutoring experience enabled pre-service teachers to acquire deep knowledge of assessment as they determined how to administer, score, and interpret results from a variety of classroom formative assessment tools they presented in class. Candidates also began to refine their sense of matching appropriate assessments to learners as well as critical awareness of what the assessment can and cannot tell us about the learner.

The tutoring experience in the literacy clinic was followed by several opportunities for candidate reflection. Although no commonly-agreed upon definition for reflection exists (Roskos et al., 2001), I kept in mind Moon's (2000) contention that we engage in reflection to consider something in detail through our application of our knowledgebase and experience to somewhat complex, ill-structured problems that lack clear solutions. I also attempted to follow Moon's (2000) more explicit guidance on the reflective process outlined below:

> Reflection… in the academic context is also likely to involve a conscious and stated purpose for the reflection, with an outcome specified in terms of learning, action or clarification. It may be preceded by a description of the purpose and/or the subject matter of the reflection. The process and outcome of reflective work is most likely to be in a represented (e.g. written) form, to be seen by others and to be assessed. All of these factors can influence its nature and quality" (Moon, p. 37-38).

During the class reflection sessions, I asked the candidates to reflect in small groups immediately after the lesson. This adaptation was suggested by E. M. who was one of the teacher candidates in the course. Following Bean and Stevens' (2002) advice, I attempted to scaffold their reflection with guiding reflection questions and candidates shared their thoughts about their lesson with peers who tutored students at similar grade levels. As part of this reflective discussion, they were asked to state their lesson objectives, their instructional methods and how they think their chosen assessments determined whether the objectives were met. As part of the discussion of their assessments, they discussed the data they collected as well as how they interpreted the data. Lastly, they were asked to discuss what they thought worked well in the lesson and what they were less satisfied with. At this point, they were encouraged to share assessment and instructional method ideas with each other. The purpose of this activity was to allow them to recognize their common struggles and possibly to share teaching ideas and adaptations that they found to be helpful in using the new assessment technique.

After that, guided by the same guiding questions as their small group verbal debriefing session, they composed a written reflection that expanded on the same issues. I gave some latitude in terms of topics permitted for reflection. They submitted their written reflections online where I provided my reaction and feedback via the word processor comment function. My feedback typically included clarification of how to plan and conduct assessment procedures, advice on possible unique adaptations and even validation of candidates' experiences and positive encouragement as they overcame the inevitable challenges of administering these new tools with

their student and interpreting the data that they collected. Candidate feedback was also used to gauge whether a follow up face-to-face meeting was required for candidates who seemed to be having particular difficulty with a concept or procedure. This was an iterative process whereby feedback from instructor and peers fed into the teachers' expanding assessment literacy as they continued to experiment with a variety of assessments across the semester. Candidates had the opportunity to engage in these guided reflective discussions and written reflections for the ten tutoring sessions that took place during the class. According to Bean and Stevens (2002), scaffolding is crucial for allowing pre-service teachers to connect their practice to a solid theoretical and research knowledge base. On the last two days of classes, candidates had an opportunity to share some of the main insights they developed in the course when they presented what they learned from the experience to their peers. I informally observed the candidates as they engaged in this process but I did not record observation notes or other formal documentation of the process because I was not conducting a formal research study.

The following brief account provides an illustrative example of how I implemented this procedure. I first introduced candidates to methods for conducting an informal reading inventory (IRI). An IRI is a collection of graded reading assessments that generally include graded word lists, measures of reading rate, miscue analysis and reading texts with comprehension questions that teachers use to collect information that they then use to evaluate a learner's comprehension ability, decoding strategies, sight word recognition and reading fluency (Walpole & McKenna, 2004). Candidates read relevant sections of the course text that explained the technique and listened to me further explain and demonstrate the method in class. In the following weeks, candidates began to experiment with IRIs in their literacy tutoring sessions. Over the following few weeks, they administered each of the subtests of the IRI to their learner in the clinic. They then compiled the data they had collected onto summary forms. From there, they had to interpret the data to find patterns indicating their learner's needs and strengths. Based on their findings, they then made recommendations for instructional interventions that could be made in the classroom, the school or the home to improve their learner's engagement and performance.

As with other tools candidates used in the class, I asked them to reflect upon challenges that arose for them as they worked to administer this assessment and teach a literacy lesson based upon its results. Some of the guiding questions for their reflections included: What were your objectives? How did you assess whether the student met your objectives? How do you think the student responded to your session? What do you think went well during the session? What will you do to improve future sessions? And what additional support/resources might have enhanced this session? Issues and themes raised in follow-up reflective comments indicated that the tutoring experience was pushing candidates to strive for a deeper understanding of the logistics of administering and interpreting IRIs. Candidate comments indicated they were beginning to appreciate the necessity of a clear understanding of the rationale underpinning the use of IRIs, as well as the logistics of how to effectively administer, score and interpret the assessment. Without this type of small-scale trial of the tool, teachers cannot really be sure of what kinds of challenges may arise or understand the logic for administration procedures until they have actually had the chance to use the instrument. This is an example of the kind of enhanced development of assessment literacy that the combination of input, tutoring practice, reflection and instructor feedback can foster.

Ultimately, candidate reflections provided them with a safe space where they could reveal their struggles and I could offer suggestions for how to administer a tool more efficiently based upon my own experience. My responses generally took the form of praise or suggestions. For

example, one candidate described her modeling of the flexible use of word attack strategies. I responded with "That is terrific. I especially like that you did not just model each strategy in a one-off disconnected way. You demonstrated that the strategies have to be used flexibly depending on the situation." A second type of comment related to guidance for how to handle a particular challenge the candidate was facing. As an illustration, a candidate related how her learner wanted rewards for positive classroom behavior. I responded with, "This is a bit of a tricky topic. To my mind, the main problem with giving external rewards like candy for classroom performance is that the student will eventually come to expect the reward and will not do the activity unless the reward is offered." Follow-up discussion allowed the candidate to focus on engaging activities and learner success as motivators. In instances where more intensive follow up was required, I could also approach candidates to work one-on-one when they were continuing to have difficulty. For instance, one candidate was laboring to administer the word list assessment for the IRI and interpret its results to choose an appropriate miscue analysis reading passage. I demonstrated the procedure with her learner and observed her as she worked with the learner until we felt comfortable that she could continue independently. It was the reflective process that revealed this obstacle and allowed us to address it.

Figure 1 *The Iterative Process of Implementing Tutoring for Assessment Literacy*
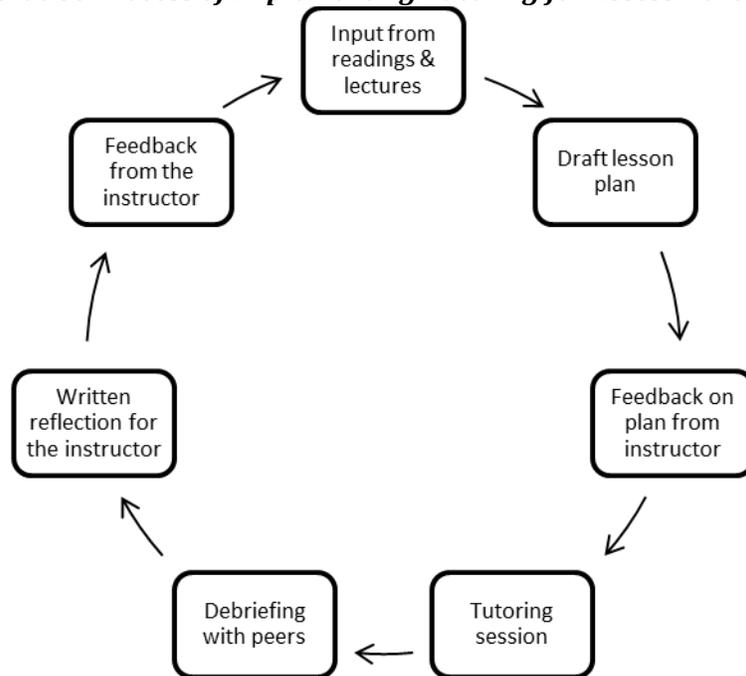
Instructor Reflections on the Use of Tutoring to Support Assessment Literacy Development

The reflective tutoring process described in Figure 1 above has the potential to encourage candidates' deeper engagement with assessment concepts, tools, and techniques as they experiment with the assessments and reflect on the process. The typical approach of assimilating new information about assessment in many teacher education programs comes primarily through text readings and class lectures. However, the approach tends to reinforce pre-service teacher candidates' preconceptions that assessment is an intimidating arcane and technical discipline

(Chappuis et al., 2009). This shortcoming, coupled with the substantial amount of material typically covered in one semester, can cause candidates to only minimally engage with the subject matter. Allowing candidates to participate in hands-on work with the assessment techniques that they are learning provides them with a sense of how these assessments function in authentic contexts and gives them insight into the logic behind these techniques. The collaborative reflective procedures followed in the course allowed candidates to discuss their efforts to manage the various classroom assessment techniques and obtain peer and instructor feedback on their progress. This reflective dialogue also gave the instructor an opportunity to provide additional scaffolding for problematic concepts and offer additional encouragement as the neophyte language assessors took their first unsteady steps into a new and challenging area.

Finally, I feel I would be remiss if I neglected to mention my own growth process as a member of our learning community. After all, if we are not growing as teacher educators why should we expect growth of the candidates? Therefore, I believe it is important that I heed my own advice and demonstrate my own iterative reflection changed my teaching practice over time. At the outset of this class, I tended to see myself as the primary legitimate provider of feedback to candidates. That is, I tacitly believed that my feedback was somehow more valuable than their peers' was. However, as the course progressed, I came to realize the immense value of the insights that candidates had to offer each other. Through the class and my own outside reading and reflection, I began to see that the process of their giving each other feedback was often more valuable for them than their getting feedback from me. I learned that their being able to provide each other with feedback on their performance compelled them to think through what quality assessment practice looked like. This prompted deeper reflection and engagement with the concepts presented in the class. Consequently, future iterations of this class will contain many more opportunities for properly scaffolded peer feedback. I hope that as I continue to teach and refine this class I will continue to learn as much from my students than they have from me.

Conclusion

The reflective tutoring process outlined above is a useful tool for teacher educators who want to expand their candidates' assessment knowledge and competence within the limited timeframe of a teacher education course. The pre-service candidates are given the opportunity to work with local youth to enhance their assessment literacy by actually engaging in assessment practices rather than just reading and talking about it. The key component in the process is the teachers having the opportunity to reflect in small group discussion and writing on the tutoring experience while they receive feedback from their peers and professor. My experience is that this iterative process of learning about assessment concepts and tools, experimenting with them, and reflecting on the practice seems to encourage candidates to engage with the ideas presented on a deeper level.

Of course, the candidates are not the only winners in this. Equally, if not more importantly, the tutoring process offers numerous benefits to the learners as well. The literacy center classes provide a space in the heart of a large urban area where diverse learners are able to nurture their literacy talents. They are given one-on-one attention and encouraged and supported to ignite a life-long passion for books and literacy. Through the auspices of the center, these learners receive additional after-school tutoring free of charge from teachers who are rapidly expanding their knowledge base to meet learners' literacy instructional needs. Overall, the use of an innovative tutorial-reflection approach to assessment literacy offers great benefits to all who participate.

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