

Final Written Report

Professional Development Grant

“Using Alternative Assessment Strategies to Evaluate International Student Performance”

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This is the final report for a professional enhancement project funded by an ATU Professional Development Grant.

A. Title page (provided above)

B. Restatement of Professional Enhancement Opportunity

Abstract of Conference Paper Presented:

It is 10:00 a.m. Friday morning in Mrs. Smith's English language class. As always, it's test time. The students sit quietly, waiting for the inevitable. Gu is sitting in the front right corner of the classroom. He has a scared look on his face, his palms are sweaty, and he can't sit still. Thikra sits beside him. She can't stop playing with her pencil. Her hands are visibly shaking. Across the way, Mohammad sits with his head in his hands. He looks as if he moved that his head would explode. Mrs. Smith asks them to put everything away except their pencils, and then she proceeds to pass out the exam. This is a summative achievement testing scenario, and these types of tests occur every day in classrooms across our nation. For some students, these tests are brutal experiences while for others they are stressful at best. Couldn't we find a better way than this? How to best assess their students has long been an issue teachers have struggled with. While traditional summative exams have long been the norm in classrooms, teachers are beginning to realize there are other equally useful ways to assess students. Alternative assessment is one of these ways. In this presentation, I will introduce various alternative assessment techniques and discuss advantages of using them when working with international students. Specifically, I will talk about alternative assessment techniques including portfolio, presentation, and conferencing. I will also use examples from my classroom experience to show how well alternative assessment works for international students. Finally, I will include student testimony to that effect.

C. Brief Review of Professional Enhancement Opportunity

I attended the National College English Association (NCEA) Conference where I presented a paper on March 30. The conference ran from March 30 to April 1, 2017. Therefore, I traveled to the conference on March 29, 2017 and arrived home from the conference on April 1, 2017.

D. Summary of Experiences

Almost every semester, I teach at least one course that has an international student population in it. Therefore for a while, I have been noticing the problem of how to best assess them based upon their level of English language ability. Recently, I have been seeking solutions to this problem, and this research and presentation grew out of that. Every time I attend the CEA Conference, I gain invaluable critical feedback from colleagues regarding future directions for my research.

E. Conclusions and Recommendations

Presently in my specialty field of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), there is not enough research or training commentary addressing adequate evaluation of international students. For so long standardized testing has been the norm in our country as well as around the world, but there is a better way. Consider alternative methods. As a result of this shortage of scholarship in my field and both positive and negative commentary that I have received on my scholarship at national conferences, including the 2017 College English Association (CEA) Conference, I will continue conducting inquiry in this area. I can envision creating a series of articles from this endeavor.

Thank you for your continued support.

