Standards-Driven Teaching: Designing an rGrade Course

Needs/Goals

Much like K-12 public schools, higher education programs preparing teachers must also meet specific standards in order to meet accreditation. Instead of No Child Left Behind, policy established by NCATE, or National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education, requires programs training teachers to demonstrate adequate student achievement in 10 specific areas or INTASC (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium) principles. These include broad categories such as the second standard that states “the teacher understands how children learn and develop and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development” or the seventh standard that states “the teacher plans instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.” These are then developed into more specific standards that fall into three categories: knowledge, dispositions, and performances.

Because my career as an education professor at Manchester College involves teaching pre-service teachers and because the Manchester College Education department is accredited through NCATE, I must not only prepare my students to teach in the 21st century, but I must also create courses that have standards-based assignments. While we have always passed the NCATE visits, the people in charge of collecting, analyzing, and presenting the data have always had an extremely difficult challenge. Until the advent of computer-based programs like rGrade, we had to demonstrate by hand that our students had mastered the ten INTASC principles. This has included creating matrices and calculating the percentage of students achieving various levels of the standards. During our past visit, we hired the former director of teacher education who spent hours disaggregating the data. This antiquated system must change before the next NCATE visit in 2011, especially with the paperless requirement the NCATE team will ask of us.

While our education department has not adopted rGrade, we have adopted a similar program called Taskstream. However, at this point, we have not fully implemented the program and I do not have coordinator status. As a result, I was unable to create my course for this project using the system I will be using in the fall. Instead, I have created my course using Ball State’s rGrade; this gives me a good understanding of how to create lessons and units based on specific standards-based rubrics. By using a program such as rGrade for this final project, I will achieve one of my biggest teaching goals: implement a standards-based, computer-generated assessment program that will allow me to track the individual and group achievements of my students. Another goal I have for this project is to familiarize myself with rGrade in such a way that I will be able to articulate the benefits of using a computer-generated assessment program like rGrade or Taskstream to my colleagues who seem to be skeptical of such programs.
Alignment and Support for NETS and other related curricular or professional standards (INTASC)

This project feeds excellently into alignment with NETS as well as INTASC principles because these are the standards that drive our education program. While our program has always been based on these specific INTASC standards, I have just recently begun to incorporate the NETS standards as well, for I believe all teachers should be ready to teach in the 21st century, and that requires them to have 21st century skills developed and ready to implement in their own classrooms.

For example, one of the Assignment Groups is “Projects,” and within this group is the assignment “Professional Web Page.” This particular assignment asks students enrolled in this course to develop a professional web page that serves as a showcase for their work during their tenure at Manchester College. The immediate purpose is to serve as a portfolio they can provide to prospective employers. Obviously, because of the nature of the project, students meet several NETS standards. First of all, students meet the first standard, “teachers demonstrate introductory knowledge, skills, and understanding of concepts related to technology,” when they create this web page. Completing the project requires them to demonstrate basic knowledge of how to use the computer as well as the Microsoft Frontpage software. The professional portfolio also meets the fifth NETS standard as they are developing ways to “use technology to communicate and collaborate with peers, parents, and the larger community in order to nurture student learning.” The ultimate goal of this particular assignment is to help students develop crucial skills that will enable them to develop classroom web pages in order to communicate with the greater community.

The best assignment to meet required INTASC standards is the lesson plan found under the “Projects” Assignment Group. Throughout the semester, students are asked to write ten sequential lesson plans each modified for a different exceptionality. The lesson plans are graded individually, but when placed together, they create a unit for the pre-service teacher who will be entering his/her student teaching placement in the spring. This one assignment alone meets eight different INTASC standards because the student is asked to design a lesson plan that gives special regard to differences in learners.

Overall, this project in general meets several standards for me as the instructor. I am linking every assignment to INTASC principles and NETS standards when appropriate. At this point, I am just beginning to add NETS standards to my lessons, but ultimately, I would like to integrate even more assignments that utilize a variety of technology. Making deliberate decisions about which standards are being met requires me to reflect not only on the purpose of the assignment, but on the specific steps and requirements within each assignment. Instead of simply making an assignment because it sounds “cool” or is meaningful to me as a professor, I must make sure, like K-12 classroom teachers, that what I ask of my students meets a standard.

Barriers and Opportunities for Implementation

One of the major barriers at this point for me to fully implement this project is the incompatibility between the rGrade program used by Ball State and the Taskstream program my department has adopted. I will have to redo all of my rubrics and assignments; however, I certainly do not see this as a huge barrier. Instead, I will have worked through the problems
encountered in this assignment and understand what I need to ask for and examine when I transfer the course to the Taskstream program.

Another barrier I found to the implementation of this project is that it lacks some of the benefits of Blackboard, and yet, it provides an important element of teaching that Blackboard lacks. The course appears in linear fashion, much more linear than Blackboard, and therefore appears to students as simply a “grade book,” not a course through which the professor and students can interact.

However, the major benefit to this project far outweighs any of the barriers I can foresee. Through this project I have had to create my course EDUC 352, Adolescent Exceptional Learners, in an assessment program rGrade. As previously mentioned, I had to think carefully about what I want my students to do for each assignment, creating a rubric that will measure those objectives. I also had to carefully consider the various INTASC and NETS standards that would be appropriate for seniors ready to enter student teaching.

In the end, I would consider this project one of the most beneficial and meaningful I have completed in three years of coursework at Ball State. It is something I will certainly use this fall when I teach EDUC 352 and more importantly, it has started me thinking about assessment and how I can use the data I receive from the rubrics to influence my instruction.

Finally, the biggest benefit of creating an rGrade course is the fact that I feel better prepared to address the assessment needs of our own education department at Manchester College. We must bring our department quickly into the 21st century and that means using an online assessment tool such as rGrade or in our case Taskstream. The challenge will be convincing my colleagues that we should embrace this technology, and while acknowledging its limitations, understand that it will help us understand the data so much easier than we ever have before.

** Attached you will find an annotated sketch of the assignments I have created on rGrade as well as the screen captures from the actual program. Only people who are participants in the class may view the actual rubrics and assignments.
The following assignments fall under several different Assignment Groups including Essays, Projects, and Presentations. Each assignment is explained briefly and contains a screen capture of both the rubric and linked INTASC/NETS standards.

**ESSAYS**

Exhibit 1: The first exhibit is the Liberal Arts paper our students are required to write. In Educ 352, the secondary majors reflect on the impact a liberal arts education has on them as future teachers. Students are instructed to write specifically about experiences at Manchester College that has shaped who they are as teachers. This assignment is a portfolio requirement.

**Exhibit 1: Liberal Arts Essay**

![RGRADE.LiberalArts](http://www.bsue.edu)
Exhibit 2: The second assignment shown is the Professional Article Evaluation students must do in Educ 352 three times throughout the semester. Students select an article from a list of professional journals that deals with one of the exceptionalities the course examines. This assignment allows them to reflect on different exceptional students they may some day have in their classrooms, and it meets several important INTASC standards, particularly in the 9th principle.

Exhibit 2: Professional Article Evaluation
Exhibit 3: The third assignment found in the "Essays" Assignment Group is the Reader Response Journal students are expected to complete. In this assignment, students summarize the readings, make a professional connection, make a personal connection, and make additional comments or raise questions. Because research shows we remember what we read when we connect with the reading, this is an excellent assignment for undergraduates (or anyone for that matter).

Exhibit 3: Reader Response Journal
PROJECTS

Throughout the course, students must complete a variety of assignments that fall under the "Projects" Assignment Group. These include creating a professional web page as well as creating a unit.

Exhibit 4: The Professional Web Page assignment requires students to create a web presence in which they can showcase their work.

Exhibit 4: Professional Web Page
Exhibit 5: Lesson Plan

RGRADE_Lesson Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Distinguished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Objectives</td>
<td>Inductional goals and performance objectives are vague or do not follow NCEO format.</td>
<td>Inductional goals and performance objectives are somewhat clear and follow NCEO format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Standards</td>
<td>State standards are not clearly linked to the performance objectives. State goals are not aligned to the lesson.</td>
<td>State standards are somewhat aligned to the performance objectives and somewhat aligned to the lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipatory Set</td>
<td>Not really focused. Does not connect to the day’s anticipatory activities.</td>
<td>Lesson focuses on student reflections on the lesson’s objectives a “guide” and is somewhat connected to prior knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling the Behavior</td>
<td>Learner is not fully responsible for modeling the procedure in the lesson.</td>
<td>Once the material has been presented, the learner will be able to repeat examples of what is expected as an end product of the lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check for Comprehension</td>
<td>Checking for comprehension is not stated anywhere in the lesson.</td>
<td>Checking for comprehension is stated with at least one example of how it will be done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided Practice</td>
<td>Self-direction is vague with no guided practice present.</td>
<td>An opportunity for each student to demonstrate understanding through an activity or exercise under teacher’s direct supervision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closure</td>
<td>Closer to visage or three-line formal closure.</td>
<td>Authors and statements are provided that are designed to bring a lesson to an appropriate end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>There is an assessment, but it lacks the necessary to indicate objectives. The assessment was reviewed in this lesson.</td>
<td>An assessment is described with relevance to stated objectives. Assessment data is collected and planned for utilization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifications for Students with</td>
<td>Modifications and implementations are not clearly identified (e.g., containing, set accessibility).</td>
<td>Modifications and implementations are identified for the specific target exceptionality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exhibit 6: Students enrolled in EDUC 352 must create a unit for their student teaching placement. One of the activities they must complete is to create a WebQuest for their students. Once they have created the WebQuest, they must have a junior high or high school student evaluate the project and then they write a reflection on the evaluation.

Exhibit 6: WebQuest
PRESENTATIONS

During the course of the semester, students give one presentation to their peers. This presentation is an introduction to one of the exceptionalities such as gifted and talented, vision impairment, learning disabled, etc.

Exhibit 7: The Group Presentation assignment requires students to collaborate with peers in order to research and present information to their classmates regarding one of the exceptionalities outlined throughout the course. Presentations must last 45 minutes and be hands-on as much as possible. Peers in the audience must be engaged in the presentation.
## Exhibit 7: Group Presentation

### RGRADE_Group Presentations

**Description:** In groups, students will create a 40 minute presentation in which they fully examine one of the cases.

**Author:** Heather Schilling

**Sharing Status:** Shared with editing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Distinguished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Presentations contain two of the necessary components as outlined in the directions.</td>
<td>Presentations contain some of the necessary components as outlined in the directions.</td>
<td>Presentations are thorough and contain all of the necessary components as outlined in the directions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning</strong></td>
<td>Presentations need more planning and organization. Opportunity to review peers.</td>
<td>Presentations need more planning and organization. Presentation visual, auditory, and hands-on supportive for listeners.</td>
<td>Presentation is well-planned and contains visual, auditory, and hands-on elements for all learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information</strong></td>
<td>Information is poorly organized with a few group members demonstrating little understanding of the information.</td>
<td>Information is organized but some group members did not understand all of the information.</td>
<td>Information is organized and clearly understood by all group members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length</strong></td>
<td>Presentation is 0-24 minutes in length.</td>
<td>Presentation is 25-30 minutes in length.</td>
<td>Presentation is 40-44 minutes in length.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Handout</strong></td>
<td>Handout is provided but contains 7 or more grammatical and spelling errors and is incomplete or is incomplete.</td>
<td>Handout contains accurate information, but has 6-8 grammatical and spelling errors. Required and references are cited.</td>
<td>Handout contains useful, accurate information. There are 2-5 spelling and grammatical errors. Appropriate resources are cited and references are included.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Standards Report

rGrade provides instructors with a summary of which assignments are meeting each specific standard as seen in the screen captures of my Educ 352 course below: