

# Pathways to Professionalism Intern Grant: Intern Online Orientation and English Learner Assessment

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The Pathways to Professionalism Intern Grant at California State University San Bernardino designed and developed an online assessment to meet the requirements of the Williams v State of California settlement. This presentation explains the design and development process that was required to meet the special needs of our program in regards to our geographic area and the needs of our students.

The Pathways to Professionalism Intern Grant at California State University San Bernardino developed an online assessment tool to meet the requirements stated in the settlement of the Williams v the State of California settlement. The assessment created serves as a general orientation to new interns and meet the requirements of general experience new intern teachers need in order to better assist English learners in the classroom. This presentation will showcase the design and development stages and how this assessment meets the requirements of the Williams case settlement as well as our general student needs. The major aspects of this presentation include the analysis, design and development, implementation, and evaluation of the intern online assessment.

## Analysis

The intern program was given an estimated period of over four weeks to design, develop, and implement an assessment for new interns entering the program in order to meet the requirements of the Williams v the State of California settlement in the summer of 2006. In 2000 a coalition submitted a lawsuit to resolve some of the inequities in the California education system and provide all children with qualified teachers, textbooks and adequate facilities (Powers, 2004). Because of this decision, districts across the state requested all teacher preparation programs to include a minimum of twelve hours of experience in English learner education for all new intern teachers before they enter the classroom. The solution for many other programs was to meet this requirement by conducting full day workshops for their students. In our situation we had to take into account different factors that in the end lead us to conduct our assessment online.

Our program has an average of 300 students spread across an area that includes the San Bernardino and Riverside counties from Barstow to Coachella. This situation made it difficult for us to conduct full day workshops at the university. The program coordinators decided to create an online assessment that could fulfill the requirements of the Williams case and also serve as a general orientation for our incoming interns to familiarize them with our program. It was important in this phase to make sure that the online assessment would not replace any course material covered in our program. The online assessment needed only to cover the basics of working with English learners in the classroom.

In order to achieve our objective we requested the assistance of the Office of Distributed Learning at the university who provided server space and the software required to develop the assessment. The content was created by two faculty members with experience in the subject. These faculty members were the co-authors of a book that would be given to every intern and that would assist them in completing the assessment.

## Design and Development

Online assessments have many advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of computer online assessments are that students can receive immediate feedback, useful for assessments such as multiple choice questions, they are not confined to a physical site, and provide effective use of staff time. The disadvantages are that they are confined to objective questions, they can be insecure, difficult to authenticate, and assessments are mostly knowledge based and measure surface learning (McKimm, J., et al., 2003). Also, it was important to minimize academic dishonesty. Olm (2002) provides the following strategies for minimizing academic dishonesty. This include “acknowledging the disadvantages of online assessment and overcoming them, designing an effective, cheat-proof online assessment, keeping online courses current, and providing students with an academic dishonesty policy.”

This information laid the basis for our design. The assessment consists of four modules. Module one is divided into two sections; section one would be a general orientation of our program and section two covers chapters one and two of *Teaching Expectations for English Learners* by Balderrama and Diaz-Rico. Module two covers information from chapters three and four, module three chapters five and six, and module four would cover chapters seven and eight with specific questions and cases for multiple and single subject students. In case a student fails an assessment, they will be directed to a second assessment that would rephrase the questions. In case a student a second assessment they would need to fill in a survey directed to an advisor that will be in contact to answer any questions. The survey needs to be completed in order to let them move to the next assessment. Because of time issues regarding the process of getting a credential we allow the students to complete the orientation even if they fail all the modules, this is because this is a general orientation and it is not testing for content, but we integrated surveys to keep track of students who fail the assessments before they can receive their credential. Please refer to Figure 1 to see an outline of the assessment.

The Office of Distributed Learning provided the services in the development of the assessment. HostedTest and HostedSurvey were used to develop the assessment and surveys to meet the requirements of the design. This process took several weeks in the period of time allotted as it included several meetings to setup the different modules and revise all of the testing modules. In order for students to access the exam they would need to be added to an online course created on Blackboard were they could see the instructions. This also provided the security that all the students who accessed the exam were current university students, which is important in order to meet the licensing requirements for the software used in the assessment. Once a student completes the assessment they will be able to print a certificate with a special watermark, this certificate is required as a proof for completing the assessment and must be presented at the credentials office in order to process their credential.

## Implementation

The online assessment was implemented during a pilot program in the month of August 2006. Twenty five interns were selected to pilot the program. A blackboard course was created and students were enrolled and added to HostedTest and HostedSurvey. Access to the assessment requires all students to use their student ID, this allowed for us to keep track of the students who submit certificates to the credentials office if we any discrepancies are noticed.

## Evaluation

The pilot version of the assessment was completed on August 31 2006. This version of the assessment included a special survey that collected information on the overall experience of the student during the assessment. The information collected served to identify the positive and negative aspects of the orientation. Students had a negative reaction to the length of the assessment, but was counteracted with positive reactions in regards that the assessment is open book, easy to access, and the overall preference than a full day workshop. Feedback from the evaluation on general comments provided by students assisted us in making some changes to the context of some questions, typographical errors, and correcting missing links that were not identified during the implementation process.

## Conclusions

Student feedback in regards to the assessment was very positive. It provided a cheap and effective way to

meet the requirements of the Williams case. This is the beginning phase and changes still need to be made, but this provided a great overall experience. A great team was created in the collaboration of our program with the Office of Distributed Learning. Although there are some minor problems and glitches common to technology implementations the main goal was achieved. The online assessment provided a way for our program to provide assistance to all of our students in the wide area that we cover so that they can apply and receive their credential without compromising their jobs.

#### References

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Figure 1

## Intern Online Orientation Assessment Flowchart

