



NATIONAL ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT CENTER NEWSLETTER

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Curriculum Leadership Summit

The University of North Carolina NAAC partners, in collaboration with the Technical Assistance and Dissemination Community of Practice, will be conducting a Curriculum Leadership Summit in December 2008. The purpose of the Summit is to stimulate national discussion about curricular outcomes for academic learning for students with significant cognitive disabilities. What do we hope to achieve through instruction in mathematics, language arts, and science? The format for the Summit will be a teleconference in which the UNC Charlotte team, including content experts, measurement experts, and special educators, propose guidance for this academic learning.

In preparation for the Summit, the UNC Charlotte team has been engaged in several activities. First, the team of general education and special education researchers developed conceptual models to frame outcomes for students with significant cognitive disabilities that represent high expectations for this population. For the summit, these models will be summarized with brief conceptual statements (e.g., “Why Teach Science to Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities”) and a visual model on the project’s website. The team also used the conceptual models to prioritize content within each academic domain and to define skill progressions found within general education for three grade bands. From these, the team generated a recommended priority list of discrete skills to define grade band progressions for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Finally, using these skills, researchers developed at least one “work it up” (across grade bands) and “work it across” (symbolic levels) to show how content can be differentiated by grade and current level of symbol use. These materials are now being prepared for review by content experts, special education experts, and special education teachers in Summer, 2008. For example, the content experts will critique how well the extended skills retain the original content and the teachers will describe how helpful the resources are for planning instruction. Based on this review, the team will then revise the materials for presentation in the Summit. The 90 minute teleconference Summit will include live presentations by the content experts about the conceptual models, a synthesis by Diane Browder, and discussion of the proposed outcomes.

NAAC Welcomes Pam Mims

We welcome Pam Mims to the UNC Charlotte team. Pam will assume the position of project manager beginning July 15, 2008. We extend our congratulations to Shawnee Wakeman who accepted a special education faculty position at UNCC. Shawnee will continue with the project as a part-time Faculty Associate. Pam’s background includes working with students with the most significant disabilities (deaf-blindness, multiple physical impairments) and those just beginning to acquire symbolic communication. Pam also has been involved with the states of North and South Carolina in extending state standards. She conducted alternate assessments as a classroom teacher prior to beginning her PhD work at UNC Charlotte. Pam’s dissertation focuses on shared stories for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

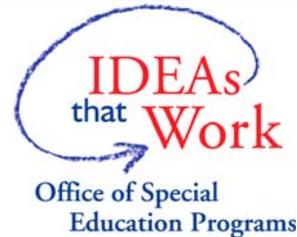


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Instructional Alignment Research Plans at UNCC

For the first three years of NAAC, UNC Charlotte focused on alignment of alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS). Through that focus, the researchers created an alignment model, the Links for Academic Learning (LAL), and conducted alignment studies with six different state AA-AAS. Currently the LAL is being replicated by SALLSA, a research project directed by Sue Bechard and Pat Almond, using four additional state AA-AAS. The focus at UNCC will now be shifting from alignment of AA-AAS to alignment of instruction for students with significant cognitive disabilities. This shift over the next two years includes plans to:

- a) conduct a curriculum leadership summit (described on page one of this newsletter),
- b) develop models for three levels of instructional planning: 1) extending state standards ("Work it up/ work it across"), 2) developing standards-based IEPs and embedded systematic instruction plans for these skills, and 3) collaborating with general educators to develop universally designed daily lesson plans.
- c) develop and validate an instructional alignment checklist using evidence based practice indicators that can be applied to teacher

instructional plans,

d) create a series of skill progressions, recommended priority skills, and "work it across" and "work it up" documents to support teacher understanding of how to differentiate instruction by symbolic communication levels across the grades within a content strand,

e) pilot and the models for three levels of instructional planning in the Charlotte region (08-09)

e) evaluate the models of three levels of instructional planning nationally through work with teachers in five states using the instructional alignment checklist to determine the impact of this professional development (09-10)

UNC Charlotte (Diane Browder and Fred Spooner) recently received an IES grant called Project Mastery to study instructional alignment for mathematics and science. The UNC Charlotte NAAC Partners (Diane Browder and Claudia Flowers) will focus on instructional alignment of language arts in the above goals to complement the work of Mastery.