

Out Comes Learning

McHenry County College's Assessment Team Newsletter

A newsletter dedicated to the promotion and recognition of Academic Assessment at MCC

A Day at Alverno College: Teaching and Assessing Student Abilities

November 2, 2006

Seeking continuous improvement of our assessment system, a delegation of 11 MCC faculty, administrators, and staff* traveled to Milwaukee to participate in Alverno College's educational outreach conference. Alverno, a private four-year liberal arts institution, approaches assessment in the context of college-wide **ability-based curriculum and instruction**. At the conference, host-school faculty shared their assumptions, methods, and results.

Alverno College's assessment principles and practices suggest a perspective for MCC's state-of-the-art assessment and its further improvement

<u>Alverno College</u>	<u>MCC</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student learning must be demonstrated, often in "performances" (presentations). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student learning objectives are measurable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Eight (8) core Abilities (learning outcomes) form the framework for assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Twelve (12) General Education goals form the framework for assessment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All lower division courses and programs address the 8 Abilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ College-wide, four (4) Gen. Ed. goals are selected each year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Programs (majors) tailor and amplify a select set of core Abilities appropriate to their discipline. (Ex. "aesthetic appreciation" applies less to chemistry than to art.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Departments (programs) amplify and emphasize selected Gen. Ed. Goals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Course-specific learning outcomes are aligned with college and program level Abilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Course level assessment is used to measure department/Gen. Ed. Goals.

For a description of Alverno College's Ability-Based Curriculum and more information about their assessment system, see

http://www.alverno.edu/for_educators/ability_curriculum.html.

* Alverno Day 2006 participants: Marc Arctander (Art), *Jeffrey Bright* (Adult Education/Workforce Services), *Kathy Chamberlain* (HHP & Assessment Chair), *Dr. Beverly Dow* (Biology), *Julie Freelove* (Administrative Office Management), *Dr. Jim Gray* (Vice-President, LSSS), *Dr. Christine Grela* (Psychology), *Jennie Hoffmann* (Adult Education), *Diane Nyhammer* (Humanities), Mike Reagan (Sociology), Bruce Spangenberg (Horticulture & CAPC). *Italics* denotes member of Assessment Team.

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Our Mission: The mission of the McHenry County College assessment team is to provide support to divisional faculty for learning outcomes assessment. This support will be provided by division liaisons who will communicate information about the assessment and transformation process; coordinate the flow of information; investigate and recommend plans to record, organize, analyze, and report data; and be an advocate for the integration of assessment into the College community for the purpose of improving student learning.

Authentic Assessment in the Firefighter Program

The FRS 150 Firefighter II class offered to students at MCC is a combination of classroom and practical, hands-on exercises. The successful student will receive twelve (12) hours of college credit and will become certified as a Firefighter II by the Office of the State Fire Marshall (OSFM). Students study the science and theories of fire suppression and prevention and become proficient in the operation of tools and equipment used in today's fire service.

After the students have studied a specific skill, i.e. advancing a hose line, it is practiced at the MCC Fire Training Tower located behind E Building. To test the multiple level skills (hoses, ladders, search and rescue), the class takes a 12-hour field trip to the University of Illinois Fire Service Institute in Champaign, IL, where they fight live fires in three separate burn buildings. Under the direction of MCC and U. of I. instructors, the students are trained and assessed on their skill sets.

This form of firefighter assessment is important to the student and the instructors as well. The student learns of his/her abilities under the hostile environment of live fire conditions, resulting in self-confidence for the individual. The instructors also note the ability of the student to actually complete the objectives learned in the classroom and the ability to work as a member of the group. This activity is a good example of Authentic Assessment where the task being assessed reflects real-world challenges.

If problems or concerns are encountered, the student can continue to practice that specific skill throughout the day.



Firefighter II Students in Champaign

C.A.T. of the Month: The Applications Card

Directions: Take a few moments to recall the ideas, techniques, and/or strategies that you have discussed in class. Have your students draw a midline on a piece of paper and title the left side **Interesting Ideas/Techniques I've learned**. The title on the right side should read **Possible Applications to my work/life/other learned concepts**. Tell your students to quickly list as many possible applications as they can. These are merely possibilities. You can always evaluate the desirability and/or feasibility at a later date.

This assessment helps you to see if your students are making connections in their learning and are using the critical thinking skill of *application*.

From Angelo, T. A. and K. P. Cross, 1993. *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers

Happy Holidays
from your assessment team

