

**CONFIDENCE LEVELS OF SSU EDUCATION STUDENTS
IN WRITING ASSESSMENTS**

Honors Thesis

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Abstract

Salem State University has a newly accredited 4+1 master's in education program but has been teaching education for decades. Given the newness of the 4+1 program, are the students getting a good idea of what assessments to write, what they look like, and when to do which type of assessment? This study investigates the confidence levels of SSU Education students in writing assessments based on their experiences and classes that they have taken in the School of Education.

In order to examine this question, a survey was completed by students in the education program in which they specified their knowledge on each type of assessment (summative and formative), which classes they have taken, what experiences they have had, and how comfortable they are writing both. It is then analyzed by the classes they have taken the program, their comfortability, and knowledge of each assessment.

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Confidence Levels of SSU Education Students in Writing Assessments

Introduction

Assessments are how we analyze and determine student progress and student performance. There are two different types of assessment that are used in the education system frequently, summative and formative. Summative assessment is an assessment that measures student learning at the end of a unit/chapter/topic by comparing it against some standard or benchmark. These assessments are usually high stakes assessments. This assessment is the type of assessment that we see nationally and worldwide with SATs and other large assessments. Formative assessment, on the other hand, is an assessment to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by teachers to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. This is usually a more informal type of assessment, that is usually low stakes and high analysis. Throughout history, summative assessment is usually related to traditional education and formative assessment is usually related to progressive education (Dewey, 1963).

When we look specifically at formative education, there are many ways to integrate it into your classroom. Formative assessment can be done by listening, a quiz, projects, etc. and is described as anything to help student progress. One way that this can be done is by evaluating your students critical thinking, without grading their mistakes (Gil, Juliette, Ruder, Stanford, & Cole, 2020). This can be seen as formative assessment because you can give feedback on how they are critically thinking, and they can improve. A large part of formative assessment is the ability to take feedback and improve. If there is no feedback given or there is no opportunity for improvement, the assessment is no

longer formative. Inquiry based education, which is where students learn by creating hypothesis and testing them, is one that relies heavily on formative education. The reason it relies mostly on formative education is because there is constant feedback, not just from the educator, but also from the experiments that are done to prove the hypothesis (Bahnsen, Wilcox, Kruse, & Schou, 2020).

Focusing solely on summative education, we tend to see grades given and no ability to change or improve. For example, SATs you take them get a grade and if you fail, you retake the, and if you pass, you never look at it again for the most part. A big downfall of summative assessments is that those from lower income, and minority groups tend to score worse on summative assessments and have for decades (Agboola, O. and Hiatt, A). When we look at this achievement gap, we tend to think it is due to lack of resources to our lower income and minority groups, but even if they get the same education, this achievement gap exists.

Background

Assessments are done worldwide and for the most part are there to guide our opinions and steps moving forward. Assessment in education is no different. However, in education, teachers must administer both summative assessments and formative assessments. They implement formative assessments to see the progress their students have made and use it to make changes. Summative assessments, on the other hand, are assessments that are more widely used and are used to evaluate the students' knowledge after everything has been taught and there is not progress made after that assessment for the most part.

Appeal

This study was one that piqued my interest as Salem State has a newer 4+1 education program. So far almost all of the graduates from the program have gotten jobs. However, did they get jobs because there is a shortage of teachers or because they were the most qualified candidate? In order to determine this, I conducted the following study to review the opinions and confidence levels of our education students at differing levels, grades, and programs. This is important as these students are going to be the future educators and if they are not confident in writing these assessments, how will they get accurate results from their students.

Method

Participants

The survey was done with a convenience sampling and was sent to members of the School of Education, where they were asked to fill out the survey anonymously. The survey was sent through email and also through Canvas messages by professors in the School of Education to help get the survey to as many different members of the School of Education. Any member of the School of Education was asked to fill it out. The ages of those in the School of Education can vary, and there was no age limit to who could fill it out.

Materials

The survey itself was an online questionnaire that consisted of the following: (a) questions to determine their connection to the School of Education, (b) questions to determine their confidence levels and why they choose them, and (c) questions to

determine their prior knowledge about formative and summative assessments. Questions about their connections to the School of Education consisted of asking which program they are a part of and which classes they had taken in the School of Education. Questions to determine their confidence levels included asking what they believed their confidence level in writing formative assessments was and why and asking what they believed their confidence level in writing summative assessments was and why. The questions to determine their prior knowledge of assessments asked them to define formative and summative assessments and also to choose from a list of assessments which they thought were formative and which they thought were summative. The responses to the confidence level questions were given in a scale form from 0-100% confidence.

Design

This study is being used to see if there is a connection to confidence levels and the coursework done in the School of Education. Also, it will help determine if confidence increases as the students move farther into their time in the School of Education. There will hopefully be a correlation in confidence levels when we analyze the results.

Procedures

The online survey was administered through surveymonkey.com. Participants were not asked to submit their name, location, or any other identifying information, and no IP addresses were collected or stored during data analysis. The participants were directed to the survey when they clicked on a link sent through email or Canvas message. The survey began by giving a brief explanation of the research being done and why it was being done. After the participants selected their connection to the School of Education, they filled out their knowledge of formative and summative assessments and skip logic

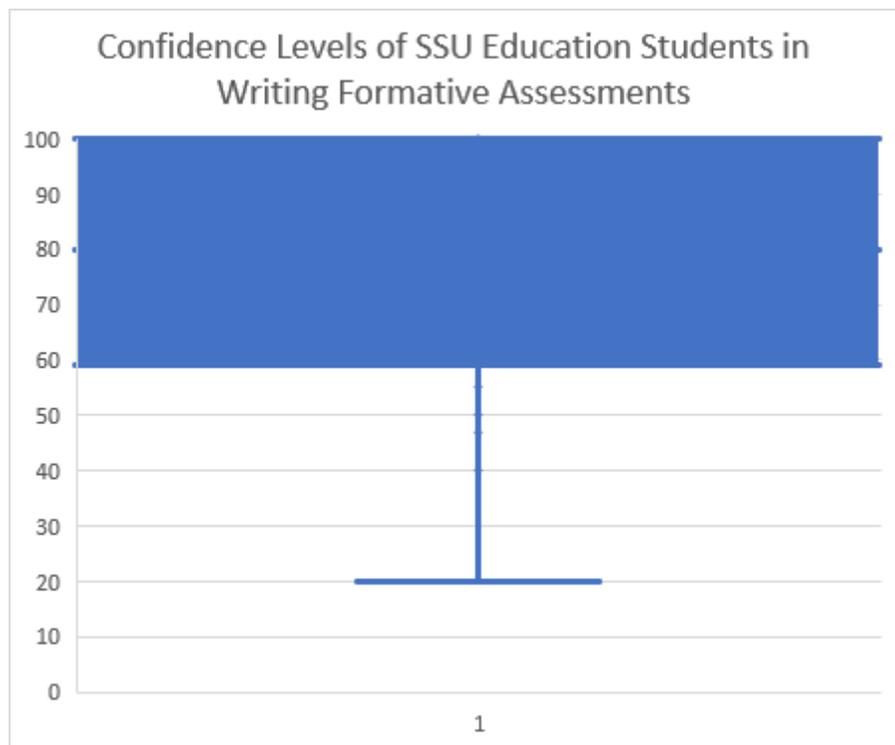
brought them to the section to select the classes that they had taken in the School of Education based on their connection to the department. All questions were voluntary and did not have to be answered or if they were short answer could be filled in with N/A.

Results

The study allowed anyone that was a student in the School of Education to participate. The survey yielded 23 responses. There were six Early Childhood Education 4+1 students (26%), three Early Childhood Education graduate students (13%), four Elementary Education 4+1 students (17%), zero Elementary Education graduate students (0%), six Secondary Education 4+1 students (26%), and four Secondary Education graduate students (17%).

When we look at the responses to the confidence levels in writing Formative assessments, we had a range from 20%-100% confidence. However, the middle 50 percent was from 60%-100% confidence levels, so we had outliers that were under 60% confidence. There was a total of 6 responses below 60% and of those, 3 said that they did not really know

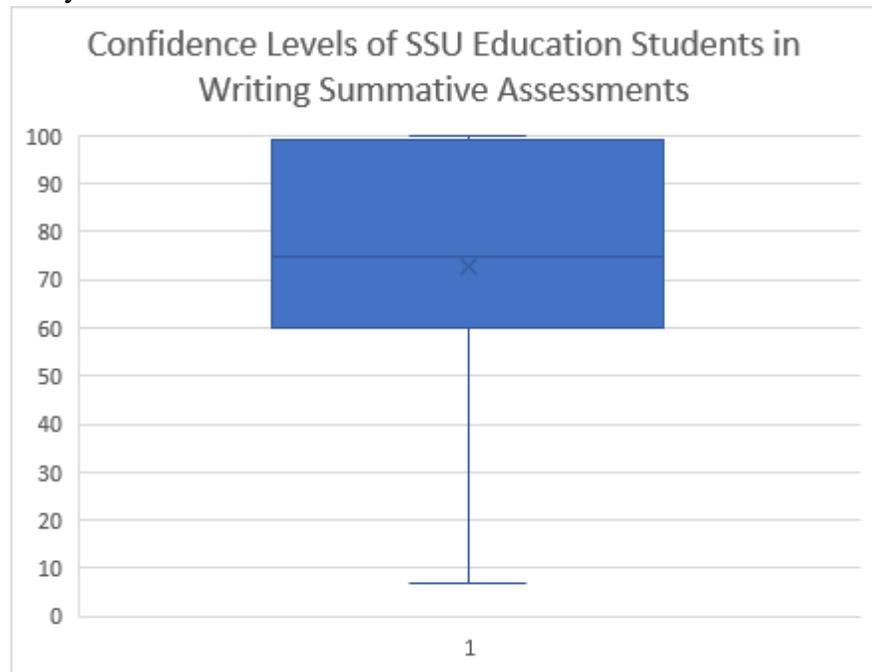
or understand
 was a formative
 assessment was,
 and 3 stated that
 they knew what it
 was, but they do
 not have enough



practice or experience writing them. Based on the responses in confidence, those that were below 60%, 3 were far into their program, and 3 were new or in the beginning stages of their program.

When we look at the responses to the confidence levels in writing Summative assessments, we had a range of 7-100% confidence. The middle 50 percent was between 60%-99% confidence levels. There were five responses below 60% confidence. Of those we had three state that they felt coursework did not focus on summative assessments

enough, and two state that they did not really know what a summative assessment is. The two that said they did not really know what a summative assessment is are



early in their program. Of those that stated coursework did not cover it enough, one was early in their program and two were at least halfway through their program. Although there were five participants below out 50%, we also had five about our 50% at 100% confidence. Of those that answered 100% confidence, four stated that their confidence was based on their field experience and one stated it was due to their classes in the School of Education. Those that answered at 100% confidence levels were at least halfway through their program.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis that I made was that those that were earlier in the program would have lower confidence than those farther in the program. I found based on the classes that they had taken that those that were far into the program had 82% confidence in writing formative assessments and 81% confidence in writing summative assessments. I also found that those who were halfway or less through their program had 67% confidence in writing formative assessments and 60% confidence in writing summative assessments. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was proven correct.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis that I made was that students would have a higher confidence in writing formative assessment verse summative assessment. Of the respondents, I found that only five had a higher confidence in writing summative assessments (22%), six had the same confidence in writing summative and formative assessments (26%) and twelve had higher confidence in writing formative assessment than summative assessment (52%). Hypothesis 2 was also proven correct as over 50% of the respondents had a lower confidence level in writing summative assessments compared to formative assessments.

Conclusion

This study showed a great deal about the opinions and confidence of our SSU School of Education students. First it showed that those that are farther into their program have a higher confidence level, which makes sense as they have more experience and more coursework under their belt. Second, it showed that there was a higher confidence in writing formative assessments than summative assessments. This could be because of

the consistency of formative assessment or the amount of time spent in courses going over formative assessments. Based on the information that was received, there are three steps that I would recommend to the School of Education going forward.

The first step that I would recommend is doing more practice. Although the confidence levels I found are so called “passing” grades, they are still slightly low. I recommend providing more opportunities for students to be writing these assessments and revise them with feedback. Providing the space for students to write the lessons and revise them is also a good reflective practice as they can reflect on what they did originally and why they think it was changed. Many of the responses to why they picked their confidence level was just because of lack of coursework.

The second step that I would recommend is providing students with concrete examples of both types of assessments. This is something that would benefit students as they will have an idea of what formative and summative assessments look like. Some of the responses that I received stated that they did not know enough about the assessments to be confident. Personally, I think that concrete examples that can be easily converted throughout disciplines is important to help students become more comfortable in writing their own assessments.

The last step that I would recommend is mor support for the future educators. Teaching is a hard profession and has been especially hard during a pandemic, so having a space for students to speak their fears and accomplishments would be helpful. I think that this could be done as a one credit course or even just as a group/club.

This study could be done further as an exit interview for seniors leaving the program during their graduate year. That would provide the School of Education with more in-depth feedback and serve as a formative assessment to deter the program.

Appendix 1

Survey

1. Please select the answer that most closely aligns with your connection to SSU's School of Education
 - a. Elementary Education - 4+1
 - b. Early Childhood Education - 4+1
 - c. Secondary Education - 4+1
 - d. Elementary Education - Graduate
 - e. Early Childhood Education - Graduate
 - f. Secondary Education - Graduate
 - g. Not part of the department
2. Based on your knowledge and experiences, how would you define formative assessment? (one sentence)
3. Please select which of the following you would describe as types of Formative Assessment. (Select all that apply)
 - a. Exit Ticket
 - b. District Benchmark
 - c. Essay
 - d. MCAS
 - e. Weekly Quizzes
 - f. Discussions
4. . Given the definition "Formative Assessment: Assessment to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by teachers to improve their teaching and by students to

- improve their learning", how confident do you feel writing formative assessment?
(0-100)
5. Why did you select the confidence level above? Please provide specific experiences that affected your confidence. (courses/instructors/field experience)
 6. . Based on your knowledge and experiences, how would you define summative assessment? (one sentence)
 7. Please select which of the following you would describe as types of Summative Assessment. (Select all that apply)
 - a. Exit Ticket
 - b. District Benchmark
 - c. Essay
 - d. MCAS
 - e. Weekly Quizzes
 - f. Discussions
 8. Given the definition "Summative Assessment: Assessment to evaluate student learning at the end of a unit/chapter/topic by comparing it against some standard or benchmark", how confident do you feel in writing summative assessments? (0-100)
 9. Why did you select the confidence level above? Please provide specific experiences that affected your confidence. (courses/instructors/field experience)

Early Childhood Education 4+1

1. What classes have you taken in the School of Education?
 - a. EEC 105 Approaches to Early Childhood Education

- b. EEC 205 Assessment, Planning, and Instruction in Early Childhood Education
- c. EEC 207 Supporting Dual Language Learners and Their Families in Early Childhood
- d. EEC 250 Emergent Literacy and Language Development
- e. EDC 405 Culturally Responsive Teaching
- f. EDC 415 Effective UDL Classroom Practices
- g. EEC 301 Integrating Social Studies and Creative Arts in Early Childhood
- h. EEC 302 Integrating Mathematics and Science in Early Childhood
- i. EEC 303 Integrated Approach to Teaching Literacy to Young Children
- j. EEC 304 Integrated Curriculum Lab
- k. EEC 401 Preschool Practicum I
- l. EEC 401S Preschool Practicum Seminar I
- m. EEC 402 Preschool Practicum II
- n. EEC 402S Preschool Practicum Seminar II
- o. EEC 410 Capstone Seminar in Early Education and Care

Early Childhood Education Graduate

- 1. What classes have you taken in the School of Education?
 - a. EDU 720 - Child Growth and Development
 - b. EDU 725 - Introduction to Literacy Development
 - c. EDC 710 - Fundamentals of Lesson Planning
 - d. EDU 737 - Applying Human Development to Teaching and Assessment
 - e. EDC 810 - Technology Methods in the Early Primary and Elementary Grades

- f. EDG 705 - Culturally Responsive Teaching
- g. EDS 860 - Sheltering Content for English Language Learners
- h. EDU 990E - Teaching Students with Exceptional Learning Needs
- i. EDC 795A - Universal Design for Learning Foundations
- j. EDC 795B - Universal Design for Learning Methods
- k. EDC 795C - Universal Design for Learning Practice
- l. EDC 736 - Early Childhood Pre-Practicum
- m. EDU 822 - Language Arts and Social Studies for Young Children
- n. EDU 739 - Literacy Instruction and Assessment in the Early Childhood and Elementary Classroom with field experience
- o. EDU 823 - Science and Mathematics in Early Childhood Education
- p. EDC 796 - Classroom Management Seminar for Elementary School and Early Childhood Settings
- q. EDU 801 - Classroom Management and Positive Behavior Supports
- r. EDC 829 - Prekindergarten/Kindergarten Practicum
- s. EDC 834 - First/Second Grade Practicum
- t. EDC 834S - Practicum Seminar in Early Childhood Education
- u. EDU 712 - Models of Early Education: Past & Present
- v. EDU 921 - Capstone Seminar in Early Childhood Education and Child Development

Elementary Education 4+1

- 1. What classes have you taken in the School of Education?
 - a. EDC 115 Exploring Education
 - b. EDC 400 Literacy Development I

- c. EDC 401 Fundamentals of Lesson Planning
- d. EDC 451 Fieldwork Seminar I: Critical Issues and Effective Practices in the Elementary Grades
- e. EDC 406 Literacy Development II
- f. EDC 408 Culturally Responsive Instruction in Elementary and Early Childhood Classrooms
- g. EDC 415 Effective UDL Classroom Practices
- h. EDC 405 Culturally Responsive Teaching
- i. EDC 452 Fieldwork Seminar II: Critical Issues and Effective Practices in the Elementary Grades
- j. EDC 705 Assessment and Instructional Practice
- k. EDC 740 Language Arts Methods in Elementary Grades
- l. EDC 741 Social Studies Methods in Elementary Grades
- m. EDC 753 Fieldwork Seminar III: Classroom Management in the Elementary Grades
- n. EDC 742 Mathematics in Elementary Grades
- o. EDC 743 Science Methods in Elementary Grades
- p. EDC 754 Fieldwork Seminar IV: Classroom Management in the Elementary Grades
- q. EDS 860 Sheltering Content for English Language Learners
- r. HST 204 U.S. History and Constitutional Government I
- s. ENL 250 American Literary Studies I
- t. ENL 251 American Literary Studies II

- u. MAT 123 Mathematics for the Elementary Teacher I
- v. MAT 124 Mathematics for Elementary Teachers II
- w. PSY 251 Child Growth
- x. SMS 225 Introduction to Health and Physical Activity for Children

Elementary Education Graduate

1. What classes have you taken in the School of Education?
 - a. EDC 715 - Elementary Pre-Practicum Seminar I
 - b. EDC 716A - Elementary Pre-Practicum I
 - c. EDU 725 - Introduction to Literacy Development
 - d. EDS 860 - Sheltering Content for English Language Learners
 - e. EDC 795A - Universal Design for Learning Foundations
 - f. EDG 705 - Culturally Responsive Teaching
 - g. EDU 737 - Applying Human Development to Teaching and Assessment
- OR
- h. EDC 710 - Fundamentals of Lesson Planning
 - i. EDU 766N - Helping People Learn Math: A Research Based Mindset Approach
 - j. EDC 795B - Universal Design for Learning Methods
 - k. EDU 739 - Literacy Instruction and Assessment in the Early Childhood and Elementary Classroom with field experience
 - l. EDC 742 - Mathematics in Elementary Grades
 - m. EDU 899 - Social Studies Methods in Elementary Schools
 - n. EDU 762 - Science Methods in the Elementary Schools
 - o. EDC 716 - Elementary Full-time Pre-Practicum

- p. EDC 795C - Universal Design for Learning Practice
- q. EDU 961P - Practicum Experience in Elementary Education
- r. EDU 961PS - Practicum Seminar in Elementary Education
- s. EDC 796 - Classroom Management Seminar for Elementary School and Early Childhood Settings

Secondary Education 4+1

1. What classes have you taken in the School of Education?

- a. EDC 115 Exploring Education
- b. EDC 404 Introduction to Teaching
- c. EDC 405 Culturally Responsive Teaching
- d. EDC 415 Effective UDL Classroom Practices
- e. EDC 416 Introduction to Assessment
- f. EDC 461 Fieldwork seminar I: Critical Issues and Effective Practices for Secondary and Specialist Teachers
- g. EDC 462 Fieldwork seminar II: Critical Issues and Effective Practices for Secondary and Special Education
- h. EDC 7XX Methods of Teaching I
- i. EDC 760 Adolescent Literacy in the Disciplines
- j. EDC 762 Technology Methods
- k. EDS 7XX Methods of Teaching II
- l. EDS 860 Sheltering Content of ELLs
- m. EDS 763 Classroom Management and Community Building

Secondary Education Graduate

1. What classes have you taken in the School of Education?

- a. EDU 737 - Applying Human Development to Teaching and Assessment
- b. EDG 705 - Culturally Responsive Teaching
- c. EDU 990E - Teaching Students with Exceptional Learning Needs
- d. EDS 860 - Sheltering Content for English Language Learners
- e. EDS 812 - Special Education History and Law
- f. EDC 77X - Methods of Teaching I
- g. EDC 77X - Methods of Teaching II
- h. EDC 8XXP - Student Teaching Practicum (8-12)
- i. EDC 8XXPS - Practicum Seminar in Teaching

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