



ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY TEACHER EDUCATION UNIT
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

MTLE WRITING WORKSHOP (FALL, 2012): A BRIEF EVALUATION

STUDENT SERVICES
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The Minnesota Teacher Licensure Examination (MTLE) Basic Skills tests are required for evaluation of P-12 teacher candidates in Minnesota. These Basic Skills tests assess candidates' abilities in reading, writing, and mathematics. Because of concerns about passing rates, the unit is moving toward requiring passage of the examinations prior to student teaching or even prior to admission to teacher education, though these decisions have not yet been approved.

In an effort to improve the passing rates of SCSU students, the Student Services Office, through its MTLE Center, offers test preparation workshops on each of the MTLE Basic Skills content areas. On September

15th, 2012, the MTLE Center sponsored a workshop on the writing test; 10 candidates provided evaluative feedback.

We present the results of the exit surveys to help evaluate the perceived effectiveness of the workshop. The workshop was evaluated on both the content of the class as well as instructor effectiveness. Via each item, candidates were asked to respond on a five-point scale with values assigned from 1 (Not Helpful) to 5 (Especially Helpful). Students were also allowed to comment freely on what they found particularly helpful or things that could improve the session. Descriptive data are laid out in Table 1. The "percent helpful" rating was calculated by determining the percentage of students that selected either 4 or 5 (the two highest values). We organized data in descending order by mean.

Table 1. Workshop and instructor items in descending order.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>% Helpful¹</u>
Workshop			
I would recommend this workshop to others	4.9	0.32	100
In class practice passages with multiple choice questions	4.7	0.48	100
In class practice with writing paragraphs	4.7	0.48	100
Online expanded study guide for the MTLE	4.7	0.67	90
OWL Purdue Online Exercises	4.6	0.70	90
Test taking strategies	4.4	1.26	90
Slideshow with test format discussion	4.1	0.88	70
Teach RITE online tutorial	4.1	0.99	80
Reducing test anxiety	3.9	1.45	70
Instructor			
The instructor was clear and well prepared	4.9	0.32	100
The instructor was engaging and motivational	4.9	0.32	100
The instructor met my objectives for the workshop	4.8	0.42	100

¹Percent of candidates selecting either of the two highest values.

The ten participants clearly valued the workshop and the instructor's abilities, with nearly all items attaining a value of four or greater on a five-point scale. Particular strengths of the workshop included the quality of the instructor's preparation and engagement. In addition, participants praised the practice passages, the expanded study guide, and online activities.

It appears that text anxiety remains an issue with candidates who had failed to pass *MTLE Writing* at least once. Perhaps this is not surprising, as the instrument is particularly high stakes for this group. Education unit representatives should review literature on the degree to which text anxiety affects performance. Promising practices in alleviating test anxiety should also be sought.

In the end, the performance of the candidates attending the workshop will be the best test of the session's effectiveness. We can track the performance of candidates against their own previous performance and critically evaluate score changes as a function of having attended one workshop or multiple sessions.

Via written responses, candidates wrote about the instructor's expertise and teaching style (N = 4, "Dori makes the subject clear"). Candidates offered specific suggestions and commentary on the session and their hopes for future sessions:

- I like the OWL-Purdue online tutorial
- Having extra help can reduce anxiety
- I would have these workshops available once a month