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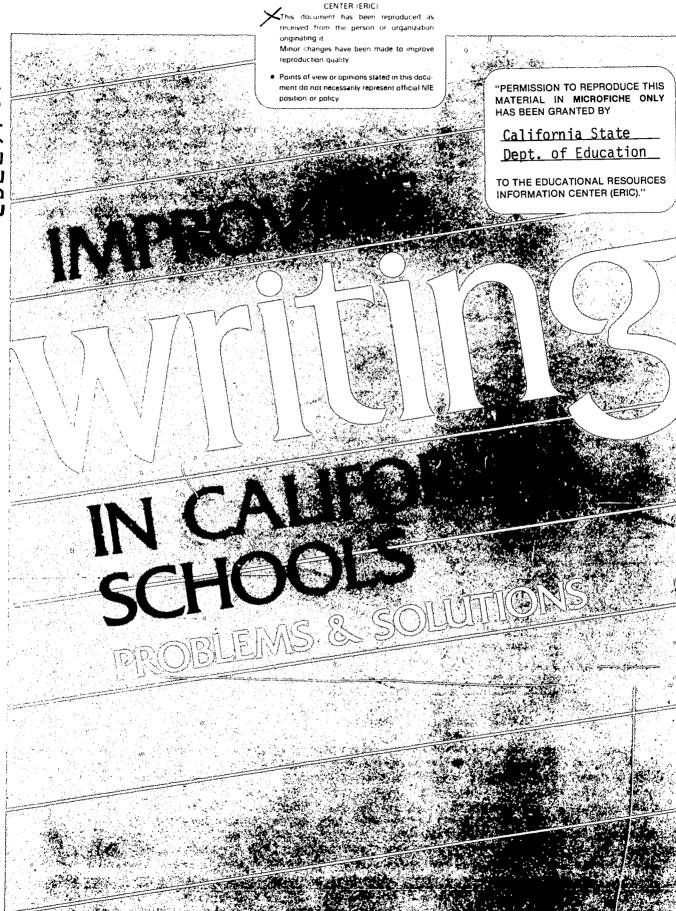   Project

ABSTRACT
         Intended to help teachers, curriculum directors,
school administrators, and school board members follow through on
their commitment to teach students how to become better writers, the
techniques and resources described in this booklet are arranged into
seven chapters. The first chapter examines whether the "writing
crisis" is fact or fiction, and discusses the test results from the
National Assessment of Educational Progress and the California Survey
of Basic Skills. The second chapter focuses on activities of the Bay
Area Writing Project and other writing projects throughout the state
of California. The third chapter deals with various approaches
several California cities have taken, such as individualized language
arts or the workshop/laboratory approach. Successful classroom
techniques are detailed in the fourth chapter, among them using
students as evaluators, choosing good topics, observing students as
they write, prewriting, and motivating the student. Evaluation and
assessment are the focus of the fifth chapter, which considers the
types of tests available, types of scoring, evaluation in the
classroom, and state or school district testing. The sixth chapter
discusses what is known about writing, emphasizing grammar,
prewriting, reading, oral language, sentence combining, and writing
practice. The final chapter discusses the use of computers in
writing, especially the use of the word processor and how it will
shape the student as writer. (HOD)

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IMPROVING writing IN CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS

PROBLEMS & SOLUTIONS

Publishing Information

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Foreword

I don't know what I think until I see what I've said.
E. M. Forster

Is writing important?

Some people say "no," arguing that advances in technology will soon create a "paperless" society. This argument ignores the crucial role of writing as a tool for thinking and learning. As the quotation from E. M. Forster suggests, composing requires the pulling together of thoughts, ideas and data—making logical connections between bits of information. Precision in writing is intertwined with the ability to think clearly.

Practice in writing thus builds analytical skill and the power of observation. When students write about a topic, they often understand it far better than when they simply read about it or discuss it in class. For this reason, writing is an important tool not only for English classes but also for classes in virtually every other academic subject.

Instruction in writing, as a method of improving language, can also be an aid to upward mobility. A person's language dramatically affects the impression he or she makes on others. When someone uses nonstandard English or expresses thoughts in a muddled way, many listeners are likely to assume that the speaker is inept at other things, too.

Writing has come into the spotlight recently because of disturbing evidence that students' writing ability has declined markedly. Many reasons are given for this decline, but there is general agreement on at least three points:

- Teachers have received little formal instruction on how to teach writing.

- Insufficient classroom time is devoted to writing.

- Much of the writing that *is* required focuses solely on the end product - in other words, teachers are *testing* writing, not teaching how to do it.

The news is not all bad, though. Increased awareness of the problem has generated a resurgence of interest in writing instruction. One of the most promising answers to the problem of training teachers, in fact, started in California with the Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP) at the University of California, Berkeley. This project taps the expertise of practicing teachers to deal with the "Johnny Can't Write" problem. Under its auspices, teachers exchange ideas and learn what research tells us about the writing process. They also study theories of how to teach writing. Above all, they write. This writing experience gives them valuable insight into what their students face with each classroom assignment. The consequent empathy changes their expectations and approaches. Because of its demonstrated successes, the BAWP's format has spread beyond the Bay Area as the California Writing Project (CWP). It has also been adopted in many other states. Added together, these adoptions of the BAWP represent an enormous expansion of the original idea—and in an amazingly short time.

School districts and teachers inside and outside California have pioneered other promising approaches for teaching writing. Scholars and practicing teachers have also developed new ways to evaluate writing so that the resulting data can augment instruction. In addition, the renewed interest in writing has also spurred research efforts to increase the understanding of the writing process.

Perhaps the most promising development is clear evidence that once teachers are exposed to new knowledge and approaches, they are eager to implement these approaches in the classroom because of a greater appreciation of the importance of writing and a renewed commitment to help students become better writers. Administrators are also showing more interest in writing than they have in the past. They are supporting in-service training efforts for their teachers and increasing the emphasis on writing throughout the curriculum.

The techniques and resources described in this special report are intended to help teachers, curriculum directors, school administrators and school board members follow through on their commit-

ment to teach students how to become better writers.

Although it was born amid negative national publicity, the concern about writing has grown to provide positive and constructive solutions. One such solution is the *Handbook for Planning an Effective Writing Program,* which is one of seven curriculum handbooks we are developing to strengthen instructional programs in the schools of California. The handbook on writing is designed to provide the schools with a standard for assessing their existing writing programs and a tool for helping them design new programs. In addition to the production of the handbook, a series of regional workshops were held throughout the state in 1982 to help educators and others at the local level learn to use the handbook. The workshops were sponsored by the Department of Education, the California State Steering Committee for Curriculum Development and Publications, and the California Writing Project.

Teachers, fortified with new information and techniques, are enthusiastically returning writing to its rightful place of prominence in the English curriculum. The growing interest in writing research

and teaching techniques bodes well for the future of writing.

Another promising sign is the growing recognition that writing can help students learn other subjects. In addition, subject-area teachers are beginning to take greater responsibility for the writing skills of their students. This broadened understanding of the role of writing should help ensure that the new found interest in the "second R" will not be merely another passing educational fad added to the curriculum. In fact, in California the graduation proficiency requirements give writing the same status as reading and mathematics.

Writing is not and will never be an easy subject to teach. Students will always struggle with the challenge of trying to express themselves in a clear and interesting manner. But students now have a much better chance of becoming good writers. It is an opportunity that must not be lost.

Bill Honig

Superintendent of Public Instruction

Preface

The effort to help students become competent writers has been a major priority in California since 1976. During this period, the California Writing Project (CWP) has emerged as a major strategy that schools and districts can use to deal with this important need. The growth of this project, its working strategy and its debt to the Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP) are described in this document.

Gearing up a state as large as California to deal with improving the teaching of writing has not been easy. By its very nature, the problem is complex. Any possible solution calls for action from a disparate array of people and resources and, further, means that these people and their organizations have to work cooperatively over a long period of time. This, the CWP has done; indeed, various individuals with support from their organizations have been working together at the state, county and local levels since 1975 in a way that is unique and can serve as a model for other educators.

Most of the major actors in public education in the state have played important roles in creating and implementing the CWP. They include the California State Department of Education, the system-wide administration of the University of California, almost all campuses of the University of California, the Chancellor's Office of the State University and Colleges and several individual campuses, the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges and some member colleges, the California Postsecondary Education Commission and many offices of county superintendents of schools across the state.

As with any large, complex organization, maintaining a continuing working alliance among so many diverse groups is no easy task. Over the years, however, the working relationship has grown and, indeed, prospered. Since the BAWP began, a large number of additional writing project centers have been established that follow the BAWP model. Seventeen additional centers have been established in California that focus primarily on improving writing skills. (See page 27 for a list of the California Writing Projects.) Under the auspices of different agencies, including the California State Department of Education, committees have been formed, position papers have been developed and, finally, legislation to support improved writing programs has been enacted.

Collegiality, mutual trust and support are principles adhered to by all participants. This, of course, does not mean there have been no differences of opinion concerning the nature of the problem, the responsibility for general and specific tasks or the strategies for solutions. Participants have, however, been determined to work problems through until they agreed upon solutions that would do two things: (1) solve the problem at hand; and (2) continue effective working relationships among various parties who tended in the past not to communicate with each other.

George Nemetz, Consultant in English, has represented the California State Department of Education throughout both the BAWP and the CWP efforts. We are confident the activities will continue to be important factors in education in California.

JAMES R. SMITH
Deputy Superintendent
for Programs

Competencies in Writing Expected of Freshmen Entering Colleges and Universities in California

A substantial number of students who enter California colleges and universities are not prepared for college-level work. Deficiencies in basic skills, particularly in English and mathematics, prevail despite the special importance of competence in these areas. Adequate preparation in English and mathematics is needed to provide basic skills in communication and analysis, not only to prepare students for additional work in these disciplines but also to provide access to other disciplines and prepare students for a wide spectrum of career choices.

Students who plan to continue their education at a college or university must have a clear understanding of what basic academic skills will be expected of them. As beginning freshmen, students should have acquired the competencies in writing, reading, and mathematics described in this statement. The importance of acquiring these skills cannot be overstated. These skills are an essential foundation for successful college and university coursework. The minimum proficiencies now required for high school graduation are not sufficient to provide this foundation.

There are, of course, varied and complex causes of underpreparation of entering college freshmen; however, the one of concern here is a lack of understanding among students, parents, and educators of the competencies expected of entering college students. It is the responsibility of college and university faculty to specify and communicate these competencies. It is the responsibility of secondary school teachers to determine the methods of instruction by which these competencies can be taught.

.... Writing Skills ....

Clarity in writing reflects clarity in thinking. College and university faculty expect students to be able to understand, organize, synthesize, and communicate information, ideas, and opinions. Students must also be able to make critical judgments, to distinguish primary and relevant ideas from those that are subordinate or irrelevant. Students will be required in their college courses to demonstrate these abilities by writing compositions, reports, term papers, and essay examinations. Because the learning process as well as the quality of the student's written work depends upon these abilities, it is crucial that these abilities be developed before students enter college.

Emphasis upon the following writing skills is not meant to diminish the importance of other forms of writing or an appreciation of literature. However, the skills listed below are fundamental for successful baccalaureate-level work.

1. The ability to generate ideas about which to write;
2. The ability to formulate a single statement that clearly expresses the central idea of one's essay;
3. The ability to construct a paragraph that develops and supports the paragraph's main idea with examples or reasons;
4. The ability to organize paragraphs into a logical sequence so that the central idea of the essay is developed to a logical conclusion;
5. The ability to use varied sentence structures and types effectively in order to indicate the meaning, relationship, and the importance of ideas;
6. The ability to write sentences with precise and appropriate words, to distinguish between literal and figurative use of language, and to avoid inappropriate jargon and cliche;
7. The ability to vary one's choice of words and sentences for different audiences and purposes;
8. The ability to present one's own ideas as related to, but clearly distinguished from, the ideas of others, which includes the ability to use documentation and avoid plagiarism;
9. The ability to support one's opinions and conclusions, including the appropriate use of evidence;
10. The ability to use dictionaries and other reference materials for the purpose of checking words and facts used in one's writing; and
11. The ability to proofread one's essay for errors and omissions of both form and substance, to revise and restructure where ideas are poorly organized or where evidence is lacking, to correct the draft for errors in capitalization, spelling, and punctuation, and to produce a finished paper relatively free of sentence fragments, comma splices, agreement errors, and improper pronoun references.

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Publications Available from the Department

Improving Writing in California Schools is one of approximately 500 publications that are available from the California State Department of Education. Some of the more recent publications or those most widely used are the following:

American Indian Education Handbook (1982)	$3.50
Assessment of Writing Performance of California High School Seniors (1977)	2.75
Bilingual Program, Policy, and Assessment Issues (1980)	3.25
California Private School Directory	9.00
California Public School Directory	12.50
California's Demonstration Programs in Reading and Mathematics (1980)	2.00
Education of Gifted and Talented Pupils (1979)	2.50
English Language Framework for California Public Schools (1976)	1.50
Foreign Language Framework for California Public Schools (1980)	2.50
Guidelines for Developing Comprehensive Guidance Programs in California Public Schools (1981)	2.00
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Handbook for Planning an Effective Mathematics Program (1982)	2.00
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Relationship Between Nutrition and Student Achievement, Behavior, and Health (1980)	4.00
Science Education for the 1980s (1982)	2.00
Science Framework for California Public Schools (1978)	1.65
Statement on Competencies in English and Mathematics Expected of Entering Freshmen (1982)	2.50
Student Achievement in California Schools, 1981-82 Annual Report (1982)	2.00†
Students' Rights and Responsibilities Handbook (1980)	1.50
Toward More Human Schools (1981)	1.75

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*Price of 1983 revision, in process, $2.50.
†The report for 1980-81 is also available for $1.75, plus tax.

Chapter 1

A WRITING CRISIS— Fact or Fiction?

"American teenage.s are losing their ability to communicate t' rough standard written English." With that con.ment and the results of its 1974 assessment of writing, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) sparked a national debate on the state of writing in American schools and colleges. NAEP found in 1974 that thirteen- and seventeen-year-olds wrote in a shorter, "primer-like" style and used more incoherent paragraphs than their counterparts tested four years earlier.

The bad news from NAEP came on top of a continuing decline in scores on the verbal compo- nent of the *Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)*. Between 1963 and 1977, the national average for verbal scores dropped 49 points, from 478 to 429 (out of a possible 800). A study commissioned by the College Entrance Examination Board shows that the rate of decline has accelerated since 1970. In 1979, how- ever, California's students taking the *SAT* improved their scores over the previous year, thus marking a turnaround for the state after a long period of decline. The decline continued in most other states.

The writing problem has been felt in the business world. According to a personnel official for the Bank of America quoted in *Newsweek*, "Errors we once found commonly in applications from high school graduates are now cropping up in forms from people with four-year college degrees." The magazine also noted that the Civil Service Commis- sion had doubled its in-house writing programs "in order to develop adequate civil servants." (6)*

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*This number and all other numbers in parentheses refer to the Selected References at the end of this chapter where complete biblio- graphical data are given.

In California, the average twelfth grade writing score on the *Iowa Test of Educational Develop- ment (ITED)* fell from the 42nd percentile to the 32nd percentile between 1969 and 1975. The national average for the test is the 50th percentile. Seniors now take the California Assessment Program's *Sur- vey of Basic Skills*, which is equivalent to the *ITED*, and until last year their scores had revealed a continuing problem. However, in 1980-81 the seniors improved their scores in all content areas. Written language scores were up   7 percent; read- ing, up 0.3 percent; spelling, up 0.2 percent; and mathematics, up 1.2 percent (9).

Special studies provide a basis for comparing the performance of California's twelfth graders on the *Survey of Basic Skills* with the performance of stu- dents who took tests produced by national test pub- lishers. On the basis of the 1978 norms set for these tests, the performance of California's twelfth grad- ers has improved relative to the rest of the nation. In written language, for example, the comparison for 1980-81 places California's seniors at the 43rd percentile on the *ITED;* 40th, on *Tests of Aca- demic Progress;* and 57th on *Sequential Tests of Educational Progress.*

Even with these recent improvements in test scores, a survey taken not too long ago on the 19 campuses of the California State University and Colleges' system revealed that 40 to 60 percent of the 250,000 undergraduates in the system were con- sidered incapable of college work requiring "the ability to write a comprehensive sentence." (4) And the University of California, Berkeley, which draws from the top 12 percent of the state's high school

students, has found that nearly half of its incoming freshmen need a special course called Subject A, generally known as "bonehead English." (See page viii for a list of writing skills the universities in California expect their entering freshmen to have.)

NAEP Results

NAEP, a federally funded agency that measures the knowledge, skills and attitudes of young Americans on a number of subjects, gave essay topics to a nationally representative sample of nine-, thirteen-, and seventeen-year-olds in 1969-70 and again in 1973-74. In both instances, the thirteen- and seventeen-year-olds were asked to describe "something that is worth talking about," such as the Empire State Building or Niagara Falls. The nine-year-olds were shown a photograph of a kangaroo jumping over a fence and were asked to describe what was happening.

The essays were rated from two different perspectives by English teachers trained in NAEP scoring techniques. The first group gave each essay a "holistic" score, which represented the reader's response to the essay as a whole. Holistic scores permit reliable comparisons of essays, but they tell little about why one essay is better than another. Under the second scoring method, the English teachers examined the mechanics of writing and categorized the essays according to various types of sentences, punctuation, spelling and word usage errors.

Comparing the assessments in 1969-70 with those in 1973-74, each of which involved approximately 80,000 students, NAEP concluded that the writing ability of thirteen- and seventeen-year-olds had declined, but that the ability of nine-year-olds appeared to have improved slightly. In the 1974 essays by seventeen-year-olds, NAEP found more awkwardness, run-on sentences and incoherent paragraphs than it did in 1970. The teenagers seemed to be moving away from traditional writing conventions and toward those of everyday speech, NAEP said (12).

More Literacy at the College Level

Under a requirement recently imposed by the system's trustees, students at campuses of the California State University and Colleges, must prove they can write the English language to graduate. The writing requirement was adopted by the 19-member campus system in 1976. When machinery for enforcing the measure is in place at each institution, sponsors hope it will close an academic loophole which enabled some students to struggle through remedial English, avoid further writing courses or tests, and graduate without the ability to write literate English.

So far, testing has shown that some juniors and seniors do have a problem. At California State University—Sacramento, nearly half the juniors who took the test recently did not meet the required standards when asked to write on a topic for two hours. Most who failed did not address the main question, organize their thoughts or develop and support their ideas. Many of the Sacramento students did not meet the general

upperclassmen to pass a writing exam for nearly 20 years, and scores have improved considerably since the early years. At California State University—Humboldt, only 18 percent of the 360 juniors who took the writing exam in a recent year failed, but the results do not necessarily prove juniors there write unusually well. School officials caution that the most confident students probably took the test the first time it was offered, and that, most likely, these were also the ablest writers on campus. The test will be offered several times, and officials expect the failure rate to increase.

To fulfill the writing requirement, some campuses of the California State University and Colleges administer a test while others permit students to take a writing course within their own major field of study. All the campuses offer intensive follow-up courses and tests for those who cannot meet the writing standards. One effect of the new requirement

On the bright side, there seemed to be no deterioration in the way nine-, thirteen-, or seventeen-year-olds coped with mechanics—punctuation, capitalization, agreement and spelling. Such mechanics were being handled adequately by "the vast majority of students," NAEP reported.

NAEP results also indicated that the gap between good and poor seventeen-year-old writers may be increasing. The good writers in 1973-74 were as good as they were in 1969-70 (they had the same average holistic score), and, possibly, there were a few more of them in 1974 than there were in 1970. The poor writers, however, did worse in the second assessment than they did in the first (they had a lower average holistic score), and there were definitely more of them. They wrote shorter, less stylistically sophisticated essays and made as many errors as students did in 1970. Also, more weak essays in the second assessment were incoherent.

Among thirteen-year-olds, the 1974 essays were shorter than they were in 1970. The vocabulary used was simpler than in the previous assessments, and most thirteen-year-olds committed at least one comma error. The proportion of very good writers dropped from 19 to 13 percent. The scorers noted a marked increase in "rambling prose," which NAEP defined as "somewhat unfocused writing containing more run-on sentences and more awkwardness." This increase was particularly noticeable among males. More thirteen-year-olds in the 1974 assessment also tried to spell phonetically words they did not know.

The performance of nine-year-olds was more encouraging. The proportion of essays ranked four or better (on an eight-point scale) rose from 51 percent in 1970 to 57 percent in 1974. The average paper in the 1974 assessment contained more complex sentences but was less coherent than the average paper from 1970. Apparently, the students were moving toward more sophisticated writing and were losing some clarity in the process. Most essays by nine-year-olds were free of errors concerning word choice, agreement, run-on sentences, commas and periods. Very few nine-year-olds, however, wrote fully developed paragraphs, and the percentage of them decreased between 1970 and 1974. The most rapid decline was among writers of high-ranking papers (12).

California Test Results

NAEP results parallel the findings of a 1975 study based on essays written by 4,000 California high school seniors. The California State Department of Education published the results of the study in 1977 in *An Assessment of the Writing Performance of California High School Seniors* (1). Analyses of the essays showed that although the majority of the seniors could handle basic writing mechanics adequately, many could not develop sophisticated paragraphs or manage complex sentences. The essay examination was conducted by the California Assessment Program (CAP), an effort directed by the California State Department of Education's Office of Program Evaluation and Research.

CAP also assesses student abilities every year through a written expression test consisting of multiple-choice questions based on objectives developed by the Department's English Language Assessment Advisory Committee. The tests were drawn up after the California Legislature required, in 1972, that the state develop its own tests, based on the instructional objectives and curricula prevalent in California schools, rather than use commercial tests developed for nationwide use.

The essay assessment was administered only once. Although members of the advisory committee felt that essay exams measure students' writing ability more accurately than multiple-choice instruments, the cost of scoring essays annually on a statewide basis was considered prohibitive. Results of the essay assessment, however, were used to validate the multiple-choice tests to ensure that questions did accurately gauge writing skills.

For the essay test, students were asked to complete one of five tasks: describe a favorite object, describe an automobile accident from a diagram, give directions on how to make something, compose a letter describing a pictured event or discuss an invention "mankind would be better off without." The essays were scored twice. First they were given a holistic score. Then sample essays ranked in the top quarter, middle half and bottom quarter were examined to pinpoint common strengths and weaknesses.

The 1975 assessment report concluded that the vast majority of seniors in California were able at least to communicate in writing and that "only a very small percentage were completely unable to communicate through written English." Despite this positive overview, CAP—like NAEP—detected great differences in the levels of skill shown by good and poor writers. Students who wrote well tended to do well in all dimensions of writing, including content and mechanics. Those who wrote poorly tended to have difficulty with all dimensions of writing. In both the CAP and the NAEP studies, average scores for girls were slightly higher than the scores for boys.

California seniors whose essays were in the top quarter demonstrated strength in almost all dimensions of writing, according to *An Assessment of the Writing Performance of California High School Seniors*. They frequently maintained a consistent tone, and many wrote creatively, regardless of the topic, the report said. Vocabulary choices were judged to be precise, fresh and original, and sentence structure was generally effective and varied. The assessment report described paragraph development as "ordered, coherent and well-supported with vivid detail." Other strengths noted were correct use of standard English and proper spelling and capitalization. The only weakness in the top-ranking essays concerned punctuation (1).

California's seniors in the middle group displayed a wide range of writing ability. Among their most frequently noted strengths were consistency of tone, observation and description; they generally used precise vocabulary and demonstrated a basic grasp of proper sentence structure. But many had difficulty with the proper use of pronouns. Their writing also lacked variety and complexity and often contained awkward phrases and redundancies. The overriding weakness of this group concerned paragraph development. Although these students demonstrated some sense of order and organization, their paragraphs lacked sufficient supporting detail and consistency in the use of tense; they handled capitalization and spelling competently but had trouble with the comma and apostrophe.

California seniors in the low quarter demonstrated weaknesses in all areas of writing. Some even failed to follow directions. Most low-ranking papers were too short, and the longer essays tended to ramble. Both the individual paragraphs and the essays as a whole were weak in reasoning, supporting evidence, organization and logical development. Run-on sentences and awkward phrases were common, as were departures from standard English. Vocabulary was limited and lacked variety; there were many mistakes in spelling and punctuation. Like the middle group, the low group frequently misused the comma and apostrophe.

The California Survey of Basic Skills

On the California Assessment Program's objective test, the *Survey of Basic Skills*, students have displayed strengths and weaknesses similar to those reflected in the essays. This multiple-choice written

How Have the Schools Failed?

What has gone wrong with writing in the schools? Two prominent college professors believe that the schools have failed to place enough emphasis on the worth of true literacy.

According to J. Mitchell Morse of Temple University, literacy all too often has been sacrificed to the belief that students should be free to express themselves in their own language. Here's how he expands this viewpoint:

Their own language, before they come to college, is in most cases the language of nonreaders. It lacks the words and the syntactical structures they will need in order to live in the literate world. It is not extensive enough or varied enough to form thoughts of much complexity, and they lack experience in handling more varied and sophisticated elements. Without practice in combining many words in many ways, what can they express but naivete? Until they are exposed to writing more sophisticated than that of a comic book with a fourth grade vocabulary and a fourth grade syntax, they will remain poverty-stricken. Teachers who tell them their poverty is not poverty are deceiving them. (*Temple University Alumni Review*, Fall 1976)

There is no easy way to master language, warns A. Bartlett Giamatti of Yale University, and any teacher who pretends there are shortcuts will inevitably shortchange students:

High school and college students have been encouraged to believe that language does not require work—that if they wait, they will suddenly blossom and flower in verbal mastery .... Clearly, to have been told all these things—and millions of schoolchildren were and are told these things—is to have been lied to. It is also to have been robbed of the only thing that everyone does share, the only thing that connects us each to each. Language is the medium in which the race lives, it is what we have brought from our past, and it is what has brought us from the past—our link with who we were and what we want to be. (*Yale Alumni Magazine*, January 1976)

expression test has been given to all the state's sixth and twelfth graders annually since 1975-76. It tests students' abilities in reading and mathematics as well as in written expression. Results of all the assessments, along with sample questions, appear in *Student Achievement in California Schools* (8, 9).

Sixth Grade Results

In written expression, the overall performance of sixth graders has improved slightly each year since the *Survey of Basic Skills* has been given. Pupils answered an average of 62.5 percent of the questions correctly in 1975-76, compared to 66.2 percent in 1980-81. A state-appointed advisory committee analyzed the 1979-80 results and identified, on page 108 of the annual report, three areas of strength among the sixth graders:

- Selecting the correct form of a word for a sentence
- Selecting the correct verb or pronoun according to standard English usage
- Discriminating between complete and incomplete sentences (9)

California sixth graders were strongest on word forms, answering an average of 83.4 percent of the questions correctly in 1979-80 and 84 percent in 1980-81. Below is a typical question from this section of the test (the percentage of students selecting each response is shown in parentheses, and the correct response is darkened):

Fill in the oval next to the word or words that best fit each sentence.

She was _____ extreme pain until yesterday.

o suffer (3%)
o suffered (11%)
⊕ suffering (84%)
o suffers (2%)

Pupils answered an average of more than three-fourths of the standard English usage questions correctly. These questions test knowledge of pronouns and verb forms, as in this example:

Fill in the oval next to the choice that is correct for each sentence.

The doctors _____ everything possible.

● did (84%)
o done (16%)

Between 1975-76 and 1980-81, the state's sixth graders made steady progress on sentence recognition. Test questions require students to distinguish between complete sentences and sentence fragments and between run-together sentences and

those with a normal word order. The following example shows student performance on one item in 1980-81 and the average performance on sentence recognition for each year of testing:

Fill in the oval next to the group of words which needs more words to make it a complete sentence.

o They brought a present. (11%)
o We are happy. (16%)
o Barry is not here. (8%)
● In the dark of the night. (65%)

Percent correct for all sentence recognition on items, by year of testing

1975-76	58.7	1978-79	63.0
1976-77	61.1	1979-80	65.1
1977-78	62.2	1980-81	66.3

A related set of questions required pupils to select the most effective sentence or sentence element, a skill involving recognition of the clearest, most concise and most direct way of expressing a statement. Youngsters have shown steady improvement in this area, answering an average of 64.6 percent of these questions correctly in 1980-81. Since the questions tend to be relatively subtle and sophisticated for sixth graders, members of the state's English Language Assessment Advisory Committee were pleased that performance was this high and had continued to climb. The following is a sample exercise used in the 1979-80 assessment (the percentage answering each item is in the parentheses at the right):

Beneath each sentence you will find four ways of writing the underlined part. Choose the answer that would make the best sentence, and fill in the oval next to it. The first answer is always the same as the underlined part and is sometimes the correct answer.

Besides selling candy, flowers and greeting cards are also sold by Mr. Grog.

o Besides selling candy, flowers and greeting cards are also sold by Mr. Grog. (15%)
o Not only candy, but Mr. Grog sells flowers and greeting cards too. (24%)
o Candy as well as flowers and greeting cards, too, all of these are sold by Mr. Grog. (7%)
● Mr. Grog sells not only candy, but flowers and greeting cards as well. (54%)

The sixth graders were weak in four skill areas, according to the advisory committees:

- Spelling words with suffixes
- Capitalizing days of the week and months of the year

- Identifying the most specific or general word in a group of words
- Selecting a word which is most likely to convey a particular feeling or attitude

The 64 spelling questions were designed to measure students' knowledge of regularly spelled words, those with unusual spellings and those formed by adding prefixes or suffixes. Students were given several words and asked to pick the one misspelled. One choice was "all correct." The committee was satisfied with the students' performance on general spelling items but expressed concern that they did not deal as well with suffixes, as on this example:

Pairs of words are given below. In each pair, one word is spelled correctly, and the other is spelled incorrectly. Fill in the oval next to the CORRECT SPELLING.

o careing (35%)
- caring (65%)

The committee decided that the scores on this item and similar items were unnecessarily low, because the spellings follow regular and predictable patterns for adding suffixes. The committee recommended that spelling be taught in a systematic and structured way, preferably using a spelling textbook; students should be exposed to clusters of words that follow a particular spelling pattern—instead of being given lists of unrelated words to memorize—so they can learn generalizations for adding suffixes.

The English Language Assessment Advisory Committee added that if students fail to master some of the basic rules for spelling suffixes in the third and fourth grades, these lessons should be retaught, reviewed and practiced in the fifth and sixth grades.

There were 14 questions requiring students to recognize words that should be capitalized in a sentence. Student performance in this area showed the largest percentage gain over the four years of any writing skill, rising from 57.4 percent in 1975-76 to 64 percent in 1980-81. While pleased with the overall gain in capitalization, committee members judged that student performance was still too low on questions involving days of the week and months of the year. The committee expected the vast majority of sixth graders to know that the days of the week should be capitalized, but only about 68 percent of them did so in 1979-80, as illustrated by this question and others:

In the following sentences you are to look for mistakes in capitalization. When you find a mistake, fill in the oval next to the line with the mistake. If there is no mistake, fill in the fourth oval.

- On monday my (68%)
o brother always rides (3%)
o his bicycle to school (3%)
o (No mistakes) (26%)

The committee also noted that many sixth graders capitalized only the first word of a proper noun phrase that included more than one word. It concluded that those students needed a better grasp of the concept of proper nouns.

Punctuation questions required students to detect errors in the use of the period, question mark, exclamation point, comma, apostrophe and quotation marks. This proved to be the most difficult task of all for the sixth graders; they answered 57.9 percent of these questions correctly. It was, however, a skill in which California sixth graders' scores have improved considerably in past years, rising roughly a full percentage point a year between 1975-76 and 1980-81.

The following question was given in all of the first five years of testing. (The percentages at the right refer to the results for this one question in 1979-80, not to all punctuation items.)

The following sentences may have a mistake in punctuation (periods, commas, apostrophes, etc.). When you find a mistake, fill in the oval next to the line with the mistake. If there is no mistake, fill in the fourth oval.

o This summer we are (6%)
- going to Hollywood California (57%)
o for at least three days. (2%)
o (No mistakes) (35%)

Percent correct for all punctuation items, by year of testing

1975-76	48.3	1978-79	54.8
1976-77	51.7	1979-80	56.8
1977-78	54.2	1980-81	57.9

Language choice questions were used to test the students' ability to select words carefully for different purposes. Some questions asked them to pick the most specific and vivid word from several listed; others directed them to choose a word that would reflect a particular emotional tone in a given context. In the 1977-78 testing, language choice was the only skill in which sixth grade scores declined (from 56.5 to 55.2 percent correct). However, by 1980-81 the students had made up all of the lost ground, with an average of 56.6 percent giving correct answers. The following are examples of two kinds of language choice questions given in 1979-80 (with the percent of students selecting each response shown in parentheses):

Pretend that you are writing a story. Fill in the oval next to the word or words that will give your

reader the clearest, most specific, and concrete picture.

EXAMPLE:
At the bottom of her lunch sack she found
___.

o some food
● a carrot
o a snack
o a vegetable

I gave my ___ a bath.
● poodle (52%)
o dog (36%)
o animal (1%)
o pet (11%)

Fill in the oval next to the word or group of words that answers the question.

Which of the following best shows that John's attitude was unfriendly?

"Where are my bat and ball?" ___ John.
o called (8%)
o said (20%)
● grumbled (57%)
o exclaimed (15%)

While sixth grade results on language choice questions have been uneven, twelfth graders' scores have declined. This fact concerned the advisory committee, because students need to understand the special effects that can be created by words both for their reading and for writing. Since this weakness appeared at several grade levels and in different content areas as well, the committee recommended that language choice receive more instructional emphasis. Specifically, members suggested that teachers construct practice exercises that would help students choose words according to their degree of specificity and their intended emotional effect.

Further examples of test questions may be found in *Test Content Specifications for the Survey of Basic Skills: Written Expression and Spelling, Grades Six and Twelve* (10).

After reviewing the sixth graders' performances on all written expression items in the 1979-80 testing, the committee made three recommendations for instruction:

1. A more efficient approach to teaching spelling is needed at the elementary level. Children should be exposed to homogeneous groups of words following similar spelling patterns so that they can more easily internalize generalizations that apply to many other words as well. Such instruction should include more emphasis in the generalizations pertaining to the spelling of words with suffixes. If students fail to form such basic generalizations in the third and fourth grades, where they are first introduced, these lessons should be retaught, reviewed, and practiced in the fifth and sixth grades.

2. Some of the simplest capitalization rules pertaining to days of the week and months of the year need to be retaught and reinforced in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. Intermediate students also need more specific instruction in the skill of identifying all the words in a multiple-word proper noun and recognizing that all of them must be capitalized.

3. Focused instruction and skill-building practice are needed in the language choices skill area to help students understand some of the issues related to effective word choices. Such instruction should encourage students to think about word choices in terms of degrees of specificity and particular emotional effects. For example, students should recognize that "Pinto" communicates with greater precision than "car" and that "grumbled" and "stated" convey different emotions. Students need this sensitivity to language if they are to write effectively, read critically, and be alert to propaganda devices in all the media. (9)

Twelfth Grade Results

The strengths and weaknesses of the seniors who took the *Survey of Basic Skills* in 1979-80 and 1980-81 were remarkably like those of their sixth grade counterparts. The state's English Language Assessment Advisory Committee found the twelfth graders strong in three areas:

● Selecting the correct form of a word for a sentence
● Discriminating between complete and incomplete sentences
● Inserting punctuation in sentences where the sound of spoken English could be used as a guide

The seniors were weak in seven areas:

● Spelling words with suffixes
● Inserting punctuation in sentences where knowledge of a rule or convention is necessary
● Recognizing the most specific or general word in a group of words
● Selecting a word which is most likely to convey a particular attitude or emotion
● Identifying basic grammatical elements in sentences
● Recognizing the most effective and concise statement of an idea
● Achieving coherence in paragraphs

Questions in the section concerning word forms proved to be the easiest for the twelfth graders, although scores on this part of the test had declined

Jargon 101?

The teacher holds the post of language guardian during children's formative years, according to *Empty Pages: A Search for Writing Competency in School and Society*, compiled by Clifton Fadiman and James Howard. "The teacher's influence is more vital than a bureaucrat's or a politician's language...; more vital than the broadcaster's language...; more vital than the parent's language, since the family as a quasi-educational institution has weakened considerably; more vital even than the work of professional writers, for only a minority read it."

At one of the nation's colleges or universities, *Empty Pages* says, a student should find an atmosphere conducive to literate expression. But what is he or she to think, it adds, when confronted by a statement like this description of a writing course taken from a college catalog:

This course will examine both oral and written communication and various other interactions between members of the health team and their clients in respect to various therapeutic and operational conditions. The technique of writing clear, concise, and pertinent instructions, reports and documents, in order to optimize the clients (sic) therapeutic experience will be examined and developed in detail. It is anticipated that material covered in this course will not be limited to intrahospital dialogues but will be extended to interactions with the clients (sic) families, and various other community agencies and institutions.

"The student reading such prose will normally assume that it represents the way to write—after all, it describes a course in writing," notes *Empty Pages*.

Empty Pages is based on papers written by members of the Commission on Writing, most of them educators, and compiled and edited by James Howard and Clifton Fadiman. Copies may be obtained from Pitman Learning, Inc., 6 Davis Drive, Belmont, CA 94002.

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slightly since 1975-76. In 1980-81 the seniors answered an average of 72.5 percent of these questions correctly. Most questions ask either for the correct form of a word in a sentence or for a demonstration of dictionary skills. Here is an example from the 1979-80 report, with the percent of students selecting each response shown in parentheses:

Select the form of the word which is grammatically correct in the sentence.

Some methods of teaching have been found _____; others have not.

o education (2%)
o educate (2%)
• educational (89%)
o educationally (7%)

For the 20 sentence recognition questions, twelfth graders had to identify complete sentences, sentence parts, sentence patterns and appropriate subject-verb relationships. This was the second easiest skill area for the seniors and the only area where scores had registered increases for three years in a row. The committee commented that these increases may have been the result of greater emphasis placed on the basics. Within the sentence recognition section, however, performance varied greatly. Most California twelfth graders could recognize incomplete sentences, but many could not name the grammatical parts of a sentence.

Here is how they performed on one question about incomplete sentences:

Identify the group of words which is incomplete or needs additional words to complete the meaning.

• The barking dog in the driveway. (71%)
o It is humid. (6%)
o Peace continues. (18%)
o There is the mail. (5%)

Fewer seniors were able to answer the following question, which required knowing the parts of speech and how to use them in a sentence:

The _____ man seems very _____.

The part of speech that will usually fill both blanks in the sentence above is:

o a noun (11%)
o a verb (17%)
• an adjective (65%)
o a pronoun (7%)

Ability to punctuate was another area where both strengths and weaknesses were revealed. The seniors were adept at selecting the right punctuation when the mark coincided with the natural junctures of spoken English, as in this example:

In the following sentence which punctuation is needed?

We visited Taliesin West Frank Lloyd Wright's famous home in the desert.

- West, Frank (76%)
- visited, Taliesin (16%)
- famous, home (2%)
- home, in (6%)

On the whole, punctuation and capitalization questions continued to reflect the second lowest median score of all the skill areas. In 1980-81 seniors answered an average of 56.6 percent of these questions correctly, which is 1.2 percent higher than it was in 1979-80. One area that gave the seniors trouble was the use of contractions. They could not answer such questions by relying on what "sounds right." However, where students had to use knowledge of one or more conventions as a guide, the percent correct scores dropped substantially, as in this example:

In each sentence there may be an error in capitalization or punctuation. The error, if any, is underlined and lettered. If there is an error, select the one underlined part that must be changed to make the sentence correct. If there is no error, the answer is D.

"Will you make sure that all the boys turn in their uniforms, Steve?" asked Mr. Ross.
$\overline{\text{A}}$ $\overline{\text{B}}$ $\overline{\text{C}}$

No error
D

- A (38%)
- B (22%)
- C (3%)
- D (37%)

The state's advisory committee commented that students at all grade levels seemed to have difficulty with apostrophe usage.

Spelling questions were used to test students on regularly spelled words, those with irregular spellings and those with suffixes. Students did well on the spelling items, answering an average of 68.8 percent correctly. Many questions asked them to verify the spelling of a word in a sentence:

In the following sentence, one word is underlined and is written in **bold type.** Fill in the oval next to "right" if the word is spelled correctly or next to "wrong" if the word is spelled incorrectly.

This is only a **temperary** job?

- Right (30%)
- Wrong (70%)

Although seniors did well on that type of spelling question, they had difficulty with suffixes. The following questions illustrate the kinds of words often misspelled, with the percent of students identifying the spelling of the word as "right" or "wrong" shown in parentheses:

Are we eating in the **dinning** room?

- Right (52%)
- Wrong (48%)

After cutting the grass, I **trimed** the hedge.

- Right (33%)
- Wrong (67%)

Members of the English Language Assessment Advisory Committee were disturbed to see that so many seniors had failed to learn some of the most basic rules for adding suffixes to words. They recommended that California schools begin skill maintenance programs for junior and senior high school students. In these programs, words would be introduced in homogeneous groups to enable students to learn generalizations about spelling suffixes.

The 32 language choice questions required students to sense the undertones of attitude-conveying words and phrases, to differentiate between specific and general words and to identify the intended audience of a piece of writing. They answered an average of two-thirds of these items correctly. Until 1980-81 this was the only skill area in which twelfth graders had registered a decline in almost every year of testing since 1975-76, when the *Survey of Basic Skills* was first administered. However, even the 66.7 percent correct score for 1980-81 was below the 66.9 percent for 1975-76.

These questions illustrate two types of language choices seniors were asked to make:

Dr. Henry J. Heimlich, _____ at Jewish Hospital in Cincinnati, described the technique in the journal *Emergency Medicine,* and invited physicians to try it in real emergencies.

Which of the following terms is most respectful in the context of the above sentence?

- director of surgery (63%)
- chief blade (1%)
- practitioner (17%)
- head doctor (19%)

Which of the following words or groups of words is most SPECIFIC?

- current events magazine (32%)
- publication (5%)
- *Newsweek* (57%)
- magazine (6%)

Committee members were concerned about the low scoring levels, particularly on questions like the second example. They commented that students' writing typically suffers from a lack of specificity. Perhaps one reason students produce vague papers is that they cannot distinguish a specific word from

a general word, even when both are given, committee members noted.

The committee recommended more instruction geared to language choice. Teachers can construct sample exercises, based on items in the *Test Content Specifications* (10), that build students' skill in selecting words for their specificity or for the attitude they convey.

As in the past, sentence manipulation was the area of poorest performance for the twelfth graders; in 1980-81 they answered only 44.3 percent of the questions correctly. In this section students were tested on their ability to select the most effective sentence style among several options. In all three assessments, many students preferred awkward, wordy and choppy sentences—often in the passive voice—to simple, direct, concise statements. Here is an example from the 1979-80 report:

> Beneath the following sentence you will find four ways of writing the underlined part. Choose the answer that makes the best sentence, and mark the oval in front of the answer you have chosen. The first answer is the same as the underlined part and may be the correct answer.
>
> On Sunday we bathed the dog, which he needed very badly.
>
> o bathed the dog, which he needed very badly (39%)
> o bathed the dog, which he very badly had need of (5%)
> ● gave the dog a badly needed bath (50%)
> o gave the dog a bath, being badly needed (6%)

In 26 paragraph questions students were assessed to determine how well they understood the relationships among the sentences in a paragraph. The seniors were required to identify irrelevant sentences, recognize inconsistent verb tenses, determine logical sequence, select summary statements and identify transitional words within one or more paragraphs.

Students answered correctly 60.2 percent of the paragraph questions in 1980-81; this is the highest score the high school seniors have recorded for this item. Members of the committee expressed concern about any decline on these questions. Here is an example of the twelfth graders' performance on two questions about paragraphs:

> The seven sentences below are in a scrambled order. Some of them can be put together to make a single, unified paragraph. Before attempting to answer any questions, read all of the sentences carefully.
>
> A 1 It probably received its name from its
>   2 copper-colored head which is triangular
>   3 in shape.
> B 4 Like the rattlesnake, it is a member of
>   5 the pit viper family having a hollow or
>   6 pit between the eye and the nostril.
> C 7 The copperhead was once the most com-
>   8 mon and widely distributed of all ven-
>   9 omous snakes in the United States.
> D 10 This may be the reason that Democrats in
>   11 the North who sympathized with the South
>   12 in the Civil War were called "copperheads,"
>   13 for they were suspected of treachery.
> E 14 Unlike the rattlesnake, it has no rattles
>   15 and strikes without warning.
> F 16 Augustus Thomas wrote a full-length drama
>   17 that he called *The Copperhead.*
> G 18 Today, however, it is most frequently
>   19 found in sparsely settled areas of the
>   20 South.
>
> Which sentence most logically follows Sentence C?
>
> o Sentence A (18%)
> o Sentence B (10%)
> o Sentence E (14%)
> ● Sentence G (58%)
>
> Which of the following words serves as a transitional word in the paragraph?
>
> o which (line 2) (14%)
> o rattlesnake (line 4) (12%)
> o copperhead (line 7) (16%)
> ● however (line 18) (58%)

Student performance on the preceding questions demonstrates a weak grasp of the concepts of sequence and transition in paragraphs. Committee members speculated that these weaknesses could be related to the loss of coherence which was reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the writing of seventeen-year-olds. The members of the California advisory committee were equally concerned that students could not pick out a sentence with a verb tense that was inconsistent with the rest of the paragraph, as illustrated in the following example from the 1979-80 report:

> WASHINGTON (UPI)—(1) Director William E. Colby admitted Tuesday the CIA kept a secret cache of deadly poisons and forbidden weapons—including a suicide drug for captured U.S. spies—despite Presidential orders to destroy them in 1970.
>
> (2) Later, Dr. Frank Gordon, a retired CIA scientist, identifies himself and two colleagues as the agency officials who secreted the most potent of the banned poisons in a vault where it remained hidden for five years.
>
> (3) Gordon was questioned for hours by the Senate Intelligence Committee. (4) He said his group decided the White House directive did not apply to the CIA supply of deadly shellfish toxins because they were chemical, not biological, and

because he thought the directive was meant only for the Army.

(5) In his testimony, Colby produced a black electric dart gun, slightly larger than a .45-caliber pistol, and explained it could fire poison-tipped darts 100 yards and kill a person silently and instantly at that range.

(6) Colby also said the secret cache of poisons made from cobra venom and the shellfish toxins could be used in offensive weapons such as the dart gun or in new, improved suicide pills for U.S. spies.

Which sentence is inconsistent with the time development?

o Sentence 1 (21%)
● Sentence 2 (35%)
o Sentence 3 (27%)
o Sentence 4 (17%)

Members of the committee concluded that the weak performance on this type of task revealed a lack of understanding about how time patterns relate to verb tense in paragraph development. Seniors also had difficulty avoiding shifts in person within sentences and paragraphs, such as changing from "one" to "your" as in this example: If one reads for many hours, your eyes will become tired. On the following test item, more than one-half the students failed to detect the inconsistency between a pronoun and its referent:

In each sentence there may be an error. If there is an error, decide which underlined part must be changed to make the sentence correct. Mark the oval corresponding to the letter for the underlined part.

Many of Shakespeare's plays appear to question
                                        A
whether it is within the power of man to control
         B
your own destiny.   No error
         C   D

o A (11%)
o B (14%)
● C (44%)
o D (31%)

The low score on the preceding question may reflect a more basic difficulty: recognizing the referent of any given pronoun. In this case, *man* is the referent of the incorrect *your*. Such problems with pronoun reference were also noted by the California State Department of Education's Reading Assessment Advisory Committee in its analysis of reading results for the second, third, sixth, and twelfth grades (8 and 9).

Instructional Implications

Based on the twelfth grade results for 1979-80, the state's English Language Advisory Committee made the following recommendations for teaching:

1. *Spelling.* A skill maintenance program in spelling for junior high and high school students is needed. Such a program should involve a highly structured approach to spelling instruction which would introduce words grouped on the basis of spelling generalizations, particularly generalizations which apply to the formation of new words by the addition of suffixes to a base word. This kind of structure coupled with appropriate practice should enable students to learn a number of highly useful generalizations which can be applied to many other words. More time and especially more efficient and specific instruction should be devoted to the spelling needs of junior high and high school students.

2. *Language choices.* Elementary and secondary students should have more experience and more focused instruction in a number of dimensions which relate to effective language choices in writing. These factors include the degree of specificity of a word (see Example 51) and the emotional tone conveyed by a given word in a particular context (see Example 52). The Reading Assessment Advisory Committee which found that many twelfth grade students displayed confusion on some of the reading questions requiring them to detect the author's emotion or attitude in a selection, concurred that students need more focused instruction in the language choices skill area.

3. *Paragraphs.* Specific and sequential instruction in a variety of paragraphs skills (include stating ideas in a logical sequence, using transitions, and achieving consistency of verb tense and pronoun reference) is needed at the secondary level. Such instruction in the paragraph skills should be reinforced by the detailed examination and discussion of written material through sustained classroom discussions. Members of the Reading Assessment Advisory Committee concurred with the English Language Assessment Advisory Committee in feeling that the intensive study of paragraphs skills is likely to increase reading comprehension as well as improve coherence in student writing.

4. *Sentence manipulation.* High school students need more experience with sentence manipulation activities (as in Example 57) in order to help them (1) learn to equate effectiveness with economy of expression, and (2) gain control of sentence structure in their own writing.

Members of both the reading and English language advisory committees agreed that intensive study of paragraph skills is likely to increase students' reading comprehension as well as to result in more coherent writing.

Although the *Survey of Basic Skills* is strictly a California test, special studies have been done to equate student performance on it with the results of certain nationally normed tests. For several years preceding 1976, written expression scores of both sixth and twelfth graders in California had been below national norms. Sixth graders improved in 1976-77 when they moved above the national average for the first time—from the 49th to the 51st percentile. In 1980-81 their scores reached the 55th percentile when equated with nationally normed tests. As noted earlier in this chapter, the scores for California's seniors changed significantly in 1980-81, even though they are still below the 50th percentile for some of the nationally normed tests (9).

Why Have Scores Declined?

The reasons cited for the decline in writing ability run the gamut—i. o much television, society's failure to value good writing and lack of writing practice in school. Educators who reviewed the NAEP results tended to hold society responsible because it downplays the importance of writing. "Business and personal communication depends primarily on the telephone," says W. Ross Winterowd of the University of Southern California. "With the growing preference for spoken communication, routine writing moves toward simpler forms." (12)

"What are the payoffs for being a good writer in our society?" asked Richard Lloyd-Jones of the University of Iowa. "Students question the need to master a skill they may never be called upon to use after school has ended." (12)

Those who blame television viewing point to the fact that it is a passive activity that fills time children might spend reading. They also note that it is an activity that does not develop the analytical skills needed for writing. Reading, in contrast, requires more effort, wrote philologist Mario Pei in *Change* magazine, and also does something more: It presents "a chance to be critical—to go back and

Journal Writing in Social Studies

When students keep journals in social studies, their writing helps the teacher gauge how well they understand a concept. The teacher reads their entries but does not grade them. Instead, the teacher uses the journal contents as a source of feedback from the students, which helps guide future class discussions and teaching presentations.

The following unedited journal entries were made by a 12-year-old seventh grader at the beginning of a social studies unit. The class spent two days comparing maps in a world atlas to determine patterns that would answer such questions as: Do countries with a high gross national product (GNP) have lower infant mortality?

The student's comments in his journal follow exactly as they were written without corrections of spelling, capitalization, and grammar:

I'm a little mixed on what to write. . . . Literacy is "inter-connected with" infant mortality because you have to read to understand health etc. It shows how population is high in some countries and in other countries not so populated. The facts show that many subjects, such as infant mortality, life expectancy, literacy, G.N.P., and population, can fit together in the world as global problems.

This, I'm pretty sure, doesn't make that much sense to you. It's hard for me to explain it. I think I really have to get into our subject more for this quarter to explain it. I think I really have to get into our subject more for this quarter to explain may answer (s) better.

You can't have all the questions about what I wrote!!!

I understand that the important thing is how long you are going to live. That's all I understand about that. Infant Mortality, what a funny word. Infant means baby or small child, but mortality means how long a baby is going to live. Why don't they just say Child or Baby Expectancy. It'd be a lot easier. Japan has the lowest Infant Mortality because it has a large G.N.P. Literacy means can you read and write. Your not supposed to confuse literacy with being smart or dumb. Russia has a lot a Literacy? Population means how many people in a area. They have 9,000,000 on the island they call Japan. No wonder the people are so little.

I didn't learn much but I did learn something how it is one big blurr. If you have bad GNP there would be Infant Mortality which would cut down population I can't get the rest.

What I don't get is how it all ties in and how life expectancy and infant mortality have to do with global problems.

I learned that countries with a high G.N.P. are countries with lower infant mortality, longer life expectancy, higher literacy, and pretty well controlled population. These countries, since they have a high G.N.P. they can afford good medical care, good education and good scientific knowledge and investigations. (I don't understand Peter R.) The unit is easy and educational, but boring. I hope that later in the unit we start some projects to do in class.

reexamine what the writer has said, compare it with your own ideas and attitudes . . . and then digest it with the admixture of your own enzymes." Radio and television rarely offer an opportunity to reexamine content. As a consequence, Pei argues, listeners passively adopt the corruptions of language that bombard them daily in advertisements and regular programs (5).

One of the few efforts to determine the effect of television viewing on student achievement was made in 1979-80 as part of the California Assessment Program's annual testing of all sixth and twelfth grade students in the public schools of the state (9). Over 280,000 sixth graders and 230,000 twelfth graders were asked how much time they spent watching television, doing homework or assigned reading, and reading other materials for their own enjoyment.

The responses to the questions were compared to test scores and such other factors as the socioeconomic status (SES) of the students' families and the students' levels of English language fluency. The results were also examined to see if there were any differences between the test results for boys and for girls. Those who conducted the California study said, "The results have not yet been analyzed in detail, but there was one particularly noteworthy indication: Students who watch a lot of television generally score lower on the CAP tests than those students who watch little or no television. The preliminary results by no means prove that television watching causes lower test scores; they do, however, suggest an important area for further research." In discussing the overall relationship between test scores and amount of television watched, the researchers had this to say:

The rate of decline in test performance of sixth graders remained constant with each increment of television watching through three hours per day, then became noticeably worse for those nearly 60,000 pupils or 20 percent of the sixth graders surveyed who indicated they watch four or more hours per day. Twelfth graders' scores are similar except there is no correspondingly sharp drop in test scores at the three-hour point. More important, the reader will note that the association between amount of television watched and test scores attained for all subject matter areas appears to be more pronounced amoung twelfth graders. Their overall drop in test scores is correspondingly greater for each subject area than is that of sixth graders.

The attack on standard English is not limited to the airways. Another serious threat, according to scholar Jacques Barzun, comes from the pervasiveness of jargon -the pseudo-technical, muddy verbiage that finds its way into government reports, academic papers and everyday speech. Writing in *The College Board Review*, Barzun warned that most Western languages are infected with "assembly-line thinking. Leaving out poetry and some prose fiction, contemporary writing is made up of prefabricated parts- not words denoting things which one can see, hear, smell or touch, but ready-made expressions pointing vaguely to human experience by way of abstraction and metaphor." (2)

The problem with phrases like "growth potential," Barzun contends, is "their remoteness from reality." Writers use such prefabricated phrases not only because of laziness, but for the sake of what Barzun calls "verbal snobbery." "The abstractions and metaphors are tokens of things most honored in our civilization- science, technology, philosophy, the analytic mind and the certified expert." (2)

A more direct cause of the writing problem may be that students are not required to do enough writing in school. A 1968 study by James Squire and Robert Applebee found that in even the best high school English programs, less than 16 percent of class time was spent on composition, and most of that time was devoted to aspects peripheral to writing (7).

As part of NAEP's 1974 assessment, the seventeen-year-olds were asked how much writing they had done in all their courses during the previous six weeks. Thirteen percent reported doing no writing at all in the six-week period, and more than a quarter (27 percent) reported writing only one or two reports or essays. Three-fourths of the respondents averaged less than one writing assignment per week.

When California seniors who took the state's *Survey of Basic Skills* in 1978-79 were asked how many essays and reports they had written in the previous six weeks, just over 22 percent answered "none." Another 14 percent said they had written only one essay or report, and 27 percent reported they had done only two or three such papers. Only about 12 percent of the seniors indicated they had written six to 10 reports or essays in the six-week period.

The California assessment report noted a direct relationship between the number of papers written and the seniors' scores. For example, those who had written two papers scored an average of 61.5 percent on the test, and those writing four or five papers averaged 65.2 percent correct. Those who reported no major writing assignments during the previous six weeks had the lowest written expression scores while the group with the highest scores reported writing six to 10 essays during the time period. The latter group scored a little higher than students who wrote 11 or more essays.

In a study for the Ford Foundation, *Balance the Basics: Let Them Write*, University of New Hampshire education professor Donald H. Graves visited several urban, suburban and rural school districts in three states engaged in efforts to improve writing programs. "In the three districts, children from the 2nd through 6th grades wrote an average of only three pieces during a three-month period," Graves said. "Even less writing was required at the secondary level. Yet, if writing is taken seriously, three months should produce at least 75 pages of drafts by students in the high school years," he concluded (3).

One obvious reason for the dearth of writing assignments is that evaluating papers is a time-consuming task. A. D. Van Nostrand of the Brown University Center for Research in Writing estimates that it takes a minimum of 20 minutes to read and evaluate one essay. If a high school teacher assigned two essays a week, that would add an additional 50 hours to the teacher's work week. In self-defense, Van Nostrand says, the teachers teach "etiquette—conventions of spelling and punctuation,"—and "writing appreciation—showing good examples and saying 'go and do likewise.'" (11)

Another problem, according to Graves, is that writing has been treated as a stepchild of reading. Graves reviewed public investment at all levels for the Ford Foundation study and found that "for every dollar spent on teaching writing, a hundred or more are spent on teaching reading." Graves also determined that research on writing was "decades behind that on reading." (3)

This imbalance also appears in textbooks. Graves found that only 10 to 15 percent of the content of the language arts textbooks he surveyed concentrated on writing. Most texts were dominated by exercises in grammar, punctuation, spelling, listening skills and vocabulary development. One textbook editor told Graves: "When writing is part of a reading series or when much writing is required, the materials won't sell. Teachers want more labor-saving devices, like easier scoring. Some publishers have tried and they have been hurt by their ventures." (3)

There is also strong evidence that most teachers are not properly trained to teach writing. Graves surveyed the catalogs of 26 universities and found that for elementary education candidates, there were 169 courses in reading, 30 in children's literature, 21 in language arts and only two in the teaching of writing.

The situation is no better for secondary school teachers. James Moffett, an authority on school composition, points out that as English majors,

these teachers studied "almost nothing but literature and seldom wrote anything but essay question tests and term papers." The result, he adds, "is that they don't write well themselves for the simple reason that they have had little writing experience. Little in their English major or later in teacher training would have prepared them to guide the writing of others. Mechanical grammatical analysis and wretched little exercises with the sentence or the paragraph filled the vacuum and contributed to the 'crisis in the classroom,'" he concludes (4).

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Chapter 2

CALIFORNIA'S ANSWER

Since its first Summer Writing Institute in 1974, the Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP) at the University of California, Berkeley, has had a profound effect on countless teachers and students. Its impact has reached beyond the Bay Area through its offspring, the California Writing Project (CWP), and beyond the state through the National Writing Project (NWP). The growth of the BAWP idea is a major success story in American education.

Inspiration for the Bay Area project came in 1971, prompted by concern about the quality of the writing produced by freshmen at the University of California, Berkeley. It was decided at the outset, according to James Gray, BAWP director, that the university should not try to fix "blame" for this writing problem, but instead should work cooperatively with public schools in an attempt to find a solution.

This decision led to the development of BAWP's core—the Summer Writing Institutes. By the summer of 1980, these institutes had trained more than 175 preschool, elementary, secondary and college teachers. After receiving the training provided by the institutes, these teachers conduct in-service workshops to share with other teachers proven techniques for teaching writing.

The concern that prompted the formation of BAWP was shared by educators at the state level. In late 1975, the superintendent of public instruction asked William Webster, then deputy superintendent for programs, and George Nemetz, consultant in English in the State Department of Educa-

tion, to explore ways the Department could help reverse the decline in students' writing ability. BAWP, which had already completed two successful summer institutes, was a natural model for the statewide effort.

While the state-level planning was under way, BAWP received word that the National Endowment for the Humanities would provide seed money to establish additional writing projects. By the spring of 1980, a total of 16 sites in California and 59 additional sites nationwide had been established, forming a network that maintained communications through a national newsletter, yearly meetings of project directors, an NWP advisory committee and periodic visits by members of the BAWP staff. Thus, what began as a regional attempt to meet a regional need had evolved, only five years after the first summer institute met, into a national effort through the NWP.

The Bay Area Writing Project

Although many reasons have been given for the weaknesses in student writing, Gray says, "Investigation and experience now show that the single most important factor is a lack of expertise on the part of teachers themselves. While much is known about the teaching of composition," he continues, "this knowledge is presently limited to a small number of researchers and experts in the field; little information on writing instruction has been transmitted to those most concerned with this process

the English teachers in the public school systems." Many teachers, Gray maintains, simply have not been adequately prepared to teach writing.

Nevertheless, there are outstanding teachers of writing in the schools, and BAWP gives them full recognition. These teachers are themselves sources of knowledge about the teaching of writing—knowledge based not on books of composition theory, but on the successes and failures of day-to-day classroom experience. These teachers can be identified, brought together to share what each has discovered individually and exposed to current theoretical knowledge. Thus trained, Gray explains, these teachers of writing become the best teachers of other teachers best because their information has stood the test of classroom practice and has been presented in practical terms that other teachers can translate directly into lessons for their students.

BAWP's Summer Institutes

From the above assumptions, the basic model for the BAWP Summer Writing Institutes was created. Gray, then supervisor of English education at the University of California, Berkeley, was experienced in programs that used teachers to train other teachers. In the most ambitious of these programs, about 200 English teachers were trained to provide in-service training to their colleagues. But this program failed to have lasting impact, Gray says, because the teacher consultants were widely scattered across the state and because follow-up was random. From that experience, Gray explains, two lessons were learned: To have impact, a program should be concentrated geographically, and it should have a narrower focus than the entire English curriculum. BAWP met these criteria by working only with teachers from the nine counties of the San Francisco Bay Area and by focusing on the teaching of writing.

Attending the first summer institute in 1974 were 25 exemplary composition teachers, selected and designated as University Fellows. The University of California, Berkeley, budgeted $13,000 for the program's first year, including $500 stipends for each teacher to cover tuition and other costs. The institute's chief aims were to get the teachers to share effective materials and techniques, air frustrations they had experienced in the classroom, learn how others had solved problems and challenge one another on theories and methods.

The summer institutes meet four days a week for five weeks. During morning sessions, fellows individually demonstrate methods of teaching writing that they have used successfully in their classrooms. Each speaker explains the theoretical assumptions behind the method demonstrated and de-

scribes the skills it is designed to teach. Frequently, he or she distributes personally developed instructional materials and examples of student work. Often, too, the speaker asks the audience to assume the role of students and do the writing assignments the method requires. Presentations by the fellows are supplemented by those of guest speakers—nationally known authorities on the teaching of writing who explain significant research findings or describe approaches not covered by the fellows.

The institutes promote no single philosophy or methodology. Instead, teachers are presented with a cross section of theories and approaches they can weigh and debate. Within this flexible framework, however, BAWP has evolved a core of topics its staff considers important to successful writing instruction:

- *The composing process:* prewriting activities through revision
- *Syntax:* rhetoric developed by Francis Christensen (2),* sentence combining, examination of common errors
- *Sequence:* from personal writing to analytical writing, forming the thesis, patterns of reasoning, sources of content
- *Small-group techniques:* peer criticism, writing to real audiences within the classroom, reading aloud in small groups
- *Writing assessment:* holistic and close reading techniques, schoolwide assessment

BAWP institutes deliberately mix teachers from all grade levels, kindergarten through graduate school. Through their discussions, participants discover that the writing process is the same at all levels; no sequence requires students to learn to write a sentence at one grade level, a paragraph at another and an essay even later. Instead, students at all grade levels can work on complete pieces of discourse, with the teacher focusing on the process of writing at whatever level of maturity the student is able to understand.

Teachers Write, Write and Write

The most revolutionary—and in some respects the most important—aspect of the institute program is the volume of writing done by the participants. During the first four weeks, the fellows are asked to write about a subject that interests them from three points of view, ranging from the personal to the analytical. Papers are duplicated and distributed to small writing response groups, where

*This number and all other numbers in parentheses refer to the Selected References at the end of this chapter where complete bibliographical data are given.

each is read aloud by the writer and discussed thoroughly.

During the final week, the teachers write personal position papers describing their philosophies and practices in light of the new information and insights they have received.

At first, many of the teachers find writing for colleagues to be a frightening experience. Many have written little besides personal letters and lesson plans since graduating from college. The personal writing, however, breaks down barriers that might exist among teachers from different schools, grade levels and backgrounds, and it becomes the highlight of the summer experience for many.

Besides helping weld the group together, the extensive writing, though exhausting, gives participants a sense of what students go through when they write. "Those of us who experienced that first summer program at Berkeley came away convinced that English teachers who want to teach writing must themselves write," says Mary Lee Glass, an English teacher at Gunn High School in Palo Alto. "Only when we have practiced writing along with reading about it when we have agonized over the process as well as theorized about it can we have the patience, persistence and on-the-job inspiration to understand and use approaches that others have worked out. And only then can we begin to comprehend what it is like to be a kid faced with a blank piece of paper."

The writing response groups, which meet afternoons throughout the summer institute, provide a model for future small-group work in the classroom. Students, like these teachers, are more apt to discover errors when reading their papers aloud than they are when proofreading silently. Also, students are more likely to remember rules for writing mechanics when they point out errors in one another's writing, Jean Jensen, former teacher at Las Lomas High School in Walnut Creek, found her students were less likely to repeat errors called to their attention by their peers.

Teachers complete the institute invigorated and eager to share their new knowledge and insight with their colleagues. Just before they leave the institute, the fellows have one more assignment: a written curriculum project. Frequently, these projects are materials the teachers prepare for the in-service training they conduct in Bay Area school districts. The materials can also be tailored for use in the teacher's own classroom.

District In-service Training

After the first summer institute, key school administrators recommended by the summer fellows were invited to a dinner meeting at the University's Faculty Club, which was hosted by the dean of the School of Education and the dean of the School of Letters and Sciences. The two deans stressed the university's view that the schools and universities shared a writing problem that could only be solved through cooperative efforts. The administrators were urged to use the talents of the teacher/consultants who completed the institute in in-service training programs at the school or district level. The range of consulting services provided by BAWP also was explained.

Any in-service training coordinated by BAWP is planned cooperatively by project and district personnel; cooperative planning ensures that the training will be directed toward local needs and that the district will be committed to its success. The district also makes a financial commitment to cover the cost of the teacher/consultants.

The in-service programs are flexible and take various forms, depending on the desires and needs of the district. The typical year-long program involves ten or more three-hour sessions conducted every other week by teacher/consultants trained in the summer institutes and coordinated by the BAWP staff. A full range of specific approaches to teaching composition is introduced. Because each session is long, the teachers have time to write as if they were the students who eventually receive the instruction. Other possible programs include after-school or Saturday workshops, English department presentations and school-wide across-the-curriculum workshops. In some programs, participants write out-of-class assignments that are read and revised in small writing response groups.

Year-long BAWP in-service programs for school districts usually include presentations on many of the following topics:

- Organization of the writing class:

  Improving teacher responses to student writing, including the correcting and grading of student papers

  Examining various sequences for teaching writing

  Using and organizing writing folders

- The theoretical bases for writing programs:

  The composing process—from prewriting to writing to revising

  Research on the development of writing ability

  The connections between oral language and writing and between reading and writing

  The connections between the study of grammar and the improvement of writing ability

- Specific practices in the teaching of composition:

  Teaching writing across the curriculum

  Encouraging writing to a variety of audiences

  Using sentence-combining activities

  Teaching the reluctant or remedial writer

  Using small writing response groups

  Directing the writing of research papers and papers about literature

  Helping students move from personal experience writing to writing about ideas

  Stimulating fluency prior to dealing with form and correctness

- Evaluating writing programs:

  Methods of evaluating writing ability for grading, placing and choosing appropriate curriculum materials

  Methods of measuring writing competencies and evaluating programs

Other in-service programs spawned by the BAWP include:

- Ten-week, three-hour workshop programs led by teacher/consultants in Stanislaus, Tuolumne and the nine Bay Area counties, including follow-up programs in subsequent years
- A five-year writing improvement program planned cooperatively by the Santa Rosa Unified School District and BAWP, which began with a summer program for junior high school teachers
- District assessments of writing ability using holistic scoring of writing samples, planned cooperatively by district teachers and BAWP consultants
- Year-long in-service training series for college instructors of writing, sponsored by BAWP and RAEBCU (Regional Association of East Bay Colleges and Universities)
- Writing-across-the-curriculum workshops for entire faculties of schools funded by California Assembly Bills 551 and 65
- Districtwide revision of composition programs and requirements in Petaluma and Milpitas school districts by their own teachers/consultants
- Annual writing seminars at Diablo Valley College for English department staff members

For more information about BAWP in-service education programs, write to:

Bay Area Writing Project
School of Education
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

Impact in the Classroom: The Las Lomas English Program

One of the Bay Area schools most profoundly influenced by BAWP is Las Lomas High School in Walnut Creek. Several Las Lomas teachers have attended either the summer institutes or other BAWP activities.

The English program at Las Lomas High School, in the process of changing since 1964, took on a clearer focus after Jean Jensen, former head of the English department, attended the first BAWP summer institute. Las Lomas then began assessing students' writing each year and altered the structure of its courses. Composition is now the focus of six one-semester courses. Freshmen and sophomores are required to take one semester each of composition and literature. Juniors and seniors must take either practical composition (if they do not plan to go to college) or advanced composition. Journalism, a creative writing workshop and a number of literature courses are offered as electives.

The composition and literature classes overlap somewhat. In composition, students analyze books and shorter passages by contemporary authors which exemplify good writing techniques. In the literature courses, the students apply a variety of writing techniques to the books they have read. For example, freshmen learn to write monologues in composition class; in literature, the students might be asked to write a monologue for a character, creating a scene that was not in the book.

Dividing the courses this way has "made writing important to both the parents and the kids," says Jensen, who believes such an approach is the only logical way to teach both subjects. "Otherwise, there's too much to cover and something gets neglected."

Composition Classes

Assignments in each Las Lomas class call for learning a progression of simple to complex skills. Students begin Tim Boorda's freshman composition course by interviewing a classmate and writing a "biographical fragment" about that person. The assignment teaches organization, Boorda says, because the writer must arrange details in order of importance. It also helps establish an attitude of trust among students in the class. Next, students write a series of monologues to develop skill in the use of sensory data. Then they write dialogues based on classroom improvisations and compose and deliver speeches. In a journalism unit, students write news stories, features and editorials. They also write a paper analyzing the main idea presented in a film or videotape.

Two Tea... [illegible]

Teacher participants in the Bay Area Writing Project were requested to put their thoughts on writing into a position paper. The following is a distillation of the reflections of two teachers on what they see as some of the causes behind education's newest crisis.

One teacher cites the demands for paperwork, committee work, and work with parents and students as a drain on the extra energy she used to give to those students in need of a little more coaching. But, she notes, these drains are minor compared with the problems of student absenteeism. "How can you teach a youngster who does not come to class?" she laments. "The teaching of writing skills requires that students be in class because it requires drill on such things as the parts of speech." Her sorrow turns to anger, however, when she relates how the principal refuses to make attendance mandatory or to consider a penalty of lower grades for students who miss a maximum number of classes without a legitimate excuse.

Another teacher—"young and with little experience," she admits—looks back with ill-concealed disgust at the school where she teaches. "There is a fatuous type of logic behind our program," she writes. "The freshman and sophomore years concentrate on literature and basic communication skills. You know the stuff I mean: some novels and plays, Steinbeck, the 'easier' Shakespeare. And next, a galloping glance at some literary forms like poetry, drama, the short story, and the short novel. Then there's composition: a dash of description, a pinch of argumentation and persuasion, and a bit of narration. Maybe the business letter and the application form. Some language, with simulation games as fillers and perhaps a unit on the media ... laced with rock music to write by. We touch all the bases," the young teacher said.

"The electives," she continued, "are a whole cafeteria of sundry subjects, leaning heavily toward literature. The amount, kind, and quality of writing in those courses are difficult to ascertain. No matter, because a student is not required to select a writing class in the junior or senior year. In fact, aside from journalism, there is no writing course for him to take,

[The right column is largely illegible due to image damage.]

... syntax. We [illegible] elective course [illegible] and, even then, [illegible] because we [illegible] municative [illegible] matter. This is [illegible] teachers in our [illegible] program.

"I do not [illegible] tive programs. In fact, I agree with the [illegible] of election in [illegible] But the shocking realization that a [illegible] sizable number of students, as a [illegible] would filter through our program without committing [illegible] to paper, without [illegible] and misuses of [illegible] idea, without thinking or talking or writing, is cause enough for concern.

"We operate on the [illegible] of a double-horned dilemma. We feel guilty because the general 'competency' [illegible] in general instead of [illegible] guilty because the [illegible] panacea—[illegible] specificity but also in program [illegible] One unfortunate result of the [illegible] any sequential program in language and composition has all but disappeared at our school.

"We teachers are left with the bag of guilt. We walk tightrope among a community that wants clean and well-lighted kids, a school board which wants to save money, and school administrators who can hardly tell a dilemma from a cop-out."

With all these [illegible] the teacher ends her position paper. Still [illegible] blaring." She writes: "The Bay Area Writing Project has given me new hope [illegible] amount of confidence. I can't [illegible] over my department, but perhaps a few of us will practice some of what's been given to us."

Each week Boorda's students prepare several "free writing" assignments based on suggestions that arise in class discussions and written in a form of the student's choosing. After completing several free writing assignments, each student selects one to revise into a finished piece. Along with writing, reading is stressed. Students must read 500 pages each quarter to earn a C, 750 pages for a B and 1,000 pages for an A.

Assignments in Bob McKechnie's sophomore composition course give students a sense of writing to an audience. The topics progress in a logical sequence, from those for an audience of one—a personal or subjective piece—to those for an audience of many. McKechnie introduces each assignment with an experience the whole class can share. Students then tell him briefly what they plan to write, thus assuring him that they understand the assignment. Next, they write in class with McKechnie's help. Each student shares his or her writing with a classmate for a response. The paper is then handed in for McKechnie's evaluation.

Major assignments in McKechnie's class are:

- Stream of consciousness
- Dreamwork—writing about a dream or fantasy
- Use of quotations in a writing sample
- Description of a person (from an interview)
- Description of a thing (from a photograph or object)
- Observations from a trip to San Francisco
- Autobiographical fragments (early life, an intensely negative experience, an intensely positive experience, a turning point, the future)
- Ordering facts in a story
- Interview of a person on an issue and giving an opinion
- Personal opinion
- A final paper that incorporates skills learned during the semester

Practical Writing

The practical composition course at Las Lomas is designed for students who do not plan to go to college. It combines career education with practical writing skills. When it was first offered, the course focused on "nuts and bolts" writing. Teachers also invited members of the business community to speak to the class.

"One of our speakers was a woman from the State Department of Employment," Jensen says. "She told our students how important writing could be in preparing to enter the job market. 'You must write a great deal in order to find out who you are and what you want to make of your lives,' she told them. 'When you are almost written out, then learn to do the practical things.'" Her comment suggested new possibilities for the course, which has since been substantially expanded.

Now, the first nine weeks of the course are devoted to personal writing. Students explore their likes and dislikes, their backgrounds and what they would like to do. During the second nine weeks, they interview guest speakers about finding an apartment, buying a car and looking for a job; writing assignments during this quarter relate to the interviews. The students also write business letters, including a complaint to the Better Business Bureau. McKechnie's students concentrate on common errors in usage. On Monday, he hands out and explains a usage sheet that includes examples. The students practice and have a quiz before the next concept is introduced. The concepts covered are sentences and sentence fragments; run-together sentences; pronoun reference; subject-verb agreement; and use of the comma, semicolon, colon and apostrophe. All the practical composition teachers conduct with each student a mock job interview that is videotaped and reviewed privately with the student. One year, several students applied for and got jobs shortly after their mock interviews. "They came back convinced they got the jobs because they'd been in that class," Jensen says.

Advanced Writing

Advanced composition, a demanding course developed by four members of the Las Lomas English department, is team taught by two teachers at a time. The four teachers share a preparation period during which they polish and refine writing assignments. "We discovered that one of the most important things we can do is give a good assignment," Jensen explains. "Every year we rewrite the assignments to correct loopholes or things the kids don't understand. All assignments are mimeographed. We spend an entire class period explaining an assignment and answering all the questions." The teachers themselves have written on all the topics they assign and sometimes share their own papers with the class.

The semester begins with ice-breaking exercises, making a limerick out of one's own name, for example. These activities help build trust and respect so the students will feel comfortable sharing their writing with the class. Students then write a one-page paper about an object they value and read the papers to the class.

The instructors use author Ken Macrorie's concept of a "helping circle" (8) (see Chapter 4, page 49). "After a student has read, we ask, 'Now that you have read your paper, would you change anything, or are you satisfied that this work is your best effort?'" says Jensen. "That's a key question to ask before anybody makes any comments. And we do a good deal of talking about sensing your audience. 'You can tell if what you thought was funny is really funny if your audience laughs. If there's an appreciative silence when you finish, you know you've really hit home.'

"And we try to get the kids to be specific," Jensen continues. "We don't want them just to say, 'Oh, that was *sooo* good.' We want them to say, 'I really liked the way you developed the character of the person you were interviewing. Specifically, I liked the fact that you called him a craggy, rugged, mountaineering type of human being and that those were the words you used.' That's very hard for kids to do, but I think once they begin to do that, then they can write themselves."

Students also share their writing with each other in editing groups they form themselves. Discussion is aided by a set of written guidelines that the teachers hand out and explain.

Assignments progress in difficulty from sentence-combining exercises to writing descriptively from various points of view. The students write an interview with a member of their class. Then they analyze examples of contemporary literature and practice such techniques as effective repetition. These exercises lead to one of the major assignments, a position paper in which the student takes a stand on a controversial topic.

Next, students study *The New Journalism* by Tom Wolfe, in which Wolfe argues that the writer's own reactions to an experience should be an integral part of the finished product (10). The students pair off and spend a day in San Francisco observing and gathering material for a "saturation paper."

A handout tells students what is expected in this assignment:

Your papers should reflect your San Francisco experience. Using all sorts of sensory data, dialogue, description, reflection, telling facts and any other goodies you can remember, try to make this paper another attempt to go through facts (experiences) to a LARGER MEANING. In other words, try to make your paper make a statement about the city of San Francisco as seen through your eyes.... Imagine that you are a camera and allow yourself to select close-up shots and panoramic shots, all to emphasize what you want your reader to realize when he or she finishes your paper. Your readers should be able to identify with you so that they will follow your words

to perceive what you perceive, interpret as you want them to and finally arrive at the same evaluation of your materials as you do.

The assignment sheet suggests many interesting sights to see, and it closes with this admonition: "Take notes and don't rely exclusively on your memories. Good reporters always note their material for later use."

For the final paper of the course, students are asked to synthesize all the techniques they have practiced. From a list of historic buildings, they select one that interests them, research its past and visit the site. "Dream a little," the assignment sheet instructs. "Try to bring this place to life, first for yourself, then for your readers." Students are reminded that they should use clever flashbacks and transitions to "bring all of the artistry of fiction to a piece of nonfiction writing."

In addition to these formidable assignments, advanced composition students also do many free writings, some of which are revised and handed in to be graded. (Every student paper is read by the teachers, but not all are graded.) If time permits, the students write a poem and a short story in class. They may also take the University of California's Subject-A examination, an essay test that determines whether entering freshmen must take the University's remedial English course. Like the other writing classes at Las Lomas, advanced composition stresses usage through style sheets.

The Students' Verdict

What do the students think about the writing courses at Las Lomas?

The yearbook class, composed of juniors, seniors and a few sophomores, engaged in a freewheeling discussion on the subject one day in the spring of 1978. Comments were generally positive, although students had complaints about specific teachers or an aspect of a course. A few expressed concern about skills they felt had not been given sufficient emphasis.

"Freshmen and sophomore English classes were really good," says Bob Owens, a junior. "The different kinds of writing stimulated your thinking." Owens especially enjoyed an assignment on dreams and other exercises that enabled him to jot ideas down before starting to write. He did not enjoy writing in literature class as much as composition, though.

"Before, I never liked writing," says Carolyn Krapa. However, she says, the Las Lomas courses "gave one freedom to express oneself in different ways" and made her want to write more.

Debby Young enthusiastically described the advanced composition class as the highlight of her high school career. "You learn a ton in advanced comp," she says, adding that she enjoyed the interaction between teachers and students. "I feel my writing has improved very much."

Although grammar is usually the least popular aspect of English, several students say more attention should be given to grammar in their courses. "I haven't had grammar since the eighth grade," explains Kristie Snider. "I can't tell you what a proper sentence is. I don't like grammar," she adds, "but I may need it in college."

For Joe Anthony, former Las Lomas principal, the changes wrought by the writing project have been positive and significant. In 1975, Las Lomas began giving a writing assessment each year to all its students. According to a BAWP analysis, the average writing assessment score for freshmen (on a scale of 2 to 18) rose from 9.07 in 1975 to 10.93 a year later. Those who were sophomores in 1975 saw their average scores rise from 10.81 to 13.03 by their senior year.

Perhaps more dramatic than the test scores, however, are the changes in attitude. "Pupils no longer dread English," Anthony says. "On the contrary, we have 1,225 students and our enrollment in English is 1,300 plus; obviously, many elect to take two periods of English." The benefits of the project are not limited to students who are strong in English. "There seems to be appreciation and a desire to learn on the part of most students," Anthony continues. "They are being asked to do things that make sense to them, and they are experiencing success success that had been denied before. Kids who would not even attend class, much less write for a teacher, are now volunteering to read their writings to the class."

Anthony, who formerly chaired the Las Lomas English department, also notes "a growing trend for all departments in the school to expect correct writing from students. The departments all elected to require students to write in ink with correct sentence structure, spelling and word usage. All departments require written responses to questions. Students no longer feel that writing is a skill used only in an English class."

Jean Jensen, former head of the English department, believes this BAWP-coordinated writing project also has had a positive impact on English teachers. "Since we teachers both write and read our papers, the sense of professional admiration in the department comes through loud and clear. We respect one another a great deal more now. Because we read the 1,200 (writing assessment) papers together," she adds, "our sense of what makes an A

or C paper tends to be more standardized. Because we make every effort to keep up with current research, our curriculum guide is fluid—it changes every year, growing more useful as the years go by."

One factor that probably contributes to their success, Jensen says, is that persons who teach the same course generally prepare it together. Another positive—and controversial—aspect is that each staff member teaches at least four different courses requiring different kinds of preparation. "All of us found this a little overwhelming to begin with," Jensen says. "Now we would not have it any other way."

In her travels as a teacher/consultant, Jensen stresses a key BAWP tenet—that there is no one "right" way to teach writing. "We think what we do at Las Lomas is extra special, but it might not work somewhere else," she says. "The teaching of writing must be adapted to the teachers, the students and the school community."

Other Bay Area Writing Project Activities

Not every school receives BAWP's new concepts and techniques warmly. In a district where only one teacher has been involved in the project, isolation can be a real problem. When a class lesson eagerly prepared by the teacher fails miserably, no one is nearby to analyze and commiserate. Even in the best of situations, there is a danger that the teacher's ideas will grow stale without the crucial element of follow-up.

For these reasons, the BAWP sponsors many activities that keep institute graduates in touch with each other and with new developments. As local in-service programs begin to take shape, the teacher/consultants attend planning meetings to coordinate and compare presentations. BAWP also hosts monthly three-hour Saturday meetings for all teacher/consultants throughout the year. At some meetings the teachers write; at others they hear new presentations or guest speakers. Attendance at the Saturday sessions averages 40 to 50—about one-third of the total number of institute graduates—says James Gray, BAWP director. All teacher/consultants are also invited to hear guest speakers at each summer institute.

Some teachers, eager to keep improving their writing, form groups that continue to meet during the year. Others form special-interest groups that stress logic, reasoning, syntax, secondary curriculum and other areas. Elementary teacher/consultants meet together by grade level to discuss common problems. A similar group has been formed for college teachers who have attended summer institutes.

Those who do not join groups or attend meetings can still keep in touch through the BAWP newsletter. Many articles are contributed by the teacher consultants themselves. Some articles describe activities of individuals; others discuss new developments of the project; still others explore some aspect of writing.

An Expanding Circle

Interest in BAWP techniques has spread beyond the continental United States. In the summer of 1978, BAWP teacher consultants conducted workshops in the Virgin Islands and Alaska, and in England for teachers at U.S. Department of Defense overseas schools for military dependents. In 1979, workshops were again held in England and Alaska, and BAWP teacher consultants traveled to Tokyo, Singapore and Hawaii as well. This worldwide outreach seems likely to continue as word of BAWP's success in helping teachers spreads.

The Open Program

The invitational summer institutes and the in-service workshops generated so much interest from teachers that, by the spring of 1976, the BAWP office was deluged with inquiries from teachers wishing to participate in its activities. To meet this demand, the BAWP staff decided to start a new course that summer, which would be open to anyone who wished to enroll. This course, dubbed the Open Program, has since been offered each summer as a part of the University of California, Berkeley, Summer Program for Teachers. Formally entitled "Teaching Writing at All Grade Levels," the course is coordinated and taught by a team of BAWP teacher consultants. Enrollment has ranged between 70 and 100 teachers representing grade levels from kindergarten through college. They include not only English teachers but also teachers of social studies, mathematics, homemaking, physical education and many other disciplines. School administrators also have enrolled. Teachers from as far away as New Orleans, Philadelphia and Anchorage have enrolled in the program.

Participants in the Open Program read valuable research and have theoretical discussions about teaching writing; hear presentations by the instructors, by teacher consultants from past summer institutes and by guest speakers; and meet in small groups to discuss special areas of interest or methods for applying new ideas at specific grade levels.

Most important, like teachers in the invitational program, Open Program participants write. Their papers range from pieces about personal experiences to fiction, poetry, essays and, finally, a state-

ment of personal philosophy about teaching writing. Their writing is duplicated and read and discussed in small groups. At the end of the summer, participants publish several anthologies of the writing they have done.

For more information about the Summer Program for Teachers, write to:

Summer Program for Teachers
School of Education
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

Other BAWP Programs

The BAWP also is involved in other teacher education efforts. One of these is the Subject-A Training Program. Subject-A is the University of California's basic writing course for all students who score below 600 on the English achievement section of the College Entrance Examination Board test and who fail an additional essay examination.

Each year, 15 University of California, Berkeley, feeder high schools are invited to send an advanced composition teacher to a two-week summer training program conducted by the Subject-A staff at the University. In this program, similar to one for new instructors of Subject-A, teachers study the Subject-A methodology, examine diagnostic essays, visit Subject-A classes, write Subject-A essays themselves and discuss problems and concerns with the Subject-A staff. After the summer session, the Subject-A staff visits the teachers' schools to read and discuss essays with student writers. The purpose of this program is to pass on to high school teachers the techniques the Subject-A staff has developed to prepare students for college writing in ten weeks, so that more entering freshmen can bypass Subject-A.

For more information, write to:

Subject-A Department
216 Dwinelle Annex
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

To help make sure that new teachers leave college adequately trained to teach writing, BAWP is involved in the University of California's Pre-Service Credential Program, an experimental program for English and related majors who plan to teach in intermediate and secondary schools. The program draws extensively on BAWP teacher/consultants as classroom supervising teachers and as guest instructors in professional courses on campus. During the winter quarter, credential candidates participate in a miniature version of BAWP's summer institutes. In the spring, their supervised teaching experience also includes field research on

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the teaching of writing, usually in collaboration with BAWP teacher consultants. Program graduates are fully credentialed as English teachers with special qualifications for teaching writing.

In addition, a Master of Arts in Teaching is available. Jointly administered by the English and education faculties, the M.A.T. program affords candidates wide latitude in relating academic and theoretical interests to classroom problems encountered by teachers.

For more information about either the Pre-Service Credential Program or the M.A.T. program, write:

Kenneth S. Lane or Grace D. Maertins
c o Bay Area Writing Project
School of Education
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

Classroom-Based Research

One of BAWP's basic assumptions is that classroom teaching, in itself, is a source of knowledge about how students learn that is parallel to (although different from) the knowledge that grows out of university-based research and theorizing. Given the time and the methodology, the BAWP staff believes, teachers could indeed test their ideas about what works best in the classroom and present their findings in a form useful to other teachers.

Acting on this belief, three BAWP teacher consultants, with the help of a BAWP research assistant, have completed studies of the classroom effects of methods, materials or ideas they developed for teaching writing.

Rebekah Caplan, a teacher at Foothill High School in Pleasanton, tested materials she had developed for teaching students to use more specific, vivid language. Caplan and two other teachers of twelfth grade advanced composition each taught the materials to one class and also taught a control class which received the same instruction except for the Caplan material. Students in all classes wrote essays of argumentation and personal narratives at the beginning and the end of the experiment. Students in Caplan's project class made significant gains on both papers as compared with her control class; there was, however, no significant difference between students in the project and control classes of the other teachers, both of whom made less use of Caplan's program than she did.

In another project, Pat Woodworth, a teacher at Tomales High School, and Catharine Keech, a BAWP research assistant, set out to see if students writing for specific audiences would write better than students aiming at a general audience. Students in six classes were randomly assigned three different forms of the same topic: Write about "The first time you experienced something which may later have become ordinary, or may never have been repeated, but was special when experienced for the first time." For one-third of the students, no audience was specified. Another third was told, "Imagine you are writing for someone who has not yet had, but may soon have, a similar experience." The remaining students were asked to "Choose someone you know who has not yet had, but may soon have, a similar experience."

Woodworth and Keech discovered no significant difference in the writing of the three groups, but they did find that students who had been told their papers would be read and analyzed by an outside research team wrote consistently better for this assignment than they usually did. They concluded that audience did indeed have an effect on the quality of writing, but that the real audience perceived by all three groups was the researchers. They further concluded that students may be motivated to produce their best efforts by a "sense of occasion," which can be provided by a variety of rhetorical situations writing for real audiences, writing for special testers, writing for publication and writing to share with peers.

Composition Starter

A Teacher-Tested Idea from an *English Journal* Workshop

• The object of this exercise is to put yourself inside an object. Give the object you have chosen a character. Try to imagine how the object sees things. Look at the world around you from the object's point of view. Students should be given examples of monologues of this type (not very many, but enough to indicate the pattern) and ideas for objects they might choose as subjects (grain of sand, pencil, piece of bubble gum, desk). The monologues should be written in class, though some students will need to take them home to finish them. The next day students can read their monologues aloud. (Most are eager to do so.) An interesting discussion might follow as students talk about the unique traits brought out in the papers. Imaginations may be further stretched by having students take the part of their objects and carry on dialogues with other objects.

—Donna Haglin
Southern Hills Junior High School
Boulder, Colo.

Reprinted from the December, 1973, *English Journal* by permission of the National Council of Teachers of English.

In a third research study, Stephanie Gray, another teacher at Foothill High School, tested the effects on ninth and eleventh graders of a training program in expository writing she had developed entitled "Writing from Given Information." Two project classes and two control classes were used, and all were asked to write both compare-and-contrast and process essays before and after the program. The eleventh grade project class made statistically significant overall gains on both types of essays and, in analytic readings of the essays, also increased the number of comparative terms used and the number of sentences referring to both items being compared. The ninth grade classes did not improve, primarily, the researchers feel, because of motivational factors within the school completely unrelated to the materials.

These three studies and samples of the teaching materials used by the teacher researchers were published by BAWP in late 1980. Additional classroom-based research studies are under way and will be published when completed.

For more information about teacher-conducted classroom research, write to:

Bay Area Writing Project
School of Education
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

Publications of BAWP

In keeping with its belief that the classroom teacher is a source of valuable knowledge about teaching and learning, BAWP has launched a series of teacher-written curriculum publications, each focusing on a different aspect of teaching composition. One publication, written by teacher consultants Ruby Bernstein and Bernard Tanner (1), analyzes writing samples from the California High School Proficiency Examination. Other BAWP curriculum publications include *Teaching Writing K 8* (6) and *Independent Study and Writing* (4). In *Formative Writing* (5), techniques are explained that can be used by teachers in all subject areas to help students use writing not merely as a means of testing knowledge, but also as a method of gaining knowledge. In other publications, Miriam Ylvisaker describes *An Experiment in Encouraging Fluency* (11), and Mary K. Healy discusses her techniques of *Using Student Writing Response Groups in the Classroom* (7).

Under the terms of its latest grant from the Carnegie Foundation of New York and the National Endowment for the Humanities, BAWP is preparing a series of publications for the National Writing Project (NWP). These include a handbook for NWP site directors, a handbook for schools and districts on methods of assessing student writing and a series of monographs describing teaching practices entitled *Writing Teachers at Work.*

A complete list of available titles and ordering information for BAWP curriculum monographs may be obtained by writing:

Bay Area Writing Project Publications
Education Business Office
1615 Tollman Hall
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720
Phone: (415) 642-8683

Writing Across the Curriculum

BAWP believes that writing can be a powerful tool for learning in all school subjects. "Whatever we learn, we have to reconstruct for ourselves," says Mary K. Healy, BAWP assistant director. "We do that through language." During its first five years, BAWP has included teachers of science, social studies, business, mathematics and home economics in its summer institutes and in-service programs. By increasing writing opportunities in other subjects, these teachers help students gain new insights into subject matter as they improve their writing.

The first step in writing across the curriculum is to convince teachers to take a broader approach to student writing experiences. Teachers need to see that classroom writing can be addressed in other roles than that of the "teacher-as-examiner." In her own experience as a junior high school teacher and teacher consultant, Healy found that writing is rarely used to gauge a student's initial reaction to subject matter.

In contrast, seventh graders at Del Mar Intermediate School in Tiburon, where Healy teaches, enhance their understanding of math by keeping journals. Students are asked to write about their past experiences in math, including areas where they have had trouble. The teacher responds in writing, completing two-way communication.

When a new concept is introduced, the students write about it from their own points of view. After the teacher introduces prime numbers, for example, she asks them to write in their journals as if they were explaining the concept to a fourth grader. This assignment forces them to cast the idea into their own words. Then the students share their explanations in small groups, and the teacher immediately can see which students understand and which ones are confused. Those who do not understand have explanations from their classmates to help them. Sometimes the students revise

their journal entries and send them to fourth graders to see if their explanations really are understandable.

The students were skeptical of the journals at first. Once they saw how useful the writing could be, however, they quit complaining. The sharing of entries showed them that people learn in different ways. "Many students, especially young ones, think there's only one way to learn and that their way is wrong," Healy says. "They lose their power as learners because they lose confidence. They need not only to be told that people learn in different ways but also to have it demonstrated."

To be successful, journal writing must be given a central place in the work of the class. The math teacher explained why she thought the journals were important and took the time to respond carefully to each student's entries. She read excerpts aloud in class to show the variety of responses that were possible. Students wrote more as the term progressed.

In social studies at Del Mar, seventh graders keep journals and also take notes on material for a lengthy paper. During a unit on the culture of the Middle Ages, they record observations drawn from films, teachers' lectures and readings. As a final exam, they describe a typical medieval day from the viewpoint of a specific person, such as a knight or a serf. Their papers cover such aspects of the Middle Ages as the government and the person's attitude toward religion and nationalism. The students share their first drafts in small groups.

"These sessions are fascinating," Healy says. The students talk about the papers in terms of both writing skill and accuracy. Healy records the small-group sessions and plays them back to monitor the groups' work. After the group sessions, the students revise and rewrite their papers. The teachers judge the structure of the writing as well as the content.

Healy uses a "no-fault" spelling policy. "If a student puts a question mark over a word that might be misspelled, the student is not penalized," she explains. "The teacher will write the correct spelling over the word *once*." The student enters the word in a writing folder, which the teacher consults when grading. If the same word is misspelled again, it does affect the student's grade. Spelling and punctuation are not graded in student journals these are considered first-draft writing exercises, sometimes to be revised later for a grade. "The focus in the journals is on students working out their ideas," she explains.

Del Mar students also keep journals in science class. A typical assignment might ask them to write what they learned from a film. The exercise enables them to make connections between the subject matter and personal experience.

Writing across the curriculum also reinforces learning of subject matter. As a review for a science test, bilingual students at a suburban San Jose high school were asked to combine sentences. They were given three short sentences about muscles, for example, to combine into a single sentence. This process taught them to write more mature, complex sentences and simultaneously reinforced the subject matter. More entertaining assignments tell students, "Assume you're a plant cell. Write a letter to an animal cell, telling how you're different," or "Describe how it feels to be a biceps muscle." The school uses the same science unit tests every year. According to Healy, test scores rose significantly the year writing was added to the course.

In all kinds of student writing drafts, journals, expressive writing the success is proportionate to the amount of importance the teacher attaches to it, Healy maintains. "The teacher must be committed. That's why BAWP has teachers write in the summer institutes and workshops. Unless teachers experience (writing) and believe in it, they're not going to teach it effectively or stay with it."

The California Writing Project (CWP)

The expansion of the BAWP concept to the state level began in 1975 when William Webster, then deputy superintendent of public instruction for programs, and George Nemetz, English consultant in the California State Department of Education, formed an Ad Hoc State Advisory Committee on Student Writing. The committee included a teacher consultant and the co-directors from BAWP as well as teachers, administrators, parents, students and college faculty from all areas of the state.

The committee recommended that the Department identify outstanding teachers of composition and outstanding composition programs. It also recommended that the Department, in cooperation with local school districts, colleges, universities and county offices of education, promote in-service training in the teaching of writing by making use of these exemplary teachers and programs. BAWP became the model for the state program.

Members of the ad hoc committee from Los Angeles began talking about forming an organization to promote writing in their area. One committee member was Edward M. White, who, as director of the English Equivalency Examination program for the California State University and Colleges (CSUC) at that time, knew English teachers and administrators from all levels of education. A local steering committee was formed in May 1976.

California Writing Projects

Area III Writing Project
English Department, Sproul Hall
University of California, Davis
Davis, CA 95616 (916) 752-8394

California State University,
  Northridge Writing Project
Department of English
California State University, Northridge
18111 Nordhoff
Northridge, CA 91330 (213) 885-3421

California Writing Project, UC-Irvine
University Extension
University of California, Irvine
P.O. Box AZ
Irvine, CA 92716 (714) 833-5192

Central California Writing Project
Oakes College
University of California, Santa Cruz
Santa Cruz, CA 95064 (408) 429-4047

Central Coast Writing Project
English Department
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407
(805) 546-2596

Inland Area Writing Project
Department of English
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 State College Parkway
San Bernardino, CA 92408 (714) 887-7472

English Department
University of California, Riverside
Riverside, CA 92521
(714) 787-5306 or 5228

Kern/Eastern Sierra Writing Project
School of Education
California State College, Bakersfield
9001 Stockdale Highway
Bakersfield, CA 93309 (805) 833-2279

North Bay Area Writing Project
Sonoma State University
Rohnert Park, CA 94928
(707) 664-2140

Northern California Writing Project
Department of English
California State University, Chico
Chico, CA 95929 (916) 895-6134 or 5849

Redwood Writing Project
Humboldt State University
School of Creative Arts and Humanities
Arcata, CA 95521 (707) 826-3758 or 3174

Attending the first meeting were representatives from public school districts, county offices of education, the CSUC and the University of California systems, private colleges and universities and an ex-officio member of the California State Department of Education. This highly representative group laid the groundwork for cooperative working relationships in the California Writing Project (CWP).

As a first step, the Los Angeles steering committee planned a large meeting for the fall of 1976 to publicize BAWP and explore avenues of future funding. The cost of this meeting was borne by the California State Department of Education. Part of the agenda was devoted to bringing educators from the same geographic area together to design a writing project.

From this meeting emerged plans for three California Writing Projects in the Los Angeles Area:

- *The UCLA/California Writing Project* in cooperation with Santa Monica College

- *The South Basin Writing Project* (University of Southern California; California State College Dominguez Hills; California State University Fullerton; and California State University Long Beach)

- *The Inland Area Writing Project* (University of California Riverside, and California State University San Bernardino)

The California State Department of Education later sponsored similar conferences in San Diego and Chico to stimulate interest in writing projects in those areas. Then the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) became interested in spreading the writing project idea nationwide. Money provided to BAWP by NEH led to the establishment of eight new writing projects by the summer of 1977 in California and one each in New York, Colorado, New Jersey and Oregon.

In addition to the NEH "seed" m ey for the additional sites in California, the Cai ornia State Department of Education, through Title IV-C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, offered a series of adoption grants that districts could use to replicate the BAWP model locally. The total Title IV-C support between 1977 and 1980 exceeded $600,000.

"There was overwhelming interest statewide in setting up writing projects," Gray says. "Our agreement with NEH stipulated that only eight of the projects could be in California. Three more programs that we couldn't fund went on anyway." Since that time, several additional sites have been established.

California Writing Project (CWP) Innovations

Although the basic program at each site is modeled on BAWP, several of the California Writing Projects have developed their own innovations.

In addition to a regular summer institute for teachers, the South Bay Area Writing Project in San Jose hosts a one-day writing workshop for students. The first Young Writers Conference was attended by 300 students in the fifth through twelfth grades. "It was a great success," says Iris Tiedt, project director. "We're going to do it again." Richard Armour, author/humorist/professor, was the opening speaker, and poet Toby Lurie concluded the day. In between, the students could attend two workshops on such topics as writing the short story, handling dialogue, tips for beginning writers, writing to understand yourself and learning how to write an article.

In the workshops, the students were grouped by interest rather than by age, a format that worked very well, Tiedt says. As an encore, South Bay scheduled a week-long summer institute, again for fifth through twelfth graders. In both the day workshop and the week-long institute, sessions were taught by South Bay Area Writing Project summer institute graduates, classroom teachers and members of the Santa Clara County Committee on Writing.

The Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools has been an active participant in the South Bay Project. The county offers a staff development course, "Discovering the Writing Process," for teachers who cannot participate in project training through their own districts. The course is open to teachers from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Eight sessions are offered, meeting every other week to give teachers time to use each new idea in the classroom before the next concept is introduced.

Teachers attending the 1978 course received six quarter-units of credit from the University of Santa Clara. Course topics included:

- *Developing fluency:* The place to start, personal writing, individualization, reading to write
- *Trying narrative forms:* Storytelling on paper, oral traditions, point of view, literature models
- *Polishing writing skills:* The student editor, handling evaluation, teaching specific skills
- *Making a statement:* Introduction to expository writing, taking a position, structuring a statement
- *Examining the English sentence:* Building blocks, syntax, sentence variety

- *Exploring English words:* Rich resources of language, effects of words, lore of the English language
- *Summing up:* Philosophy, attitude, evaluation, teac^ ^pectations, goals and objectives

The South Ba, project's Summer Writing Institute meets on the campus of California State University, San Jose. In addition to the five-week writing institute, a two-week reading institute was initiated in 1978. It stresses reading in content areas (including multicultural assignments) and a holistic approach to the teaching of reading.

The Inland Area Writing Project, cosponsored by the University of California, Riverside, and California State University, San Bernardino, experimented with different formats for its summer institute in 1978. Half the fellows attended sessions with a structured, teacher-centered format, and half had an open format similar to the BAWP model. Both groups included teachers with a range of experience and teaching styles. "We know very little about how teachers change," according to Dan Donlan, project co-director. Donlan says the project will try to determine:

- How the writing project affects teachers with little versus much experience
- How different in-service formats affect different teachers

The Inland project is also seeking the best way to teach writing across the curriculum. Three junior highs and one high school in the Redlands Unified School District are experimenting with teaching writing in social studies classes. In some classes, the English teacher comes in one day a week and teaches writing directly, Donlan says. In other classrooms, the English teacher trains the social studies teacher, who then incorporates writing instruction into the curriculum.

The North Bay Area Writing Project, based at California State University, Sonoma, altered BAWP's usual in-service training format to serve teachers from a large rural area. Instead of meeting biweekly for ten weeks, this workshop met one Saturday a month for five months. The university and the Santa Rosa Unified School District also cosponsored a visit by British educator Dorothy Heathcote, who conducted workshops on writing and improvisational drama in various parts of Sonoma County.

Impact on Post-Secondary Education

The BAWP and the CWP are affecting instruction in colleges and universities as well as in public schools. Teacher/consultants from the UCLA/California Writing Project, for example, are teaching

Taking a Positive Approach

Yes, Students Can Write, ... the title of a handbook for teachers, ... Clara (County) C.................... find imaginative ways to .... and appreciation for ....

The handbook contains .... for teachers. To give .... writing for a real .... might let ninth graders .... with a visit to the .... to third graders. Fifth graders .... to write letters of complaint to .... who refuse to share playgr.............

One extensive section of .... serve as a guide for evaluating .... After collecting compositions from .... students, the handbook's authors .... writing as superior, average or .... lyzed the sentence structure, style and .... characteristic of these writing levels in the various grades.

Characteristics found typical of writing by average fifth or sixth graders were:

- Some inconsistency of skills throughout, with good and weak elements existing side by side
- Content that was unsophisticated and that tended to be factual
- Inclusion of irrelevant material
- Some relationship between ideas
- Uncertain paragraph development
- Sentence patterns limited in variety and length
- Ordinary vocabulary
- Some errors in spelling, punctuation, agreement and consistency of tense

Examples of students' writing at each grade level, along with comments by evaluators, are included in the handbook.

Another major section of *Students Can Write* describes results of important research studies on writing and what the findings suggest for writing teachers. The Santa Clara handbook also lists other resources writing teachers might find useful.

Copies of *Students Can Write* are available from:

Office of Santa Clara County
Superintendent of Schools
Publications Department
100 Skyport Drive
San Jose, CA 95110

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English 130, a junior-level composition course for students preparing for a secondary credential in English. The teacher/consultants, who range from elementary to junior college specialists, teach the course on a weekly rotating basis. The course is half composition and half how-to-teach composition, says Everett Jones, director of the UCLA project.

Teacher/consultants from the San Diego Area Writing Project have trained professors at California State University, San Diego, in holistic evaluation and prewriting techniques. Other training was given to Subject-A faculty and graduate students at that campus, says Mary Barr, co-director of the project.

The concept of writing across the curriculum is "exploding" at California State University, Long Beach, according to Alice Brekke, director of the South Basin Writing Project. In 1977-78, the English and Speech Department faculties co-taught a communications course for finance and accounting majors. A writing course for pre-law majors was added in 1979-80. Composition courses for single-subject credential candidates (secondary education) have been required since 1972. A composition course now will also be required for multiple-subject credential (elementary) candidates. From 1974 to 1977, the English faculty at California State University, Long Beach, enrolled in English 1000, a faculty seminar that taught them how to teach composition.

Los Angeles County Workshop

A summer program offered by the Office of the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools differs from those of the other California Writing Projects. The county's Workshop in Written Expression and Reading Comprehension lasts two weeks and is geared to teachers from the fourth through twelfth grades. This program uses a teacher-training-teacher approach, but its purpose is to help the regular classroom teacher, not to train teacher/consultants.

The half-day sessions include presentations by major speakers and small-group meetings on specialized topics. "Each summer," explains Julia Gottesman, consultant in English and language arts, "the emphasis shifts to accommodate the needs and interests of teachers and districts." After the topics and teacher/leaders are selected, the leaders meet with consultants Richard Lid and Helen Lodge, co-directors of the California State University, Northridge, Writing Project. The consultants suggest resources for presentation topics. The 1977 workshop introduced teachers in Los Angeles County

to holistic scoring of writing samples. One presentation became a handbook, *A Common Ground for Assessing Competence in Written Expression* (3).

In 1978, the workshop focused on the under-achiever, or the student with special needs. Session topics included.

- Understanding the reading and writing process
- Assessing written expression
- Remediating the writing problems of the low-achieving student
- Improving reading comprehension
- Coping with classroom management through small-group instruction

Notices of upcoming summer workshops are sent to key administrators in the school districts in Los Angeles County. The districts are encouraged to send teams of teachers, but individual teachers may also enroll.

Funding Sources for BAWP Services

In the past school districts took advantage of Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP) services through grants provided by Title IV, Part C, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This federal act provided grants to develop and adopt innovative projects, and in California, the BAWP model was approved for adoption through Title IV-C. The funds were used to send teachers to summer institutes, to pay teacher/consultants to conduct district-level workshops, or to hire substitutes so that regular teachers can be released during the school day to score writing assessment papers. By 1980, a total of 40 writing projects had been set up in California with Title IV-C funding.

With the demise of Title IV-C, school districts will have to turn to other sources for the type of funds provided in the past through ESEA, Title IV-C.

As BAWP has demonstrated, a key component in improving students' writing is improving the skills and knowledge of composition teachers. In an era of declining enrollments, relatively few new teachers have been hired by districts; therefore, most training has taken the form of in-service training for employed teachers. And in California, a number of state and federal programs have provided funds for in-service training in writing.

The National Writing Project

The National Writing Project (NWP), which began in 1977, was made possible by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

Each writing project received a one-year grant of $15,000 from NEH. To receive a grant, new projects had to come up with matching funds from sponsoring universities and participating local school districts. During its first year, each project was expected to build a success record that would ensure continuing support from local sources. BAWP screened applications, provided matching funds and gifts, conducted planning meetings at the University of California, Berkeley, and sent BAWP teacher consultants to assist at the first summer institute at the new writing center.

The NEH made an additional grant available in 1978, bringing the total to 41 projects in 24 states, including 14 in California. By 1980, the total number of writing projects based on the BAWP model had reached 75 throughout the United States.

The NWP became a truly national network with the publication of the first national newsletter. The NEH also provided a small grant for inter-site visits and for meetings, where national site directors exchange information on policies and practices. The NWP is coordinated by the BAWP staff, assisted by a six-member NWP Advisory Board whose members are selected from active NWP site directors.

NWP Sites: The Model and Its Variations

Each new NWP site is modeled after but not identical to the BAWP. The major components which define the BAWP model are:

- The summer institutes.
- The school-year in-service program. This element varies from site to site since local needs differ in various parts of the country.
- Evaluation and assessment: Almost every NWP site has incorporated an evaluation plan of some kind to measure outcomes for the training program.

Some NWP site directors use different methods to select participants for their summer institutes. Some make a general open announcement of the institute and accept applications, usually accompanied by a written statement of the applicant's qualifications and his or her references. Applications are screened, and applicants are usually interviewed as well, either individually or in groups. At some sites, where applicants come from widely scattered areas, directors solicit applications and then interview by telephone or mail. Elsewhere, the site director tours the state to conduct interviews with interested teachers.

The summer institutes generally resemble those of the BAWP. In some, the typical five-week pro-

gram has been extended an additional week to permit presentations for school administrators and community leaders, to allow teachers to work with students or to provide an opportunity for school program planning.

Variations in the summer program usually have been made to help fellows improve their presentations.

The Missiouri Writing Project uses a unique means of evaluating presentations. After each teacher's presentation, participants fill out a response sheet. These sheets are given to the presenter, who then summarizes the responses and describes in writing ways he or she would change the presentation before giving it at an in-service program. This evaluation takes little time and gives participants valuable suggestions on how to revise their presentations for their future roles as teacher/consultants.

The Montana Writing Project, in contrast, includes post-presentation discussions where teachers talk about ways to adapt a demonstrated technique for both the classroom and for consulting purposes.

The Montana project also asks teachers to *write out* their presentations, describing necessary procedures and materials, the time required for each step and problems teachers might encounter. In the process of writing, teachers reportedly are able to amend or improve their presentations. The written versions are compiled into a source book for teachers to use in their own schools and districts.

One Nebraska Writing Project innovation helps fellows profit more fully from the many new ideas they encounter by having them review and consolidate their experiences. Each day two teacher/consultants are assigned to write "minutes" of the day's sessions. These pieces, combinations of personal reporting and response from others, are duplicated for the group to read and discuss the next morning. Through writing, reading and talking about the sessions, participants can classify their experiences. The daily reviews also create a coherent picture of past sessions that may be used as a basis for deciding what to do next, for generalizing about what has been learned and for evaluating presentations, readings and editing groups. These minutes also enable teacher consultants to "re-experience" classroom learning: They discuss not only how writing improves but also how learning itself occurs generally in a classroom.

The NWP site personnel also have devised imaginative in-service training methods that are effective in their particular localities. Louisiana's Greater New Orleans Writing Project has developed an innovative Title IV-C project aimed at high school students and teachers in a five-parish area. Each year a teacher/consultant from the writing project serves as a full-time writing resource person in one

area high school. With the help of Elizabeth Penfield, one of the project's directors, the teacher consultant conducts a five-day writing mini-institute for the target school's English staff just before the fall term begins. During the school year, two follow-up days of workshops are held for the home school staff, and two additional in-service training days involve English teachers from other parish high schools as well. Throughout the year, the teacher consultant is on call at the target school, providing ideas to help both teachers and students with all facets of writing. The project was funded for the first year at $41,500, with additional funding up to three years; by that time, it will have directly or indirectly involved 10 high schools.

Other types of training programs offered at NWP sites include graduate course work on teaching writing, university faculty writing workshops, a parents' writing night at a public school, half-day introductory programs for teachers and administrators, direct classroom support with project teachers during the school year and the creation of instructional materials for an undergraduate writing center.

Perhaps the most innovative NWP idea is a plan initiated by Fred Grossberg at the Northern Virginia Writing Project to videotape outstanding writing teachers. The NEH-funded project, officially called "Televised Models of Teaching Writing," is a joint venture of George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, and the Fairfax County Public Schools. The project distributed 50 sets of video cassettes and booklets to CWP and NWP sites and to other curriculum centers across the country for use in after-school in-service programs.

The 12-part videotape series shows outstanding teachers of writing at work in their own classrooms and in teacher-training workshops. Rather than theorizing or dogmatizing, the series demonstrates *how* writing is being taught: It documents good teaching of students, good teaching of teachers and the strong relationship between the two.

At the heart of the series are seven programs, each featuring one of the most outstanding grade school, high school or college-level writing teachers in the country. The teachers were chosen from a group nominated by NWP directors, freshmen English coordinators and English curriculum specialists. The final selection was based on videotapes of their teaching performances.

The series includes one program documenting a five-day writers' workshop led by several outstanding poets and novelists. Another program covers workshop activities of the 1979 summer institute of the Northern Virginia Writing Project. Finally, the series documents various ways of using television for teacher education. A number of programs show how these teachers use videotapes of their classroom work in their in-service presentations to colleagues.

For more information about this television series, write to:

Fred Grossberg
Department of English
George Mason University
4400 University Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030

Evaluation of the Writing Projects

In October 1979, Michael Scriven, director of the Evaluation Institute at the University of San Francisco, released the results of a three-year, $150,000 evaluation of BAWP funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Although the student performance component of the evaluation was not definitive, BAWP, as compared with other writing improvement efforts, was called "the best large-scale effort to improve composition now in operation in this country, and certainly the best upon which substantial data are available."

"We looked at comparable English projects, but they were single-thrust approaches," Scriven said. He described the project as "impressive, with a highly intelligent approach." Particularly impressive was the continued enthusiasm for the project among participants. "Almost all BAWP participants felt strongly enthusiastic about their experiences with the project, regardless of grade level or years of involvement; this enthusiasm reportedly did not diminish over the years," evaluators noted.

Among the features of the BAWP model Scriven singled out as contributing to the continuing enthusiasm of participating teachers were "the treatment of teachers as extremely valuable resources and as autonomous agents; the heavy emphasis on the importance of the teachers doing more writing themselves; the stress on prewriting activities by students and on multimode writing and on writing across the curriculum; the use of an eclectic but carefully selective range of experts as resources to broaden the classroom-bound teacher's horizons; the stress on holistic assessment; the continual updating of the program content; peer criticism (both of teachers' writing and of students' writing)."

For more information on the Carnegie evaluation, you may write to:

Michael Scriven
Director, Evaluation Institute
University of San Francisco
San Francisco, CA 94117

The BAWP concept has also received praise from other sources. Ben Nelms, editor of *English Education*, cited a "new professionalism" among teachers as a major strength of the project. "Teachers in the project are viewed as professionals, with their own areas of professional expertise, their own successful classroom experiences to report and their own contribution to make to the improvement of their fellows . . . . This shared responsibility for improved teaching may be the theme of a new and exciting professionalism" (9).

Finally, Paul Diederich, senior research associate of Educational Testing Service, observes that "BAWP has stirred up English teachers to an extent that I have seldom if ever seen. I was closely involved in the work of some of the research and development centers established by Project English, but none of them started what one would call a 'movement.' I believe that the BAWP really has started a movement that is sweeping the country . . . . With all my bias in favor of hard data, I am already pretty sure that this is one of those ideas that will last like Langdell's invention of the case method of teaching law about 1870."

"Through Summer Institutes and in-service sessions, the projects are proving that teachers can teach students to write," comments James Gray, BAWP's director. "The combination of new information, learning-by-doing class lessons and rediscovering the writing process is giving teachers the confidence to stress writing in their classes not writing that focuses on the conventional surface garnishes of spelling and punctuation, but on the truly basic skills of clarity and coherence."

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Basic Principles of an Effective Writing Program

An effective writing program:

* Is a schoolwide effort involving writing as a means of learning in all curriculum areas
* Provides a wide range of writing experiences for learning in all subject matter areas
* Builds on students' interests and on their reading and oral language experiences
* Offers the opportunity for students at any level to develop *fluency* before they are overly burdened with the fear of error, but with the expectation that they will later attain mastery of form and correctness (*Fluency*, as used here and elsewhere in this document, means the ease and confidence with which a writer is able to put thoughts on paper. It is the facility for being able to write without the constraints and fear of error.)
* Provides for adequate "time on task," which is basic to the learning process
* Provides staff development for the instructional staff
* Helps students to discover that writing is a way of learning about one's self and about the world, of developing thinking skills, of generating new ideas, and of helping one to survive in an increasingly dynamic and complicated society

An effective writing program treats writing as a process, a concept which regards the act of writing as an interrelated series of creative activities. Included within this are prewriting, writing composing, revising, and developing skills with the [illegible] of writing, evaluating, and post-writing. This process has several stages in which:

* All parts of the process are given appropriate attention.
* Instruction in specific skills is integrated into the writing process at appropriate points.
* Students write frequently.
* Students write in all subject areas.
* Students write in many modes, such as descriptive, narrative, persuasive, and so forth.
* Students write for a variety of audiences and purposes.
* Teachers serve as models by doing the same exercises they assign their students.

An effective writing program produces students who:

* Believe that what they have to say is important.
* Are motivated to write, because they feel they have something significant to say.
* Write fluently, coherently, and correctly and with economy of expression.
* Do not overly fear putting their ideas on paper for the consideration of others.
* Realize that composing is an important learning tool in all curricular areas.
* Are able to write in many modes and for a variety of audiences and purposes.
* Readily engage in revising and editing early drafts.
* Pursue the writing [illegible] under their own "steering as a [illegible]."
* Evidence some enjoyment of the act of writing.

Chapter 3

OTHER PROMISING PRACTICES

Many school districts outside the Bay Area Writing Project's (BAWP) inspired network are independently experimenting with ways to improve students' writing. Some of their programs focus on improving the teachers' skills; others concentrate on techniques to help students. Many have components aimed at school staff and students. Both the sheer number and the variety of programs indicate that schools are taking the writing problem seriously and are finding creative new ways to increase students' opportunities to master the craft.

Los Angeles—A Step-by-Step Plan

Over the past several years, the Los Angeles Unified School District has developed a multipronged approach to improving writing. In 1974, a Los Angeles School Board member asked the district to prepare a report on composition instruction in the city's schools. The report was compiled by Los Angeles teachers, teacher training supervisors and leaders of English teachers' organizations. It recommended that children be given more opportunities to write, that class size be reduced to provide more individualized help with writing and that new resources and textbooks be made available.

Next, the district's Instructional Planning Division formed an Advisory Committee on Composition. The committee developed a writing improvement plan that divided composition into four "domains": sensory/descriptive, imaginative/narrative, practical/informative and analytical/expository. Although there is some overlap in the kinds of writing required in the different domains, the divisions give teachers manageable categories around which to make assignments. The four domains also show the range of assignments that should be included in a balanced writing program.

Within each domain, the committee defined five competency levels that illustrate how writing skill and maturity should progress. The domains and competency levels are arranged on a chart: Sensory/descriptive writing assignments at competency level one include limericks and personal journal entries; by level four, the descriptive writer is expected to compose poems of observation and to address a wider audience in his or her journal.

The domain arrangement does not represent a rigid hierarchy, but most teachers find it logical to start with concrete, descriptive assignments and advance to abstract, analytical ones. Before the writing improvement plan was developed, says Nancy McHugh, a Los Angeles resource teacher, high school composition programs concentrated almost solely on expository writing. But topics, such as "Should the 18-year-old be allowed to drink?" required high levels of abstract thinking. Without assignments to build writing skills up to this level, she explains, many students failed.

The writing chart also sets competency levels for prewriting experiences and composing skills. The prewriting experiences stimulate students to think before they start to write. Composing skills consist of specific techniques that should be taught before a writing assignment is given. Composing skills at competency level one include forming interesting

A Treat for the Senses

To stimulate keen observation, a vital element for good writing, some Los Angeles Unified School District elementary teachers use corn-popping as an exercise to sharpen all five senses simultaneously. The technique is used with children who are just beginning to write. The teacher shows them how popcorn looks at the kernel stage and asks them to describe it. Then the youngsters put some corn into a pot and listen to it pop. They taste, see, touch and smell the results, all the while attempting to put into words what is happening. This way the youngsters learn to associate descriptive words with real experience. Teachers encourage them to think of as many descriptive words as they can.

This technique also guarantees that one of the children's first encounters with writing is positive. "We believe that students will remain interested in writing throughout their lives if their first experiences with words are stimulating and pleasant," says Nancy McHugh, director of the district's writing improvement team.

This exercise is one of many outlined in an instructional guide called *Write: A Way* that divides elementary school writing into four areas: descriptive, creative, practical and explanatory. The guide includes sample lessons for teachers. Lessons for the upper elementary grades include listening to records and describing the responses, writing various kinds of letters and analyzing newspaper or magazine stories.

Information about the overall Los Angeles writing program appears on the accompanying pages of this publication. Copies of *Write: A Way* are available from the district's publications unit.

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opening sentences and using supporting details. At competency level three, they include writing thesis sentences with well developed ideas and organizing details according to different patterns.

After the chart was completed, the advisory committee wrote *Compose Yourself* (2),* a book that contains the chart, the writing improvement plan, sample lessons and typical student papers marked with teachers' comments and summary statements.

A second chart also was developed, outlining domains and competency levels for elementary students. This chart, entitled "Written Composition Experiences," groups oral language, writing and other skills into four domains: sensory/descriptive, creative, informational/practical and expository writing. The competency levels extend from "readiness" through level F. (Both charts may be ordered from the Los Angeles Unified School District, District Publications Unit—G-230, 450 North Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90012.)

The Los Angeles School Board has shown its commitment to the writing program in a number of ways. In 1976, at the suggestion of the composition advisory committee, the board added a graduation requirement in composition. Each student must now take contemporary composition, a five-hour course, during his or her sophomore or junior year.

The board allocated $3 million to hire 185 new teachers, enabling it to reduce the size of each composition class to 25 students.

The school system also allocated $100,000 for a writing improvement team composed of teachers from kindergarten through the ninth grade. The teachers, who came from each of Los Angeles's 12 administrative subdistricts, conducted in-service training on the new writing plan for representatives from each of the district's 625 schools. These representatives then returned to their home schools to train other teachers there. The team conducted in-service training for two years.

In 1978-79, Los Angeles's writing improvement effort began to evolve in two new directions. First, the money previously allocated to the writing improvement team was reinvested in development of a test to meet the requirement of Assembly Bill 65 that all high school graduates demonstrate writing proficiency. This money also pays for scoring test writing samples and for developing remedial instruction for students who do not pass. For more information on this effort, see Chapter 5.

Second, the district developed "Writing Competence," a $100,000 Title IV-C ESEA project, which produced a new model for in-service training and helped teachers prepare curricula based on the writing plan. The project began in 1978 with a summer institute similar to those conducted by the BAWP. Attending were one junior and one senior high

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*This number and all other numbers in parentheses refer to the Selected References at the end of this chapter where complete bibliographical data are given.

teacher from each Los Angeles subdistrict and four teachers from nonpublic schools. As in the BAWP program, teachers wrote and shared ideas about writing; in contrast to the BAWP, teachers' presentations were tailored to use in their own classrooms rather than to future in-service work.

In exchange for tnis training and a stipend, the teachers were expected to do five things:

- Train a home-school partner (another English teacher) in the new techniques.

- Train two other home-school teachers of subjects other than English.

- Develop 12 lesson plans with the other three teachers, including four plans that use writing in another subject.

- Orient teachers from feeder elementary schools to the project.

- Orient parents from the teacher's "target" class.

The target class is one selected by the teacher participant for pre- and post-testing of writing ability. Although the teachers are encouraged to use the new techniques with all their classes, they are *required* to use the techniques and lesson plans with the target class.

For more information on the Los Angeles program, contact:

Los Angeles Unified School District
ESEA Title IV-C Writing Competence Project
Nancy McHugh, director
Roger Hyndman, supervisor
450 N. Grand Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 625-6424

The Three Stages of Writing

Teachers from Anchorage, Alaska, to San Jacinto, California, are finding success with an approach adapted by James Sabol, coordinator of English at Bellevue (Washington) Public Schools. Sabol's approach breaks the writing process down into three distinct stages. According to Sabol, writing instruction went awry about 100 years ago when "reformers" shifted to an emphasis on surface features of writing that put a premium on correctness. A student should be concerned with correcting only after two more structural but equally important phases of writing are completed, Sabol says. He calls the three stages drafting, editing and publishing (correcting). Sabol adapted his approach from Aristotelian rhetoric and from the work of Donald W. Cummings and John Herum at Central Washington University.

Each stage of the writing process has its own virtues, skills and degree of audience awareness. During drafting, the virtue is momentum and the object is to get many ideas down on paper in an expansive but structured way. Drafting is essentially oriented to the writer's private thoughts. In editing, the writer shapes and refines the ideas generated during drafting. The virtues at this stage are restraint, orderliness, organization and control, all aimed at making the message understandable to others. During the third stage—publishing; that is, going "public"—the student concentrates on correcting spelling, punctuation and capitalization and other surface features . The virtue at this stage is "correctness," because the paper is going home to parents, into a folder or out to a prospective employer.

The structure for teaching in these three stages is called Topic Comment. The topic is the subject matter of the theme, and the comment says something about the topic. "A paper is never completely about the topic," Sabol notes. "My summer vacation" is an inadequate assignment for students, he believes, because it does not have a comment. By contrast, "My summer vacation was terrible," because it has a propositional comment—what the paper is really about—can stimulate many lively ideas.

The first basic tool for the drafting stage is the skill of naming using a word "cache," or noun collection. The cache forms a reservoir of named material that students can draw from in developing sentences and paragraphs of comment. The teacher suggests an experience—whether a field trip or the third act of *Macbeth*—and students think of words about it, which the teacher then writes on the board or on pieces of papei. In a second grade class, for example, students collected "words of fall," prompted by a picture and the teacher's suggestion that each one think of "what I see, what I hear and what I smell." The resulting collection included words like "bonfire," "leaves," "noses" and "cocoons." In a high school class, the word cache might come from a reading assignment like *Death of a Salesman*. All of the words in the resultant caches are potential topics on aspects of a topic.

Sabol's approach is being used successfully with students from elementary school through high school, including those ir remedial, special education and college-bou programs. By changing assignments and examples, teachers can adapt the approach easily to any grade level.

Once students learn how to generate a naming word cache of nouns (these terms are purposely redundant to teach students what a noun really is), they practice the complementary skill of renaming

to begin their discovery of propositional content for their topics:

Topical Experience: Mount St. Helens

Naming	Renaming
eruption	
ash	dust (dry)
	mud (wet)
	souvenir (for some)
lava	killer (for others)
elk	
mountain	resort (formerly)
	volcano (now)
Harry Truman	hero (according to some)
	victim (according to others)

In the naming renaming exercise, students discover not only many things to write about but also the importance of point of view, setting, audience, and other considerations from the province of literature, which, after all, is someone else's writing.

The next step is to teach students to use the commenting structures of adjective and predication in their writing. Sabol uses the following format to structure continued development of the proposition:

TOPIC		COMMENT	
Naming (word cache nouns)	Renaming (more nouns)	Attributing (adjectives)	Predicating (verbs)

As a class exercise, students list a number of adjectives attributable to each noun in a topic. The teacher then shows them how these adjectives can be combined to form phrases. For a "Star Wars" writing assignment, fifth graders in the Renton (Washington) School District described the robot R2D2 as "friendly, short, round-topped, beepy and kind." Obviously, not all those attributes could be comfortably included in a single phrase. Thus, the students practiced editing when selecting the adjectives for the phrase: "friendly, short, beepy R2D2."

When preparing to write individually, each student lists several nouns in the topic column and selects colorful adjectives for the second column. A student in another fifth grade class compiled the following lists and then combined them into a descriptive essay:

Nouns	Adjectives
unicorn	twisted horn, blue-eyed, black, long-legged
forest	dense, large, mossy, hilly
eyes	red, beady, gigantic
creature	tall, large, manlike, hairy
nap	long, quiet, restful

This exercise teaches students the parts of speech as it gives them building blocks for writing. Sabol acknowledges that, at first, students may go overboard in their use of adjectives. As part of the editing instruction, teachers can advise students to be careful not to use the same adjectives repeatedly. Continuing with the format, students learn how to compose predications—the main vehicle of propositional content—for integration into their writing. For a word cache naming family members, one fourth grade class in San Mateo contributed these predications for the word *dad*:

- Can make his eyes water while eating extra hot mustard in Chinese restaurants
- Can snore with his mouth open
- Can brush his teeth and blow his nose at the same time
- Can conduct conversations with people who are not there

After students have learned the four basic parts of topic and comment to develop propositional content for their writing, they use the same format to master sentence structure beginning with the basic patterns:

Pattern 1	Noun + Verb
Pattern 2	Noun + Verb + Noun
Pattern 3A	Noun + Link + Noun
Pattern 3B	Noun + Link + Adjective

Examples

Pattern 1	Birds fly.
Pattern 2	Birds make melody.
Pattern 3A	Kangaroos are marsupials.
Pattern 3B	Pandas are furry.

Students practice using these basic sentence patterns in paragraphs and essays. When they become proficient in the patterns, they begin expanding their sentences. First they learn to expand by adding modifiers; then they are introduced to sentence combining. Finally, they learn to compose integrated sentences that include all of the developmental skills introduced thus far.

Evidence shows that teachers have confidence in the Sabol approach. Pre- and post-testing in participating school districts show measurably significant gains in student skills. His adaptation of ancient rhetoric is being used in 24 Washington state school districts, and he has taught the method as a nine-week graduate course at nine universities throughout the western states. Sabol also spreads the theory through presentations at education conferences and weekend workshops, and he is now teaching the process as director of the Writing Northwest program at Seattle Pacific University. When contacted for this report, Sabol had commit-

ments for five months' worth of weekend workshops, several in California.

For more information, contact:

James W. Sabol
Office of Special Programs
Seattle Pacific University
Seattle, WA 98119
(206) 281-2121

Individualized Language Arts

Individualized Language Arts (ILA) is called the "grandaddy" of all the writing projects by one of its developers, Edwin Ezor, a professor of reading and language arts at Jersey City (N.J.) State College.

Development of ILA began in 1966 in grades one through six at Roosevelt Elementary School, Weehawken, N.J. The school still serves as headquarters for ILA, but the program has spread to schools in 44 states.

ILA was started by a research team that was discontented with student writing: Jeanette Alder, supervisor of instruction for the Weehawken schools, who became director of the program; Allen Schichtel, chairman of the Weehawken High School English Department; Edwin Ezor; and Ted Lane, also a professor of reading and language arts at Jersey City State College.

Alder obtained a grant under the now defunct Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the team began looking for a practical method of teaching writing. Their research led to the development of 22 techniques that help youngsters to plan, write, and improve their compositions. Four of the techniques are considered "starters" or ways to help students start to write; 18 are improvement techniques.

These techniques are one of the main differences between ILA and some of the other more eclectic approaches to the teaching of writing. ILA is structured — which appeals to some teachers but not to others — and its intent is to give teachers a definite program they can apply immediately in their classrooms. Unlike the Bay Area Writing Project, ILA does not emphasize that teachers must experience writing themselves in order to be able to teach writing.

ILA, the Bay Area Writing Project, and some other writing programs are similar, however, in the amount of stress they place on certain basic concepts. All believe that students should write daily, if at all possible; that writing must be a part of all subjects; that pre-writing activities, such as discussion of the topic, should precede actual writing; that grammar should be taught in the context of learning to write; that students should have ample opportunity to read their writing aloud and to work with their peers in composing and editing; and that teachers should maintain folders of student writing.

ILA Judged Effective

ILA was used and refined in one Weehawken elementary school and later extended to all grades throughout the district. It came to national attention after it was "validated" or judged effective and worthy of federal dissemination in 1974 by the Joint Dissemination Review Panel of the U.S. Department of Education. It was the only writing program validated by the panel. Since then, the New Jersey Writing Project, a spinoff of the Bay Area Writing Project, also has received the federal seal of approval.

ILA developers convinced the federal panel of the program's effectiveness by presenting this evidence: Weehawken students in grades three and seven wrote and rewrote compositions on topics of their own choosing at the beginning, middle, and end of the 1970-71 school year. A group of similar youngsters in a nearby community did the same. The Weehawken students had been taught by teachers trained in ILA techniques; the teachers of the other group had received no special training.

The writing samples were scrutinized for growth in 11 areas. The results showed that Weehawken youngsters were writing longer, richer, and more varied sentences, and that they exhibited more variety in their writing style, conveyed greater amounts of information, and used a higher proportion of compound and compound-complex sentences. The same Weehawken students, in a followup study in the 1971-72 school year, generally continued to show improvement in their writing.

Between 1974 and 1977, evaluations involving rural, suburban, and urban students in New Jersey districts in which teachers had been trained to use ILA techniques also showed significant gains in vocabulary, sentence structure, organization, mechanics, and grammar. Similar success occurred with students in a remedial writing course in a New Jersey state college. These students had a record of not responding to instruction in composition taught by traditional methods, but they showed substantial gains when they were taught by teachers trained in ILA.

How Does ILA Work?

ILA's basic formula includes four elements: diagnosing student needs, establishing priorities for improvement, prescribing which of the 22 ILA techniques should be used to meet individual or group needs, and evaluating student progress. ILA gives guidance in all four areas in the *Teachers' Resource Manual,* a 279-page book so packed with ideas that many districts, in using the program, have produced their own, less-detailed mini-manuals, based on the original.

The techniques are arranged in sequential order, by level of difficulty. Generally, they fall into two categories; techniques to be used in producing a first draft and techniques for improving a composition.

ILA trainers tell teachers to use just a few of the easier techniques on an experimental basis for the first year or so, and to use only as much of the technique as the maturity and ability of the class permit.

The techniques, when viewed as a whole, aim at giving students practice in using the four methods all writers use in moving from first draft to finished product: adding, subtracting, rearranging, or substituting words.

Here is an example of how one of the techniques, slotting, would be used: The teacher would ask students to write a sentence, slotting in the missing words. The sentence could be this: "The Declaration of Independence was written in the year _____ by _____ in the city of _____ ."

The teacher could use this technique in any content area to replace oral questions. Other techniques could be used to expand the basic sentence, if desired. Students could include more information; for example, telling "what kind of document" the Declaration of Independence is, "why" it was written, "what" the result was. This technique is called "expansion by modification."

To teach students to elaborate on their writing or to expand a single sentence into a paragraph, the teacher could also use another from of slotting. Students would be asked to list details on a sheet of paper which is divided into columns labeled "who," "what," "what happened," "when," "where," "how." Upon filling in the columns, the students would realize they have most of the information they need to write a paragraph or first draft.

This ILA technique, as well as all the others, can be modified to fit the needs of the students. The basic idea behind this technique, according to ILA developers, "is to get students to do some thinking before they write and to give them some substance to work with. It can bring highly abstract students down to

earth and, at the other end of the scale, it can help learning disabled students to amplify their writing."

By the second year, the manual says, teachers should be ready to follow the ILA cycle of diagnosis, prescription, instruction, and evaluation.

At the beginning of the year, teachers diagnose needs by having each student write a composition. It could be preceded by oral discussion of possible topics. Students should have access to a dictionary as they write, and, if time permits, to write several papers at different times and turn in the best one.

Beginning in the middle grades, ILA suggests that teachers have students write the composition in an expository manner.

Teachers are advised to review the papers by looking for "gross, obvious, or serious" needs in each student's writing and to record their findings on a form that lists elements such as vocabulary, sentence structure, organization. ILA's *Resource Manual* includes a "diagnostic grid sheet" that can be used for this purpose, or teachers may devise their own method of recording the information.

Using the results, teachers then establish (1) common needs; (2) needs shared by some students; and (3) individual needs. From this tabulation, ILA suggests that teachers establish priorities in teaching or "minimal, conservative objectives" to be met during the school year.

The teacher can then turn to the *Resource Manual* to plan a sequence of recommended prescriptive techniques. If run-on sentences are a common problem, for example, the manual says the teacher could have students read their writing aloud or use the slotting technique or another technique called "sentence reduction."

If clear, accurate use of words, on the other hand, is one of the teacher's objectives, the variety of techniques could include oral reading, many forms of slotting techniques, or dictionary activities.

ILA suggests that the procedure of formal diagnosis be repeated at midyear to gauge student progress and at the end of the year to discern the impact of the total program and make adjustments for the following year.

Informal diagnosis should be done on a daily basis or each time a writing activity is carried on, the program developers suggest.

The *Resource Manual* acknowledges that a secondary English teacher with a class load of 125 to 150 students, working a little at a time, would require a couple of weeks to complete a thorough formal diagnosis. But the time is worthwhile in the view of the program's developers. Otherwise, they say, teachers cannot shape their classes to meet the needs of students.

Program Spreads Across U.S.

When ILA was "validated" or approved for dissemination to schools nationwide, it became eligible to compete for federal dissemination funds under the National Diffusion Network (NDN).

NDN is a nationwide system that enables schools to "adopt" federally approved programs such as ILA. Stated in the simplest terms, an adoption means that the staff of the approved program provides in-service training and follow-up services to teachers and administrators in a school or district that wants to duplicate the program.

NDN also funds "state facilitators," who serve as brokers between local schools in their region or state and the NDN programs. They help schools define their problems, and they make the schools aware of NDN programs that could offer a solution. The methods used by different facilitators vary, but all are charged with making the adoption process as simple as possible for schools.

The services of the facilitators and of the staffs of the NDN programs are available at no charge to schools.

In-service Training the ILA Way

ILA trainers provide two days of in-service training for teachers in a school making an adoption. Administrators are also invited to attend the session so they are aware of how the program operates and how it should be evaluated.

Most ILA training sessions are conducted by Alder or Ezor and his wife, Rita, at the adopting school. However, ILA periodically holds large training sessions at its home base, open to any teachers or administrators who wish to attend.

During the two-day training session, participants become familiar with ILA's diagnostic, prescriptive, and teaching techniques. Most important, the teachers become students. They use the techniques as they are learning about them. They also make sample materials to take back to their classrooms.

"We have found that 'hands-on' experience which produces materials suited to the teacher's school is better than handouts," said Alder. "We distribute few written materials, because we are concerned with a process—writing."

Most participants purchase a copy of the *Resource Manual* (cost $10). It is available only to those who go through formal training as part of an ILA adoption.

The training sessions serve some other purposes, in addition to introducing participants to the manual. The trainer, for instance, can set straight any misconceptions participants may have about the teaching of writing and also elaborate on how to adjust ILA techniques to the needs of different students and different classes.

The trainers also pass on tips for making the program work successfully. In one in-service session, for example, Ezor offered participants these tips:

- Begin writing by discussing the topic with students and by incorporating reading, speaking, and listening.
- If teachers can overcome the idea that writing is a separate subject, the program is easy to implement.
- A writing program needs continuity. Ideally, it should start in the first grade with oral activities
- Daily practice in writing is as necessary as daily exercise. "The daily 15-minute writing assignment is the key to good writing."
- The most difficult problem to deal with is clumsy, unclear writing.
- Work for clarity first, then expansion of writing.
- Encourage students to do at least some group work in composing.
- Start a writing folder at the beginning of the year for each student. Include diagnostic writing samples and other examples of student work. Pass the folders on to the teacher at the next grade level.
- Do not hold students responsible for anything they have not been taught.
- Get students into the habit at the beginning of the year of reading aloud.
- Have all students develop a "mechanics" checklist they can use in editing their own writing.
- From grade five on, make students responsible for correcting their spelling errors.

Ezor also commented on some of the advantages of the program. ILA, he said, relieves teachers of what to teach, and it is logical. Teachers do not complain about the lack of time, he added, because students are correcting their own work, doing their own editing, and proofreading. "The program becomes your writing program; you don't need anything else." On the other hand, he said, ILA can be used as a supplement to another program.

Start small. Ideally, Alder said, an adoption should start with the training of at least a few experienced teachers from different grade levels—teachers who are enthusiastic about the program. More teachers can be brought in later.

What a school or district should not do is to force the program on a whole staff at the same time. The slower approach, using volunteer teachers, results in a better adoption. The best way to sell the program, ILA developers believe, is to show the "before" and "after" results of students' work.

"Teachers are convinced about the effectiveness of the techniques," Alder commented, "when they see growth."

After the adoption is made. If teachers have questions after they start to use the techniques in their own classrooms, they may consult with the ILA trainers by phone or letter. Some schools also request the trainers to return for a second session several months or more after the initial workshop.

In many schools, a teacher with experience in the program and the ability to teach other teachers becomes the school or district ILA trainer. The program has officially "certified" 55 persons in 17 states who are considered qualified to offer in-service training in ILA in their districts, regions, or states.

Alder also recommends that adopting districts designate a liaison person—whether principal, department chairperson, or teacher—to stay in touch with the program for ongoing help and support. It is not uncommon, moreover, for ILA-trained teachers to hold informal or formal meetings on a school, district, region, or statewide basis in order to help each other and to share what they have learned about writing.

ILA Is Meeting Needs

Some districts are using ILA to meet state requirements or to prepare students for minimum competency tests in writing. Some examples and results:

- *The Pearl River (N.Y.) Schools,* which adopted ILA in 1978-79, noted no failures at the middle school level in the writing portion of the state minimum competency test. The Hyde Park (N.Y.) Central Schools similarly credits ILA for decreasing the failure rate of its students on the same test by 50 percent.
- *The Hatboro-Horsham (Pa.) School District* uses ILA as part of its comprehensive reading/communications art plan required of all Pennsylvania districts. Four of the ILA techniques (sentence synthesis, the framed paragraph, expansion, and outlining), the district notes, are extremely useful in all content areas at all grades because they help students develop better study and organizational skills. Primary teachers in the district are using ILA as the basis for integrating reading and writing activities.
- *In the Farmingdale (N.Y.) Public Schools,* John F. Rooney, chairman of English, kindergarten through grade nine, uses ILA as one of the resources for paperbound collections of "Writing Strategies for the Eighties." The doc-

How to Tell a Successful Adoption

ILA trainers consider an adoption of ILA a success when teachers are applying the program consistently throughout the school year. More specifically, they say a successful adoption should contain the following "critical elements":

- Assignment of frequent writing activities, making use of ILA techniques in content areas as well as in English or language arts.
- Ongoing diagnosis of students' writing, and prescriptive selection of techniques to meet needs.
- Development of writing checklists to remind students to apply ILA techniques in every writing lesson.
- Maintenance of individual writing folders for students.
- Motivating students to write and giving them careful evaluation of writing assignments.
- Linking [illegible]
- Planning [illegible]
- Evaluation [illegible]
- Periodically [illegible] personal program and [illegible]

uments keep teachers and administrators in Rooney's district up to date on research and practices in the teaching of writing.

ILA is having its largest impact in the states of Georgia, Indiana, Maine, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Texas.

In 1979-80, ILA had more adoptions (648) than any other program in the federal government's National Diffusion Network. A complete tally of adoptions for 1980-81 was not available as this report went to press. But, noted one of the trainers, "We expect it to be well over 500."

NOTE: For more information, contact Jeanette Alder, Project Director, Individualized Language Arts, Wilson School, Hauxhurst, Ave., Weehawken, NJ 07087.

Huntington Beach—A Workshop/Laboratory Approach

In its writing improvement effort, Huntington Beach (California) Union High School District concentrates on improving the writing skills of ninth graders, all of whom take a special composition program. Before the program began in 1976,

all freshmen were asked to write a composition, and these samples of their work were scored holistically. The range of possible scores was 2 to 12; those who scored 5 or below were targeted for intensive help. Some district schools scheduled small classes composed entirely of target students, while others mixed target and high-scoring students in the same class.

At the start of the 1976 fall semester, the district hired 15 experienced composition teachers to implement the new program. It also inaugurated a semester-long weekly seminar on composition open to the new teachers and to others already employed by the district. The seminar was taught by W. Ross Winterowd of the University of Southern California and Dorothy Augustine of Chapman College. Through readings, class discussion and lectures by Winterowd and Augustine, the teachers explored research and theory about how students learn to write.

A key precept of the Huntington Beach approach is that writing and editing should be taught separately and in different settings. According to Winterowd and Augustine, creating language is an innate ability that does not need to be taught. Instead, they say, composing skills should be nurtured in a freewheeling atmosphere they call the writing workshop. By contrast, they add, editing skills—the conventions of acceptable written English—are best learned through drill and practice. "Students need to practice both (writing and editing)," the professors say, "but to learn both at the same time, to be expected to produce both simultaneously, is counterproductive for the beginning writer."

Their solution is to teach composition in the writing workshop and editing—on different days—in an editing lab. In a paper describing the Huntington Beach program, Winterowd presents a montage of activities found in the writing workshop:

- Discussion of and practice with prewriting techniques by the whole class
- Small group activities for two or three students—for example, two students reacting to and making suggestions about a paper (perhaps a rough draft) produced by a third student
- Composing on the board, with volunteers making attempts to solve a given writing problem, such as how to get a paper by one member of the class under way effectively
- Class discussion of one, two or three mimeographed papers written by class members
- Conferencing—the teacher circulating in the classroom to help individual students with writing problems while the others work on their papers

- Some editing lessons for the whole class, dealing with a limited problem that all members of the class have in common
- Reformulation exercises, in which all class members make suggestions for improving one student's paper
- Class discussion on how to adjust a given paper for a certain audience
- Journal writing
- Language games, such as the round-robin sentence, in which students successively add modifiers to a base, perhaps (depending on the level of sophistication) in an attempt to parody some author, such as Faulkner
- Publishing activities, in which groups of students or all class members participate in getting a collection ready for the press and distribution
- Class development of writing assignments, during which students devise topics, define audiences and delineate situations

The editing lab was designed to help students with their individual needs. Through personal conferences and other workshop activities, the teacher identifies problems students are having with the mechanics of writing. Each student is then scheduled into the lab with an individual prescription to work on a given area, such as pronoun reference or punctuation.

The physical makeup of the lab varies from school to school. At Huntington Beach High School, lab materials are grouped in a classroom set aside for that purpose and staffed by a specific teacher. At Fountain Valley High School, space for a separate lab was unavailable; teachers solved this problem by constructing a "floating lab," with materials housed in portable files. The teachers rotate the workshop and the lab from classroom to classroom, although the same teacher runs both the workshop and the lab.

In 1977, Huntington Beach repeated its fall seminar for teachers of composition. This time, it was taught by teacher/consultants who attended the first seminar. Winterowd served as a consultant and guest lecturer. The seminar evolved away from teaching theory to demonstrating practical applications of theory in the classroom.

After the seminar began, the district received two Title IV-C developmental grants to expand the effort. One grant, for Project Literacy, provided funds for a teacher training program, while the second, for the Integrated Communications Skills Lab, launched a pilot program at one Huntington

Calling on the Community

The Rose Tree-Media School District in Media, Pennsylvania, has turned to the surrounding community for help with one tiresome job—editing the mounds of papers that result when teachers assign more writing. The district hires qualified but noncertificated persons from the community at nominal pay to help teachers correct themes and to assist in the classroom once a week.

Among the community residents hired since the program began in 1971 are a newspaper correspondent, a graduate student in communications, a newspaper editor and a free-lance writer. The assistants call themselves lay readers. They work with students under the direction of the English teachers and receive $1,000 a year for the one day per week they spend in junior or senior high classes.

Each reader's precise role depends on the students' needs and the wishes of the teacher. When themes indicate that the students need help, a lay reader might write sentences from the papers on the board and help the class take note of errors in grammar, punctuation, parallelism and so forth. The reader might also lecture on how to write a theme. In a class of academically talented students, the reader and the teacher might split students into groups and conduct the class in a manner similar to that used in a writers' workshop. The newspaper correspondent taught students how to write news stories, some of which were submitted to editors of publications. The newspaper editor helped students publish their own newspaper. Some readers also are effective with students who have personality or behavior problems, because the reader is not the usual class disciplinarian and can take a fresh approach to such difficulties. Teachers make sure that on the day

of the lay reader's visit, class activities center on composition.

At first, the Rose Tree-Media faculty had some misgivings about asking outsiders into their classes on a regular basis. But teachers' concerns have been allayed. The number of lay readers has grown every year, with increasing numbers of teachers and principals requesting their help. The school system recruits lay readers through newspaper advertisements and by word of mouth. Candidates for the jobs are interviewed first by administrators and then by the teacher with whom they must work. Teachers have the final say in choosing their assistants, thus helping pave the way for a congenial relationship.

Qualified lay readers are surprisingly easy to come by, in spite of the low salary and the lack of social security, insurance or retirement benefits. Why do they do it? One lay reader, Ruth S. Seegrist, writing in the *American School Board Journal* of September, 1979, says, "My own reasons for sticking with the program are similar to those of other lay readers: I enjoy working with young people, being involved in their education, and keeping abreast of their world. I like to write and enjoy sharing what knowledge I have about the subject." Seegrist is a professional free-lance writer from Springfield, Pennsylvania.

Of course, not all lay readers have the specialized background of an editor or correspondent, and some do not work well with an entire class. Those who do not, however, can help students individually and correct their papers.

Beach high school that extended the program to target students in grades nine through twelve.

Project Literacy teacher/consultants meet twice monthly to give presentations to each other, hear outside speakers and plan future seminars and workshops. The meetings rotate among the schools, with teachers from the host school explaining their program to other consultants. The goal is to have, in each high school, three to four teacher/consultants who can work with the approximately 30 language arts teachers on that campus, explains Jim Sebring, project director. For this reason, the consultants are expected to be generalists, knowledgeable about all aspects of the Huntington Beach

program. However, the teacher/consultants from one school are free to invite a consultant from a neighboring school to present a "guest lecture" on a topic where the neighboring teacher has special expertise. In addition to the regular meetings, the consultants are released for two days each year to develop their skills as teacher trainers.

The semester seminar exists primarily for the teacher/consultants, but it is also open to other district teachers and to teachers from five elementary districts that feed into Huntington Beach. Sebring notes that the mix of elementary and secondary teachers benefits both groups, because it makes them aware of instruction at one another's level.

The Integrated Communications Skills Lab expands the focus of the writing program at Westminster High School to help students who have difficulty with both reading and writing. Eligible students are ninth graders who read two or more levels below grade or who score 5 or below on the district's writing sample test. These students take the writing workshop, the editing lab and a reading course that emphasizes vocabulary development and paragraph comprehension. In the writing workshop, students keep journals and study sentence fluency and spelling in the context of their writing. The teacher confers with each student at least once each week to determine the areas of grammar or mechanics in which he or she needs practice.

Students attend the editing lab two days a week. Generally, the writing teacher sends some of his or her students to the lab and works with a smaller group in the workshop. In the lab, students are given personal attention by a teacher and a college student aide; they are taught as well as asked to complete written exercises.

For more information about the Huntington Beach programs, contact:

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Huntington Beach Union High School
  District
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Huntington Beach, CA 92647
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The Rockville Writing Lab

Like its counterpart in Westminster, California, the language lab at Rockville (Maryland) High School is for students who need help with both reading and writing. It focuses on ninth graders who are reading and writing below a sixth grade level. The number of students in the lab is small, and games are exercises designed to have students practice language skills, rebuild students' confidence and make each student responsible for his or her own learning.

To identify students needing help, an ad hoc committee of resource teachers from Montgomery County met during the summer of 1975 to draft a checklist of basic writing skills. Students with severe deficiencies in two or more of the skills were expected to take the lab as well as ninth grade English. The 12 basic skills targeted are as follows:

- *Alphabet* recognizing capital and small letters, alphabetizing

- *Handwriting* practicing cursive letters, copying material accurately

- *Numbers* using cardinal and ordinal numbers in a

series, translating information such as time into numerals

- *Abbreviations* forming and punctuating standard abbreviations

- *Survival skills* filling out forms, reading a road map, writing a check

- *Fragments and sentences* recognizing and writing a sentence, using fragments to complete sentences

- *Categorizing* classifying a list, distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant details, outlining

- *Summarizing* taking notes, interpreting charts and graphs, paraphrasing a paragraph, summing up a point

- *Mechanics and usage* capitalizing, spelling, punctuating, using correct grammar

- *Paragraphing* writing a paragraph based on a topic sentence, developing sequential sentences, using language at different levels, proofreading

- *Letters and notes* writing letters of complaint or for informational, social and business purposes

- *Daily communication* preparing composition notes, asking clear questions, describing an incident, defining, writing down directions, explaining a process, keeping a daily record, supporting an opinion

After compiling the basic skills list, the committee designed a packet of activities pertaining to each skill. To demonstrate summarizing, for example, a student is expected to answer a newspaper ad about a job, enclosing a written summary of his or her background and work experience.

Three teachers in the Rockville High School English department then converted the packet of information into exercises, which can be used in the classroom by small groups or for peer tutoring. Each exercise lasts only five to ten minutes to avoid student boredom.

The Rockville lab complements a districtwide writing curriculum that emphasizes instruction in rhetoric, composition and grammar from the seventh through the twelfth grades.

A Student-Centered Approach

A curriculum developed by James Moffett is based on the two premises that students should learn to write in different modes for different audiences and that they should start out by writing about themselves. Assignments are arranged in an orderly sequence that takes students from personal, inward-looking writing to objective, outward-looking pieces. After they have practiced writing about "familiar territory," they move more easily to abstractions and generalizations. According to Moffett, a "bad" assignment one that students do poorly may be a "good assignment given before students are ready for it." (4)

Assignments illustrating Moffett's theory are presented in *A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K 13: A Handbook for Teachers* (4). His approach integrates the four language skills: talking, listening, reading and writing. For example, children in the primary grades (K 3) are introduced to language through pantomime, improvisation and class discussion. Children dictate stories to older students and then begin writing themselves, compiling their own books, writing puns and games and taking simple dictation. As a first step toward learning to observe, they record how they respond through one of their senses to things in the classroom.

In the primary grades, the pupils do most of their composing in groups, saying sentences aloud while someone writes their words down. They also respond to one another's papers in groups. Both the writing and the evaluating are part of what Moffett calls the writing workshop. Students get into the habit of writing for each other, an activity which gives them motivation and a sense of writing for an audience.

In the intermediate grades (fourth sixth), the improvisations and dictation are more complex, and the sensory observations are made outside the classroom. Pupils begin recording memories for use in later assignments. For both sensory and memory tasks, students are instructed to write hurriedly to capture all their thoughts without worrying about spelling or punctuation. They rework their material later, pulling thoughts together in a way that will be meaningful to readers. The students continue to evaluate each other's writing in workshops.

In junior high school (grades seven nine), students apply previously mastered skills to more advanced written work. The improvisations become

Composition Starter

A Teacher-Tested Idea from an *English Journal* Workshop

• Give students photographs of people, and ask them to choose one that catches their interest. The assignment is to write about what the person in the picture is thinking, how he got where he is in the picture, and so forth. When this activity is complete, the student can write another essay pretending he or she is the person in the picture looking at the student on a typical day. What would the person in the picture think about the student's life?

—Gayle Kennedy
Waytata, Minn.

Reprinted from the December, 1973, issue of the *English Journal* by permission of the National Council of Teachers of English.

dramatic monologues and plays; this scripting leads to stories, essays and poems. Sensory assignments from elementary school become the foundation for eyewitness reporting, which culminates in writing a newspaper story. The earlier memory assignments are expanded into autobiographies and memoirs both of which recall single events.

Junior high school students also keep journals and diaries. Following the Moffett sequence personal to public writing students begin with in-class diaries and progress to short, public journals. Then they summarize their journals in a long miscellaneous journal.

In high school (grades ten twelve), the autobiography and memoir writing is expanded to cover a "phase" of a person's life, rather than a single incident. One series of assignments combines reporting through interviews and observations with research taken from written sources.

Moffett prescribes four "repeatable" essay assignments designed to help train older students to make abstractions. First, the student tells of several incidents, drawn both from life and from reading, that illustrate an idea or repeat a similar theme. Next, the student writes single sentences that represent generalizations, such as maxims or aphorisms. The third assignment is to develop one of the generalizations with additional statements and illustrations.

Moffett points out that his assignments deal with types of writing not usually required in school. He opposes purely academic writing assignments on the grounds that they take time that could be better spent doing other things. For example, book reports are often assigned in elementary school to check whether students have read a book; Moffett believes that class discussions are a far less tedious way to accomplish the same thing. Moffett also deplores asking elementary children to do reference papers and literary analyses. The first encourages plagiarism, he says, and both are seen by children as a test of whether they have read the material.

Moffett's materials include criteria for judging the value of a writing assignment.

A booklet which expands on the Moffett sequence of autobiography and memoir has been published by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) as part of a series on classroom techniques called *Theory and Research into Practice* (1). The booklet, entitled *Writing About Ourselves and Others,* by Richard Beach, is intended for teachers of high school and college students. It outlines activities to develop skills for writing autobiography (about the self in the past), memoir (about someone else in the past) and portraits (about someone else in the present). It also suggests contemporary books that can be related to the writing assignments.

Help from Professional Writers

A Title IV-C project in Fairfax, California, used teacher writers to work intensively with regular Fairfax teachers at the kindergarten through the sixth grade levels. A key element of the three-year, $73,000 Expressive Writing project was that project staffers considered themselves professional writers as well as credentialed teachers. Two are published poets, and the third has published short stories and produced a radio program. Unlike a traditional artist-in-the-schools program, however, these writers worked with teachers as well as with students, and the contact continued throughout the school year.

The purpose of the Expressive Writing in School project is to improve students' expressive writing skills and attitudes. Program goals emphasize three aspects of writing instruction: the writing process (for example, fluency, authenticity, enjoyment); the writer's craft (for example, organization, vocabulary, the use of detail); and language and literacy skills (for example, spelling, presentation, punctuation). Children in the project work on writing daily as a regular part of the school day. Writing is actually taught rather than merely assigned and includes attention to the various stages of writing, from thinking and planning to original drafts, revisions, and presentations of finished work. Students write in many forms and genres, such as letters, reports, fiction, and dialogues; and writing is taught with other curriculum areas, such as social studies or art.

The program in Fairfax is carefully planned so that students can develop a positive attitude about writing. The language that comes to the page is a child's own, whether the work is academic, creative, or autobiographical. Through workshop seminars and written materials for teachers, the project helps teachers develop classroom writing programs that can continue after Title IV-C funding ends.

Participating teachers were released for workshops six times during the year. Meanwhile, project staff members worked closely with the teachers on a one-to-one basis: A staff member taught one demonstration lesson a week in each teacher's class and helped that teacher prepare other lessons. This personal format enabled the staff to augment the workshop training. The small size of the Fairfax faculty made such an approach possible. The 31 teachers involved in the first two years constituted half the faculty. During the final year of the project, the staff expanded the program to all teachers in the district.

The program's goal was to develop students' fluency and confidence through direct instruction in writing. In kindergarten, the emphasis fell on oral composing; someone else wrote down what students said. The writings of upper-grade students were published.

Evaluation of holistically-scored writing samples has shown in each of the three years that project students in kindergarten through grade six made significantly greater gains in their writing than the comparison students did. Furthermore, it appears that the project has had a cumulative and lasting effect on students who have been in the project for two years. On attitude surveys, project students expressed more positive attitudes toward writing and a more sophisticated understanding of the elements of good writing than did comparison students. Project teachers said they felt more confident about their ability to teach writing.

For more information about the Fairfax program, call or write:

Bryce Moore and Bill Boyer, coordinators
Expressive Writing in School
Fairfax School District
101 Glen Drive
Fairfax, CA 94930
(415) 454-7585

SWRL—A Sequenced Approach

Another carefully sequenced, step-by-step composition program has been developed by the Educational Research and Development unit of Southwest Regional Laboratory (SWRL), a California-based, nonprofit organization primarily supported by the National Institute of Education (NIE). The materials, keyed to elementary school pupils, were developed with funds from the U.S. Office of Education and the NIE. Development included extensive field testing in schools with pupils from varying economic and racial backgrounds.

A key component of the SWRL approach is a set of specific objectives for each learning unit. Each unit ends with a test that measures how well students have mastered these objectives. Students learn the required skills by completing exercises on worksheets. If they have difficulty, supplementary lessons are provided.

The SWRL curriculum contains 14 nongraded blocks. If used at a rate of one block per semester (three lessons per week), the material can be covered between kindergarten and the sixth grade. Some schools, however, prefer to spread the instruction over more grades, completing the series in the seventh or eighth grade.

Underlying the SWRL approach is an emphasis on getting the students to plan what they write and then having them edit and revise their compositions. Without specific guidance, explains Roger

Scott, SWRL project manager, students tend to write something down without thinking it through. The SWRL teacher's manual suggests specific activities to guide students' discussions of, for example, the kind of information that should be in a business letter. "There's no one particular (planning) technique," Scott says. Instead, numerous suggestions provide variety in instruction.

In addition to the teacher's manual, the materials include a program guide, which provides general information; teacher procedure cards, which describe particular lessons; worksheets and workbooks for student exercises; criterion tests; and supplementary worksheets.

The SWRL curriculum covers writing skills in the following sequence:

- Blocks 1 and 2 Handwriting, formation of letters and numbers, progressing to words

- Blocks 3 and 4 Writing words to fill in blanks in sentences, writing sentences, then short stories

- Blocks 5 and 6 Writing descriptions, following directions, explaining how to draw an object, writing plot-oriented stories and friendly letters

- Blocks 7 and 8 Writing descriptions and stories using dialogue, persuasive writing an summarizing fiction (book reports)

- Blocks 9 and 10 Writing descriptions of scenes, memory narratives, newspaper stories and headlines, publicity announcements (news releases and posters)

- Blocks 11 and 12 Writing stories that focus on characterization, stories that focus on setting and plot, newspaper editorials and reviews, summarizing nonfiction (note-taking)

- Blocks 13 and 14 Writing reports from interviews, writing reports from written sources (research papers)

Rolando Park Fundamental School in San Diego was one of the pilot elementary schools that tested the SWRL materials. The school has continued to use not only the composition program but also three related SWRL programs in reading, spelling and expressive language. "We've had phenomenal luck with them," says Nadine Humberstad, a teacher who has taught with SWRL materials at several grade levels.

According to Humberstad, the primary strength of the program is its carefully sequenced approach. First graders start the year by reviewing handwriting, which they learned in kindergarten. Compos-

ing exercises progress in difficulty, from choosing which of two words best completes a sentence to filling in a word from picture clues. The children then learn to write phrases, to use phrases to complete sentences and to write whole sentences. Punctuation and capitalization are integrated in the lessons. When the student has to choose between two words, for example, the same word might be given twice, first followed by a period and then followed by a question mark. The student must determine whether the sentence is a statement or a question to select the appropriate answer.

"The strength of the SWRL communications program is that all four parts reinforce each other," Humberstad says. Words from the spelling lessons, for example, are also used in the reading and composition lessons. Humberstad describes the program as highly teacher directed. For this reason, it is used more frequently in high'y structured and fundamental classrooms than in open classrooms, where children work in individualized, self-paced programs.

During the seven-year development of these composition materials, pre- and post-tests were given to SWRL students and to control groups. With every unit, those using the SWRL program scored higher on the post-tests than the control groups did.

The SWRL materials have been published by Ginn and Company, but SWRL consultants are still available to provide technical assistance or general information. For more information, contact:

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Chapter 4

SUCCESSFUL CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES

Why does writing flourish in some classrooms and flounder in others? Is it partly a matter of the chemistry between teacher and students, or is it strictly craft or technique? If teaching writing—like writing itself—is a craft, then how can students be led from one level of skill to the next? Is there a natural path of development? And what techniques will inspire students to write voluminously and spontaneously? Can grammar be taught so it does not interfere with self-expression?

Traits of Successful Teachers

For that matter, what type of teacher is best equipped to make students' writing flourish? In a study for the Ford Foundation, Donald H. Graves, University of New Hampshire professor of education, spent many months observing writing instruction in the United States, England and Scotland. He found good writing in all kinds of settings, but successful teachers shared a similar attitude and approach.

"All had high personal standards of craftsmanship," Graves writes in *Language Arts* (4). "They had an artisan's view of the universe. Materials were constantly evolving toward some expression of excellence. Compositions, drawings, experiments, mathematical problems were never wrong, only unfinished." Teachers also tended to share outside interests painting, writing, even caring for plants with the children, and they kept abreast of the students' particular interests.

These teachers also encouraged their students to do a lot of writing. In fact, writing was a chief means for exchanging information between teacher and child in these classes. There was "a curious lack of skills checkoff lists, behavioral objectives or detailed plans," Graves notes. One teacher explained that she felt such lists took valuable time from teaching. "Besides," the teacher said, "any real information I need from others is here in these collections of the students' writing. Turn the pages in the folder. Can't you tell if there has been effective change?"

Besides sharing these traits, teachers conducted similar activities in classrooms where successful writers were produced.

Graves isolated six common characteristics:

1. *Where writing flourished, it was one of many forms of expression.* Drama, storytelling, music, painting, choral speaking, handicrafts, movement or dance were practiced, depending on the backgrounds and interests of the staff. Sometimes special art or music teachers would contribute activities, "but rarely did their aid take root in a class (with) a teacher who did not have an artisan's view."

2. *Teachers provided other audiences than themselves for children's writing.* The writing was published, bound and circulated in the library or shared among students in the classroom.

3. *The teachers provided time for writing.* In the early grades, children wrote throughout the day. Writing was expected, even if not formally assigned. Also, teachers frequently encouraged the children to

write with "specifics." "John," said one teacher, "you know all about blue whales. I think you're capable of putting together an illustrated booklet." This "encouragement with specifics" extended throughout the writing process, from choosing the topic through early drafts and final revisions.

4. *The teachers responded first to content, regardless of the assignment.* Revision was geared first toward improving the information, then to language conventions.

5. *The concept of drafting was not confined to the activity of writing alone.* Instead, there was an overall stance of inquiry and reflection throughout the curriculum in these schools. Students were encouraged to go back and rebuild projects which did not work out according to plan.

6. *Writing occurred in a community.* "This was difficult to assess; yet, it seemed to have more to do with standards of excellence than any other factor already named." When one child sought the advice of another, the classmate was specific with criticism. Often, the reviewer would adopt the teacher's approach of responding first to the information, then to mechanical aspects. The students were aware of their classmates' areas of expertise and consulted them both orally and in writing for this knowledge.(4)[1]

Getting Started—Prewriting Comes First

Successful writing teachers say that the writing process contains three distinct steps: prewriting, composing and rewriting. During the prewriting stage, the goals are to motivate the students to write and to give them tools, such as sharp observation skills, that they may use in getting ready to write. Teachers say that time spent on this part of the writing process pays off in more finished compositions than the compositions created without a prewriting stage. (See the Department of Education's *Handbook for Planning an Effective Writing Program* for a description of the prewriting stage.)

An Eye for Observation

A technique for building observation skills is described in a booklet called "Observing and Writing," published by the National Council of Teachers of English as part of a series called *Theory into Practice* (5). The booklet describes 15 classroom activities that develop students' abilities to observe their surroundings to become aware of their senses and to draw inferences from their observations. The first exercise, "The Spy Game," gives students one

[1] Reprinted with permission from "We Won't Let Them Write," by Donald H. Graves, in *Language Arts*, May, 1978. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English. copyright, 1978.

minute to view a collection of objects (students pretend they are undercover agents at an embassy in Paris and that the objects were recovered from a captured spy). After viewing the objects, students return to their seats and each compiles a list. Then they compare their lists and discuss what the items reveal.

"What was the captured spy like?" asks George Hillocks, author of the booklet. "What might be significant clues about his business? What clues are there to his personality?" The students' conclusions, of course, are less important than the skill they develop in observation. Other exercises include listening to sound and silence, observing bodily sensations, observing behavior through pantomime and role-playing, and recalling experience. The exercises can be used with students in seventh grade and above.

Listening to Language

Claire Pelton, English department chairperson at Los Altos (California) High School, trains her students in a different kind of observation she intends to give them an ear attuned to the nuances of fine language. Pelton explains in *The College Board Review* that students constantly are assaulted by poor language usage through television, the things they read and everyday conversation (8). To counteract this "insidious bombardment," she says, "teachers must barrage their students with the sight and sound of fine prose." Pelton spends "an inordinate amount" of class time on reading. The students see the words on photocopies while hearing them read aloud. They study words, phrases, paragraphs and stanzas.

Pelton varies her examples, going from Hemingway and James Joyce to a Hugh Sidey column. Other sources include "a cadenced paragraph from a student theme" and even "the personable letters of Fred Hargadon," dean of admissions at Stanford University.

"By reaffirming the eloquence of the written word," she explains, "I prod students to listen to the sound of their own prose. In short, I try to develop their 'ear' and make them critical of bloated, imprecise language." When this happens, "their criticism becomes both contagious and irrepressible," Pelton adds. "The language of their teachers and of the authors of their textbooks, the 'double-speak' and bland illiteracies displayed in daily announcements (most often written by administrators and teachers), a clumsily expressed editorial in the local newspaper all become prime targets."

The criticism becomes so lively that Pelton is occasionally addressed rather sharply by an em-

barrassed colleague or administrator. "I remain delighted," she says.[2]

Next—Motivating Students

Other prewriting experiences give a valuable boost to student creativity by providing a mood that makes students want to write. The rather sterile surroundings of a typical classroom cannot be relied upon to give students creative stimulus. Also, since most secondary schools divide classes into 40- or 50-minute periods, students coming into English classes are likely to be thinking about something

that happened in the previous period or while classes were changing.

Beth Dakelman, a creative-writing high school teacher in Martinsville, New Jersey, uses a technique she calls "Mind Transportation," a voyage into a fantasy world that students take while they are sitting in their seats. Dakelman has students write for 10 minutes a day for several weeks on a series of "absurd or mind-tickling questions." In an article in the *English Journal*, Dakelman offered these as possible topics: "If you had one wish, what would you choose? If you could not be yourself, what would you be and why? What is inside the secret chest that you have just found in your backyard?"(?)

An Experiment in Observation

Most teachers of composition recognize lack of specificity in student writing as a continuing problem from junior high school to college. . . . Even when students are confronted with actual concrete situations to observe and write about, their writing omits details that might enable them to capture the timbre and quality of the given situation. Either they believe that their prose does convey their own specific perceptions or they are, for some reason, oblivious to the particular details which give any subject its peculiar qualities. Talks with students about what they have just observed (a seashell, a painting, a dispute between two students, etc.) seem to indicate that the latter is the case. They simply do not examine experiences very carefully.

George Hillocks, Jr., writing in the February, 1979, issue of *Research in the Teaching of English*, describes a problem that most teachers know well. Attempting to find a remedy, he designed a series of exercises to help students develop their powers of observation. To determine the effectiveness of the exercises, Hillocks and others used them with groups of ninth and eleventh graders in three suburban schools for roughly a ten-week trial period.

Students in experimental classes spent most of their time on specific observational activities, recording visual, tactile, auditory, olfactory and internal sensory perceptions. They practiced describing their sensations by responding aloud, taking notes or writing brief compositions—usually not more than a few sentences in length. For example, in one activity, students working in small groups put on blindfolds and examined a plate full of objects, such as sandpaper, carpeting, an elastic bandage and a piece of onion. Students tried to identify the objects and then, still wearing the blindfolds, thought of words and phrases to describe their textures.

Another of Hillocks's activities involved physical exercises. As students did exercises, they noted changes in bodily sensations. Afterward they wrote a brief description of these sensations. A follow-up assignment asked students to imagine they had been chased by a mysterious-looking person to a hiding place, where they remained as silent as possible; they were to describe sensations resulting from their exertion and fear. Meantime, control group students busied themselves with more traditional English class work.

The research, reported in *Research in the Teaching of English*, showed that Hillocks's exercises did, indeed, help students write more specifically. The examples below illustrate the difference in one student's writing before and after the observational exercises:

Before: The first time I went into a forest, I was amazed at all the living things around me. The tall green trees with bright green leaves, the beautiful wild flowers, and the free and wild animals.

After: The old man, wearing torn and tattered clothes, with worn patches, sat on the warped, wooden, green park bench, reading a two-day-old newspaper. The man's face was rugged and full of prickly whiskers. His face and hands were dirty. As he read the newspaper, he swung his foot slowly and very steadily. He seemed to be enjoying himself.

"Such questions stimulate a student's mind in much the same way the game 'Let's Pretend' evoked fantasies in childhood," she explains. "The images that emerge from this type of assignment gradually become more creative."

If weather permits, Dakelman suggests letting the students either sit on the lawn to write or wander about the school grounds, jotting down observations. A good training lesson for sharpening observation skills is an assignment to describe a pineapple, using the senses of taste, touch, smell and feel.

Another technique Dakelman uses is the "Think Tank." Adjoining her classroom is a smaller room where she dims the lights, arranges scented candles and plays relaxing music by such popular artists as Carole King, Cat Stevens and Laura Nyro. Chairs are pushed aside, and students may sit on the floor. (If no extra classroom is available, the regular classroom can be adapted as the Think Tank.)

Dakelman explains the ground rules for the Think Tank while her students are still in the regular classroom. First, silence must be strictly observed, because "each student eventually retreats into the privacy of his own world." The students may write on any topic, but their first results are usually poetic; Dakelman introduces the room during a poetry unit. "Once comfortable, the students succumb to the tranquil mood and write at a rapid pace," she says.

Students usually keep their own papers for the entire period, but for variety Dakelman sometimes has them exchange papers and continue writing. Some will continue their own ideas on the new page; others will try to develop the idea begun by a classmate. The exercise provides raw material that the students take home and rework into a finished poem.

A Poet Sets the Mood

As a visiting poet at a high school, R. Baird Shuman found that two minutes of silence helped put students in a writing mood, according to his article in the *English Journal* (10). After students in his poetry workshops were seated, Shuman asked them to put a piece of paper and a pen or pencil before them. "When I say 'Go,'" he explained, "you are all going to close your eyes for two full minutes. Stay as quiet as you can and let yourselves go as limp as you can. Allow your minds to wander." Not surprisingly, Shuman did not give his students their assigned topic until *after* the period of silence.

When Shuman did give them the topic, he told them to write as much as they could and to let their words flow with ease. "We all have thousands of words within us," he told the students. "But we cannot always get the words we need, particularly in written form. So now we need to do something that will limber us up and make the words flow more easily." Each workshop group was given a different topic. Topics included: "The best thing that ever happened to me was . . ."; "The thing I would most like to change"; and "The thing I would most like to own." Shuman allowed the students 2½ minutes to write, but he did not tell them the time length in advance so that the limitation would not interfere with their fluency.

At the end of the time segment, Shuman told the students to stop, even if they were in the middle of a word. Each student put an identifying mark on the paper other than his or her name. Shuman collected the papers and redistributed them among the students. During the next seven minutes, the students were to read and write comments on as many of each other's papers as possible. This exercise aimed at having the students interact fulfilled a goal Shuman considers important. In addition, it was popular with the students. Many of them found much to say. Their comments were, "for the most part, incisive and extensive," Shuman says. In fact, "some students who (had written) no more than two or three lines in the timed writing were able to write half to three-quarters of a page in comments, thereby improving their fluency considerably." After this groundwork, Shuman introduced the students to writing poetry.

The next day, Shuman again asked the students to spend two minutes in silence. He then had them think of fresh images to go with the phrases "as yellow as," "quieter than," "as stubborn as," "richer than" and "rougher than." Students did better at this when they worked in pairs. After this image exercise, Shuman asked the students to write two short poems, which they then combined into a third. All three poems were to emphasize sensory images.

Other techniques Shuman found successful were:

- Showing a poem with the poet's revisions on it. One resource for this was the Thomas Johnson edition of Emily Dickinson's complete works.

- Referring to a poetry anthology and reading a poem to illustrate a point that came up in class discussion.

- Playing a recording of a poet reading his or her own works, and at the same time projecting the poem on a screen.

Like many other teachers, Shuman concentrated on getting students to write freely, at least when they were starting out. "Keep your pen or pencil moving, even if you run out of things to say," he advised.

Encouraging Free Expression

Experience has shown that students who spend a lot of time writing become better writers as a result. But if they are to write about a subject, it must be one about which they have something to say: It must interest them, and it must deal with a subject they have given some thought beforehand. Consequently, good writing teachers often choose their writing topics carefully.

One teacher in a Philadelphia inner-city junior high school, C. James Trotman, encourages his students to keep journals, on the theory that they probably will find a lot to say about themselves. An article in *Classroom Practices in Teaching English, 1969-70* describes the advantages of Trotman's technique (1). He introduces the idea of the journal to his students in a casual way. He compares the journal to a diary it is personal, continued daily and seen only by the teacher and the student. The students accepted the journal idea the first year partly because Trotman promised it would be an experiment; if it did not prove to be a successful learning experience, they could vote to dismiss it. Although this was a gamble, Trotman notes, it enabled students to become more directly involved in their learning. It also forced them to think about criteria with which they could judge its effectiveness.

The students make their journals from pieces of notebook paper folded in half to ensure privacy and to give the page a book-like appearance. Each entry is dated. At first, the students may write on any topic they choose a hard decision for some. "With time and encouragement to experiment," Trotman adds, "this obstacle is overcome."

Initially, the journals are neither corrected for common usage errors nor graded. As students do more writing, however, the quality increases. The teacher's comments, not grades, remain the primary means of evaluation. These comments are vital, according to Trotman, because they form "a nucleus for guiding improvement in writing and communication generally."

As a teaching tool, journal writing has five positive features, Trotman says:

- It provides an opportunity to experiment with different kinds of writing. Journal jottings contain poetry and include elements of fiction, such as plot, denouement and character development.

- The journals provide students with an outlet to express frustrations encountered in daily living. Such a catharsis gives teachers a new insight into their students and provides another level of communication.

- Because each student writes about something different, the teacher must respond to each journal individually. The individual response is also dictated by the need to preserve confidentiality.

- It provides the student with an audience his or her teacher. "If the student begins to respond to this ever-accessible audience," Trotman says, "he or she is also likely to respond more to recommendations for improving the mechanical aspects of his/her writing."

- As an audience of one, the teacher also is in a position to provide guidance to the student on issues raised in the journal. By responding in writing rather than face-to-face, the teacher may be able to help the student with sensitive matters, such as problems with peers or conflicts at home. (1)

At the end of the "experiment," Trotman asked his junior high students to describe the strengths and weaknesses of the journal approach. The almost 60 students who replied listed them as follows:

Strengths

1. Freedom to say what you want, when you want, how you want
2. Relief to writer by getting problems down on paper
3. Sharing personal problems
4. Communication between writer and reader

Weaknesses

1. Having to write every day
2. Shortage of time
3. Need for ideas
4. Limited audience[3]

Choosing Good Topics

Donald Saine, who teaches English in another Philadelphia junior high school, makes choosing a topic a creative process in itself. He usually selects current events from the school or from the nation to generate student interest in writing. During national elections, Saine might assign "If I were President." Other topics might be keyed to local issues "The current transit strike for more money is fair? Unfair?" or "How gangs make our neighborhoods unsafe what can we do about them?"(9)

Before he gives an assignment, Saine reads a writing sample designed to elicit interest in the topic (the sample also provides a model for form). He discusses both the form and content of the sample, including its strengths and weaknesses. Then the class thinks of topics that the sample brings to mind, and Saine writes them on the board.

After the board is filled with suggested topics, Saine hands out a sheet with step-by-step directions and guidelines. The class discusses the material on the sheet, and Saine answers questions. Students are encouraged to modify the suggestions if they

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Writing to Learn

Teachers of all subjects—even athletics—should look for opportunities to assign writing, because students learn more as they weave ideas and facts into pieces of writing. *Empty Pages*, compiled by Clifton Fadiman and James Howard, recounts the experience of one history teacher who discovered this fact for himself. Looking over his students' papers one day, he was struck by the fact that if the students had written down all they knew about history, perhaps he wasn't doing such a good job of teaching. He decided to spend some time showing them how to write history papers.

Before long, he realized that his students were not just learning to write—they were writing to learn. "When the demands of clear composition left them no alternative to being precise (not approximate), substantial (not vague) and orderly (not hit-or-miss), his students began not only to remember 'the facts,' but also to understand them, to be able to use them. In short, they began to know what they were talking about," Fadiman and Howard point out.

Although the authors concede that it is easier

[text obscured] to improve writing as students ... they believe ... the same thing ... they might ask students to ... their experiments in writing ... might assign ... students ... revision ... and ... teachers might get their students to writing workbook.

Teachers of English and other subjects can work together on such students learning something about one another's subjects in the process. If they are blessed with imagination, then those teachers can come up with assignments and projects that truly will advance learning on a broad front, give students unusually good experiences in writing, and in the bargain make teaching more interesting and less burdensome." According to Fadiman and Howard, even grading the papers could be a joint project.

wish. "Some time is usually spent here (if I can hold them back) thinking and planning mentally a most valuable time," he comments. No pressure is applied to "start now."

Saine moves about the room, talking to students who are having trouble getting started. As they talk, he tries to draw out ideas or make suggestions. By mid-period, the students are usually all writing. "I'm still floating," he adds, "asking questions encouraging, complimenting, reading and listening." The papers are collected either at the end of the period or the next day at the beginning of class.

Saine reads the papers, makes comments and marks them with standard proofreader's marks, which are introduced the first week of school. At certain times students read and discuss their essays in class; at other times the essays are recorded on tape. Many are given to the yearbook for publication.

Saine encourages the students to continue developing their composition topics in other ways. If an assignment lends itself to illustration, the author may work with the art teacher. Extra credit is given to each student who develops a topic through additional compositions or adapts it to different forms. Students expand on ideas through skits, poems or plays and by using cameras and tape recorders. "One writing assignment may never be finished," Saine concludes, "living proof that writing can be

and is being taught—by planning, use of contemporary media, allowing freedom of content without sacrificing form, by encouraging creativity while striving for a 'standard' of excellence and by honestly praising and immediately reinforcing."(9)[4]

One Creative Teacher's Ideas

Another teacher who believes it takes creative assignments to bring out creativity in students is Gladys Veidemanis, English chairperson at Oshkosh (Wisconsin) North High School. Writing in *The College Board Review* (11), Veidemanis says, "stimulating invention" in students involves four separate teaching tasks:

- Creative formulation of the assignment
- A sparkling classroom presentation
- Daily follow-up, prodding, inspiring, hand-holding
- Rough draft therapy

Veidemanis spends a great deal of time developing assignments, working at just the right wording of topics and preparing lists of possible angles or approaches. She is careful to avoid being overly prescriptive, however, and always tells students they can devise an alternative topic if they do not

like the one she suggests. She uses a half-hour brainstorming session in class to excite student interest in the assignment. This session is also geared to explaining ways the topic can be developed.

Veidemanis tries to provide class time for all phases of writing. Once the students start to write, she maintains momentum through a variety of activities. These include daily classroom talks, small-group sharing of ideas and efforts, one-to-one conferences and "verbal and visual prods," such as provocative essays and poems. Other interest-sustainers are quotations, striking photographs or illustrations and discussions of records, television shows and films. "Most important," she counsels, "the frustrated and discouraged must be sustained and spurred on. 'Hang in there' is the message they most need to hear, and occasionally, 'Don't worry if your paper is a little late.'"

The last task, rough draft therapy, takes place during the writing process, not at the end. When she spots a common weakness, Veidemanis spends part of a period discussing how to overcome it. For example, if students are writing paragraphs that are uninteresting, she may launch a discussion on sensory detail, expanding ideas or inclusion of quotations. If the students' leads fail to "grab" the reader, she may spend a period examining the opening paragraphs of magazine articles. She tries to be an audience and an editor as well as a teacher.

Veidemanis lists the following problems as amenable to rough draft therapy:

> starved paragraphs; flat beginnings and endings; faulty logic; wooden dialogue; rash or tasteless generalizations; bland, indifferent or "masked" writing; humorlessness; absence of conviction; and inappropriate tone for a given audience. (11)[5]

The Process-Conference Approach

The process-conference approach resembles rough draft therapy in that it treats writing as an ongoing process. Emphasis is on improving the paper while it is being written. This approach consists of individualized instruction involving brief conferences between the teacher and a student over several days. A single composition might require six or more conferences of from one to five minutes each before it is ready to be put in final form.

In *Balance the Basics: Let Them Write,* a report written for the Ford Foundation, Donald Graves presents a script of conversations that might evolve between a seventh grader and his or her teacher during the development of a theme (3). It is not

until the fourth conference that the teacher usually reviews a draft. In his book Mr. Graves outlines the conference in this way:

Conference 1

Jerry: I want to write about sharks, but I have a hard time getting started. I'm not much of a writer.

Ms. Putnam: Well, have you had any experiences with sharks, Jerry? How did you get interested in the subject?

Jerry: Yeh, me and my dad were trolling for stripers and all of a sudden this fin pops up just when I got a hit. That was it. No more fishing that day Can they move! I got to talking with the guys down at the dock; they said we've got more than usual this year. Blue sharks they were.

Ms. Putnam: You have a good start with what you have just told me. Many people talk about sharks, but few have actually seen them. What else do people at the dock have to say about sharks? Any old-timers who might have had run-ins with them? You say the sharks move quickly. Well, how fast can sharks swim?

At the second conference, Jerry reports that an old lobsterman told him a shark once nudged his boat. The fisherman did not know whether or not the ait was intentional. The teacher challenged Jerry to find out if blue sharks attack people. "Have there ever been any shark attacks in this area? Do you think this is important information? Where can you find out?

Conference 3

Jerry: I asked at the newspaper, and they didn't know of any shark attacks over the last five years. So I asked them who might know. They said I ought to call the Coast Guard station. They said no attacks, but lots of sightings; they were more worried about people doing stupid things in the boats with this shark craze that's around.

Ms. Putnam: What do you mean, doing stupid things?

Jerry: Well, now when a beach gets closed, people stop swimming, but these crazy kids go out in small boats to harpoon sharks. They could get killed. Sharks really don't harm people, but if you start poking them, who knows what will happen?

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Ms. Putnam: Jerry, you certainly have good information about sharks. I suspect that very few people know what the Coast Guard is up against. And what do you think will happen if some 18-year-old has to prove he's a man?

Conference 4

Jerry: Well, here's the first shot. What do you think?

Ms. Putnam: You have a good start, Jerry. Look at these first four paragraphs. Tell me which one makes you feel as if you were there.

Jerry: This one here, the fourth one, where I tell about two kids who are out trying to harpoon a shark.

Ms. Putnam: Don't you think this is the one that will interest readers most? Start right off with it. Hit 'em hard. This is an actual incident.

At the fifth conference, Jerry complains that he has so much information he does not know what to do with it. Putnam suggests that Jerry write down the five key things he wants his audience to remember. "Don't look at your notes," she tells him. "Just write them down off the top of your head. You know so much you don't have to look anymore."

Conference 6

Jerry: Well, I took those five points. I feel better now. But look at all this stuff I haven't used.

Ms. Putnam: That's the way it is when you know a lot about a subject. Over here on the third page you get a little abstract about people's fear of sharks. Can you give some more examples? Did you get some in your interviews? What needs to be done before this becomes your final copy?

Jerry: Put in those examples of fear I have plenty of those. I have plenty of weird spellings guess I'd better check those out never could punctuate very well.

Ms. Putnam: I think you have information here the newspaper or the Coast Guard might be interested in. Had you thought about that? Let me know what you want to do with this (3)[6]

Half the conferences are geared to helping the student gather information. "Until students feel they have informaiton to convey," Graves says, "it

[6]Reprinted by permission from *Balance the Basics: Let Them Write* by Donald H. Graves. New York: Ford Foundation, 1978.

is difficult for them to care about writing or feel that they can speak directly and with authority." The first draft emerges from "the first wave of information," he notes. "Succeeding drafts include more information, more precise language and changes in organization."

In process-conference classrooms, teachers never see a composition as wrong—only unfinished. For example, in Aberdeen, Scotland, Graves observed students who were expected to do their own proof-reading. "A teacher would merely say, 'But you're not finished yet, Matthew. You must be having an off day. Perhaps Margaret will look it over with you.'"

Another strength of the process-conference approach is that it enables the teacher to introduce new skills as a student needs them. For example, a process-conference student would learn about quotation marks as he or she used dialogue in a composition. By contrast, in a classroom where achievement-test performance was stressed, students might be introduced to quotation marks primarily because a test was nearing. The first student "masters the conventions of language in the process of conveying information," Graves explains. The second "is more likely to struggle with quotation marks as an isolated phenomenon" as he punctuates sentences provided in a workbook. "He will not see himself as a writer."

Students as Evaluators

In many classrooms, particularly those with a process-conference approach, students play a key role in assessing their writing improvement. Graves points to a school in upper New York state where students perform such a role. They keep a file of their writing for 10-day periods; then the teacher helps each one evaluate his or her progress. Sometimes they agree that a good piece of writing belongs in a class collection or should be bound in a book the child puts together. If possible, student writing is published in some form.

One New Hampshire school system completely changed its approach to writing instruction after the superintendent enrolled in a writing class while working on an advanced degree. His university began working with district teachers on the process-conference approach. In exchange, the district helped the university develop new procedures for assessing writing. A teacher and student together would select the student's four best papers for assessment. In this way, students were evaluated on their strong papers for assessment points—on papers demonstrating their skills in a variety of writing styles.

Another approach to using students as editors is advocated by Ken Macrorie, a teacher and author who believes that students should write freely and quickly, then revise (6). Teachers influenced by Macrorie will sometimes ask students to write for 10 minutes each day on topics of their choice. At the end of a week, students pick out their favorite 10-minute efforts and develop them into finished pieces.

Students read their papers aloud in front of editing groups made up of their peers. The reading enables them to hear errors and awkward phrases which they might not notice otherwise. After a paper is read, the writer gives his or her evaluation first; then the rest of the group responds, making positive comments first. The criticism may be given or'lly or written on the rough draft or slips of paper provided for that purpose. Then the student writes another draft to reflect the group's comments. The editing-and-revision process may be repeated a number of times.

The editing groups put the responsibility for correcting errors on the students, not on the teacher. The groups may contain up to 15 students. Each group is constant from assignment to assignment, so that students learn how to work together to evaluate each other's efforts. When a paper is completed, it is handed in to the teacher. Classroom applications of Macrorie's ideas can be found in the description of the Las Lomas High School writing program in Chapter 2.

Overall Organizational Strategies

For a classroom assignment to run smoothly, the teacher needs to have an outline or plan in mind to carry the students along each step between choosing a topic and turning in a completed paper. Leon Wiskup of Herbert Hoover High School in the Glendale (California) Unified School District uses a five-step composing process (12). Students are introduced to the topic through a stimulating classroom experience (motivation). They explore the topic (discussion) and then compose a draft about it (writing). Some papers are placed on transparencies for the fourth step (sharing and editing). The fifth step (reviewing language skills) involves individual teacher conferences with each student and an analysis of student writing for its strengths and weaknesses.

Wiskup successfully used the five-step process during a summer school session by basing a writing assignment on an unusual newspaper story. For step one, *motivation*, Wiskup read the class an article entitled "The Tragedy of Joanne." It was about an introverted, problem-ridden woman whose five-

day-old baby was chewed to death by her starving pet dog.

Step two, *discussion*, entailed four separate tasks. To involve every student in the discussion phase, Wiskup took a class poll on who or what was responsible for the tragedy. Taking a poll "is a non-threatening way to get each student to react," Wiskup explains. The results were tabulated on the board, and a discussion of responsibility followed. Each student gave an opinion on this highly emotional topic. When the discussion became heated, the teacher paired the students and had them act out dramas about individuals who might have been involved what a policeman and a neighbor might have said about the death of the baby, for example. As the students began to act out their impressions, Wiskup asked them to write down their conversation as if it were dialogue in a drama. The dialogues were read, and the class discussed whether the lines were appropriate to the roles. The class then collectively wrote a drama on the board, with each class member contributing a line or two.

By the time Wiskup shifted to the third step, *individual writing*, each student was highly interested in the topic. The assignment was to compose a diary entry written by Joanne on the evening she brought her baby home from the hospital. "Nobody was stymied; nobody handed in a blank paper or only one line," Wiskup comments. "As a matter of fact, every person wrote rather voluminously."

For step four, *sharing and editing*, Wiskup made transparencies of a number of the papers. He set the tone by pointing out the strong points in each paper. The students reinforced many of his comments and then began to correct the papers.

This led to step five, *reviewing language skills*. The strong points in the papers provided "models of excellence," which Wiskup used to demonstrate how certain aspects of standard English had been handled successfully. Similarly, he used weak points in the essays to show how errors can interfere with communication.

The most important part of the review was a five-minute individual conference with each student. While the rest of the class worked on another task, Wiskup read one student's paper aloud to him. After Wiskup finished reading, he checked several good points in the paper to reward the student for things well done. He also made two specific comments about things that should be improved next time. Before the conference ended, the student had to repeat to Wiskup the two things that needed improvement. The conferences were "friendly, non-threatening and positive," Wiskup adds. "Each student expressed thanks for the personal conference."

Teaching Specific Skills

Sister Agnes Ann Pastva of Elyria. Ohio. follows a similar sequence of activities when she teaches composition, but she adds another step to the process: She inserts examples of specific writing techniques that students can use as guides. Like Wiskup. Sister Agnes begins with a motivational activity. which she calls an "interest-starter." In an *English Journal* (7). Sister Agnes defines interest-starters as "fun things that the students look forward to doing." On a dark, rainy day, a teacher might introduce an activity that evokes moods associated with rain. She gives a student an umbrella and asks him or her to walk around the room. allowing imagination and memory freedom to roam. A second student joins the first. Beginning with them. then inviting response from others, the teacher asks the students to recall emotions they have experienced under an umbrella. Their suggestions are recorded on the board.

At this point, the students have completed two steps: The interest-starter has engaged their attention, and they have made a list of emotions to use as various topics for writing. Sister Agnes then introduces a couple of literary devices that offer students a choice in structuring their papers   for example. the flashback and the simple past. This stage operates something like an incubation period for the creative process, she explains. "Even though the formal assignment has not been made, students may find that ideas for possible topics are milling around in their heads as the formal writing techniques are investigated."

At this point, Sister Agnes shows the class samples of student writing that illustrate each technique. In addition to providing good models, the student samples build confidence by showing that other high school-age youths have succeeded at the task.

The next step. trial flight. builds further confidence by giving students a small task they can easily master. The class identifies the words in the student samples that evoke the mood. Next, returning to the list of emotions brainstormed earlier by the class. groups or individuals expand on them by suggesting suitable images.

When she makes the formal assignment. Sister Agnes reviews what the class has already learned. She suggests that students picture the rainy day situation they wish to capture. list images that will provide detail and use one of the two literary techniques presented earlier. As writing begins. "some students may be willing to share their initial sentences or seminal ideas with others who are having difficulty getting started." she notes.

During the next step. preventive measures. Sister Agnes walks among the students, offering suggestions and cautioning them on spelling or matters of style. She uses only two criteria to evaluate each paper: whether the student follows one of the two literary patterns and whether details are used to express a mood.

In her last step. post-writing activities. she includes a variety of "rewards" for the students, such as sharing the papers in class. taping them for playback or having the class vote on papers to be printed in a literary magazine or class collection.

Writing Tips from a Pro

Authorities on the teaching of composition point out that teachers must write themselves if they are to teach students to write well. While it does not offer specific classroom lessons. *On Writing Well* is a useful book for writing teachers (13). Its author is William Zinsser. a professional writer who now teaches nonfiction writing at Yale University. Zinsser's advice is sound; his prose strikingly illustrates his philosophy of what good writing should be. His book also includes excerpts from contemporary writers.

To write well, Zinsser says. one must read the works of good writers and develop a respect for words   a concern for the subtle shadings of meaning. With this attitude. the writer will not be satisfied with cliches and banalities.

"The good writer of prose must be part poet." he admonishes, "always listening to what he writes." If something does not sound right. Zinsser advises the writer to read it aloud. "See if you can gain variety by reversing the order of a sentence, by substituting a word that has freshness or oddity, by altering the

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Composition Starter

A Teacher-Tested Idea from an *English Journal* Workshop

● After teaching children about tall tales, we did research on our local hero, "Peter the Indian." (Our township was named after him.) We each wrote a "tall tale" about our hero and made this into a book of *Tales of Peter the Indian.* It was so successful that each class since then has asked to be given the same opportunity to write about Peter.

—Jean M. Roach
Peters Township Schools
McMurray, Pa.

Reprinted from the December, 1973, *English Journal,* by permission of the National Council of Teachers of English.

length of your sentences so that they don't all sound as if they came out of the same computer. An occasional short sentence can carry a tremendous punch."

Above all, Zinsser exhorts authors to write simply. When complete, a piece should be edited ruthlessly to eradicate any words that do not serve a purpose. "Clear thinking becomes clear writing: one can't exist without the other." He describes good writing this way:

> The secret to good writing is to strip every sentence to its cleanest components. Every word that serves no function, every long word that could be a short word, every adverb that carries the same meaning that is already in the verb, every passive construction that leaves the reader unsure of who is doing what — these are the thousand and one adulterants that weaken the strength of a sentence. And they usually occur, ironically, in proportion to education and rank.

Other Zinsser gems:

* Good nonfiction writing has unity of pronoun, of tense, of tone.

* Don't become a prisoner of a preconceived plan. Writing is no respecter of blueprints — it is too subjective a process, too full of surprises.

* There are no set rules on leads. The first sentence should lure the reader along with humor or interesting details designed to arouse curiosity.

* Writers should not try to summarize at the end of nonfiction articles — the reader will be insulted. Instead, the piece should close with a provocative thought.

* The writer should use active verbs. They are vivid and carry their own imagery: "flail," "poke," "dazzle," "beguile," "wheedle."

* Adjectives and adverbs can be redundant: "He moped dejectedly," the winner "grinned widely." For this reason, they should be used sparingly.

* There is a 19th-century mustiness that hangs over the semicolon. Use it with discretion and rely instead on the period and the dash." (13)[7]

"Always make sure your reader is oriented," Zinsser adds. When changing time context, the writer should use "meanwhile," "now," "today," and "later." Transitional words alert the reader to a change in mood from the previous sentence. These mood-changers include: "yet," "but," "nevertheless."

According to Zinsser, it is all right to begin a sentence with "but," but not with "however" — "it hangs there like a wet dishrag." Sentences should

not end with "however," either. "By that time, it has lost its 'howeverness,'" he quips.

Finally, Zinsser warns that a writer's credibility is fragile." "Don't inflate an incident to make it more flamboyant or bizarre than it actually was. If the reader catches you in just one bogus statement . . ., everything you write thereafter will be suspect. It is too great a risk, not worth taking."

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In Defense of Language

An eloquent plea to restore correct language to a place of honor both in the schools and in society comes from the Commission on Writing, organized by the Council for Basic Education to look into the writing problem. In *Empty Pages: A Search for Writing Competency in School and Society*, the commission points to the writing crisis not only as an affliction of the schools but also of society at large—one which may endanger the very roots of democracy. In defense of "our magnificent language and a deep concern for the literacy of the American student—and indeed of the American citizen," the commission asserts the following principles:
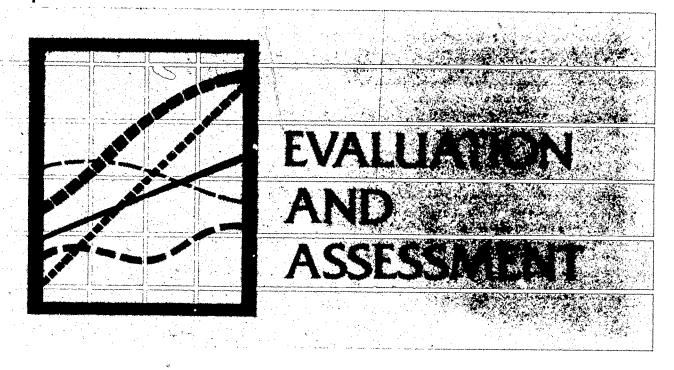
* The life of any culture rests on that rock-bottom device of social bonding, its language.

* Therefore, the teaching and learning of the language should have as their ultimate goal (in addition to more immediate aims) the continued health and improvement of the culture.

* One way to achieve this healthy state, as well as to effect the improvement, is to liberate the intelligence of citizens by ensuring that they have the ability to read and write.

* The liberation of the intelligence should not be confused with "socialization," "acculturation," "self-expression" or the "search for identity." The teaching of language, and notably of writing, should not be subordinated to purely private purposes, let alone fleeting trends or fashions. It should be anchored in the best means of expression so far attained by our culture.

* English teachers are primarily the best means we have of transmitting language skills. They are not, or should not be, primarily entertainers, welfare workers, group therapists, priest-parson-rabbi surrogates, librarians or sitters. Even if not primarily so, all teachers (and even administrators) are or should be teachers of English and therefore, to some degree, of writing.

* The job is to teach the students to talk, think, read and write in the language known as Standard English. Oral Standard English and written Standard English may differ, but the differences between them are less marked than those distinguishing the accepted language from ethnic, dialectal, jargon or vogue English.

* Writing is inseparable from thinking, reading, speaking, listening and studying. Though writing has its own norms and uses its own pedagogy, it is part of a circle of connected activities.

* Since reading and writing are intimately connected, learning to write depends on exposure to high-quality reading material.

* Teachers themselves must have learned and must continue to practice writing. The obligation rests on them as it does upon the student.

* Achieving competence in writing is both the right and the responsibility of all members of a democracy. We cannot afford to reproduce in the domain of literacy the Two Nations—the Poor and the Rich—that Disraeli identified in the domain of property.

* Clear and effective writing is not simply a skill or a socioeconomic advantage. Because it expresses the integrity (or dishonesty) of an intellectual process, it is a moral activity.

* Finally, we believe that every normal Jane and Johnny can, if properly taught, learn how to write clearly, competently, and correctly.

Empty Pages is based on papers written by members of the Commission on Writing, most of them educators, and compiled and edited by James Howard and Clifton Fadiman. Copies may be obtained from Fearon-Pitman Publishers, Inc., 6 Davis Drive, Belmont, CA 94002.

Chapter 5

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Evaluation of student writing can be done in an individual classroom or conducted throughout a school or a district. Classroom evaluation, generally conducted by the teacher, is intended to help the student improve as he or she moves from one assignment to the next. School district assessment may be done either by teachers or administrative employees. Its purpose may be to satisfy a district competency or graduation requirement, to compare local students' performance scores with national norms or to evaluate the district's overall writing program.

The districtwide test may consist of objective, multiple-choice questions or a sample of the student's own writing. For its objective test, the district may choose either a norm-referenced or a criterion-referenced instrument.

Types of Tests Available

The norm-referenced tests, produced by commercial publishers, report local students' performance in comparison with the performance of students nationally. By definition, half the students tested nationally must be below the norm and half must be above. For this reason, the tests have been heavily criticized by teachers' groups. Norm-referenced tests also rank students' scores in numerical order, and questions are selected primarily because they make discriminations that permit such a ranking. For this reason, important skills may not be tested. As a result, norm-referenced test results often provide little diagnostic information that would be useful to teachers.

Criterion-referenced test items, in contrast, are keyed to specific learning objectives. Each test item is included because the district thinks it measures a skill that is important. Test scores show how well students have mastered the stated objectives.

In a booklet called *A Common Ground for Assessing Competence in Written Expression* (2), Los Angeles County teachers listed the following categories as important to include in an objective test of writing skills:

- Finding a thesis or central idea
- Style (audience, tone, word choice)
- Organization (topic sentences, relevant and irrelevant details, main ideas and supporting statements)
- Sentence manipulation (coordination, subordination, rephrasing)
- Coping with syntactical problems (parallel structures, reference, modification, sentence completeness, shifts in voice)
- Word manipulation (affixing, making plurals, using contractions, making comparisons, changing nouns to verbs or adjectives and the like)
- Word recognition (homonyms, idioms, confusing pairs)
- Usage (agreement of subject and verb, reference of pronouns, forms of adjectives and adverbs)
- Conventions (capitalization, punctuation, spelling)

Districts can purchase criterion-referenced tests or develop their own, either independently or in conjunction with a commercial publisher, the Los

Topic and Rubric Developed for the Los Angeles County Workshop in Written Expression

Sensory/Descriptive Domain Composition Topic:
40 minutes

Think about a food that you especially like. As you think about it, try to picture the food in your mind. Let its colors, smell and flavor come back to you. Once you have chosen a food and thought about it, write a description of the food telling what the food is and making sure your paper includes sensory details, such as how the food looks, smells, tastes, and so forth.

Instructions for the Reader

The topic requires the student to identify a food and to describe it using sensory detail. While students are *not* required to produce specific reasons for their choice, the descriptive details should suggest their reasons for liking the food.

Readers should keep in mind that they are not looking for errors to correct; rather, they are rewarding the writer for what he or she does well in response to the question. Scores should not be raised or lowered because the reader approves or disapproves of values expressed.

Rubric

9-8 These scores apply to superior papers. A 9-8 paper does most or all of the following well:

 • Names a food and describes it using rich sensory details which appeal to several senses.
 • Employs precise, apt or evocative vocabulary.
 • Probably organizes ideas in several paragraphs, but at least includes an introduction, some closure, and an orderly progression from one idea to another.
 • Varies sentence structure.
 • Generally uses effectively the conventions of written English—spelling, usage, sentence structure, capitalization, punctuation.

7 This score applies to upper-half papers which respond well to the question, but which are thinner versions of the superior (9-8) papers.

6-5 These scores apply to papers in the upper-half category which are less well written than a 7 paper. A 6-5 paper will exhibit these characteristics:

 • Names a food and describes it using some detail which appeals to the senses.

 • Emphasizes narrative and expository details at the expense of descriptive details required by the prompt.
 • Communicates clearly.
 • Shows some sense of organization but is not fully organized.
 • Uses less variety of sentence structures.
 • Contains some errors in mechanics, usage and sentence structure.

4-3 These scores apply to lower-half or average papers which lack the content and development of an upper-half paper and may exhibit serious weaknesses in the writer's ability to handle written English. A 4-3 paper may be described as follows:

 • Names a food and describes it with little reference to the senses.
 • Employs nonspecific detail.
 • Displays minimal overall organization.
 • Has little variety of sentence structures and many sentence errors.
 • Seriously misunderstands the requirements of the prompt (for instance, describes a food *disliked*).
 • Often violates conventions of written English, but such errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the paper.

2 This score may be assigned to papers which present some content but which compound the weaknesses of a 4-3 paper. A 2 paper does several of the following:

 • Fails to name a food.
 • Fails to describe a food.
 • Distorts, misreads or ignores the topic.
 • Shows little or no development of ideas, lacks any focus on specific, related details.
 • Contains disjointed sentences; lacks sense of sentence progression and variety; contains many sentence errors.
 • Shows serious faults in handling the conventions of written English to the extent of impeding a reader's understanding.

1 This score is used for any response which is not on the topic and has almost no redeeming qualities.

Angeles County report says. In any case the test's objectives should be examined carefully to determine the proportion of items devoted to measuring each skill. The Los Angeles County teachers warn that tests should stress the important composing skills organization, syntax and tone rather than surface conventions of punctuation or capitalization. They acknowledge that teachers tend to teach to a test, and if the test emphasizes grammar and conventions, those aspects will receive inordinate classroom attention.

Good objective tests that show a high correlation with writing skills help predict how a student will perform in a given class. They can be used to place youngsters in advanced or remedial classes, for example. However, because objective tests require students to choose from prewritten responses, they are not a true test of writing ability. In addition, the Los Angeles County teachers recommend collecting writing samples from each student. The samples, they advise, should be written on separate days and should test distinct writing skills. For example, one might measure a practical task, such as writing a letter; another might test the ability to present a convincing argument in an essay. A third measure of writing competence could be taken by reviewing a student's writing assignments for an entire year. The review would demonstrate the student's progress in a nontest situation.

Research and development in the testing field have led to refined methods for evaluating student writing samples. Some of the new techniques are better for grading large numbers of papers, as in a districtwide writing assessment. Others are useful to teachers in day-to-day writing instruction.

Three Types of Scoring

Three types of scoring are used in large-scale assessments: holistic, primary trait and analytic scales. Each has particular advantages when used to measure the performance of students at a single grade level, in a particular school or in an entire district.

General Impression or Holistic Scoring

Holistic scoring ranks papers according to the reader's impression of the writing as a whole. The most common type of holistic scoring called general impression scoring uses a scoring guide, or rubric, that describes the writing characteristics typically found at various levels of ability. Readers are trained to memorize the rubric; then they read samples until they can categorize the writing consistently. As a further check on the method, each paper is read by two readers. If they differ by more than

one or two points, a third person reads it. The number of gradations on the scoring scale is flexible. The Educational Testing Service, which developed the technique, uses a scale of one to nine. Others use a scale of one to six or one to four.

Holistic Scoring: Example No. 1 Sir Francis Drake High School in San Anselmo, California, one of three high schools in the Tamalpais Union High School District, used general impression scoring from 1967 to 1979 to evaluate its overall writing program. Since that time, the same process has been used in all the schools in the district to test writing proficiency.

In conducting a writing assessment, an evaluation of the writing program, administrators and teachers at Drake assumed that if all students were graded on the same criteria and seniors performed better as a group than freshmen, then the writing program was probably having some effect on student writing ability.

Current district-wide use of holistic scoring is still used as a program evaluation, but in addition, individual student scores are used to assess proficiency for meeting graduation standards.

The Tamalpais District uses a nine-point scoring scale. Each student's score is the total of the points given by two readers. Scores are tabulated for each grade level and each class, and individual scores are reported to counselors and teachers. "The results were encouraging for Drake as a program evaluation and district results continue to be impressive," says Kate Blickhahn, former English teacher at Drake and currently director of instruction for the district. "First, our students do improve substantially in their ability to write according to this one measure." Also, teachers with differing teaching styles find they give "remarkably similar" scores. This discovery has led to greater cohesion in the department and in the district. Scoring papers according to the same criteria also gives teachers a common sense of what constitutes good writing, and the entire assessment process gives writing more prominence in the curriculum.

Since eighth graders are tested prior to entering high school, eighth grade teachers are included in the scoring process. The assessment has been, therefore, a very valuable means of articulation with elementary districts which feed into the district's three high schools.

The assessment procedure used in the Tamalpais School District is highly refined. First, a committee of English teachers meets to choose the topic. After the topic is selected, the readers write on the topic themselves. Their papers are not scored, but the writing helps them refine the assignment. The topic

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is next given to a small sample of students to uncover any ambiguity in the way it is worded.

On the writing day, the students are given a code number, which they write on their papers. The codes ensure anonymity during the scoring process, but they also permit scores to be recorded for each student and tabulated for each grade level later.

After the sample papers are written, a committee of readers meets to select sample or "anchor" papers and to develop the scoring guide. Members of the committee each read from 20 to 25 papers, selecting those they believe are representative of various scores. Together the committee reads those papers and selects the "anchors." The "anchor papers" are put into group packets of five papers of varying scores, and these packets are used to train the larger group of readers for the scoring. This committee also develops the descriptive rubric or scoring guide. (A sample topic and rubric used by the district appears below.)

Blickhahn calls the development of the rubric or scoring guide, and its later discussion by the large group of readers in working through the anchor papers, "one of the most important phases in guaranteeing the reliability of the scoring." As they discuss the sample papers, the teachers discover they may be interpreting a topic too narrowly, insisting that students read the question in a certain way, when in fact the question does not specify such a narrow reading. Holistic scoring demands that readers do not score writing according to individual taste.

On scoring day, all readers are led through a discussion of the scoring guide and are trained in practice sessions with the packets of sample papers. Samples are also read at points throughout the day to reinforce the rubric and to compensate for fatigue. After half the papers are read, they are shuffled and redistributed, and after the second reading (first scores are hidden) the readers can

Tam Skills Test-Writing Sample Scoring Guide

A. Question

Sometimes we form an impression of a person by noticing things around him/her. Someone's appearance, car, house, room, or locker tell us about that person's interests, activities, or personality.

Write about someone by telling about the things around that person; explain what those things tell you about his/her interests, activities, or personality. In doing this writing, you may choose someone you know, a famous person, a character from a book or TV, someone in history, etc. You may do this writing as a biographical sketch, a story, an essay, a letter, or some other form.

B. Discussion of Skills

Each paper is to be read with three areas of skill in mind, and the student is to be rewarded for what he/she does well in response to the question:

1. *Basic literacy:* using the conventions of written language at a level which does not impair meaning; legibility, spelling, capitalization, punctuation.

   We will assume that the student produced a careful first draft; time limit of 35 minutes did not allow students to polish, to edit, to produce final drafts. A few spelling and punctuation errors are not sufficient reason for a low score.

2. *Organization:* organizing messages in sentences and paragraphs which convey the writer's meaning; sentences which are grammatically consistent, sentences which are clear, sentences and paragraphs which are effectively ordered.

   Here again, students did not have a chance to rewrite. A single error in paragraphing, for instance, is not sufficient reason for a low score.

3. *Design:* making choices which result in a unified composition; relatedness of form, voice, purpose, and audience; appropriate choice of word and sentence structure; appropriate kind and level of detail.

   Each paper is to be read with respect, with consideration of appropriateness of voice, for consistency of tone. A writer's use of an overly maudlin tone, for instance, is not sufficient reason for a low score.

C. Discussion of the Question

The student is asked to write about one chosen person in terms of objects which reveal something about that person's interests, activities, or personality.

The question allows the writer to focus on activities, interests, or personality. The writer may include all three but is not required to. The question does ask that activities, interests, or personality be related to things which are

compare, and a chief reader can confer with readers who consistently give inordinately high or low scores.

Drake teachers over the years have developed the following criteria for the assessment topic: It should allow students to write from personal experience in a variety of forms—letter, story, or essay. It should be something that can be handled by a very poor writer as well as by a good writer. It should be phrased in a positive way. And it should permit a wide choice of subjects and leave room for imagination and invention.

The following two Drake assignments proved successful with students and readers:

- Write about an object you are especially attached to, something which had personal meaning for you, something which has become a part of your life. You might want to consider the way you discovered it, the way it came into your life, or the way it has taken on meaning through time. You may write a letter, a story, a brief autobiography, an essay or other form.

- If you had to choose to be some form of life other than a human being, what plant or animal form would you choose? In developing your piece of writing, describe what it would be like to live as that form of life and explore some of the reasons for your choice. You may write a letter, a story, an autobiography, an essay or any other mode. You may write from the point of view of that life form; pretend that plant or animal has the power of thought and speech and use the first person.

Holistic Scoring: Example No. 2. Jefferson County Public Schools, a 79,000-pupil district west of Denver, Colorado, annually assesses the writing of students in the third, fifth, seventh, ninth, and eleventh grades. Because of the magnitude of the assessment (about 6,000 papers for each grade level), teachers from outside the district are hired temporarily as readers.

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observed, but that relation may be implicit as well as explicit.

Some writers are apt to modify the question, or to read hastily or poorly and to omit or minimize reference to the "things," taking off instead from "interests, activities, or personality." It is possible for such a paper to receive a top score if the quality of writing merits that score. The question should be considered a prompt which offers choices, not a tightly circumscribed topic to which predetermined responses are expected.

D. Possible Scores

Sequence for arriving at a score:

Is the paper in upper half or lower half of the range?

Is the paper in upper half of that segment or lower half? (2,4,6,8)

Raise or lower score in recognition of particular strengths or weaknesses in one of the skill areas. (1,3,5,7,9)

It is important to remember that there will be a range within each score. 9, for instance, should not be reserved for perfection; 1 should not be reserved for blank papers or total illiteracy.

9 Top papers will select a principle of organization, inventive form. Will probably combine rich narrative and descriptive detail which,
8 explicit or implicit, renders the relation of "things" to person.

7 Papers in the upper half of the range. Handles the topic capably, but organization is apt to be pedestrian, not tightly unified, prosaic. May
6 deal almost exclusively with interest, activity or personality without drawing on the relationship to observed objects. May follow a straight descriptive or narrative track. Writing at this
5 level will show evidence of sentence control, syntactic variety.

Papers in the lower half of the range. Writer has a more limited focus, handled in a very
4 general, superficial, or stereotyped manner. Writing about activity, interest, or personality lacks detail and may digress or lose focus. Diction, sentence structure, paragraphing, and
3 design may be limited or inappropriate.

The writer responds to the topic, chooses a person, and writes about some activity, interest, or
2 personality trait, but in a very limited way, a few sentences. A longer paper falls in this range if it lacks substance or focus, or is barely literate, severely flawed.
1

Evasion: A paper which completely ignores the question, or which is so idiosyncratic that it is difficult to score. Give to table leader.

65

The scoring guide is developed by committees of district teachers for each grade level assessed. Jefferson County uses a one-to-four holistic scale:

- One needs intensive help
- Two below grade level competency
- Three at grade level competency
- Four high competency

The rubric committees developed a matrix describing the four competency levels in eight areas: ideas, style and vocabulary, organization and paragraph development, spelling, mechanical conventions, grammar and usage, sentence structure, and handwriting. A paper that rated a four, for example, would exhibit "high competency" in all those areas. Scores from two readers are added together for each student's total.

All students in a given grade write on the same topic. In 1976-77, those in each grade were shown a different photograph and asked to describe what was happening in the picture.

Papers are returned to each school about two months after the assessment, along with the percentage of scores at each competency level. The results are useful to teachers: For example, if most fifth graders at one school scored at "grade level competency," the teachers could learn schoolwide strengths and weaknesses by examining papers with scores in that range. In addition, the district publishes a handbook with suggestions for using the writing samples for classroom instruction. According to Cary Stitt, language arts resource specialist, the teaching ideas are suggested by participating teachers and by the results of the samples themselves.

For more information on the Colorado program, you may write Cary Stitt, Jefferson County Public Schools, 1209 Quail Street, Lakewood, CO 80215.

Primary Trait Evaluation

The primary trait method of evaluation was developed for use in the 1973-74 writing assessment of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). It is a more focused method of scoring writing than most districts use. Unlike the general impression method described previously, the primary trait method defines the grading scheme in terms of the key skills needed for a particular writing task. In persuasive writing, for example, the primary trait is the presentation of logical and compelling arguments. In explanatory writing, the primary trait is the presentation of facts in a clear and orderly fashion. If the facts are not clear, the writer has failed, no matter how clever or interesting the paper may be.

Primary trait scoring uses a four-point scale. In a persuasive writing assignment, a "one" paper would present no reasonable arguments; a "two" paper would have one reason or perhaps two that were not thought out particularly well; a "three" paper would be a logically developed presentation containing several reasonable arguments; and a "four" paper would support good arguments with compelling details. As with general impression scoring, the primary trait scoring guides spell out these characteristics in terms of each specific type of assignment.

One advantage of primary trait evaluation is that the scoring guides can contain criteria for measuring secondary traits and mechanics as well. "In developing primary trait scoring guides," says Ina Mullis, NAEP analyst, "the amount of information that can be obtained from a single writing task is limited only by imagination, zeal and resources." Other categories that can be analyzed are use of tense, point of view, tone and revisions.

Analytic Scales

The third means of assessing writing samples, analytic scoring, involves selecting for evaluation certain aspects of a composition, such as content, organization, or spelling. These aspects are given a weighted score according to their assigned values on a rating scale. These values have a low, middle, and high ranking.

To rate a composition, one assigns numerical values from a rating scale to these items and totals the figures.

The choice and number of items to be included on a rating scale are crucial. A scale that is lengthy and that has too many detailed items will increase the scoring time. Too many detailed items on a scale, such as word count or conventions of style, may cause these aspects to be over-emphasized in lieu of more significant composition skills. Also, an over-emphasis of details may cause the written work to be evaluated in parts rather than as a whole.

The use of an analytic scale has certain advantages. A simple scale can help a teacher to evaluate papers quickly and efficiently, and a teacher can weigh and give more importance to certain aspects of writing that he or she wants to have students develop as skills.

The Use of NAEP Exercises

The NAEP reports its results in national terms and according to region, race, level of parental education, sex and size and type of community. Thus, a local school district that wants to try an NAEP

exercise can compare its students' results with those of other students from the same region, from the nation as a whole and from similar socioeconomic backgrounds.

The Bloomington (Minnesota) Public Schools assessed the writing of its students with NAEP exercises during the 1976-77 school year. First, a district steering committee determined the scope the assessment should have. Then a writing assessment task force chose to use the NAEP exercises. Task force members also wrote an additional test exercise and a number of questions designed to measure certain attitudes, goals and habits of the students.

Several exercises were then selected for each test packet, none of which took more than 45 minutes to administer. The assessment was given to every student in the fourth, eighth and eleventh grades during regular class periods. Only a sample of the papers from each grade was scored, because the assessment's purpose was to evaluate the district's writing program, not the performance of individual students. Because only a sample was used, the district was able to try out a larger number of test exercises. No student wrote on all the topics used at his or her grade level.

Student writing abilities in five different areas were tested: recording information, responding to information, expressive writing, persuasive writing and writing mechanics. Two exercises to measure the ability to record information required students to paraphrase a taped phone message. The third (written by Bloomington staff) asked students to describe an auto accident pictured on a diagram. Primary traits measured were coherence, clarity and completeness. In the second category, responding to information, tasks included writing a thank-you letter, addressing an envelope, writing a letter applying for a job and writing a letter to a classmate. The primary traits measured were appropriateness (no irrelevant detail), coherence, clarity and completeness.

To measure expressive writing ability, the exercises asked students to respond to a recording, to "pretend you are a pair of tennis shoes" and to write a report giving facts about the moon.

For persuasive writing, eighth graders wrote a letter to the PTA about a school carnival, and eleventh graders defended one side of the issue, "a woman's place is in the home." Primary traits for both tasks were awareness of the purpose and audience of the writing, the quality of the argument and the appropriateness of the tone.

To demonstrate writing mechanics, fourth graders responded to a photograph of a kangaroo, and the high school students wrote about a building or

place they wanted to describe. The traits measured were spelling, punctuation, errors of word choice, capitalization, agreements of subject-verb, and pronouns, run-ons and awkward sentences.

After the exercises had been selected, a consultant from the NAEP had instructed the district evaluation director in how to use the NAEP scoring techniques so that Bloomington readers would be trained to respond in the same fashion as NAEP readers. The NAEP exercises and limited assistance are available to any interested school district.

A committee of citizens and teachers developed "minimum" and "desired" standards of student performance. After the papers were scored, the committee reviewed the results, identified strengths and weaknesses and made recommendations. The recommendations were forwarded to all principals and to a district committee. The results and recommendations were also included in two published reports, a brochure and a newsletter mailed to the community.

Evaluation in the Classroom

The three techniques described for large-scale assessment - general impression, primary trait and analytic scales - can also be used on an informal basis in the classroom. They can serve as guides for teachers in grading papers or for students when they are revising their writing efforts.

Three other evaluation techniques are especially well suited to the classroom setting: individualized goal setting, self-evaluation and peer evaluation.

Individualized Goal Setting

Individualized goal setting involves one-to-one communication between teacher and student. This communication can take a variety of forms - the teacher can respond to a student's paper through written comments, taped comments, a rating scale or a personal conference.

When reading a paper, says Mary H. Beaven in *Evaluating Writing*, the teacher should look for opportunities to make comments that will build an atmosphere of trust (1). She suggests three possible approaches:

- *Asking for more information.* "I'd like to know more about this. What did the other kids do? Do you think there is a relation between this idea and the one John was talking about yesterday in class?"
- *Reflecting or rephrasing the student's ideas, perceptions or feelings.* "You sound angry here. You really do find school boring." Or, "You want to be both an artist and a businessman."
- *Sharing with the student times when the teacher has felt, thought or behaved in a similar way.* "I had problems with my parents, too. They insisted I be

home by 11 p.m. on weekends!" Or, "I still am lonely perhaps all people feel that way at times."[1]

When this bond of trust is established, students abandon stilted, impersonal styles and begin to write authentically. Trust-building comments also motivate students to write more, because they see they have a genuinely interested audience in the teachers. The comments can also reinforce strong points in each paper. "Comments such as 'No one but you could have written it that way,' and 'Your figure of speech is just right,' indicate effective elements of writing and help students develop critical abilities," Beaven says.

After reading and commenting on a paper, the teacher should establish one goal for the author to work toward. It should be stated in a positive way. As reinforcement, the next paper by that student should be evaluated in terms of that goal. Additional goals should not be given until the student can master the first one. Every three to four weeks, depending on how much writing is done, each student should revise a paper for more thorough evaluation.

Individualized goal setting has several advantages. The one-to-one communication permits the teacher to diagnose each student's major problem and prescribe an approach that is uniquely suited to his or her needs. The goal may be highly specific for one student (focusing on frequently misspelled words) and very general for another (developing a distinctive style). "By limiting attention to a few goals at a time," Beaven adds, "the student is better able to concentrate on the content of the communication." The single-goal approach also reduces the amount of time teachers have to spend reviewing each paper.

Of the three classroom evaluation techniques, according to many experienced writing instructors, individualized goal setting is the most effective for creating a climate of trust. For this reason, it is wise to use goal setting at the beginning of the year, when students and teachers are just getting acquainted. The main disadvantage of this technique is that it limits the writer's audience to one person, the teacher, and it builds dependence on the teacher for evaluation.

Self-evaluation

Self-evaluation is another effective method for in-class assessment. Students comment on their own papers and set their own goals for risk-taking

and improvement. At first, students evaluate their papers and then turn them in to the teacher. The teacher reviews their evaluations and sets preliminary goals. As students gain more experience, they take more control of the process. Beaven presents a list of questions in *Evaluating Writing* (1) that can be used by students when evaluating their own papers:

- How much time did you spend on this paper?
- (After the first evaluation) What did you try to improve on or experiment with in this paper? How successful were you? If you have questions about what you were trying to do, what are they?
- What are the strengths of your paper? Place a squiggly line beside those passages you feel are very good.
- What are the weaknesses, if any, of your paper? Place an X beside passages you would like your teacher to correct or revise. Place an X over any punctuation, spelling, usage, etc., where you need help or clarification.
- What one thing will you do to improve your next piece of writing? Or what kind of experimentation in writing would you like to try? If you would like some information related to what you want to do, write down your questions.
- (Optional) What grade would you give yourself on this composition? Justify it.[2]

The first question indicates to students that writing can be a long, arduous process. The teacher can expand on this by bringing to class letters or other writings in which famous authors describe the amounts of time spent and the difficulties encountered in their writing. As students become more knowledgeable about the writing process, the question can be changed to determine the particular sequence of steps followed in writing a composition. Beaven recounts one student's description of tearing up many drafts, then writing something that was poor. After a night's sleep, the composition practically wrote itself. "My mind must have been working on it, organizing it during the week," the student wrote. Such experiences can be shared with the class to show the different ways compositions are written.

Students are asked to check their strengths before their weaknesses, putting the emphasis on the positive. "Most people have difficulty praising themselves and accepting praise from others," Beaven says. Focusing first on the positive helps combat this cultural conditioning. By asking the students to identify their weaknesses, "teachers indicate that it is acceptable to have problems in

[1] Reprinted with permission from "Individualized Goal Setting, Self-Evaluation, and Peer Evaluation," by Mary Beaven, in *Evaluating Writing*. Urbana, Ill., National Council of Teachers of English, copyright, 1977.

[2] *Ibid.*

writing," she adds. The student may ask for help from the teacher, but the student remains in control of the evaluation process. Red marks are applied "only upon invitation."

Asking students to set their own goals has two advantages:

- It puts the student in further control of the evaluation.
- Since writing has many stages and the student may be alone during most of them, the student is in a unique position to know where he or she needs to improve or experiment.

Determining a grade for the paper is another learning experience for the students, forcing them to sift through and balance the information. Beaven says the teacher's and the student's assessments will match 90 percent of the time. "The 10 percent discrepancy provides a starting point for discussion in individual conferences," she says.

Self-evaluation takes relatively little class time compared to peer evaluation, and it takes much less of the teacher's time than individualized goal setting. The main disadvantages of self-evaluation are psychological: If teachers use self-evaluation exclusively, they invite parental criticism that they are abdicating responsibility. And when teachers use self-evaluation exclusively for more than two weeks, Beaven adds, students become uncomfortable with the freedom and beg teachers to give them grades. These problems seldom arise, however, if self-evaluation is used intermittently along with other types of evaluation.

Peer Evaluation

Peer evaluation provides students with an opportunity to hear and critique each other's work in editing groups. This procedure develops students' editing skills and relieves the teacher of much reading and grading. One frequent criticism of peer editing is that it takes a good bit of class time before students become adept at the process. Beaven suggests following a sequence of activities that build students' talents for working in groups before evaluation of compositions is even introduced.

First, students work in pairs on tasks that take 15 to 20 minutes these tasks need not be related to writing or English. The main criterion for selecting partners is to "work with someone you do not know" or have not worked with before. Next, students work in groups of four on short-term tasks. Students change groups each time a new task is introduced. One group may work at the front of the room, modeling behavior for the rest of the class. Roles may be assigned, such as recorder and discus-sion leader. When all students seem to be accepted in the groups, the class continues to the next stage.

At this point, the teacher assigns students to groups for longer projects. At the final stage, students select their own groups for sustained projects. The class may return to one of the other forms of group work whenever necessary or appropriate, Beaven explains. While the students practice working in groups, the teacher can introduce group evaluation. The teacher might start by asking students to write in class and immediately share what they have written. Then the students revise, proofread and share their work again.

The teacher guides the group evaluation with comments and questions that focus on how individuals respond differently to the same stimulus.

"The climate for sharing comes when appreciation and expectation of differences are well-established," Beaven explains. Then, the sharing can move from the large group to the smaller groups.

Beaven suggests using these instructions to get the groups started:

- Identify the best section of a composition and describe what makes it effective.
- Identify a sentence, a group of sentences or a paragraph that needs revision. Revise it as a group, writing the final version on the back of the paper.
- Identify one or two things the writer can do to improve his or her next piece of writing. Write these goals on the first page at the top.[3]

Studies of peer evaluation suggest that there is a natural pattern of evolution for editing groups. At first, students need structure, and Beaven suggests providing them with rating scales. Students gradually assume more control, perhaps selecting their own topics and goals from those on a prepared list. Finally, they have enough experience that they need only general guidelines like the three suggestions above.

Aside from the benefits already cited for peer evaluation, Beaven says, students develop interpersonal and other skills from the experience of working in groups. A problem can arise, however, if the teacher does not trust the judgment of the students. If the teacher checks the students' writing before and after it is reviewed by the groups, he or she will undermine the group process. In some cases, students will make mistakes, overlooking an error or correcting a passage with no mistakes in it. But mistakes are part of the learning process, she says. Students must be free to make mistakes and to develop confidence in their own perceptions and decisions, Beaven concludes.

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[3]Ibid.

Writing Proficiency—
A State-Mandated Evaluation

As a result of new legislation that became effective on June 1, 1980, no California student will receive a high school diploma without first demonstrating proficiency in writing. The law mandates that each school district set standards for proficiency in reading, writing and computation. These standards are to be set with the "active involvement" of a cross section of the district's parents, administrators, teachers and counselors. At the secondary level, students also must be involved.

To ensure that students reach proficiency before they are ready to graduate, school districts are required to assess writing at least once during the fourth through the sixth grades, once during seventh through the ninth grades and twice during tenth through the twelfth grades. Secondary schools began testing during 1978-79, and elementary schools began during 1979-80.

Whenever tests indicate a student is not making sufficient progress, the principal or his or her designee holds a conference with the student, the parent and a teacher or counselor. At the elementary level, attendance by the student is optional. Districts must provide supplementary materials to help students who fail the test. Once a student demonstrates proficiency for graduation, he or she is not required to repeat that test.

Each district determines the tests it will use and sets its own standards. However, the California State Department of Education provides technical assistance. District and county offices of education were mailed sets of sample exercises the department developed and field tested. With the test questions were statistics describing the performance of students during field tests.

The state-developed exercises on writing include objective questions and three actual writing tasks. The multiple-choice questions test writing skills in eight categories: sentence recognition, sentence manipulation, punctuation, capitalization, paragraph development, word forms, language choices and spelling.

The writing exercises measure performance on three different tasks: writing a business letter, summarizing a passage and writing an essay. The exercise manual provides the actual exercise, the rubric developed to score it and a sample of student writing illustrating each score on the rubric. Papers were scored holistically, using the general impression method and a four-point scale.
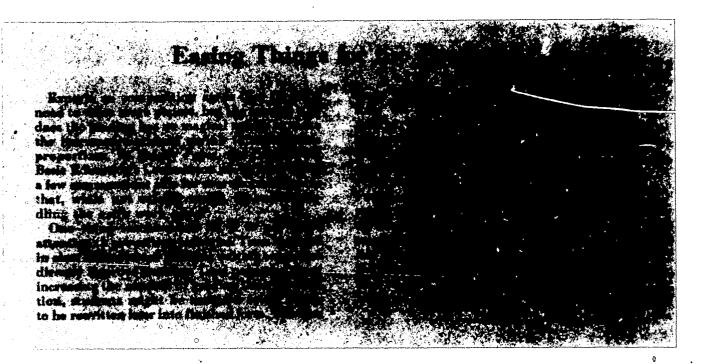
The business letters, written by ninth graders, were the easiest assignment, according to the manual. The assignment was to write and order a booklet. The summaries were the most difficult assignment. Written by ninth and tenth graders, the papers summarized an article on the use of adhesive tape by athletes. The essays, written by eleventh and twelfth graders, "proved to be the most stimulating assignment, probably because of the topic chosen," the manual says. The students were asked to discuss one of the positive aspects of television.

The manual also includes exercises that measure transfer of school skills to life situations. These generally involve more than one skill, so they are less helpful for providing diagnostic information. If a student misses an item, it may not be clear which skill is lacking. Because the tasks cover more than one skill, the exercises are grouped by task, rather than by skill. The tasks concern:

- Fill-in-the-blank forms
- Charts, maps, matrices and graphs
- Stories, articles, paragraphs, sentences and directions
- Signs, announcements and advertisements
- Measurement scales and diagrams

The final section of the manual contains applied performance tests. These also test more than one skill and are structured to simulate a real-life situation. Some of the performance tests include writing as part of the task. For example, one multipart test has a hypothetical student with a part-time job con-

sidering various forms of transportation. After several steps that require math, the student begins looking at different car models. One of the final tasks reads:

> On the basis of the information you have considered, choose the vehicle (A or B) you feel best suits your needs and budget. In a well-organized paragraph, defend your decision. Your paragraph should state your main idea, contain two supporting details, and give a conclusion. The paragraph should be indented and have at least three sentences. You may use the dictionaries at Station 4 to check your spelling. Your writing should be neat and legible.

For more information about the sample exercises or other technical assistance available from the state, contact:

Office of Program Evaluation and Research
State Department of Education
721 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 445-0297

District-Developed Proficiency Tests

Junior and senior high school students in the Los Angeles Unified School District must demonstrate writing proficiency through both an objective test and a writing sample. The proficiency standards were developed with suggestions from three different sources: an ad hoc advisory committee, questionnaires sent to heads of English departments and questionnaires sent to the local schools. The advisory committee included representatives of PTAs, English teachers, the business community, the district's four ethnic commissions, principals, counselors and students. The questionnaires sent to the schools could be completed by anyone in the school community who was interested.

All three groups said it was important to assess writing with a writing sample, says Keiko Hentell, teacher/adviser. They also said an objective test should be included for diagnostic purposes. Group members were asked to list the writing tasks they felt every high school graduate should be able to do and the specific skills necessary to accomplish these tasks. The tasks and skills listed were then ranked in order of importance. All three groups ranked the same task as most important: writing a business letter seeking or conveying essential information. The top four tasks emphasized practical applications, such as filling out a business form and writing a resume.

The first writing proficiency assessment, *WRITE: SENIOR HIGH,* was given to all district tenth grade students in 1978. They completed two writing samples: a business letter and a report to police describing a stolen item. Both samples were scored by the general impression holistic method, using a scale of one to six.

For its objective test, Los Angeles uses a hypothetical situation intended to put the student in a frame of mind to write, according to Hentell. Several multiple-choice questions follow that relate to

the situation. Skills tested in the objective portion are mechanics, punctuation, usage, vocabulary, spelling, organization and format. The test items were written by district English teachers.

The second district-developed assessment, called WRITE: JUNIOR HIGH, was given to seventh graders for the first time in the fall of 1979. An elementary assessment, developed by a private testing lab, was given to three grades in the spring of 1979. Assessments at all three levels include both objective portions and writing samples. For more information on the Los Angeles programs, contact:
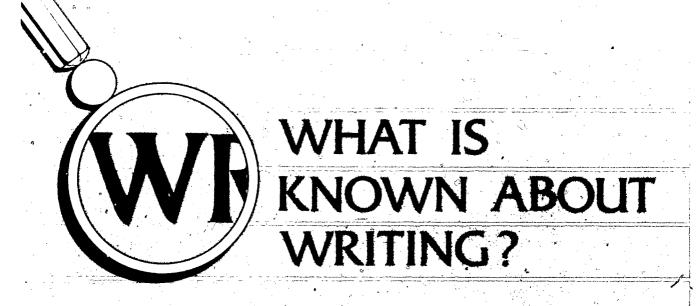
Instructional Planning Division
Los Angeles Unified School District
450 N. Grand Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 625-6424

The Los Angeles Unified School District's secondary tests will be marketed by CTB McGraw-Hill under the trade name WRITE: JUNIOR HIGH and WRITE: SENIOR HIGH. The publisher also developed a writing proficiency test in conjunction with Huntington Beach, a suburban district in California. The Huntington Beach instrument, the Test of Everyday Writing Skills (TEWS), contains both objective and writing portions. The objective test measures mechanics, spelling, punctuation, usage, and sentence and paragraph construction. These skills are applied to practical situations, such as writing a personal letter, a note, a letter of complaint, answering an ad or writing instructions.

Selected References for Chapter 5

(1) Beaven, Mary. "Individualized Goal Setting, Self-Evaluation and Peer Evaluation," in the book Evaluating Writing: Describing, Measuring, Judging, by Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1977, 135 156.

(2) A Common Ground for Assessing Competence in Written Expression. Los Angeles: Division of Instructional and Curriculum Services, Office of the County Superintendent of Schools, 1978.

Chapter 6

WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT WRITING?

Recent research raises questions about the instructional techniques commonly used in English classes. Teaching grammar, for example, may not help students become better writers. In fact, it may be counterproductive, taking time away from writing practice a more worthwhile activity, according to most experts. On the other hand, although few would argue that students can learn to write without *any* practice, some studies indicate there is a "saturation point" where assigning more compositions does not automatically lead to better writing. Other research indicates that it is important to integrate reading, speaking and listening skills into writing programs.

These and other findings have been unfolding during the past 40 years of composition research. In the last five years, the quantity of research has greatly increased, spurred by the general concern about students' writing. This chapter highlights some of the best research results currently available.

Grammar Doesn't Work

The value of teaching formal grammar is one of the "most heavily investigated problems in the teaching of writing," Richard Braddock writes in his book *Research in Written Composition* (3). Many studies based on objective tests, he says, conclude that instruction in formal grammar has little or no effect on the quality of student writing. The same conclusion was reached by Roland Harris in a two-year study of actual student writing (12). In this study, twelve- to fourteen-year-old students were divided into two groups. One group was taught formal grammatical terms and parts of speech in addition to composition. The other group was taught "sentence building and structure" along with writing. All students wrote essays before and after the experiment. Their work was examined for frequency of grammatical errors and type of sentence construction. Harris concluded that the study of formal grammar "had a negligible or even a relatively harmful effect upon the correctness of children's writing" harmful because the time spent on grammar drills could have been spent more profitably on composition itself.

A large-scale study by four researchers in New Zealand compared the effectiveness of teaching no grammar, traditional grammar and transformational grammar. In the three-year study, the researchers examined the writing performance of 250 high school students. Group A read literature, held class discussions and wrote compositions. Group B studied traditional grammar as well as Group A's curriculum. Group C studied transformational grammar in addition to Group A's curriculum. The results of the study were summarized in *Students Can Write*, (19) a handbook prepared by the Santa Clara (California) County Committee on Writing:

- Neither the traditional nor the transformational grammar group showed any benefits in writing that the non-grammar group did not show.
- There were no differences in control of sentence structure, mechanics, content or style.

- There were no differences in the average number of words per communication unit (each clause in a sentence plus its subordinate words).
- The transformational group developed strong negative attitudes toward sentence study and their language textbooks
- The non-grammar group performed as well as or better than the grammar groups on sentence-combining assessments.[1]

The Limits of Writing Practice

Just as drill in formal grammar seems to have little or no effect on the quality of student writing, research in writing frequency indicates that the sheer number of writing assignments alone does not ensure improvement. The January, 1978, *English Journal* contained a review by Elizabeth Haynes of several studies (13). She found no significant difference in the results for students who wrote a large number of compositions as compared to those who wrote a moderate number. Another study by Lois Arnold, detailed in the January, 1964, *English Journal* (1), found it made little difference if the frequency of assignments and intensity of evaluation were varied for groups of students. "Intensive evaluation of writing was no more effective than moderate evaluation," Arnold said.

Effective Evaluation

Intensive evaluation *can* be effective, however, when it is coupled with in-class writing revision. A 1958 study by Earl W. Buxton compared the writing improvement of three groups of freshmen at the University of Alberta (4). Control group students took courses that required no writing, while students in a writing group and in a special revision group wrote one 500-word essay a week.

In the writing group, students were free to write on the assigned topic or on another of their choice. No comments were made in the margin of the paper, and no grades were given. At the end of the paper, a reader wrote three to four sentences in which he or she gave an overall impression, praised as much as possible and suggested one or two ways the next paper could be made clearer or more interesting. No attempt was made to have the students revise or correct their papers.

Students in the revision group received considerably more direction. They were expected to write on the assigned topic and to include a central idea, evidence of critical thinking and material that was organized and developed. They were encouraged to

organize preliminary thoughts in an outline, to choose their words and illustrations carefully, to develop unity within paragraphs and to make transitions between paragraphs. They were warned not to make unqualified or inaccurate statements. Readers' comments referred to the presence or absence of these qualities and to errors in spelling, punctuation and sentence structure. Comments at the end of each paper gave an overall evaluation, including praise and suggestions for improvement. Each paper was given two grades, one for content and organization and another for general correctness.

In the writing group, papers were returned without discussion. In the revision group, the better part of a class period was devoted to discussing strong and weak points in the essays. Excerpts demonstrating good points were read aloud to the class. Students in the revision group were then expected to correct their errors in class, as the reader went from student to student answering questions.

Students in all three groups wrote essays at the beginning and at the end of their freshman year. The essays were judged according to 15 criteria, including variety, fluency, diction, use of figures of speech and significance of material. The revision group gained significantly over the writing group in three of the 15 categories and over the control group in six categories.

From this study, Buxton concludes that college freshmen improve their writing most when the writing is "thoroughly marked, graded and criticized" and when students are expected to revise their papers in light of the criticism.

From his review of other studies, Richard Braddock (3) also concluded that revision is effective in improving student writing—at least in the grades covered by the various projects—(sixth through twelfth grades and the first year of college).

Few studies, however, have been made to determine the best ways to mark and grade compositions. A study by Jerabek and Dieterich in the May, 1975, *College Composition and Communication* (15) found that peer evaluation and taped audio comments are the most promising new techniques. Through peer evaluation, students learn to recognize errors by critiquing the compositions written by classmates. For the audio technique, the teacher tapes his or her other comments instead of covering the student's paper with red marks. Since taping is faster than writing, the teacher can make more lengthy comments. Hearing the teacher's voice is also more personal than reading comments on a page, Jerabek and Dieterich reported.

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[1]Reprinted with permission from *Students Can Write! The Teaching of Writing K—12*. Santa Clara, Calif.: Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, 1977.

Valuable Prewriting Experiences

Prewriting experiences also improve composition, according to several studies. In her survey of the research, Elizabeth Haynes defines prewriting as "any of the structured experiences which influence active (student) participation . . . in thinking, talking, writing, working in groups." (13)

A 1971 study by Lois Widvey reported that writing ability was improved through the use of a problem-solving process at the prewriting stage (20).

In his doctoral dissertation, Ronald Dow determined that students improve their writing when they are given opportunities to share what they plan to write with peers (8).

Terry Radcliffe reported in 1972 that students write better after they tape-record discussions about their assignments (18). In the "talk-write process," the writer talks about his or her subject on tape, while a discussion partner asks questions and comments on the writer's plan. The writer then replays the tape and selects and organizes parts of it to include in the composition.

The High/Scope Project in Ypsilanti, Michigan, obtained similar results with first and second graders (2). In a review of research for *Language Arts,* Janet Emig comments that the findings reinforce her "strongly held intuition" that stress on talking and writing is superior to stress on reading and listening in developing verbal growth (9).

Composing—An Art in Itself

A document published by the California State Department of Education entitled *English Language Framework for California Public Schools* points out that there is a marked difference between requiring students to do an assignment and motivating them to compose a paper. "The student who writes a report on rocks until he or she finishes a prescribed tenth page is only doing the assignment," the framework explains. Composing, on the other hand, is not simply a passive exercise in following directions; it must be an active, creative process, and teachers must treat it as such:

> Students in all grades need *pre-vision.* If students are to write well, they need time to talk about and think about where the assignment leads. They need to be able to refer to notes and journals kept in response to actual experience and to ideas. They need time to establish an attitude toward the subject. Occasions shaped by the teacher who has spent the necessary time, energy, and imagination on the assignment will draw the best from students, requiring them to search for and discover something they care about saying . . .

The framework lists some questions teachers might ask themselves as they try to turn composing into a creative process:

* How can I help my students recognize that all writing is an expression of their individuality, requires hard work, and is worthy of their time?
* What sorts of real and vicarious experiences motivate my students to compose?
* How do I help students recognize that the oral composing present in a conversation or in a discussion is part of the composing process related to all the language arts skills?
* What criteria should I use in evaluating the effectiveness of student writing?
* Is writing skill positively influenced by the study of grammar, usage, and syntactic manipulation?
* Are the terms "creative writing" and "expository writing" mutually exclusive?
* Can a prescribed pattern of writing experiences be implemented at a department, school, or district level?
* To what degree must a composition teacher observe research and promising new practices in planning writing programs?
* How can I make my students aware that composing is an ordering, or structuring, of selected experiences, feelings, events, and ideas into spoken words, written words, paint, clay, movement, or sound?

The framework suggests several exercises that teachers can use to acquaint students with various parts of the composing process—to make them aware of their own voices as writers, to develop their sense of audience and to give them opportunities to expand their experiences into a source from which they can draw content. It also deals with development of form, style and evaluation, discussing each aspect of the composing process without specific reference to grade level. *The English Language Framework for California Public Schools* is available for $1.50, plus sales tax for California residents, from Publications Sales, California State Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802.

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Prewriting activities can include drawing. In his doctoral dissertation on how seven-year-olds write, Donald Graves compiled eight case studies, which included observation of each child, interviews with the child and parents (separately), a review of the child's written work and also testing (10). The case study of one seven-year-old, Michael, revealed a young boy who found drawing an essential part of the writing process.

In addition to the eight case studies, Graves's research included interviews with second graders in four classes (two informal settings and two formal), observation of many children writing and a review of more than 1,000 student writings to discover common traits. In *Research in the Teaching of English*, (11) he reports the following conclusions:

- Informal environments give greater choice to children When children can choose whether to write and what to write, they write more and in greater length than when specific assignments are given.
- The formal environments seem to favor girls; the informal classes favor boys.
- An environment that requires large amounts of assigned writing inhibits the range, content and amount of writing done by children.
- The child's writing development level has a greater influence on his or her writing behavior than the learning environment, materials and methodologies do.
- Boys seldom use the first person form in unassigned writing.
- Girls write more about "primary territory" (school and home), while boys write more about themes described as secondary and extended geographical territories (metropolitan areas beyond home and school, current events, national and world history, and geography).[2]

Do Not Forget Reading

Reading also improves writing, according to several studies. In 1962, Frank Heys conducted a study on the value of frequent writing assignments (14). One group of students wrote a theme a week; the other wrote less often and used the extra time to read prose. On a composition test given at the end of the experiment, the "reading" group performed better than the "writing" group. A second test showed the two groups to be about equal. Heys concluded that "for many students, reading is a positive influence on writing ability."

In a similar study conducted by Mark Christiansen, an experimental group wrote 24 themes,

[2]Reprinted with permission from "An Examination of the Writing Process of Seven-Year-Old Children," by Donald H. Graves, in *Research in the Teaching of English*. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English. copyright, 1975.

while a control group wrote eight themes and also read prose selections (5). Both groups showed improvement in written compositions, and there were no significant differences between groups. Christiansen concluded that the reading assignments were as effective in improving writing as the extra writing assignments were.

Other studies also show a positive correlation between students who write well and the amount of reading they do. Although no one has yet completed a study that focuses exclusively on the role of reading in improving writing, Elizabeth Haynes suggests, based on the studies she reviewed, that teachers should incorporate more reading into the writing curriculum (13). The authors of the Santa Clara County handbook, *Students Can Write*, reviewed the Heys experiment and concurred (19). Their advice: "Do not isolate the teaching of writing from reading."

Oral Language Is Also Important

No doubt, reading and writing reinforce each other because the two skills mirror one another. For the same reason, talking and listening are related to writing. University of California professor Walter Loban studied the language abilities of tenth, eleventh and twelfth graders and found high correlations among the language skills of students in these grades (16). Students with the highest writing scores also had the highest scores in reading and oral language skills. Also, every student who ranked superior in writing read above his or her chronological age, and every student who ranked low in language read below his or her chronological age. Loban also found that those who were successful in language came from higher socioeconomic groups.

"Although better education for lower socioeconomic groups is a major concern," according to the authors of *Students Can Write*, "another implication is clearly present: Relate (rather than separate)

speaking, reading, listening and writing. Emphasize an integrated program."

"Complexity in writing may be fostered by the school," the Santa Clara County handbook continues, "but growth also depends on the age of the pupils, the language of their background and their oral use of complex sentence structure." Such sentences are learned through "much oral discussion of interesting and complicated ideas and the expression of new experiences. This discussion, ideally, occurs at home and in other school periods, not just the language period. Oral language expression," the handbook concludes, "is now seen as more valuable than it formerly was thought to be." (19)

Sentence Combining

Other helpful tools teachers can use are sentence-combining exercises. Researcher Frank O'Hare gave seventh graders "grammar free" oral and written exercises in sentence combining. After practicing the technique, the students "wrote at a level beyond typical eighth graders and in many respects similar to twelfth graders," and their compositions were "significantly better" than those of a control group (17).

The *Students Can Write* (19) handbook recommends the following teaching strategies, based on the O'Hare study:

- Writing programs should contain an enlarged language development component in which sentence-building exercises play an important role. Do not focus on any one sentence pattern; use the entire range of syntactic alternatives.

- Students should use these syntactic skills at the prewriting stage of composition. In cases where they rewrite, these skills should be used again.

- Drill in sentence combining, if the pupil is not motivated, will not improve writing ability any more than any other kind of drill the students consider a boring, required task.

In her review of sentence-combining research, Elizabeth Haynes sounds one note of caution. When Warren E. Combs (6) replicated the O'Hare study in 1976, he found that students gained, but that there were declines in syntactic fluency within a few weeks after the experiment. "In spite of this decrease," Haynes notes, "there remained significant differences between e   'mental and control groups." Because of these   .nes, and because of the relatively small numbe.   studies on sentence combining, Haynes suggests that teachers "should be alert for further evidence of whether such practice results in greater syntactic fluency over a long period of time." (13)

Teaching Implications

At the conclusion of her research summary, Elizabeth Haynes synthesized the findings into these recommendations for teachers:

- *Grammar, if it is taught at all, should not be included in the curriculum on the grounds that it will improve writing.* This caveat applies to the newer transformational and structural grammars as well as to traditional grammar.

- *Writing assignments should emphasize quality of learning, not quantity of production.* With fewer assignments, teachers will have mor time to devote to direct instruction and careful attention to the development of papers. Haynes advises trying to solve communication problems "before and during the writing process . . . . Teachers might have greater success with the evaluation process if fewer errors were identified at a given time." (In *Measuring Growth in English* (7), Paul Diederich recommends that teachers build student confidence by writing positive comments about the student's ideas. Then, continuing to praise, the teacher can begin to offer one suggestion for improvement at a time.)

- *A greater number of reading experiences should be incorporated into writing programs.* In order to write successfully, students must have a subject they can control. An increased amount of reading would enhance this control. "It is little wonder that a high school student enjoys keeping a journal," she says. "He is able to write about himself—a subject he controls from the viewpoint of an expert."

- *Prewriting exercises should be used, with major emphasis on instruction, not correction.* These exercises could include discussion groups, role playing, interviews, debates, problem solving or workshop activities. Such in-class projects give students the opportunity to receive help from their peers as well as from the teacher.

- *Revision should be built into the prewriting process.* Structured activities should lead the student through a series of steps during which he or she thinks through a composition and discusses, organizes and revises during the writing period. Revision that is done during the writing process and by the student's own choosing may be more beneficial to him than any amount of teacher-recommended revision.

- *Make the writing process a positive experience for all students.* Until research provides additional answers, this is perhaps the single most important thing that teachers of composition can do. Writing topics should be geared to the interests of the students, and there should be greater use of personal writing, such as keeping a journal. Students should be asked to revise as a matter of self-editing or improving their papers, not as a matter of correcting things done wrong.[3]

The philosophy of a positive approach is explained by Diederich in *Measuring Growth in English:* "I believe very strongly that noticing and praising whatever a student does well improves writing more than any kind or amount of correction of what he does badly, and that it is especially important for the less able writers, who need all the encouragement they can get." (7)

The research findings discussed in this chapter have guided the direction of the Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP) and its spin-off, the California Writing Project (CWP), since their inception, according to officials of both programs.

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USE OF COMPUTERS IN WRITING

WORD PROCESSING
How Will It Shape the Student as a Writer?

All educators and parents have heard the moans of children assigned the task of writing a composition or report for school. It is not surprising that children faced with writing, rewriting, dictionary and thesaurus searches, and then hand cramps from copying and recopying to produce a "perfect" paper, are not enthusiastic about the chore.

Teachers, as well, may lose their enthusiasm about teaching writing when faced with pouring through messy, misspelled and run-on products from their students.

This lack of enthusiasm on the part of both teachers and children has made many adults poor writers.

But some say the word processor (or text editor), which is fast replacing the typewriter as a secretarial tool, may come to the rescue. They say it will make children better writers by eliminating the drudge of handwriting and by allowing children the freedom to express themselves without worrying about mistakes. Others say there is a long road to travel before the word processor can be used as an effective tool to teach writing. Accessibility, they say, is the key, and it will be several years before the dream of having a computer in front of every student is realized.

Classroom Computer News invited a group of educators from various disciplines and backgrounds to discuss how word processing will help or hinder education—and what its future in schools will be.

Here we present a short statement from each of our educators and highlights from the lively discussion that ensued.

Henry Olds: Where do the idealism and the reality of using word processing to teach writing come together?

Art Bardige's Statement

Art Bardige is president of Learning Ways, a Cambridge, Massachusetts, computer software company. He is developing a word processor for very young children.

A new generation of word processors is beginning to arrive for microcomputers. These will no longer be so complicated that long command charts must be learned. They will not be just automatic secretaries that make typing and corrections much easier. And they will no longer require special additions to the computer to make lower-case letters, nor will they be priced at levels only businesses can afford. There will be word processors designed for authors, for researchers and for students in classrooms. A word processor designed for education will look and perform very differently from those that are now familiar. A word processor designed for learning will become the foundation for new curricula in reading and writing, and for new instructional techniques.

The new educational word processors will be much simpler for students and teachers to learn to use. They will be constructed in a conceptually simpler way because developers will have had experience with the first generation of word processors. This simpler conception will make it much easier to use and to understand the way it works. New programming techniques and communication procedures will make the program friendly and fun, visually interesting and easy to work with. Different word processors will be written for different-aged students and for students in very different learning situations. And all of these improvements and specialized versions will be available at much lower costs because they will be going into homes and schools, not businesses.

As exciting as these prospects are, this is only the beginning. We are beginning to see a completely new generation of educational software, a new variety of curriculum materials, that bring the full power of the computer to learning. The new generation of word processors will not be simply electronic typewriters that merely respond to the student's input, but they will become curriculum tools—learningware—from which students can learn writing and reading. They will replace textbooks and workbooks as well as paper and pencils for students.

Beth Lowd: I'd love to know, because I started out as the wide-eyed idealist thinking that this was going to change the teaching of writing. I think that the structure of schools, the way they're dealing with this technology, is killing it. I see simply that it's not ready yet; we don't have the technology in our classrooms—in big enough quantities—and we don't have teachers that know what to do with it, once they get it. And we haven't got a curriculum which allows kids to develop typing skill, for example, that will make the more efficient use of the equipment possible. There's just a whole lot of prerequisites that have to come, it seems to me, before kids in large numbers in schools are going to be able to take advantage of the wonder that we all feel when we write with word processors.

I honestly don't think that large numbers of school systems will get their acts together very rapidly to use this wonderful tool. I think that homes are more more likely places for use. Unfortunately, there aren't adults there who necessarily have ever found any joy in writing.

Jonathan Choate: Beth, I teach in a private school which has resources that do what you dream about. It works. We had four Apples in a room. The teacher would bring down a group, and we'd have three kids to a terminal. And I could spend half an hour with twelve kids and teach them to use it. By the end of the year, over 120 kids were using a word processor. So technology is learnable. And I think the real key is accessibility to the resources. The teachers seem to accept it, and are beginning to rethink how they teach writing.

Henry Olds: Jon, I acknowledge that your experience is somewhat special, but what do teachers see in this use of the text processor? What effect does it have upon the kids and upon their sense of the teaching of writing?

Johathan Choate: Well, first of all, more and more teachers have become involved. We started with one and then other teachers saw what was happening. I should say that all of them said the quality of the writing improved significantly. There's no question about that. The efficiency of the writing has improved. In a curriculum that demands a lot of kids' time, it was inefficient for kids to be spending a tremendous amount of time doing something that they could do in probably a quarter of the time, given the technology.

Henry Olds: I noticed a phenomenon years ago when typewriters began to creep into classrooms. The approach then taken was that you should have whatever you're writing finished and totally corrected before you go to use this scarce resource to do your final copy. I think I see some of that

already happening with the computer a strong tendency for teachers to let kids use it only for doing their final copies.

What I am trying to get at is the value of the resource and what its effect is on people. When I was taught to write, I was taught to do revisions too. The first draft was on a really old yellow piece of paper, newsprint. For the next draft I was given a piece of white paper, but it still had lines on it. And then for the next draft I was given a piece of really nice white paper, and it didn't have lines on it, and that was my final draft. Nice paper was the valuable resource. There was not enough of that nice white paper, so they gave us the old yellow paper.

We don't have enough word processors around. They become the white paper. The question is whether schools will ever get to the point where they'll be willing to say, in effect, that every kid should have one of these tools available all the time, which is really the place we've got to get to. I'm not sure the schools are ever going to be willing to say that.

Art Bardige: I'm positive they will get to that point. Absolutely positive. Because I see two things happening. I see the price of textbooks, of paper going up. I see the price of this technology going down. I think at some point it's going to be pretty clear that this technology is going to be as cheap over the long haul as the textbook is. At that point, we'll see schools going to it in a very significant fashion.

Jonathan Choate: So far, most word processors have been secretarial tools. They have not been designed for people's writing. That's changing. There's a whole new generation of writing machines now. If you're going to have a word processor for children, or for the home market, it's got to be easy to use, and you've got to have instructions within the machine. The text processor that we developed has all the instructions right there. There are prompts that tell you precisely how to do things.

Henry Olds: Jon, you raised the distinction between the secretarial use and the instructional use, and presumably you've been addressing that in the Bank Street Writer. Would you comment a little bit more about that?

Jonathan Choate: What we tried to do is design a word processor for junior high school. There were two fundamental design factors. One, that it had to be really simple and easy to use. Most existing word processors are very difficult. And the second, and probably more important, pedagogically, was that when students use the word processor, they should begin by using it to write their unedited

Jonathan Choate's Statement

Jonathan Choate is chairman of the mathematics department at the Groton School, a private boarding school in Groton, Massachusetts. He is Intentional Educations' project manager on the Bank Street Writer, a text processor for children.

There is no question that a word processor helps students write more efficiently. The quality of the written work produced by students who use word processors is at least as good if not better than what they would produce by other methods. My colleagues who teach writing say that they can be far more demanding in terms of the quality of the work they expect because the revision process is so easy. Spelling and grammatical errors are very easy to change so the papers look better. More importantly, since blocks of text can be moved easily, students can also move their ideas around and try presenting their thoughts in different orders without having to rewrite the paper. Writers have far more freedom to play with their ideas.

Word processors may allow students to write in a new and potentially better way. Since errors are so easy to correct, writers can now let their ideas flow out and then later correct their work for spelling, grammar, etc. Students will really be able to focus on the content of what they write and then worry about the form.

Word processors are about to come on the market that are designed to be used by student writers and not by secretaries. Secretarial word processors are very powerful and difficult to learn how to use and are not the type of tool a student should be using. This new generation of programs will make the task of writing on a computer terminal so much easier than it is now.

We have the technology and it is getting better every day. It does make the task of putting words in a graphic form easier. It allows the users far more latitude in playing with their ideas. In short, it allows people to become better writers.

Computers are still very expensive and it will be a long, long time before every student will have access to one for large blocks of time. For this reason, we, as educators, have two big responsibilities. First, to design programs that allow for a wide variety of text-processor uses. It would be a big mistake to design programs that assume that every student has unlimited access to a terminal when in many situations there will be only one terminal for an entire school. Second, funds must be made available so that all students have access to the new technology.

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thoughts, not to write their correct thoughts. We wanted to distinguish clearly between the composing and the editing processes and make the shift from one to the other deliberate. The writing process begins by sitting down and composing on the keyboard without being hung up on making mistakes. I think that's the real power.

Art Bardige: I think that we're going to be surprised in the change in the new generation of word processors, the ease with which they work, for example. All the word processors that currently exist use control keys so the child has to push one key, and another key simultaneously. Not easy for young children. I think that getting typing skills is also a problem a problem that the word processor developers have to address. And one of the ways of addressing it is to put programming in there which gets kids to learn how to type as they're learning how to use the word processor.

Henry Olds: Many people ask me, "What word processor should I get?" Jon and Art, you each have one coming out. Are there other people working on educational word processors or are your projects unique?

Jonathan Choate: I heard that someone's about to announce the $50 home word processor.

Art Bardige: I think we're going to see a flood coming out very shortly. I don't know of anybody else other than the two of us, but the times are ripe. I think that you're going to see a lot of new educational software coming out.

Henry Olds: Do you think the market is such that teachers will, in November and December, be able to find educationally oriented word processors on the market?

Jonathan Choate: Yes, they will.

Art Bardige: The Bank Street Writer will be out in the fall, the word processor that I'm working on will be out the first of the year, and I think we'll see some more stuff in the spring.

Jess Nilson: It seems to me the problem isn't word processors or computers at all, it's the willingness on the part of the English teachers to teach writing. Most English teachers in high school don't teach writing. I remember the University of Florida studies—only 20 percent of the kids had written more than once a month. And word processor-schmerd processor, it doesn't make any difference. I think there has to be a more profound change.

Beth Lowd: The problem is the view that people have of the writing act—as a one-shot deal. Once you've done it, it's done, single copy; just as you were saying, write the paper and you hand it in and you get a grade. And that's always been the wrong way to teach writing, I think—whether you're writing on paper or whether you're writing using a computer. When I taught English—and I love to teach writing—kids went through two or three revisions, even when they had to copy it over by hand for me, because revision and restructuring and adding and elaborating and changing words and correcting the flow and the sound of things was important. And I

Beth Lowd's Statement

Beth Lowd is a former English teacher, and now a computer specialist for the Lexington Public Schools, Massachusetts.

As an ex-English teacher, I have been excited about the potential of word processing for improving students' revision skills ever since I first saw Applewriter. But as yet I've been unable to set up a situation in which word pro-. cessing really works the promised wonders on more than a small handful of kids.

Several factors have stood in the way of success. First, one computer and printer for a class of twenty to twenty-five elementary or junior high students is simply not enough. A student can't have access to it at the moment he/she needs it. Ideally, a student should be able to confer with the teacher or with peers about a rough draft, make some notes about needed improvements, and go right to the computer while the ideas are fresh. In reality, it may be a week or more between turns for an individual because everyone is using the same equipment. By that time, the task is stale, the motivation gone.

Why is it so long between turns? One reason is students' lack of typing skill. Simply put, it may take an average student more than an hour to type in a page or two when he/she could write by hand in less than half that time. So much time is taken by each student for composing/typing, that little or none is left over for revision or even for editing. Another time killer is the slowness of beginners using the editing functions of the word processor itself. Given a chance to become accustomed to the commands, students can work fairly quickly, but infrequent use tends to make learning the editor very slow for most children.

The typing problem also tends to limit the length of the draft copy that students produce.

don't think we have very many writing teachers who have taught that way before. They need to learn to teach that way, in my opinion, because writing is an evolving kind of thing.

I also agree that simply typing a final draft on the computer is a real waste. It's a waste of the computer's time; it's a waste of the kid's time. It has nothing to do with the writing act at all. But you've got to teach teachers about that.

Marilyn Main in: I think you hit on the key idea when you said change the manner in which we teach writing, or in which we conceptualize the teaching of writing. Because it's not going to work in the large class of twenty to twenty-five to thirty people. You have to break it up into groups, I think. And I haven't successfully been able to work with word processing with my own students, because we don't have the setup. But I have been in schools where I've seen it work. But they change the idea that they have about the teaching of writing. And instead of just having writing assignments or in-class writing, children begin doing tasks with the word processor that contribute back to the school—such as writing the school newspaper on the word processor or writing reports for different activities and organizations. Word processing gets the kids working at writing in a real way. I think there are many practical applications that can come before the more idealistic or creative uses that we all feel as writers but that most teachers aren't ready for yet. If they can see how it makes some practical tasks

easier and allows them some control and management, it may come to play a more important part in what they do.

Beth Lowd: Sometimes I put notes on paper; sometimes I envision sections of what's on my mind written on a chalkboard, and I think about the interactions of those things. Usually I prewrite from a list and then take each piece and amplify it to make something that is worthwhile. I think there's potential in computers for graphically moving ideas around in relation to one another, maybe putting general topics or examples in boxes—perhaps with a light pen—and being able to move them around on the screen in relation to one another will get the relationship of ideas that you want, the flow of notions.

Marilyn Martin: I think so too. At the secondary level, one of the big handicaps on writing is time. And when you have longer papers and compositions, students will say, "I didn't have time to write this over. I got to the last paragraph and I really should have said that first, but I just can't go back." And so often they will discover that, as we discovered as writers, that things have to be rearranged. And I think that if they had the opportunity to do that, we would see a great improvement, because kids do have the ideas. They have some problems with mechanics, and they also have a problem with time and patience. I think that any help would make a lot of difference in what they turned in as a product.

elaboration by making additions easy to insert, While word processing is designed to encourage kids' lack of typing skill tends to counteract this benefit. The typing is so slow and painful that they make their sentences shorter, putting in less detail than they do on paper. Since one of the objects of writing programs in the elementary school is to help students freely express and elaborate their thoughts, this lower volume of output is a problem.

Besides too little equipment and lack of typing skill, two other factors can make experiences with a word processor unsuccessful: inappropriate hardware or software, and the inflexibility of school scheduling. Trying to use a tape-based (instead of disk-based) word processor is an invitation to frustration. Stories get lost, time is wasted and patience wears thin. Computers with very limited memory capacity also spell disaster, causing lost stories and therefore more abbreviated writing next time. Similarly, using a program whose editing commands require a lot of practice means many students

will never acquire the skill needed to really revise freely. Finally, the need for all students to move on after forty-minute periods can doom the effort. Access time becomes too short or too broken up to make any coherent writing or revision possible.

One final note: I speak here about experiences in elementary school for a good reason. During the first writing experiences, children develop lifelong habits and attitudes about themselves as writers. Thus, waiting until senior high rhetoric class to introduce word processing is not the answer.

In summary, until schools can afford writing labs for English classes and free-access word-processing stations scattered liberally around the school, and until we see fit to teach typing earlier (or eliminate the need for it through voice-recognition technology), I see no sense in wasting our time, students' time or scarce equipment time on word processing to improve writing.

Marilyn Martin's Statement

Marilyn Martin is a secondary school English teacher and a student in the Computers in Education program at Lesley College, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

As a tool, word processing allows students to work at the basic blocks of writing such as vocabulary, phrasing and sentences as well as at the more advanced elements of composition such as style, tone and diction. Some very good software is being developed to utilize the features of word processing in the editing or author mode, thus moving the writing experience away from drill and practice and into the realm of exploration and revision. Word processing also can help the student manage a number of practical tasks such as writing letters and papers, as well as publishing the school newspaper or producing class and activity reports.

In its purest form, however, word processing acts as an extension of the writer's mind and allows him/her to come to the board as composer, and creator. As a musician approaches a keyboard and works at combining notes until the sound is right, so a writer can approach the computer keyboard and through word processing work at combining words and developing ideas until they look right—and read right.

Of course, this is the final measure of writing: how it reads, what it communicates. Teachers know that reading and writing are mutual processes that cannot be taught in isolation, and that bringing writing to fruition requires reading it.

Word processing allows students to manage their writing with ease, to manipulate its elements to their satisfaction, and to read what they have written. Then with equal ease, they can correct and revise what they have written, examining ideas and clarifying thought.

Teachers can guide students in the use of word processing at the appropriate level of need or mastery. Existing curriculum can be adapted to lessons entered on the word processor by the teacher, or through assignments completed independently by the student. Such individualized learning is of special help to the student who needs remedial work, and is a boon to the regular classroom teacher's attempts to work cooperatively with the reading specialist or resource room teacher.

Word processing can be an integral part of the language arts program. This must be recognized by school administrators whose job it is to design curriculum and provide equipment and space for the teacher. Without the tool and the means to use it, the word processor will remain a piece of machinery in the business department and become as obsolete as the typewriter it has already begun to replace.

Beth Lowd: I think another interesting notion that word processing makes possible is multiple stages in your writing development. For example, what about rereading your draft with a particular purpose in mind? Rereading it for structure. Rereading it for specificity. Rereading it for mechanics. Most times kids only reread for mechanics. I think you can build into a word processor the possibility of blocking text in some way, and then of moving those blocks around to see how it reads when it's in a different order.

Art Bardige: How about a word processor combined with a data base manager?

Beth Lowd: It's that sort of a thing. I think that would be a really wonderful tool for learning to write. Because what you're talking about is composing your ideas. And that's the essence of what the computer can help you do, whether you're programming or whether you're writing, or whether you're solving some other problem.

Marilyn Martin: If writing labs could be set up so that teachers could break up a traditional large-size class into small groups, and have several types of activities (including word processing) going on in that class, writing might become a more important part of the curriculum without threatening the teacher.

Beth Lowd: You should give the word processor first to the teacher. Then teachers will begin to see that writing can be something different—that it can be fun to do.

Then you have to find a way to get the teacher past reading all of those boring compositions that are so terrible. Perhaps, if the process could be broken down and if the kid could get a handle on one little piece of that writing at one time, and stay with it, it could be more exciting for the teacher. If we didn't just look at the product all the time—the final big thing, the due date—and we would make the writing process more ongoing, I think that teachers might then teach it—and the students might respond.

Jonathan Choate: The question is which comes first? Can the word processor help bring about the

change, or is some change going to have to take place first?

Jeff Nilson: Well, I think it might be a little bit of both. What I see happening in some school districts is big comprehensive programs from big publishers that have word processors hooked in—a grammar-composition series that has all kinds of computer software and a word processor hooked to it. And teachers might, if it saves them a little bit of trouble and a little bit of time, use it if it can be put into a neat management system. Teaching English and grading compositions for 125 kids is no picnic. Two minutes a shot is five or six hours of work. Teachers don't want to do that. And a word processor isn't really going to make a difference, unless it's linked into a very big system. It's going to be a very slow difference in my opinion. The world that all of you are describing is a world that I don't really see.

Art Bardige: My word processing program is really an instructional program. We have to rethink all of our notions about instructing kids in reading and writing. You know the word processor is just as good a reading tool as it is a writing tool, and we have to think about it in that way too. And what I've tried to do is to begin to think about how you use this to teach kids about writing, and not just to help them or make it easier for them.

Beth Lowd: I am very fearful of the computer doing too much, and the word processor providing too much, and interfering with the human factor. It's scary to give teachers a new role, which is what the word processor can do. The teacher's role does change. The teacher becomes much more of an editor writing consultant, someone to talk over your writing problems with and to try to solve problems with.

Art Bardige: We're in a time of retrenchment, where we think teachers don't want to accept new ideas and new things. But I think there will follow a time in which they will be more open to accept new ideas and new technologies and new things, and in which they will have seen things operate in the homes and begin to understand these things.

Beth Lowd: I think it's going to be a political struggle, though. I am hopeful too, but there is a whole segment of society out there that isn't thinking or feeling the way we are.
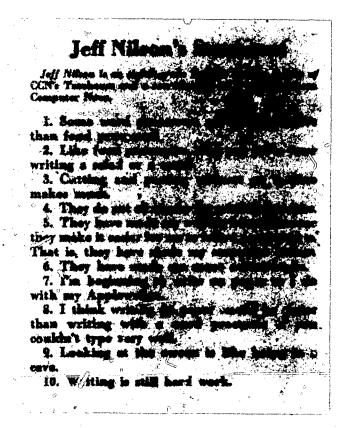
Art Bardige: You know, I think the word processor offers teachers the chance to write their own curriculum in a sophisticated way. And one of the reasons that I'm so optimistic about all of the computer curriculum material is that it has an independent flexibility and a variety to it that the textbook and the whole textbook curriculum approach has never

had and doesn't offer. It's easier to change, easier to try new and different kinds of things, easier to mess with. I think this is going to offer teachers a way to write their own curricula.

Beth Lowd: It could make curriculum writing much more a creative process, rather than the nitty picky little thing about how you get it letter perfect to get it reproduced for the teachers by fall.

Art Bardige: Maybe that's one of the ways you could introduce this stuff into a school system. Teachers who are involved in writing curriculum in the summer workshop, or writing a curriculum guide or whatever. Give them these tools and these machines. Give them the currently existing word processors or the ones that are just going to be coming out. They start using them; they feel the strength of them. I don't want to let a vision of the way computers are placed in schools currently and the kinds of machines that currently exist narrow our focus about what computers can do in education and what they ought to do.

Marilyn Martin: But they have to have administrators allowing them time and space and money. They have to have priorities established that are going to give them that. It's very frustrating now dealing with teachers and providing in-service training because they are interested, wanting to learn, but they aren't given the time. It's not a very good time to be working towards changes in the schools. It's very painful to try.

Art Bardige: No, I think it is, in fact, a very good time to be working for change. It's not a good time to change within the schools, but it's a very good time to be working for change. And that's why I'm less concerned about what we do tomorrow, or what we're going to do this coming year than I am about what we'll do in the '85-'86 school year, because whatever happens now is just pioneering, but I think we'll be able to show some real advantages a year or two down the line.

Beth Lowd: This year we're going to be planning with the English department ways they can incorporate word processing into their plans for the next ten years. It's going to take some time and a lot of money to put things in place where they're going to be useful. I couldn't agree with you more that you need to plan, you need to dream, you need to be as creative as possible about using this new tool.

Art Bardige: I think we're going to learn some creative ways of dealing with this. Maybe the computer doesn't sit in the classroom, maybe we have five computers in an elementary school, and not one in each classroom. Maybe there's a writing lab, or maybe they go down to the library. Maybe there's an after-school program in which they get to work on the machines. It shouldn't deter us from thinking about how we can use these things in all of their capacities—in all of their capabilities. It's important to get started. It's important to buy one program, put it in the hands of one teacher, and begin to try out the various ways in which this thing could work. And not wait for nirvana down the road, when all this stuff comes down like manna from heaven.

Beth Lowd: Well, I couldn't agree with you more. It certainly has been our philosophy, and I think it's paid off. I think we've learned a lot about things you do and don't do when you have computers in the classroom. We're more ready to plan now, as a result, to plan in very serious ways.

Henry F. Olds, Jr.'s Statement

Henry F. Olds, Jr., is the editor of Classroom Computer News.

One morning I mentioned to a friend that I had awoken with a clear sense of what I wanted to say in an article I was writing and was anxious to get to a text processor to do some composing on the machine. She said, "So this morning you've been text processing in your head." I told her I thought her remark was very profound because that was exactly what I had been doing. After a little more than a year of using a text processor for almost everything I write, I no longer write or think about things I write about in the same way. I truly do word process in my head.

An example—we all are familiar with the feeling of taking out a fresh, clean piece of paper and sitting down to write something. "How do I begin?" we think. Four hours later we may still be thinking about how to begin. The sense that writing is a linear process is so deeply embedded in our consciousness that we are almost totally convinced that the writing of something must start with a beginning.

A year of text processing has completely changed my writing consciousness—I no longer start with beginnings because I have become aware that I rarely know what the formal structure of what I want to say should be before I have tried to say it. With the text processor, I can easily merge form and content once my vision is clear.

So, freed from premature concerns for the form of things, I can proceed with setting down whatever I want to say. Writing now, as never before, has become a mode of discovery.

I see no reason why my experience, which seems not to be uncommon among other users I have talked with, would not be shared by students who have the opportunity to use a text processor for their written work. Might it not be the case that a large number of students would find writing with a text processor far easier and more pleasurable than either longhand or typing? Might it be that a large number of writing problems would disappear when much of the pain was removed from the task?

As a professional writer, I know that excellence in writing requires hard work. It is a craft—sometimes an art—that demands great energy and attention. But hard work comes only after the joy of it has been discovered. If in the beginning there is only hard work and no joy—the current status of most writing instruction—there will be very little writing of any reasonable quality. I believe that putting text processors in the hands of students can start the writing process in the appropriate place—with the joy of creation and the wonder of discovery.