DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 412 238   TM 027 477

AUTHOR   Daniels, Patricia A.
TITLE   Individual Action and Reflection: Four Case Studies of
                Teachers' Responses to a Statewide Assessment Policy.
SPONS AGENCY   Spencer Foundation, Chicago, IL.
PUB DATE   1997-03-00
NOTE   25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American
                Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, March 24-28,
                1997).
PUB TYPE   Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS   Case Studies; Educational Policy; *Elementary School
                Teachers; Grade 5; *Individual Differences; Intermediate
                Grades; *Portfolio Assessment; Portfolios (Background
                Materials); Professional Development; Self Evaluation
                (Individuals); *State Programs; *Teacher Attitudes; Test
                Use; *Testing Programs; Writing (Composition); Writing Tests
IDENTIFIERS   Alternative Assessment; *Vermont

ABSTRACT
            The success of alternative assessments such as the Vermont
Assessment Program (VAP) is heavily dependent on the involvement and
commitment of teachers. This paper focuses on the implementation of the
writing portfolio component of the VAP in the classrooms of four teachers who
have different knowledge and beliefs about teaching and assessment. The
historical context and basic structure of the writing portion of the VAP are
described. Vermont schools, which are predominantly rural, have a long
tradition of local governance, teacher autonomy, and inclusion of students
with disabilities in the regular classroom. Four experienced fifth-grade
teachers, first-time implementors of the VAP, were studied to determine the
effects of this policy on teachers in different contexts. These four teachers
represent four different belief cultures: curriculum-oriented,
process-inquiry, polytheoretic, and minimalist. There were varying degrees
and types of influences in these four classrooms as a result of their first
year of participation in the portfolio system. The teachers began with
different beliefs and practices, approached the VAP task differently, and
finished with different degrees of involvement at the end of the year. The
influence of the VAP in the classrooms ranged from none to changes in
organizational procedures, to students writing more and producing more kinds
of writing, and to students engaging in a new process of reflection and
self-evaluation. Results suggest the need for long-range, flexible, and
multidimensional approaches to professional development and the
implementation of alternative assessment. An appendix provides an analytical
writing assessment guide. (Contains 4 figures and 18 references.) (SLD)

Individual Action and Reflection:

Four Case Studies of Teachers' Responses to a

Statewide Assessment Policy

Patricia A. Daniels
534 Waterman Building
University of Vermont
Burlington, Vermont 05404-0160
pdaniels@zoo.uvm.edu

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Researcher Association, Chicago, IL, March 26, 1997.

Individual Action and Reflection:
Four Case Studies of Teachers' Responses to a Statewide Assessment Policy
Patricia A. Daniels
University of Vermont

*I do think the VAP is exciting. I think it probably needs some wrinkles
ironed out, but everything does when it's new. But I think that if those
who are involved in developing it are responsive to the people on the ground
floor and using it, and will listen, some very positive things will come of it.*
                                                                    Linda, fifth grade teacher

Linda's reflection on her first year of participation in the Vermont

Assessment Program (VAP) highlights the rationale for these case studies: it is

important to understand the particular experiences of the teachers as

implementors of educational reform. The success of alternative assessments such

as the Vermont Assessment Program is heavily dependent on the involvement

and commitment of teachers (Abruscato, 1993; Hewitt, 1995; Worthen, 1993).

From the beginning, Vermont teachers have been the lifeblood of the VAP. In

partnership with Department of Education specialists, teachers initially

developed and piloted the VAP system. Within that system, they remain

indispensable as "network leaders" who facilitate, support and inform colleagues,

as evaluators of local portfolios, and as scorers of state-selected portfolios. Most

importantly, however, teachers are the key decision-makers about how portfolios

are used and constructed in classrooms. In effect, they are the "gatekeeper(s) of

alternative assessment (Worthen, 1993)." It is important to investigate their

experiences and listen to their perspectives so that policy makers can understand

and respond to the nature of the impact of the VAP initiative on its primary

stakeholders: teachers and students.

This paper focuses on the implementation of the writing portfolio component of the Vermont Assessment Program in the classrooms of four teachers who hold diverse knowledge and beliefs about teaching and assessment. First, I summarize the historical context and basic structure of the writing portion of the VAP. Then I outline the case study methodology. Finally, I introduce four fifth grade teachers who are first-time implementors of the VAP. Using a cross-case analysis of four in-depth case studies of these teachers, I explore to what extent a single policy is likely to have a common effect on teachers from a variety of contexts who espouse different beliefs and practices. I describe and compare each teacher's approach to teaching writing, the portfolio development process in each classroom, and their individual reflections about the impact of the VAP. In conclusion, I address implications for policy makers and professional development.

Background Information

A Portfolio Culture in Vermont

Vermont sets a unique context for educational reform. It is one of the most rural states in the country. Its size, (9,614 square miles) is comparable to that of a large county in most of our larger states. It has a total population of only 580,209 people in the latest census, and a total k-12 public school population of 103,317 students. Most of its elementary schools are small and rural; over 50% have only one classroom at each grade level. and multi-aged groupings are common. Vermont schools have a long tradition that values local governance, teacher autonomy, and full inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms.

During the past decade, the term "portfolios" became embedded in the culture of Vermont schools. During the 1980's, Vermont teachers (myself included) flocked to statewide courses and workshops to learn about "The Vermont Writing Process" (Hewitt, 1995). Grounded in the philosophy of Donald Graves (1987), Lucy Calkins (1986), and Nancie Atwell (1987), this workshop approach to teaching writing first engaged teachers and administrators in the writing process that they would use with their students. Many Vermont classrooms transformed from a traditional approach where writing was assigned and taught as a static product, to one in which writing became an ongoing process that engaged students and teachers in discussing their writing with each other through stages that included prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and sometimes publishing a variety of pieces. "Portfolios" were typically the folders in which students kept their writing at various stages of the process.

Vermont had no uniform statewide assessment program before 1991. From 1988 to 1991, in response to a legislative prod for accountability, leaders from the Department of Education, classroom teachers, other educators, and lay people gathered to develop a statewide approach to assessment. Already grounded in process writing and portfolios as collections, these educators decided that traditional standardized tests did not provide the kind of information the state needed about what students know and can do, and also did not push student learning in the direction it should go (Hewitt, 1995). Using extensive teacher input, Vermonters created their own revolutionary alternative portfolio-based assessment system for writing and mathematics, which they piloted during the 1990-1991 school year.

Thus, Vermont became the first state in the nation to implement a statewide portfolio-based assessment program (Hewitt, 1995). Although the VAP was never mandated, from 1991-1994, VAP portfolios for both math and writing were developed by students in nearly all Vermont fourth and eighth grade classrooms. In September, 1995, the Department of Education moved the writing assessment to the fifth grade. This decision was in response to concerns raised by fourth grade teachers and school administrators about the stress on fourth grade teachers and students, implementing both writing and math portfolios within the same classroom. Another implied rationale was to promote change in the instruction and assessment of writing at grades other than four and eight (Vermont Department of Education, March/April, 1994). Fifth grade teachers who were in their first year of implementing writing portfolios for the VAP in 1995-1996,therefore, worked with students who had developed the VAP portfolios during their previous year in fourth grade.

The VAP Writing Assessment

There are two required components of the VAP: portfolios of selected students' work and a "uniform test" administered to all fifth and eighth grade students. Teachers are encouraged to develop portfolios with all students, and to score their own students' portfolios and best pieces. Ideally, writing for portfolios is collected, reflected upon, and assessed by all fifth and eighth grade students throughout the school year and maintained in a working folder or portfolio, as possible pieces to be included in the VAP portfolio. Not all portfolios are sent to the state for scoring, however. In May, the Department of Education requests a randomly-selected sample of portfolios from students in each supervisory union to be sent to a central location and scored by teams of

teachers. These writing portfolios are structured to contain six various genre of writing from that academic year, including a student-selected "best piece" which the student feels represents h/her best work, and a written reflection letter about reasons for choosing that piece. Teacher-scorers apply a four-point rubric (extensively, frequently, sometimes, rarely) against specific performance criteria in five dimensions: purpose, organization, details, voice/tone, grammar/usage/ mechanics (see Appendix). In contrast, the Uniform Test of Writing is a direct writing assessment using a single prompt that is administered and collected from all Vermont students in grades five and eight at the same time as the portfolios, and scored by an outside agency using the same criteria as used with the portfolios.

Methodology

Data Sources

These case studies are grounded in rich and varied quantitative and qualitative data: (1) surveys, (2) indepth pre-and post-implemenation interviews with participant teachers, (3) interviews with influential others (fourth grade teachers, principals, and network leaders), (4) detailed, audio taped classroom observations, and (4) portfolios and other relevant documents. A team of six university researchers collected these data during a one year period, from August, 1995-July, 1996. During frequent team meetings, we discussed emerging trends, affirmed perceptions, and developed interpretations.

Participant Selection

Surveys. Because teachers teach differently, based on their beliefs and orientations towards teaching and learning (Lipson & Goldhaber, 1993), we selected teachers who represent maximum philosophical diversity in regards to

teaching and learning. We initially surveyed all of Vermont's fifth grade teachers. Built into the survey (Lipson & Goldhaber, 1993) were items that allowed us to look at teacher beliefs from four different perspectives. Two of these focused on views of learning (behaviorist and interactive) and two focused on views of teaching (child-centered and systems oriented). A subsequent cluster analysis of respondents resulted in four identifiable groups of teachers: Curriculum-oriented, Process-Inquiry, Polytheoretic, and Minimalist (Lipson, 1995a). Teachers' membership in these clusters was strongly associated with their self-identified instructional practices and their orientation to assessment, as shown in their individual survey responses.

Twelve teachers were selected for indepth inquiry. Of these twelve, four are represented in this paper---one from each of the belief clusters. (Pseudonyms are used.) In general terms, the clusters compare as shown below (Lipson, 1995a):

Figure 1

Summary of Teacher Belief Clusters

Group	% of Respondents	Sample of beliefs
Curriculum-Oriented (Maura) High scores on Behaviorist and Systems scales. Lowest scores on Interactionist and Child-Centered scales	41%	-Parents and others need information that compares students. -VAP a poor match to present instruction.
Process-Inquiry (Eve) Highest scores on Interactionist and Child-centered scales. High Systems scores also.	19%	-Children, parents and teachers should be equal participants in collecting, selecting and evaluating information. -VAP a good match to present instruction

Polytheoretic (Linda)   21%   -Claimed multiple beliefs and
Very high scores on all scales.   often competing practices.
<u>Highest</u> scores on Behaviorist and
Systems, but also very high on other two.

Minimalist (Leslie)   18%   -Seem to hold no clear theoreti-
Low to moderate scores on all four   cal perspective on teaching and
scales, seeming uncertain about   learning.
adopting any perspective very
strongly. <u>Lowest</u> scores on System
scale.

To further maximize diversity, we selected teachers from varied contexts within different geographic regions of Vermont. Figure 2 displays variety across the contexts of the four teachers.

Figure 2

Summary of Teachers' Background and Contexts

<u>Name</u>	<u>Group</u>	<u>Experience</u>	<u>Context</u>
Maura	Curriculum	20 years M.Ed.	K-8 small town elementary school Five 5th grades Low-middle SES 23 students High special needs student pop.
Eve	Process-Inquiry	21 years M.Ed.	5-8 suburban Middle School Four fifth grades Low-high SES 50 students (team teaches)
Linda	Polytheoretic	26 years BA	k-8 rural elementary school One 5th grade low SES 18 students (14 girls, 4 boys)
Leslie	Minimalist	12 years BA	k-6 suburban elementary school Three 5th grades low-middle SES 20 students

Maura, a curriculum-oriented teacher, and Linda, a polytheoretic teacher, both teach in schools that house students from K-8. but their schools vary significantly in size. One is a rural school with a single fifth grade, while the other is a small town school with five fifth grades. Leslie, a minimalist teacher, and Eve, a process inquiry teacher, both teach in suburban schools that are similar in size, but one is a 5-8 middle school, and the other a k-6 elementary school. Eve works closely in a team-teaching situation, whereas, the other three have largely self-contained classrooms. Linda's 18 students during the year of the study were skewed in gender. Maura's class had an unusually high ratio of special needs students.

There are also factors common to all four teachers. First, they are all "experienced" teachers. Maura, Eve and Linda each taught elementary school for over 20 years prior to our study. Although Leslie is the least experienced of the four, she had taught for 12 years, and is considered "experienced." Interviews with administrators and 4th grade teachers at each school show that all four participants are highly regarded by their administrators and peers. In addition, our observations and documents, as well as teacher self-reports, show that each teacher used a type of "process writing" and that there was an impressive volume of writing produced by students in each classroom.

Observational data and related documents. The four teachers were observed for eight full days (four two-day observations, during the months of November, January, April and May). Field notes for each case included a detailed written running record of classroom activity, with times recorded every 3-5 minutes. During these visits, the teacher wore a wireless microphone so that all teacher talk could be recorded. The taped records were used to support and

clarify our written records. Documents connected to each observation included photographs, representative examples of student work, teachers' outlines of written daily plans, portfolios constructed at different phases in each classroom, and completed VAP portfolios.

Interviews. Lengthy pre-and post-implementation interviews were conducted with each teacher, focusing on classroom instruction and assessment practices, use of portfolios, and perceptions of the VAP. Additional brief interviews were conducted before and after each two day observation to clarify and to add the teacher's perspective to what was observed. Within each observation were instances of impromptu, informal conversations we called "teacher talk". Some of these were taped and transcribed verbatim; others were reconstructed as accurately as possible. Additional interviews were conducted with the school principal, a 4th grade teacher in the same school or district, and the area VAP network leader. These created a broader local context for understanding the variety of influences on the teacher's assessment and instructional practices.

Data Analysis

Shortly after the fourth two-day observation, each observer wrote a summary description of what was observed during the year. This was read by each teacher during the final interview. All teachers agreed with the characterizations in these summaries, although specific information was revised in two, based on teachers' responses.

These data were arranged chronologically in individual case books for each teacher, which include the "running records" of eight days of observations, documents that surround these observations, all transcribed interviews with that

teacher, observers' summaries of reactions/highlights from each visit, and examples of representative student work and portfolios constructed in each classroom. Primary patterns were identified, coded and categorized, using a content analysis procedure (Ely, 1991; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Patton, 1990). In doing so, we triangulated our data sources. Interview data were examined for consistency with direct observations, and documents were analyzed for additional insights into the characterization of assessment and instructional practices. Individual case studies were written from these data.

For cross-case analysis: I used four individual completed case studies of one teacher from each belief cluster (Daniels, 1995; 1996; Lipson, 1995b; 1996) and the associated summary descriptions. First, I created a meta matrix:

Figure 3

Methodology: Format of Meta-matrix

Teacher & Group	What teacher says about self	Typical writing period	How VAP portfolios were constructed	Teacher's perspective of the VAP
Maura Curriculum-oriented				
Leslie Minimalist				
Eve Process Inquiry				
Linda Polytheoretic				

It displayed four columns of information, using the same framework used for the data analysis in each of the case studies: (1) what the teacher says about h/herself, (2) what happens during a typical writing period in that classroom,

(3) how the VAP portfolios were constructed, and (4) the teacher's individual perspective on the VAP experience. Reading across the rows revealed a sense of individual teacher's experiences, and reading down the columns provided a cross-case comparison of data in the four categories.

From this process, similarities and differences among cases became visible. The large amount of data was progressively clustered and refined into quotes and summarizing phrases on a second matrix with identical categories. Salient information from this display was then condensed to three categories that address this study's general question of to what extent a single policy is likely to have a common effect on teachers: What was the focus of writing instruction in each classroom throughout the year? To what extent did the VAP portfolios become central to classroom instruction? Did the teacher report an impact from the VAP? If so, what was the nature of the impact?

Findings

Figure 4 displays the nature of our findings in three categories: (1) whether classroom *writing instruction* focused on content of students' writing (rather than editing), (2) whether the *development of VAP portfolios* became central to writing instruction in each classroom, and (3) whether teachers reported an *impact of the VAP* on their writing instruction. Next, I present the data represented by each column.

Figure 4

Individual Action and Reflection: Teachers' Responses to the Vermont Assessment Program

Teacher & Group Membership	Instructional focus on content of students' writing?	Centrality of VAP portfolios to classroom instruction?	Teacher-reported impact of VAP?
Maura Curriculum-oriented	−	−	+
Leslie Minimalist	−	−	−
Eve Process-Inquiry	+	−	+
Linda Polytheoretic	+	+	+

Teaching Writing

All four teachers said that they used the "process writing" approach, guiding their students through stages of pre-writing, revising and publishing. And we did, indeed, observe these writing stages during typical writing periods in each of these classrooms. What was done with students in the name of "process writing," however, varied markedly.

Maura, a curriculum-oriented teacher, taught writing in a very organized, methodical way. This is not surprising, given that "curriculum-oriented" teachers generally teach skills in sequential order and base judgments about students on the completion of learning outcomes. Writing happened as one part of a daily 45 minute Language Arts period, during which spelling and language arts subskills were taught separately. Students worked individually on teacher-

assigned topics, creating several revisions, in order to produce a perfect end product for each piece they started. This approach to teaching writing felt like "hard work" to Maura:

> It's hard for me to teach writing because it is a slow process....I have to be careful that when we get to our first, second, third, fourth and fifth drafts that we haven't lost the whole meaning of why we're doing it in the first place.

While students wrote, Maura circulated from desk to desk, monitoring whether students were on task, providing brief, positive comments ("Good job," "Nice work"), and editing papers for spelling and mechanics. Comments about the actual content of the writing were sparse, and very brief. In addition, there were no peer conferences. Maura felt that the high ratio of special needs students in her class made peer coferencing difficult and ineffective.

Teachers from the "minimalist" belief cluster are least likely to report that they provide a sustained writing period. Leslie's students, however, had a 45 minute block for Writer's Workshop daily, distinguishing her from other minimalist teachers. During this time, her students wrote about a variety of self-selected and teacher-assigned topics. In addition, students produced writing across curricular areas, using response journals, learning logs and projects. She believed that "the more they write, the better they're going to get at it."
The nature of the feedback she gave to students about their writing mirrored Maura's. She monitored their writing to provide encouragement and to keep them on task, but did not give specific feedback about the content. When students shared what they wrote, she responded briefly, "Nice work," or "That's a

good start," and moved on to the next student. Students shared writing with each other, but gave the same type of brief, non-specific feedback.

Eve, a process-inquiry teacher, and Linda, a polytheoretic, taught process writing very differently than Maura and Leslie. This is not surprising, given that teachers in these two groups had high interactionist scores on the surveys of beliefs and practices, compared to the low scores from the minimalists and curricularists. In Eve's and Linda's classrooms, writing occurred throughout the day, but direct writing instruction happened during a long block of integrated reading/language arts time each morning. The process and content of students' writing was the focus. Both of these teachers encouraged students to make personal connections to their writing. Eve felt that writing should be "authentic" and that

> It's got to come from inside the writer. It's got to be a reflection of the thought process that belongs to that person. If I were to order the criteria the state has put forth, I would say voice and tone has got to be right at the top....I think a good piece of writing has to show the soul.

Linda echoed this belief. She liked writing that focused on personal meaning and helped her to get to know her students better. She stated, "What's exciting is seeing what's inside the students. Sometimes, it's incredible, the depth of feeling that's in there."

However similar their basic beliefs, Eve and Linda were at very different points in their writing programs during their first year of implementing the VAP. Eve had a well-established writing program. From the beginning of the year, she gave very straightforward feedback about the quality of the students' writing, focusing on word usage, delivery, and effective imagery. Student self-evaluation

and peer conferences were ongoing. Responses that students offered to each other when sharing their writing were specifically focused on language and content. She incorporated the language of the VAP criteria in her mini-lessons and student conferences. On the other hand, Linda's year was characterized by a significant shift in the focus of her writing instruction, as well as in the nature of the responses she gave students about their writing. Early in the year, her specific feedback to students focused on mechanics and organization. Increasingly, she centered her whole group lessons on specific components of the VAP criteria, especially voice and tone, and focused student efforts on making writing personally meaningful. Whole class conferences became an integral part of each day, during which she and her students freely shared what they wrote, eliciting responses from each other about the language and content of their writing.

Doing the VAP: Centrality to Instruction

Portfolios as product or process. Two dimensions need to be considered when considering the centrality of the statewide assessment program on practice: the portfolio as a product and process and the classroom use of the evaluative criteria used for statewide assessment of portfolios. In all four classrooms. teachers created special "portfolio" folders for the products of VAP work, but these portfolios functioned differently.

In Maura's, Eve's and Leslie's classrooms, the portfolio folders were repositories for finished work, and not integral to ongoing writing instruction and assessment. Students used a different folder or notebook for current writing projects. The VAP portfolios never became central to the actual writing program in the classroom. They were kept by the teacher, and students seldom visited

them. Maura kept her students' portfolios by her desk and focused her efforts immediately on saving "every little scrap," being organized in order to fulfill the VAP requirements. Her students' portfolio folders were bulging by January. Leslie and Eve, however, did not collect writing in the folders that they created for the VAP initially, although masses of student writing was produced in each room. Consequently, when it was time to prepare VAP portfolios, they wished they had saved more student work, and resolved to do so the next year.

In Linda's classroom, however, the portfolio folders were constantly in use and contained writing in all stages of the process. Early on, she talked with the students about the Vermont Assessment Program. Linda and her students decided together to experiment with larger blocks of time for writing on a daily basis. In addition, entire Friday mornings were called "Portfolio" and were given completely to writing. Students were aware throughout the year, that anything they wrote was a potential VAP portfolio document. They voiced opinions about "doing portfolios" and wrote about its pros and cons in their journals. They understood that the VAP would require them to have several kinds of writing, and bemoaned the fact that their valued poetry could not be scored.

As noted in the previous section, in Eve's and Linda's classrooms there was a second kind of impact--the components of the VAP assessment criteria were the focus of instructional mini-lessons and conversations about writing. Eve alone, however, used it for her own assessment purposes and taught her students to use the criteria to evaluate writing. This was a refinement of her practice, which already included ongoing writing, conferencing and reflecting by students.

Final steps in constructing VAP portfolios. In May, five or six students were randomly selected from each classroom to submit portfolios for evaluation by the state. The final steps taken to construct portfolios for the VAP varied in each classroom. In Eve's, Leslie's, and Linda's classrooms, all students created portfolios in the same way, as if their name had been selected by the state. Maura, however, had a dramatically different approach than the other three. She and her classroom aide referred to the students whose portfolios were selected as "the chosen few" and she worked with them separately. While her aide worked with the rest of the class on a different assignment, Maura took these students aside and insured that they had neatly-finished pieces for each category and a complete table of contents, guiding them through each step. After these students' portfolios were completed, the remainder of the students quickly constructed portfolios, knowing that theirs was not going to the state. Although Maura stands alone in this group, examination of our remaining eight cases suggests that other teachers made special arrangements.

Eve and Linda gave all students guidelines on how to select a "best piece" in each category, and instructed them to use the language from the criteria in writing their letter to the portfolio reader. Maura gave no particular instruction about how to choose pieces for the portfolio, except to "pick quality work." Leslie asked all students to address several questions in the letter to the reader, and helped them to pick out their best pieces. In all four classrooms, however, student choices were ultimately honored, whether or not the teacher agreed.

Impact of the VAP: What Teachers Say

Teachers' self-reports affirm our observation information about the nature of the impact in each classroom. For the most part, these teachers were clear

about the influences of the state's assessment policy on their practice, and about what they would do differently during a subsequent year.

Leslie was the exception. We observed no change in her writing instruction as a result of the VAP. She also reported a minimal impact: "It gets them writing more" -- in a classroom where students already produced large amounts of writing. She stated no plans for changing her writing instruction as a result of the VAP. She did, however, plan to save more writing during the second year.

Eve reported two impacts she considered significant: finishing more writing and providing criteria for instruction and assessment of writing.

> It's given me direction. They finished far more writing this year than ever because of the portfolio... I've gone from grading everything to focusing on one piece. I've got to thank the portfolio for saying that these are the criteria that we should be looking for in a piece, and to be able to work one at a time with a piece of writing...

She was also unequivocally positive about the benefits of the criteria as a way to help her provide useful feedback to students about their writing. Like Leslie, however, she stated no plans for changing future writing instruction, other than saving more writing sooner.

In Maura's room, the observable change was that student writing was saved for the first time. Maura also reports that the VAP had a significant and positive impact that we did not observe:

> It does make you think about how you teach writing, the best way to teach writing to get the results you want. Children need to know how to write, and I think starting with the rubric the way

they have it, that's a good place to start. Now I see the reason. I see

the need. I think the state is doing a good thing.

Maura announced her plans to use the VAP criteria with her students the next

year. In a telephone conversation the following October, Maura confirmed that

she had done this, and that her students were, consequently, "writing wonderful

things."

Linda reported the impact in very different terms. While explaining a

change in the focus of her writing instruction from mechanics to meaning, she

talked more about the impact it had on her students:

> I think I've empowered them all. That grows as the year goes on. In
>
> the fall, a lot comes from me. It is a lot more directive. But as they
>
> pick up the skills, my role kind of fades. It's still there, but it's un-
>
> obtrusive, less directive, and more of a guide, less of a director..It's
>
> much more obvious this year. The students plan a major role in
>
> critiquing their work....The growth that I've seen as far as the writing
>
> that's produced! Also the growth in ability to look at a piece and critique
>
> it and see what makes it special and what needs to be done to make it
>
> special---It's phenomenal!

For the next year, Linda planned to use the VAP rubric for assessing her

students' writing, and to teach her students to use the rubric to assess their own

and their peers' writing.

Conclusion

The answer to the overall question of whether a single policy is likely to

have a common effect on teachers with different beliefs, practices and contexts is,

of course, "No." There were varying degrees and types of influences in these

four classrooms as a result of their first year of participation in the Vermont Assessment Program. These teachers began with different beliefs and practices, approached the VAP task differently, and finished in different places at the end of their first year. In each case, the influence was in relation to their existing beliefs, practices. and contexts.

The influence of the VAP in specific classrooms ranged from none, to changes in organizational procedures, to students writing more, to students producing more varieties of writing, to students engaging in a new process that involved collecting their writing, reflecting on their own work and the work of others, and selecting from their collection. In some cases, the criteria of the VAP rubric helped teachers and students to look at writing differently, impacting the content and form of instruction and assessment. Although the changes that we observed and teachers reported may be smaller or different than anticipated by policy makers, it is important to understand that teachers do report a change. Indeed, three out of these four teachers reported changes in how they teach writing---and they were generally progressing in the desired direction.

Analysis continues on the more complex interview and observational data related to these cases, but these basic findings are likely to hold. What are the implications for policy makers? Expectations for change need to be realistic. Teachers vary in their prerequisite experience and ability to move as quickly and directly as policy initiatives may assume. Change in teachers' instructional practices is usually gradual, evolutionary and context-dependent. This suggests the need for a long-range, flexible, multi-dimensional approach to professional development that is responsive to these differences.

References

Abruscato, J. (1993). Early results and tentative implications from the Vermont portfolio prlject. *Phi Delta Kappan, 74*, 474-477.

Atwell, N. (1987). *In the middle: Writing, reading, and learning with adolescents.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Calkins, L. (1986). *The art of teaching writing.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Daniels, P. (1995, December). *The meaning and use of portfolios in the classroom of a more conservative (curriculum-oriented) teacher.* Paper presented at the National Reading Conference, New Orleans, LA.

Daniels, P. (1996, December). *The meaning and use of portfolios in the classroom of a polytheoretic teacher.* Paper presented at the National Reading Conference, Charleston, SC.

Ely, M. (1993). *Doing qualitative research: Circles within circles.* London: The Falmer Press.

Glesne, C. & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction.* White Plains, NY: Longman.

Graves, D.H. (1987). *Writing: Teachers and children at work.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hewitt, G. (1993). Vermont's portfolio-based writing assessment program: A brief history. *Teachers and Writers, 24,(5),* 167-172.

Hewitt, G. (1995). *A portfolio primer: Teaching, collecting and assessing student writing.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Lipson, M.Y. (1995a, December.) *Multiple perspectives and differing knowledge bases: A survey of teachers.* Paper presented at the National Reading Conference, New Orleans, LA.

Lipson, M.Y. (1995b, December). *The meaning and use of portfolios in the classroom of a more adventurous (process-inquiry) teacher.* Paper presented at the National Reading Conference, New Orleans, LA.

Lipson, M.Y. (1996, December). *The meaning and use of portfolio in the classroom of a minimalist teacher.* Paper presented at the National Reading Conference, Charleston, SC.

Lipson. M.Y. & Goldhaber, J. (1993, December). *Teacher beliefs and literacy practices in kindergarten: Competing interests and multiple practices.* Paper presented at the National Reading Conference, Charleston, SC.

Miles, M. & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Vermont Department of Education (March/April, 1994). *Intervals 4(2).* Montpelier, VT: Vermont Department of Education.

Worthen, B.R. (1993). Critical issues that will determine the future of alternative assessment. *Phi Delta Kappan, 20,* (Feb.), 444-454.

Vermont Writing Assessment
Analytic Assessment Guide

	Purpose	Organization	Details	Voice or Tone	Grammar/Usage/Mechanics
In assessing consider.. / Ask how consistently relative to length and complexity.	...how adequately intent and focus are established and maintained (success in this criterion should not depend on the reader's knowledge of the writing assignment: the writing should stand on its own) / intent is established and maintained within a given piece of writing	...coherence ...whether ideas or information are in logical sequence or move the piece forward ...whether sentences and images are clearly related to each other (Indenting paragraphs is a matter of G/U/M) / the writing demonstrates coherence	...whether details develop ideas or information ...whether details elaborate or clarify the content of the writing with images, careful explanation, effective dialogue, parenthetical expressions, stage directions, etc. / details contribute to development of ideas and information, evoke images or otherwise elaborate or clarify the content of the writing	...whether the writing displays a natural style, appropriate to the narrator ...or whether the tone of the writing is appropriate to its content / an appropriate voice or tone is established and maintained	...the conventions of writing, including: *Grammar (e.g. sentence structure, syntax) *Usage (e.g., agreement and word choice) *Mechanics (e.g., spelling, capital-ization, punctuation) / As appropriate to grade level, command of conventions is evident through correct English or intentional, effective departure from conventions.
Extensively	Establishes and maintains a clear purpose and focus	Organized from beginning to end, logical progression of ideas, fluent and coherent.	Details are pertinent, vivid or explicit and provide ideas/information in depth.	Distinctive personal expression or distinctive tone enhances the writing	Few or no errors present; or departures from convention appear intentional and are effective.
Frequently	Establishes a purpose and focus.	Organization moves writing forward with few lapses in unity or coherence.	Details develop ideas/information; or details are elaborated.	Establishes personal expression or effective tone.	Some errors or patterns of errors are present.
	Yes — Is author's focus clear within the writing? / No	Yes — Does the organization move the writing forward? / No	Yes — Do details enhance and/or clarify the writing? / No	Yes — Can you hear the writer? Or, is the tone effective? / No	Yes — Does writing show grade-appropriate command of G/U/M? / No
Sometimes	Attempts to establish a purpose; focus of writing is not fully clear.	Lapse(s) in organization affect unity or coherence.	Details lack elaboration, merely listed or unnecessarily repetitious.	Attempts personal expression or appropriate tone.	Numerous errors are apparent and may distract the reader.
Rarely	Purpose and focus not apparent.	Serious errors in organization make writing difficult to follow	Details are minimal, inappropriate, or random.	Personal expression or appropriate tone not evident.	Errors interfere with understanding.

NON-SCORABLE:
* is illegible: i.e., includes so many indecipherable words that no sense can be made of the writing, or
* is incoherent: i.e., words are legible but syntax is so garbled that response makes no sense, or
* is a blank piece of paper
* For Portfolio: Does not have required minimum contents

24   25

REPRODUCTION RELEASE
(Specific Document)·

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title:	*Individual Action and Reflection: Four Case Studies of Teachers' Responses to a Statewide Assessment Policy*
Author(s):	Patricia A. Daniels
Corporate Source: Spencer Foundation	Publication Date: March, 1997

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic/optical media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) or other ERIC vendors. Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following two options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all **Level 1** documents

☒

Check here
For Level 1 Release:
Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical) **and** paper copy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

_____Sample_____

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Level 1

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all **Level 2** documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

_____Sample_____

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Level 2

☐

Check here
For Level 2 Release:
Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical), but *not* in paper copy.

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but neither box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

"I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic/optical media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries."

Sign here→ please	Signature: *Patricia G. Daniels*	Printed Name/Position/Title: Coordinator and Lecturer Elementary Education Program
	Organization/Address: University of Vermont Department of Education 534 Waterman Bldg. Burlington, VT 05405-0160	Telephone: 802-656-5778 / FAX: 802-656-0004
		E-Mail Address: pdaniels@zoo.uvm.edu / Date: 6/10/97

CUA

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Department of Education, O'Boyle Hall
Washington, DC 20064

800 464-3742 (Go4-ERIC)

April 25, 1997

Dear AERA Presenter,

Hopefully, the convention was a productive and rewarding event. We feel you have a responsibility to make your paper readily available. If you haven't done so already, please submit copies of your papers for consideration for inclusion in the ERIC database. If you have submitted your paper, you can track its progress at http://ericae2.educ.cua.edu.

Abstracts of papers accepted by ERIC appear in *Resources in Education (RIE)* and are announced to over 5,000 organizations. The inclusion of your work makes it readily available to other researchers, provides a permanent archive, and enhances the quality of *RIE*. Abstracts of your contribution will be accessible through the printed and electronic versions of *RIE*. The paper will be available through the microfiche collections that are housed at libraries around the world and through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service.

We are soliciting all the AERA Conference papers and will route your paper to the appropriate clearinghouse. You will be notified if your paper meets ERIC's criteria for inclusion in *RIE*: contribution to education, timeliness, relevance, methodology, effectiveness of presentation, and reproduction quality.

Please sign the Reproduction Release Form on the back of this letter and stet **two** copies of your paper. The Release Form gives ERIC permission to make and distribute copies of your paper. It does not preclude you from publishing your work. You can mail your paper to our attention at the address below. Please feel free to copy the form for future or additional submissions.

Mail to: AERA 1997/ERIC Acquisitions
The Catholic University of America
O'Boyle Hall, Room 210
Washington, DC 20064

Sincerely,

Lawrence M. Rudner, Ph.D.
Director, ERIC/E

®
ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation