
ALIGNMENT OF THE CALIFORNIA DIRECT WRITING ASSESSMENT WITH CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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The California Direct Writing Assessment uses matrix sampling to allow the testing of eight types of writing at grades 8 and 12, with 5 types repeated. Now in its third year of operation at grade 8 and first year at grade 12, the test design has from its inception encompassed teacher involvement. The test and all teaching materials are closely aligned with the new California Language Arts Framework, Grades K - 12, and with the accompanying Model Curriculum Standards.

From the outset, the test makers have attempted to design a testing project that would improve the teaching of writing in California. Classroom teachers, chosen primarily from teachers trained by the California Writing Project and the California Literature Project, have been involved in every aspect of the test design and implementation, from serving on the advisory committee to providing inservice workshops throughout the state. The major developmental work was done by a cadre of 24 classroom teachers who designed and field-tested multiple prompts for each type of writing; prepared extensive teaching materials that model the best teaching practice and current thinking about discourse theory; and served as table leaders for scoring sessions at multiple sites around the state.

Results of the test are reported directly to teachers in a special teacher report as well as to districts and state officials in a more comprehensive publication. Sample essays for each score point for all eight types of writing

appear with commentary along with the various statistical results. Selected comments from the 450-500 teachers who read each test are included in the reports.

A comprehensive survey of California Junior High and Middle School Teachers on Teaching and Assessing Writing, conducted by the Center for the Study of Writing, along with individual case studies of schools, dramatically shows the results of teacher awareness and teacher involvement. Eighty-one percent, for example, have used at least one of the writing guides developed by the CAP Writing Development Team of teachers for this project while 75% have attended at least one workshop on how to teach specific kinds of writing.