
DESIGNING RISING JUNIOR WRITING ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS

Norbert Elliot, New Jersey Institute
of Technology

Maximino Plata and *Paul Zelhart*, East Texas
State University

With increased national emphasis on the evaluation of educational outcomes, faculty within a specific institution frequently find themselves charged with ensuring the writing competencies of undergraduate students. This presentation focused on the methods used by a rural university—East Texas State University—to conduct its rising junior writing assessment program.

If developers of assessment programs are to understand fully the issues and possibilities evoked when an institution undertakes evaluation of writing ability across the university, a comprehensive knowledge of the historical background of writing assessment is essential. In this program, therefore, East Texas

looked at the relation between their new program and the history of writing assessment. We gave special attention to early scales developed by Milo B. Hillegas and M.R. Trabue. We also examined the relation of holistic scoring to psychology and the issues involved in multicultural education.

We then presented data from the program at East Texas. The assessment had been taken by 4,573 students from the fall of 1984 to the spring of 1989. We provided data on the following populations: White, Black, Hispanics, Asian, international, and learning-disabled students. We also provided analysis of the relation of scores on the assessment to grade point average and grades in English courses. Emphasis was given to variation in prompt design and its relation to the success rate of individual populations.

The presentation closed with an analysis of the issues involved in administering locally developed writing assessment programs. Discussion centered on the institutional reporting and rewards structure, multicultural awareness, and directions for further research.