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# NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL TESTING NETWORK IN WRITING

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A Project of The City University of New York and The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education

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## *From the Editors*

We begin this issue of *Notes*—NTNW's ninth—by noting the extent to which writing assessment has changed over the past nine years. Most significantly, our profession's definition of "assessment" has broadened. Today when we talk and write about assessment, we acknowledge the need for multiple measures—classroom observations, computerized process analyses, portfolio evaluations, and performance tests, for example. Multiple-choice and writing sample tests still form the core of most assessment programs, but more often than not the insights and evaluations offered by teachers, peers, and learners themselves balance information provided by the more traditional measures.

Another important change is that teachers now understand the value in shaping assessment to fit the needs and realities of their students, institutions, and communities. Today, teachers *are* test-developers: they set educational priorities and they understand the merits and drawbacks of different instruction and assessment. Certainly we have learned and changed much, and have much to point to with pride. Still, many unresolved issues demand exploration and debate.

From our perspective, the most important assessment issue of this decade is literacy. What are the linguistic, cognitive, social, and cultural components of literacy? How can teachers use their insights into learning, teaching, and testing writing to help students master increasingly complex literacy skills? What kinds of curricula and pedagogy will enable students to use text to function more effectively in society and to achieve their potential and their goals? And what kinds of assessment strategies will provide rich diagnostic and evaluative information about students' ability to understand and use the prose, data, and illustrations in documents and on computers.

These are some of the questions that we will explore at the 1990 EIGHTH ANNUAL NTNW CONFERENCE ON LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ASSESSMENT, which will be sponsored by NTNW and the City

University of New York. The theme of the conference, which will take place in New York City on *November 9, 10, and 11, 1990*, is "Multiple Literacies: Language Assessment Strategies for a New Decade." Panels, workshops, and forums will explore such topics as new definitions of literacy and new models of literacy assessment, classroom evaluation measures, literacy assessment across the curriculum, computer applications in assessment, research on assessment, and program evaluation. (See the centerfold of this issue for further information about the conference.)

This issue of *Notes* continues the tradition of publishing abstracts from the most recent NTNW conference. The 1989 conference—the first international one—was a resounding success. Co-sponsored by Dawson College in Montreal, and coordinated by Linda Shohet, the conference brought together more than 450 participants from a dozen countries to exchange information and data and to explore assessment's impact on curricula, pedagogy, and students. The order of the abstracts included here, written by the presenters, follows the conference schedule rather than a particular theme. Not included are abstracts of the keynote speakers—Rexford Brown, John Dixon, Bernard Shapiro, and Janet White. We hope to publish these separately.

Finally, the inside back cover of this issue carries announcements of new books on writing assessment by NTNW members. If you have written or edited a new book on assessment, please send us information for the next issue of *Notes*.

And please continue to write and send us materials about your institution's assessment efforts, problems, and successes.

See you in the Big Apple in November!

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