in its third year, combines several components for maximum impact on teachers and students alike. These components include: (1) providing teacher-led staff development, focusing on the design of effective writing assignments and on instructional strategies for contextualizing those assignments in the classroom; (2) training teachers in the development of criteria for evaluating student writing, using their own students' writing as the data from which those criteria are elaborated; (3) bringing together teachers from all areas of the city and from several different disciplines (English/language arts, social studies, mathematics, science), in order to generate greater districtwide agreement on expectations and objectives; and (4) building into all workshop activities the kinds of formative information that enable participating teachers to undertake classroom writing instruction more effectively.

Program components and highlights for 1988-89 include: (1) a sequence of citywide workshops on assignment-designing and evaluating student writing for 120 teachers of grades three, five, seven, and eleven; (2) implementation of school-based, school-site writing assessment programs in four pilot schools (two elementary, two senior high); (3) a Saturday symposium, "Nurturing Student Writers," open to all educators in the School District of Philadelphia; (4) publication and dissemination of Making Room for Growth: A Documentary Portrait of the 1987-88 Writing Assessment Program in the School District of Philadelphia.

The Writing Assessment Program, initially conceived as a discrete three-year (1986-89) initiative, is now poised to become a permanent, ongoing component of professional development for teachers and administrators in the School District of Philadelphia. The guiding aim of the program, as it continues into 1989-90 and beyond, is to enable critical reflection on students' writing abilities and teachers' instructional practices in ways that will enable both to improve.

DETERMINING THE VALIDITY OF ESSAY TEST PROMPTS USED BY THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Karen L. Greenberg, Hunter College, CUNY and NTTW

Every year, since 1978, The City University of New York has been testing the writing skills of 50,000 students with a universitywide writing sample test. This test—the CUNY Writing Skills Assessment Test (the WAT)—consists of a single, 50-minute expository essay that is holistically scored. We have been using the WAT for a decade now, and it has proven to be a reliable instrument for determining students' minimum writing competencies. However, we have decided that it is time to take another look at the validity of the WAT's prompts. We are currently in the middle of a three-year study designed to demonstrate whether our writing test is measuring the skills and abilities that it was intended to assess. Specifically, we are trying to discover (1) the extent to which the WAT is identifying skills that faculty agree are worth identifying in that they are modifiable through instruction or practice; and (2) alternate types of test tasks might produce data that are equally or more appropriate for accomplishing the WAT's purpose.

The first activity in this research project was a survey of faculty's ideas about the sub-domains that constitute academic writing. In general, faculty indicated that the task types that they assign most frequently are informative and persuasive tasks which require writers to organize and reorganize personal experiences and socially shared information.

Our next step was to meet with faculty to discuss the tasks that are representative of the types they assign in their classrooms. We finally reached consensus about six experimental test tasks that we are currently pilot-testing. All of the tasks ask for the articulation of a point of view and for a defense of that point of view. The actual experiment took place Fall 1989 and Spring 1990.

Meanwhile, the project is having an important unintended benefit: writing faculty from all seventeen CUNY colleges have been
sharing information about their curricula, assignments, and pedagogy. Meeting together in small and large groups has enabled us to learn from one another and to come to some consensus about the nature of writing competence and about the ways in which we can help our students improve their writing ability.

CAN WE ASSESS WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES?

Liz Hamp-Lyons, The University of Michigan

This session began with a description of the University of Michigan Writing Across the Curriculum program. I stated that we must draw upon and integrate the subject area specialists if we are to be valuable to disciplinary experts who seek to integrate writing into their courses. Similarly, they need us—their attempts to use writing, as they become increasingly "sold" on the notions of critical thinking and learning through writing, will be more effective if they can draw on the expertise of writing specialists.

In addition, there is a need to evaluate writing in the disciplines. WAC programs particularly need program evaluation to demonstrate their effectiveness and to ensure their continued funding. The assessment of student competency and progress in writing in their disciplines is a key part (although by no means the only part) of that evaluation process.

I noted further that by helping faculty find appropriate methods, criteria, and standards for evaluating the writing in their disciplines, we can make an important contribution to curriculum development within a discipline; we can help faculty emphasize active learning, critical thinking, the creation of knowledge—all those things we have long believed in and which our colleagues increasingly value.

I offered a variety of examples of measures and scales from different contexts, including two examples of specific measures for evaluating writing within individual disciplines. Each of these specific measures was developed for a particular context as a cooperative venture with specialists in the particular discipline. Finally, I stressed that my remarks were meant to apply only to the evaluation of undergraduate writing in the disciplines. I am not ready to make any claims, or even disclaimers, as to how far we can go in evaluating, or participating in the evaluation of, writing at the graduate and professional levels.

ASSESSING ASSESSMENT: HISTORY, HOSTILITY, AND HOPE

Sallyanne H. Fitzgerald and Sally Barr Reagan, University of Missouri-St. Louis

Since the Governor of Missouri required state institutions of higher education to implement assessment programs, the University of Missouri-St. Louis has been regularly assessing the writing of freshman and junior English composition students, using a writing sample. To design the writing assessment, the English Department relied on previous experience with a placement exam and a basic writing exit exam. For the freshman/junior writing assessment, students were given a prompt and allowed to discuss it or to prewrite about it on the first day of the exam. Then, on the second day, their papers were returned to them, and they were instructed to complete a final draft. Since that first experience, we have allowed students more time to work on the first draft in order to replicate the writing process we use in our composition classes.

Both the placement/exit exam on which we modeled our assessment and the current assessment resulted in student and teacher hostility. Students resented the time required to participate and felt threatened by a testing environment. Writing instructors who were not directly involved in the original assessment decisions also resented the time taken by the assessment and worried about having their teaching ability evaluated by a procedure they did not design.

However, as we move towards additional changes in assessment, we are discovering hope. First, we are involving writing instructors in planning the assessment and are sharing the results with them. Then, we are using the assessment rubric to train our TAs, who teach most of our freshman writing courses, and will offer additional faculty development opportunities this year to all writing staff. Finally, we are