takes place as a person shapes and reshapes ideas with words. According to Britton, learning is a process of knowing rather than a storehouse of the known. Elbow's believing game includes such activities as believing what others say, reading and responding with empathy instead of defense, describing rather than arguing and judging, making metaphors, and delaying closure.

Students recorded and assessed their expressive writing daily in Writers' Notebooks (journals with neutral names). They responded to open-ended prompts, which I designed primarily to facilitate learning professional writing rather than to serve as prewriting for letters and reports. Through self-assessment, students owned their own writing, viewed learning as an active process, monitored clear ideas emerging from chaos, and tracked writer-based writing becoming reader-based writing.

In keeping with the believing game, my goal for each response was to focus on the immediate meaning-making; describing, not judging, emphasizing the positive; and nurturing an evolving dialogue—not initially an easy task, for the students' writing was expressive. Writing the responses on post-it notes reinforced students' ownership of their writing.

As self-assessment continued during the semester, students increased their self-esteem, increased their confidence about writing and computers, developed control of their writing behavior and feelings, and improved their writing.

DEVELOPING PORTFOLIOS FOR BARRIER TESTING: PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES

Dennis C. Holt and Nancy Westrich Baker, Southeast Missouri State University

At Southeast Missouri State University, all students must pass a test of writing proficiency in order to graduate. Students take the test, a two-part, holistically scored essay exam, after completing 75 credit hours. Because English composition classes emphasize process and revision and because writing across the curriculum promotes the importance of writing in context, we added a portfolio option. We believe that students deserve the opportunity to demonstrate writing proficiency with writing samples that have been produced on a subject of their own choosing, with time allowed for revision.

The portfolio option, now in its pilot stage, is available to students who have failed the proficiency exam and believe that time constraints, prompt topic, or personal variables prevented them from demonstrating their true level of proficiency. The portfolio must contain a minimum of four samples of writing representing several specified modes of discourse and a spontaneous one-page analysis of the samples. It can be complete in one of three ways: by collecting writing from several different courses, by compiling a portfolio in intermediate composition, or by writing essays at three separate untimed sittings in one semester.

We have confronted the problems of authenticating students' writing samples and ensuring that portfolio evaluation is governed by fair and consistent standards. We have addressed these problems by developing certification sheets and discourse-specific scoring guides. The one-page sample analysis also serves to authenticate students' writing. Although portfolio evaluation involves a considerable expenditure of time and money, our initial experience indicates that the portfolio has the potential to be a viable option to the essay exam.

WRITING PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT ACROSS A SCHOOL SYSTEM

David Kneeshaw, East York Board of Education

Over ten years ago, The East York Board of Education sanctioned the use of writing folders across the system for grades JK to 10. At the request of the Senior Heads of English, the final step was taken about four years ago and Senior Writing portfolios were mandated by the English Subject Council to be used from grades 11 to O.A.C. (Ontario Academic Credit—the college-preparation year). As a result of these decisions, East York's Writing Folders are used in every classroom across the system.

In this session, participants examined multiple draft writing samples, which illustrate
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